The God of All Comfort

Zanesville, OH | April 7, 2019 | John Pollard | Sermon Notes

**Foundational Scripture:** 2 Cor. 1:3-4

**Intro**:

* At some point in all of our lives, we will experience what it’s like to be overcome with excessive, trying pain. When we lose our loved ones and those who are really close to us, we feel that. When we or someone who is close to us faces a dire diagnosis, we feel that pain. If you’ve ever lost a job you really loved or maybe someone really close to you turned around and committed the worst form of betrayal, you have felt this pain. These things will happen in our lives. Pain, loss, heartache and heartbreak are built into this world and its entities. To those who are disciples, when these things happen, your faith will be tested. You will question your commitment to God. You will want answers and solutions that are beyond your control. And people who have not yet come to God may separate themselves even further from Him when these situations occur.
* We do not have an answer for why these things happen, the way they occur and the frequency with which they do but I would suggest to you that God has a purpose for everything and everyone. But the one thing I do want to focus on this morning and draw your attention to, is the one thing we crave the most when we find ourselves in the midst of such pain: **Comfort.** We want comfort and we want relief. Yes, we want answers but part of the reason why we want answers is because we crave the comfort that we think we will get from them. Comfort is the number one thing most people, if not all, look for in these situations. That’s why we turn to family and friends during these situations. We look to someone to vent, a shoulder to cry on or someone who won’t hesitate to wrap their arms around us. We may turn to food, entertainment or just something that will help us feel better.
* And granted, while these things do help and do offer some level of relief they ultimately will not be able to give us the kind of relief we are looking for. I am reminded of Job who, when he had lost all his livestock, his servants and his ten children, was comforted by his three friends. They did not try to “overdo it” but they simply sat with him (Job 2:11-13). After a period of time, the silence was interrupted and Job’s friends were no longer a source of comfort but rather pain. They became a thorn in his side. I share that illustration with you because they could only provide Job with comfort to a certain extent. Who then can give us the comfort we need? To whom shall we look for relief from all our pain and suffering?
* The answer is **The God of All Comfort.** I want you to take keen notice to what Paul has said. He does not say the God of little comfort, some comfort or most comfort, but rather He is the God of ALL comfort. I believe Paul is emphasizing that we do not have all the answers and sometimes and like Job’s friends, we may only be able to extend comfort to a certain extent. Where we fail, and we cannot find all the solutions, we ought not to fear for God will be there and He will deliver. Paul probably has a particular situation of comfort in mind when writing this salutation but God comforts us in a variety of ways.

