THE COMFORT OF GOD

2 Corinthians 1:1-11

Awareness

Before listening, reflect:

- When you experience setbacks or suffering, what is your natural response? Why do you think you respond this way? What do you think your response says about how you view suffering?
- What does comfort mean to you? Have you ever experienced the comfort of God? How would you describe it to someone?

When setbacks, trials, tribulations, and sufferings in this life become too great to bear, it can be tempting to question God's motives or even his presence. But Paul argues that our view of difficult experiences will influence whether they shake our faith or make it stronger. Paul's experience of suffering led him to lean into God, strengthening his faith, and giving him the profound encounter with the incomparable comfort of God. Studying Paul's testimony gives us opportunity to recognize the comfort of God in our own lives, strengthen our faith, and discover how we can best use our testimonies to share the comfort of God with others enduring trials and suffering.

Reflection

After listening, consider:

- In his commentary *Paul for Everyone: 2 Corinthians*, N.T. Wright describes the full Greek meaning of the word translated as 'comfort' in 2 Corinthians 1. *"The whole idea of the word is that one person is being with another, speaking words which change their mood and situation, giving them courage, new hope, new direction, new insights which will alter the way they face the next moment, the next day, the rest of their life...It meets people where they are, and brings them right on to the point where they are strong enough to see new hope, new possibilities, new ways forward."* What do you think of this definition of comfort? How is it the same or different than how you would have defined comfort before? How does it make you feel about comforting a fellow brother or sister in Christ? Hopeful? Challenged?
- Based on hosts Dave Bast and Scott Hoezee's conversation in segment 2, describe how comfort should be different than sympathy.
- When in your life have you been uplifted or encouraged by someone else's testimony of God's presence and comfort in their lives? How has it helped you to trust God beyond what you can see or imagine? Can you identify others times when you've seen this reality of encouragement through shared comfort in your community?
- Have you ever seen a failed attempt by a Christian to comfort a person in need?What do you think caused the attempt to fail? Was it hollow or empty, did it lack authenticity or compassion? What cautions do you take from this example as you consider how your testimony might offer comfort to others?
- Reread 2 Corinthians 1:11. Why do you think the experience of sharing answers to prayer has an effect on the whole community, not just the person who has been through the suffering?

Related Passages

- **Acts 18**
- **John 15:18-25**
- **Matthew 28:20**
- **Philippians 4:4-7**

Conclusion

Reflect on your story and testimony—not your “come to Jesus” testimony, but the testimony of your life, the ups-and-downs and how you’ve experienced God’s faithfulness. Spend time thinking about it; write down the verses that were meaningful to you, makes notes about words that people said, or that you wished they had been said. Consider how your testimony might walk alongside someone else enduring suffering and how it might strengthen their faith or give them hope. Also identify what cautions you might need to consider so that compassion reigns and you can share the depth of God’s comfort, while avoiding empty sentiments or well-intentioned band-aid statements that misses the mark. The more you’ve thought about and processed your testimony, the more ready you’ll be to share it when the opportunities arise. Finally, spend time in prayer thanking God for his comfort in your life and asking him for opportunities to share your testimony to bring others comfort.

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