



## BELIEVERS CHAPEL

6420 Churchill Way | Dallas, Texas | 75230 | t 972.239.5371 | believerschapeldallas.org

The Sermons of S. Lewis Johnson

2 Corinthians 1:3-7

“Divine Comfort, Its Source and Purpose”

TRANSCRIPT

We're turning to 2 Corinthians chapter 1, and we're going to read the first seven verses of the first chapter. I know that we read the first two verses last Sunday, but since our Scripture reading stops at verse 7, I don't think it will hurt us a bit to read verses 1 and 2 again. And, furthermore, there's a point that I want to make which involves verse 2. So let's turn to 2 Corinthians chapter 1. We read verse 1 through verse 7 for the Scripture reading.

“Paul, an apostle of Jesus Christ by the will of God, and Timothy *our* brother, To the church of God which is at Corinth, with all the saints who are throughout Achaia: Grace to you and peace from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ. (And notice the statement that Paul makes when he says Grace to you and peace from God *our* Father. Now, that's nothing new for us because, of course, that's the way that we are told by the Lord that we should pray: Our Father who art in Heaven. But now we continue.) Blessed *be* the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ (And notice that He's our Father, He's also the father of our Lord Jesus Christ. That raises some interesting questions about which we will say a few words in the message that follows.) Blessed *be* the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of mercies and God of all comfort, who

comforts us in all our affliction, so that we may be able to comfort those who are in any affliction, with the comfort with which we ourselves are comforted by God. For just as the sufferings of Christ are ours in abundance, so also our comfort is abundant through Christ. But if we are afflicted, *it is* for your comfort and salvation, Or if we are comforted, *it is* for your comfort which is effective in the patient enduring of the same sufferings which we also suffer. And our hope for you *is* firmly grounded, knowing that as you are sharers of our sufferings, so also *you are sharers* of our comfort.”

Would you think that one of Paul’s principle points in this passage has to do with comfort? Well, I think that you can see that the word is used, in one form or another, ten times in verses 3 through 7. This is one of the great passages in the New Testament concerning Divine Comfort, and that will be the subject of the message that follows a few moments later. Let’s bow together in a moment of prayer.

[Prayer] Our Heavenly Father, we approach Thee through the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, and we thank Thee that we are able to call Thee our Father. By virtue of our relationship to the Lord Jesus Christ, who also as mediator calls Thee his father. We thank Thee, Lord, for the blessings of life that come to us from Thee. We thank Thee for the Creation. We thank Thee for the redemption, for the cross at Golgotha. We thank Thee for the gift of the Holy Spirit who indwells all believers in Jesus Christ.

We thank Thee, too, for the hope that we have: the hope of the Second Coming, the hope of the Kingdom of God. And we thank Thee, too, Lord, for the fact that between our present and those marvelous futures - the future blessings, we have the blessing of the assurance of the divine presence and comfort in the experiences of life.

We thank Thee and praise Thee for the ministry of the word of God in our day, and we pray Thy blessing upon the whole church of Jesus Christ. Bless every believer in Him, and especially today those who minister the word of God, we pray that the word of

God may go forth with the blessing of the Holy Spirit, convicting and converting, enlarging the body of Christ and building up the saints that we may be prepared for the coming of the Lord.

We thank Thee for the Chapel and its ministry, for its radio ministry and publications ministry and the Bible classes and the other forms of outreach that go forth from this place. We thank Thee for our elders and for our deacons. We pray Thy blessing upon them. And for the members and the friends and the visitors, Lord, we ask spiritual blessing and material blessing as well, upon them. We thank Thee for the day in which we live and for the challenges of it and by Thy grace may we be able to represent Thee in a way that will please Thee in our day.

We commit those who have asked for our prayers to Thee and pray that Thou wilt minister to them and build them up, courage, strengthen, console, and give healing if it should please Thee. We commit the ministry today to Thee and the Lord’s Supper this evening to Thee. We ask that it may be a time of special blessing as we remember Him who loved us and gave himself for us. Accept our thanks for all that Thou art to us, our Triune God: Father, Son and Holy Spirit.

