

4.19.20 ~ 2Corinthians 1:2-5, Father of Mercies, God of All Comfort ...

it has now been five weeks, here at First Baptist Church Waldport, since we last had Sunday School, Sunday Morning Worship, Ladies' Tuesday Bible Study, Wednesday Night Adult Bible Study, and Men's Saturday Breakfast Study.

I really miss our gatherings for prayer, fellowship and Bible study, I miss the handshakes, hugs, and seeing your faces; I miss sharing stories and laughter, while getting caught up on what is going on in one another's lives.

All these things that we are missing seem to be compounded by this COVID-19 Pandemic's mandates to stay home, keep social distances, wear masks when out in the public marketplace, wash your hands constantly, or use disinfecting hand sanitizer when hand washing isn't possible.

I'm pretty sure that no matter where you are - Oregon, California, Arizona, Minnesota, etc. - all the above sounds pretty common to you by now. So, let's change the channel and turn away from all that is going on around us, and instead let us look to God, the Father of mercies and the God of all comfort.

Read 2Corinthians 1:2-5... Life can be draining, exhausting, perhaps even overwhelming: when you or family members are struggling with health issues, financial problems, or just having hard times; when the present is chaotic and unsure and the future seems bleak, it is easy to become discouraged.

Discouragement robs our energy, our strength, our joy, our peace, and our contentment. If discouragement is allowed to take up residence in us for very long, we will most likely succumb to a downward spiral of fatigue, hopelessness, despair, and dysfunction.

When we continually focus on what is going on around us, instead of Who is in us, we can become spiritually discouraged. When we become unappreciative or forgetful of God's protection and provisions in the past, we may become indifferent toward God as provider and protector in the present, leading us to become spiritually weak and vulnerable.

When we stop focusing on the God who loves us, it is easy to forget that He knows our troubles and our needs, and He wants to help us, for we are His children. We need to keep our eyes on Jesus in order to remain encouraged, experiencing God's comfort, peace and rest.

You keep your eyes on Christ by prayerfully reading God's Word, honoring it, and applying it to your life, for it is only through obedient faith in Christ that we receive God's encouragement, strength and wisdom.

Read 2Corinthians 1:3... God is the Father of *mercies*. The Greek word translated '*mercies*' here expresses something that flows from deep down in the

heart, and this reference is to God's heart, i.e., this compassion comes from the very heart of God.

Psalm 86:5, *"For You, Lord, are good, and ready to forgive, and abundant in lovingkindness to all who call upon You."*

God is the author of compassion and mercy, He has expressed this to us through His gift of forgiveness and salvation, setting us free from eternal condemnation and punishment, at the same time granting us everything we need for our mortal life on earth and eternal life in heaven.

Ephesians 1:3, *"Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who has blessed us with every spiritual blessing in the heavenly places in Christ,"* **7-8**, *"In Him we have redemption through His blood, the forgiveness of our trespasses, according to the riches of His grace which He lavished on us[,] In all wisdom and insight [understanding]."*

Ephesians 2:7, *"so that in the ages to come He might show the surpassing riches of His grace in kindness toward us in Christ Jesus."*

1Peter 1:3-5, *"Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who according to His great mercy has caused us to be born again to a living hope through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead, to obtain an inheritance which is imperishable and undefiled and will not fade away, reserved in heaven for you, who are protected by the power of God through faith for a salvation ready to be revealed in the last time."*

2Peter 1:1-3, *"To those who have received a faith of the same kind as ours, by the righteousness of our God and Savior, Jesus Christ: Grace and peace be multiplied to you in the knowledge of God and of Jesus our Lord; seeing that His divine power has granted to us everything pertaining to life and godliness, through the true knowledge of Him who called us by His own glory and excellence."*

Isaiah 49:13, *"Shout for joy, O heavens! And rejoice, O earth! Break forth into joyful shouting, O mountains! For the Lord has comforted His people, and will have compassion on His afflicted."*

God is merciful, the God of all comfort. The Greek word translated 'comfort' here (**2Corinthians 1:3**) implies exhortation and encouragement given by coming alongside someone; another form of this word is used for the Holy Spirit, the Helper [Comforter, Counselor], Who is called the Spirit of Christ, the Spirit of Truth.

John 14:16-17, *"I will ask the Father, and He will give you another Helper, that He may be with you forever; that is the Spirit of truth, whom the world cannot receive, because it does not see Him or know Him, but you know Him because He abides with you and will be in you."*

John 14:26, *"But the Helper, the Holy Spirit, whom the Father will send in My name, He will teach you all things, and bring to your remembrance all that I said to you."*

Read 2Corinthians 1:4... God says He comforts us in all our affliction. The Greek word translated 'affliction' here can mean any kind of trouble [illness, burden, persecution, disease, suffering, discomfort].