**What are the ways in which God comforts us?**

1. **Through Himself and His Word**
	1. Several Psalms in the Old Testament are referred to as Psalms of Lament. The authors were struggling with difficult problems and they needed help and comfort during these situations. Other Psalms which are not a part of the Lament genre also indicate the authors’ desire for deliverance and comfort from some level of pain or trial.
	2. Together, these Psalms demonstrate a reliance on God, His law and His words as a major (primary) source of comfort for them (Psa. 3:1-4; 23:4; 63:6-8, 119:50, 52; 76). When we struggle with afflictions and we need comfort, the best place to turn is to God and His word.
	3. God’s word played a big part in the lives of the Psalmists not because of the word patterns or poetry structure. It wasn’t about the aesthetics but it was about the solace, confidence and relief they would find in them. Often times what gives us a lot of comfort is knowing somebody else has been through what we are going through.
	4. Think about all the stories in the OT and NT where people just like us experienced loss, pain and devastation. When we read those accounts and when we read the word of God we find an incredible source of comfort the likes no food and entertainment will ever give us.
	5. When you wake up in the morning, spend some solid time with God in prayer. Pour your heart out to God and let Him know what you’re feeling. Ask Him to give you courage and confidence to keep fighting and persevering. Then spend some solid time reading and meditating on His word (Phil. 4:8). Seek comfort from Him who is the source of all comfort.
2. **Through His People**
	1. In 2 Cor. 1:4, Paul said God comforted them and they can in turn comfort others. God designed the church for many purposes and one of the greatest benefits we reap from His design is that we have family to lean on. I’m not saying that our physical family or friends are incapable of imparting comfort and encouragement, but I am saying that God gives us a strong support system in our brothers and sisters in Christ (Acts 2:44-45; 4:32-37; Gal 6:2; Philem. 1:7).
	2. We who are all of the same mind and same goals can use God’s word and our own experiences to help our brothers and our sisters to keep fighting the good fight and to press on (Rom. 15:1). We can be there for them even if it means sitting down with them in silence. We can share with them memories and thoughts that will point them to Christ for He indeed is the source of all comfort. Aren’t you thankful for God’s people and the encouragement and comfort that they provide?
3. **Through His Grace**
	1. I mentioned earlier that I believe Paul had a particular situation of comfort in mind when he wrote the second epistle to the brethren at Corinth. The Corinthians were a mess in the first letter and so they needed to understand their need to repent. Paul was blunt about their issues because their souls were on the line.
	2. In the second letter, Paul wrote commending them and encouraging them for their willingness to repent. You see, they received the first letter and were convicted of their wrong doings and thus sought God’s mercy and grace earnestly (2 Cor. 7:8-10, 13). In a very real sense, they were fulfilling what Jesus said on the sermon on the mount: *“Blessed are those who mourn, for they shall be comforted”* (Matt. 5:4).
	3. They were mourning over their sin and their errors and Paul needed them to know that God would comfort them and had comforted them via His grace. Isn’t that amazing? All the problems and consequences that sin brings along (Read 1 Corinthians and observe) can be resolved if we turn away from sin and seek God’s help. He is more than willing and more than able to comfort us. The comfort God gives us from sin is the greatest comfort we will ever have (Eph. 2:1-8)!
4. **Through His Home**
	1. Paul before becoming an apostle of our Lord, was a ruthless persecutor of God’s people. I’m certain that Paul had to fight his guilt and everything that came along with that throughout his lifetime. I know that because he expounds on this in Phil. 3:12-13. Paul said he needed to forget about the past and press on to what was ahead. Why? What was ahead was so great and so overwhelming that Paul would immediately forget about everything in his past.
	2. Paul found a great source of comfort and encouragement knowing that he would see God one day and I would suggest to you that we can too. Paul, I’m sure, could not wait till the day came where he would no longer be concerned with his past and things of this world. That day will come for us too.
	3. We need to know and understand that the things we face here in this lifetime will be difficult and they will be hard. We will struggle in our faith from time to time, but would we go so far as to give up heaven? Paul was not going to do that, and neither should we (Phil. 3:20).
	4. Lazarus after experiencing nothing but pain, heartache, loss and seclusion was comforted in Paradise because he held on his faith (Lk. 16:25). He remained steadfast in God and looked to Him for comfort, for relief. Those who are faithful over the few things they have been granted, they will experience joy and comfort the likes of which we cannot even begin imagine let alone describe (Matt. 25:21, 23).

**Conclusion:** There may be some of you here today who are dealing with pain. You may be dealing with sickness, loss or betrayal. I want to encourage you to turn to God. Turn to His word and His people. Yes, it’s okay to eat the pizza or your favorite ice-cream if it helps a little. It’s okay to watch *The Sound of Music* to get your mind off things. But that will not ultimately resolve what you’re feeling and what you’re going through. Turn to the **God of All Comfort** who has the ability and who is willing to give you the relief you are seeking. There may be some of you here today and you are not a Christian. You have not yet made the decision to be baptized for the forgiveness of your sins. You may in pain and not even know it. And the longer you wait, the worse it will get. There is God who is able and willing to relieve you of those burdens and comfort you with His grace. There is a home prepared for all those who seek His grace. If you need to repent and submit to Christ, why wait? May we all turn to the **God of All Comfort** and may it be our goal to serve Him forever!