In Jesus’ name. Amen.

[Message] The subject for today in the second of our series of messages on 2 Corinthians is “Divine Comfort, Its Source and Purpose.” Affliction, so the New Testament tells us, is the Christian way of life. It’s not something exceptional. It’s something that we should expect. Paul and we, his followers, are no exceptions to this general principle. The word “affliction,” the Greek word *thlipsis*, is a word that in its verbal form means simply to press. And so, consequently, the idea back of it is things or circumstances pressing down upon us. In fact, in the ancient Law of England, those who willfully refused to plead, had heavy weights placed on their breasts and were so pressed and crushed to death. That was literally *thlipsis*; pressing.

Now, of course, the term has come to have a metaphorical or figurative meaning. And afflictions, as being things that press upon us, upon our spirits, upon our souls, those things are the things that are set out in the New Testament as our afflictions. One of my favorites from centuries ago, the seventeenth century to be exact, is Samuel Rutherford of the land of Scotland. He wrote to one of his friends, probably when he was in St. Andrews rather than in the earlier days in Anwoth, and he said, “God has called you to Christ’s side, and the wind is now in Christ’s face in this land. And seeing you’re with him, you cannot expect the leese side or the sunny side of the brae.” Well, I think that’s Christian experience. If we’re with Christ, we don’t look for the sunny side of the brae or the leese side. To suffer as a Christian is not only to be expected, but it’s also to be a privilege, too. Polycarp, the ancient bishop of Smyrna, in the second century when they bound him to be martyred, they said, “I thank Thee” in his prayer to God. “I thank Thee that Thou has judged me worthy of this hour.”

So when we think about afflictions, we think about them as the things that we expect in the Christian life, and we think also about them as things that God had judged us worthy to experience, simply because he has implanted the divine life within us. It’s not any merit that we have, of course. It’s simply that by his grace, he’s brought us to Christ. And the Christian life is a life of affliction. How can it be anything otherwise? “The servant shall not be above his master,” the Lord said. And he said further, “If they hated me, they will hate you.” And so, consequently, if we are truly representative of him and of human nature, it’s still human nature, than we expect the same kind of response. It’s inevitable. It’s a privilege.

Now, Paul speaks of present afflictions. He doesn’t tell us precisely what they were. It would be nice if we knew. But I sometimes feel that the reason that the apostle doesn’t tell us precisely what his troubles are in given situations, may be because the Holy Spirit that guided him in his letter writing, particularly his inspired letter writing, did that so we may properly make application to all of the experience that are similar. And so,

consequently, when Paul was in Ephesus, he had such an affliction there that it was almost the end of his life physically. He said he despaired even of life. What it was, we don’t know. Whether it was participation in the riot that took place there described in Acts chapter 19 -- that surely would fit the bill -- or whether it was one of those experiences described in the eleventh chapter -- so many of them that it’s hard to think of any particular one. Almost any kind of affliction that we’ve ever suffered, the apostle can say, “I’ve suffered that also.” Was it illness? Contemporary New Testament scholarship tends to center upon that as perhaps the apostle’s affliction. Some even think it was violence and, believe it or not, the fear of being lynched, for that was not uncommon in those days either.

So Paul doesn’t tell us precisely what his afflictions were. What you see in Corinth -- there were people in the church at Corinth who used them to attack the apostle. They said things like this: Paul’s suffering affliction. Why’s he suffering affliction? Why, everybody knows why he’s suffering affliction. Lucy tells us that. He’s done something wrong. So he’s suffering affliction because he’s done something wrong. That’s Lucy’s theology -- for those of you who read “Peanuts.” It’s very common. There’s some justification for it for God does use physical afflictions from time to time as means by which he disciplines the saints of God and means by which he judges those who are not the saints of God, too. But they use that and so they said Paul’s having difficulty. The reason he’s having difficulty is because he makes himself out as an apostle of Jesus Christ on a level with the twelve, and he shouldn’t be there.