Trouble arrives in many forms, e.g., wayward or despondent children, sickness, financial hardship, family conflict, or perhaps the loss of a loved one.

Trouble seems to come at the most inopportune times, e.g., it is bad enough to be in a global pandemic and to be sequestered in your own home, but then to lose your employment, and to struggle to pay the rent/mortgage, the utilities, to put food on the table. All of this can easily overwhelm us and cause us to become fearful, confused, angry, discouraged, and even hopeless.

We are being confronted more than ever with the reality that we live in a fallen world, where some of the consequence of sin's curse is clearly making itself known, and our world seems to be more harsh and difficult than we have experienced in a long time, as daily we are confronted with the reality that bad things happen, and we aren't immune just because we belong to God.

But, God is merciful and He wants to comfort us, to care for us.

Psalm 119:50, *"This is my comfort in my affliction, that Your word has revived me."*

Isaiah 51:12, *"I, even I, am He who comforts you."*

Jeremiah 29:11, *"For I know the plans that I have for you," declares the Lord, 'plans for welfare and not for calamity to give you a future and a hope.'"*

We can be assured that God wants the best for us, He loves us, and when we suffer, whether it is our own fault, someone else's, or just the consequence of living in a world that rejects its Creator, Savior and Sustainer, God wants to use whatever happens to us in this life for His own glory and to our own benefit.

James 1:2-4, *"Consider it pure joy, my brothers, whenever you face trials of many kinds, because you know that the testing of your faith develops perseverance. Perseverance must finish its work so that you may be mature and complete, not lacking anything."*

So then, trouble and afflictions can actually work to make us better, even strengthening our faith through the comfort and mercy we receive from God.

Philippians 4:12-13, *"I know what it is to be in need, and I know what it is to have plenty. I have learned the secret of being content in any and every situation, whether well fed or hungry, whether living in plenty or in want. I can do all this through Him who gives me strength." 19 "And my God will meet all your needs*

according to the riches of his glory in Christ Jesus."

But, how do we receive this comfort from God? The easy answer is, through faith, for we must believe that what God tells us is true, and therefore we can trust Him for whatever comfort He provides.

Psalm 46:1, *"God is our refuge and strength, a very present help in trouble."*

God is ever-present in our suffering, for He is helping us, walking with us, leading us, providing for us, comforting us.

God sometimes provides comfort to us through other believers, perhaps an encouraging word, a helping hand, a listening ear to hear our troubles, or maybe even someone to cry with.

God mostly comforts us through His Word, when we read it or hear it; for it provides encouragement and hope, as well as instruction and guidance; it is made effectual by the Holy Spirit, the One who lives in us, our resident Helper, Comforter, and Counselor from God.

God comforts us so that we may bring that same comfort to others; and therefore, God allows us to go through hard times and struggles so that we will call upon Him for help; and then having received help from God we are then able to encourage others who find themselves in need of comfort, by urging them to also call upon God, who loves and cares for them.

In a way, we should be thankful for trouble, for through it we are drawn closer to God, Who helps us in our time of need; and then sends us to help others on His behalf. We aren't comforted by God just so that we might be comfortable; but so that we will become comforters ourselves, in the service of God..

Read 2Corinthians 1:5... May we never forget the suffering our Lord went through for us, whatever comfort, encouragement and hope we receive, whether it comes through people, God's Word, or whatever circumstances, it is ultimately brought through Jesus Christ, who suffered once for all to the point of death, in order to take our sin punishment and condemnation, that we might live for Him.

2Corinthians 4:7-10, *"But we have this treasure in earthen vessels, so that the surpassing greatness of the power will be of God and not from ourselves; we are afflicted in every way, but not crushed; perplexed, but not despairing; persecuted, but not forsaken; struck down, but not destroyed; always carrying about in the body the dying of Jesus, so that the life of Jesus also may be manifested in our body."*

God is in the midst of our suffering, in order to bring us comfort. God's comfort is merciful and loving, and we receive it spiritually by faith, as a children of God.

God the Father loves you so much that He sent His One and Only Son to save you. God the Son loves you so much He laid down His life for you. God the Holy

Spirit, our Helper and Comforter, lives in us to protect and provide for us, to give us purpose and power, to know the very presence of God, and to have intimate fellowship with Him now and forever in Christ who said, (**Matthew 11:28**), "*Come to Me, all who are weary and heavy-laden, and I will give you rest.*"

The God of all mercy, the God of all comfort, desires to show His lovingkindness and compassion to each one of His children, i.e., to anyone and everyone who trusts and believes in Jesus Christ, God's Son, Lord and Savior: crucified, resurrected, and coming again.

2Thessalonians 2:16-17, "*Now may our Lord Jesus Christ Himself and God our Father, who has loved us and given us eternal comfort and good hope by grace, comfort and strengthen your hearts in every good work and word.*"

Pastor Mike

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