

SUNDAY AUGUST 12th **“COMFORT IN TIMES OF TROUBLE”** - “Key Ingredients of Comfort”

2 Corinthians 1:3 “Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of mercies and God of all comfort”

Notice what it says about God’s nature: He is the Father or Author of mercies. The heart of God is never against us – **He’s always for us** – full of compassion. When you’re in trouble His heart is soft and tender and affectionate. **He wants to help you. He’s the “Father of mercies”**

And He’s the **“God of all comfort”**. He comes to us in difficult times **to comfort us**. In difficult times it feels like God is a long way off – but interestingly He is nearer then – than at any other time of your life

We all experience difficult times and the tendency then is to lose perspective and we tend to isolate and withdraw or react in a negative way – and then problems become magnified, hopeless and worse. The biggest trouble we get into – in life - in marriage – problems at work – problems at home **is when we isolate**.

2 Corinthians 1:3-4 Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of mercies and **God of all comfort, 4 who comforts us in all our tribulation”**

How many of our problems are left out of His comfort? **None. In all difficulties we face – God comforts us**

And not only that He has a purpose in comforting us: 2 Corinthians 1:3-5 Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of mercies and God of all comfort, 4 who comforts us in all our tribulation, **that we may be able to comfort those who are in any trouble, with the comfort with which we ourselves are comforted by God.**

So the Lord has two purposes in comforting us #1 to bring relief to us in times of stress by experiencing His love – His comfort and #2 – having given you this experience with Him – that you would go and share that experience with someone else to help them

God’s purpose is always redemptive (to save someone out of trouble). If you’re in trouble – He

gets you out – **so you can help** someone else get out.

So you find yourself in a mess – even if it's a mess of your own making – God's still tender – He still cares – He still wants to engage with you to get you out of it and **thru that experience give you the grace to set someone else free.**

There's nothing worse – when you're suffering and someone says "I know how you feel" when actually they "don't have a clue how you feel"

But when someone has been thru what you're experiencing and comes along and says "I understand how you feel" and they've been there before – they've walked in your shoes - to some degree - they really do understand how you're feeling. Well now we're getting somewhere – **now that person is equipped by God to comfort you with the same comfort they themselves received from God.**

Sometimes God comforts us directly. Sometimes He brings comfort thru another person. **You might be sitting next to the person God is calling you to comfort. Or the person God has**

sent to comfort you – might be sitting right beside you or near you. Think about that.

The word comfort: paraklesis (par-ak'-lay-sis): "to call near" or "to come alongside side you in your distress and be there for you"

Jesus is our Comforter. He addresses the root of the problem. He said I'm going to send you another Comforter (the Holy Spirit) and in so saying - He Himself is a Comforter – the "God of all comfort". Notice the name He is given "Emmanuel" "God with us". He never leaves us alone – He comes alongside us – to connect with us and **walk with us** through our difficulty.

Let's look at an example of what true comfort looks like: in 1 Samuel 23:16 David is now hunted down – he's gone from fame to now being on the most wanted list – his poster in all the local post offices "Most Wanted" 1 Samuel 23:16-17 Then Jonathan, Saul's son, arose and went to David in the woods and strengthened his hand in God. 17 And he said to him, "Do not fear, for the hand of Saul my father shall not find you. You shall be king over Israel, and I shall be next to you. Even my father Saul knows that."

The evidence that you have truly comforted someone is that because of your intervention – they are strengthened in God. They feel stronger to face their present challenge.

Notice first - Jonathon left where he was and went and found David hiding in the woods. He didn't wait for David to come to him. He went and found David. He pursued the one in need of comfort.

Secondly – when he found David he addressed the way he was feeling – he addressed David's fear – he empathized with him, You can't comfort anyone until you understand what they're feeling.

Thirdly Jonathon reminded David of the promises of God “**You shall be king over Israel**”

And finally made a promise to walk with him through the trial: “**I shall be next to you**”

This is what Biblical comfort looks like: you go find them (you don't wait for them to call), you empathize with them, you remind them of God's promises and then you stand with them – you walk along-side them until they come out whatever trouble they're in.

#1 You intentionally connect with the person.

Recognize - there are some people who just need space – give it to them. But most want help. Uncle Joe: “When someone comes to mind – call them. How are you? What's going on? Is there anything I can do for you?”

#2 He addressed the emotions David was experiencing

#3 He spoke and directed David to God's Word – God's promises

#4 He made a strong commitment to stay with him – to walk along side his friend.

We're not called to fix them. We're called to comfort them.

If you feel someone is in distress or pain – make an intentional effort to connect with them. Don't invade – but rather listen to their heart. Sometimes they're not ready – give them space (personal friend in distress currently – as prompted I've called – no response. He's not ready to talk yet.) Be sensitive to their heart. But

as the Lord prompts I will continue to call until my friend is ready or until the Lord says “stop”.

When His disciples were in distress the Bible says in Luke 24:15 “Jesus Himself drew near and went with them.”

Jesus Himself - drew near - and went - with them. He’s got two of His disciples in distress – here’s the first thing He does – He intentionally comes near to them. The second thing He did was He walked with them. He went with them.

And then Luke 24:17 He said to them, **“What kind of conversation is this that you have with one another as you walk and are sad?”**

He went to them. He went with them. And then He addressed their emotions “Why are you sad?”. How can I help?

It’s important to listen to their heart – to understand where they’re coming from – before you speak. Proverbs 18:13 He who answers a matter before he hears it, It is folly and shame to him.

You can’t answer a person until you give them a good hearing. Ask them how they’re doing – how

they’re feeling – what are they thinking? And then as the Spirit leads speak with them in such a capacity that directs them to the truth and the promises of God’s Word.

Imagine the atmosphere shift if this week – wherever you go – if you were to take an interest in people – to connect with them in a positive way and simply inquire: How are you? Where are you spiritually? What’s happening? What’s going on? I notice you seem a bit sad. What’s up my friend? **Don’t try to fix anything just yet.** Just listen to their heart. Then when the timing is right – direct them to the truth and promises of God’s Word.

You might very well have the answer to their problem – but until they feel they’ve been heard and understood by you – they won’t receive what you’ve said – even if your answer is of God.

You’ve heard *“Nobody cares how much you know until they know how much you care”*

Sometimes a text is all it takes. “I love you.” “I’m thinking of you.” If the Spirit gives you a scripture or a prophetic word - send.