And then when Paul wrote letters to them and said, “I’m coming to visit you and I’m going to come in a certain way and then he didn’t come,” they say, “You see, it’s the same kind of thing.” And when Paul changes his mind and says I’m not going to go that way, I’m going to come this way, they say, “Look. How can you be in the will of God when one moment you say you’re going to do this and the next moment you’re going to do that? Either you’re in the will of God originally and you’re out of the will of God now,

or you’re in the will of God now and you were out of the will of God then.” And they were false apostles. Paul will talk about them in the eleventh chapter. In fact, he will allude to them elsewhere. They caused trouble in the church at Corinth. In fact, they caused such trouble that one individual became the means of gathering to himself the Corinthian church in opposition to Paul.

So Paul was accused of fickleness, usurpation of authority. He was afflicted by the slander of the people whom he had been God’s instrument to bring to the knowledge of the Lord. And so the Corinthians yielding to these criticisms of Paul, the murmurings, the complainings, finally caused the apostle to write them a stinging letter. That’s the way he describes it. We don’t have it. We know he wrote it, but we don’t have it. After he wrote it, he said he was disturbed because he was afraid it would be very upsetting to the Corinthians. And so, he was so disturbed by that that he sent -- he had sent Titus with the letter and he said that he was so concerned, he was so anxious, so distressed that he traveled from Ephesus to Troas to meet Titus because he was coming through Macedonia back toward Ephesus. And when Paul reached Troas, he waited until winter came when he knew no one would be out on the Aegean Sea coming from Macedonia across that sea at that time.

So he knew then that Titus would be coming by land. So Paul traveled by land. And finally he reached Macedonia, and he met Titus, and he was so overjoyed. He will talk about it later in the epistle. Titus said, “Paul, the stinging letter produced the right response. The Corinthians have repented. And, furthermore, they not only have repented, they have exercised discipline with respect to the person who has been causing the primary trouble within the church. In fact, Paul, they are depressed; depressed to realize how shabbily they have treated you.” And so Paul now writes them to comfort them and to let them know that he understands and that the comfort with which he has been comforted is a comfort by which they may be comforted, too. So the apostle writes

2 Corinthians in order to comfort the Corinthians and as well to defend his ministry and to support his authority as an apostle of the Lord Jesus Christ.

So that’s the background of what we’re looking at now when we talk about divine comfort. In verse 3 the apostle writes in praise of the compassionate Father. Blessed *be* the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of mercies and the God of all comfort. The word translated “comfort” is the word that in some form or other appears about ten times in verses 3 through 7. It’s the Greek word *parakaleo*, which is made up of a preposition and a verb. Now, we don’t base the meaning of words on the roots of words but sometimes they do give you some insight into the background and also to the sense of the word. *Para* is a preposition that means by the side of. *Kaleo* means to call. And so the word means to call along side, fundamentally, by its root. But by usage which is the important way by which we learn the meaning of terms. By usage it came to mean to comfort, to console, to exhort, and related types of meanings.

So to comfort, to console, to exhort; now it seems to me that comfort is very -- very much the sense here. Comfort in English is a term derived from two Latin words. *Com*, the prefix that means “with” and “fort” which comes from *fortus*, the Latin adjective that means strong. So comfort means, literally, with strength. It’s the comfort, the activity that is designed to bring courage. So it’s a word that suggests strength. So when a person has been comforted, he’s been made strong. So comfort.

Now, notice what Paul says about God and the Lord Jesus Christ. Blessed *be* the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ. So he talks about, first of all, who God is. He’s the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ. Now, that’s a rather strange thing. The God of our Lord Jesus Christ? In view of the deity of the Son of God, how is it possible to speak of the God of our Lord Jesus Christ? If he is God, how can he have a God? That’s very fundamental. I’m sure, as you read this verse, that’s the first thing that occurred to your mind, isn’t it? No, it’s not. [laughter] But this is one of the things you should have thought about. How can God the Son have a God?

Well, the answer to the question is found in the mediatorial office of the Lord Jesus Christ, for he is the Divine Son but he possesses two natures: a human nature, sinless; a divine nature. And so, consequently, he has a twofold relationship to God. God is not the God of the Son as God but his Father. He’s the eternal Father. He can always be called the Father of the second person of the Trinity who is God. He’s the Father of the Son by eternal generation. But when we speak about the Son as mediator, as the one who is voluntarily carrying out the mission of Messianic mediator and dying that the people of God might be saved. Ah-ha, in that office, he may have a god because he’s acting out of his human nature. As mediator, he’s our Lord Jesus Christ, God’s anointed servant, the Divine Son, suffering as man for man and thereby bridging the gap between man and God. In partaking of our nature, the mediator placed himself in the position of dependence upon God; a dependence that is reflected in the things that he says, particularly during his earthly ministry. For example, on the cross, he cried out, “My God! My God! Why hast Thou forsaken me?” He was speaking as the Son who is the mediator. My God! My God! Incidentally, he doesn’t say, “Oh God! Oh God!” But even in the midst of his greatest trial, his faith holds firm and fast. It’s My God, My God. The prophetic words of Psalm 40 are applied to him in which we find the words, “Lo, I come to do Thy will, O God.” And then you’ll remember when he was resurrected and possessed of a glorified human nature, he’s still the God-man. And, remember, he sends Mary Magdalene to the disciples with the message, I ascend unto my Father and your Father and my God and your God.

So our Lord had a dependent nature to which God stood in the relationship of God and a divine nature to which he stood in the relation of father and therefore to the complex person, Jesus Christ, God bore the relation of both God and Father. So when we read here in verse 3, Blessed *be* the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, he’s talking about those two relationships. He’s the God of the Lord Jesus Christ as the one to whom the mediator appeals and under whom the mediator serves, and then when he says he’s

the Father of the Lord Jesus Christ, well, of course he’s the Father of our Lord as the Son by eternal generation. So the God of the Lord Jesus is referred to by the apostle here; God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ.

Now, we noticed as we were reading the Scripture in verse 2: Grace to you and peace from God our Father. So the Lord Jesus may speak of God as his Father and, of course, he addresses his Father frequently. Father, into Thy hands I commit my spirit. And various other times he prays -- I believe, if I remember correctly, he makes reference to the Father maybe 170 times in the gospel records. Only once does he ever address God as God in prayer, and that’s on the cross. My God! My God! Why hast Thou forsaken me? So Father. But we address God as our Father, too. Now, strictly speaking, God has only one son; that is, one son by divine election. But surely, we read the Bible, and we discover that we’re sons, too.

In what sense are we sons? Well, we are sons in the Son. In other words, God has elected Christ and the people of God in Him. He is the Son. The Son. We are sons in him by virtue of our identity with him. So we can speak of God as our Father but only in Christ. That’s why when a person speaks of the Father in Heaven and has not come to a personal faith in Christ, he’s addressing the wind, not God in Heaven. We address him as Father because we’re in Christ, and he’s our Father in Christ. So blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ. I’m beginning to see why the apostle eulogizes God in Heaven, because that’s what the word blessed means, incidentally. It’s the word from which we get eulogize. So he’s eulogizing the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ. He calls him the Father of mercies. That’s a Semitic way of saying he’s the compassionate father.

So in the Old Testament when you read the father of this or the father of that, that’s the Semitic way of saying that he’s associated with whatever it is. For example, back in Genesis chapter 4 in verse 21, we have the statement made, “And His brother’s name *was* Jubal. He was the father of all those who play the lyre and the pipe.” Now,

that’s a tragedy because there, of course, is the originator of rock music; but nevertheless, the “father of” means that you have a special relationship to that. Now, in Psalm 103 -- one of my favorite psalms because it speaks of the mercy of God -- in verse 13 and verse 14 we read “Just as a father has compassion on *his* children, So the LORD has compassion on those who fear Him. For He himself knows our frame; He is mindful that we *are* but dust.” The Father of mercies, he’s the compassionate Father. What a marvelous Father we have. I know fathers who are not compassionate at all. As a matter of fact, they’re very severe. They have no compassion. They are severe. They’re unkind. They’re unloving, and their children suffer for the rest of their lives. We have fathers who kill wives and leave babies behind. Not very compassionate. Couldn’t help but feel the tenderness and compassion of a father for the man in Dallas whose daughter with two children -- little babies, one 2 or 3 years of age, the other just born -- mother murdered by the son-in-law. And read in the paper, “Well, this means that I’ll have to raise these two children.” And the picture of that little three-year-old clinging to his grandfather is very moving. That father -- no compassion -- no compassionate father. Paul thanks God for the compassionate Father.

And further, he’s the God of all comfort. What that means, simply, is that he’s completely sufficient and adequate for the experiences of life. In fact, the word of God just fills us with indications of the sufficiency of God for us. As a matter of fact, the Bible says, the New Testament says we have three comforters. We have the Holy Spirit given by Christ as the comforter who dwells with us forever. And then we have the Lord Jesus, referred by John the Apostle in 1 John 2:1 and 2 as a comforter. He’s the one who acts as the High Priest and makes intercession for us. So we have a comforter on earth, we have a comforter in Heaven at the right hand of the Father. And then, while the time *parakletos*, comforter, is not used of the Father, the words are found here in the present tense, speaking of something constantly going on; who comforts us in all of our afflictions. The Father is our comforter, the Son is our comforter, the Holy Spirit is our

comforter. We have two in Heaven and one on earth. We have comfort. We have the divine authority and power to strengthen us in the experiences of life.

Why does God do what he does; that is, comfort us? Paul tells us in the fourth verse. He says so that -- I rather prefer in order that -- in order that we may be able to comfort those who are in any affliction with the comfort with which we ourselves are comforted of God.

Now, the apostle may be alluding to those who’ve arrogantly scorned Paul in his trials in Corinth. But the principle is a principle for all time. God comforts us in all of our afflictions so that we may be able to comfort those who are in any affliction with the comfort with which we ourselves are comforted of God. Twice the apostle uses the word “all” to emphasize this is a universal principle. He comforts us in all our afflictions so that we may be able to comfort those who are in any affliction with the comfort with which we ourselves are comforted of God.

I was reading a little commentary. It’s just a little devotional commentary, but it’s true to the word of God generally. And the author of the commentary -- a man that I know personally and in fact in whose church in years past I have held meetings -- mentions that one of his favorite preachers was Dr. George W. Truett, pastor of the First Baptist Church of Dallas for about 50 years. He said in one of Dr. Truett’s sermons, he mentions that fact that there was an unbelieving couple whose baby died suddenly. And they came to Dr. Truett and asked him to conduct the funeral, and so he did. He said that later he had the joy of seeing them both trust in our Lord Jesus Christ. Many months later, he said, a young mother lost her baby and, again, Dr. Truett was called to bring her comfort. He says nothing that he shared with her seemed to help very much. And at the funeral service -- at the conclusion of the funeral service, the first mother who had lost her child stepped forward, went to the young girl’s side and said, I passed through this and I know what you’re passing through. God called me and through the darkness I came to him. He’s comforted me, and he’ll comfort you. And Dr. Truett said the first mother did

more for the second mother than I could have done maybe in days or months, for the first young mother had traveled the road of suffering. That’s part of what Paul’s talking about. The experiences of life are designed to fit us, to help others who are having the same experiences in life. So we don’t understand, of course, fully the reasons why there is suffering and evil in the world. But one of -- perhaps not the least notable reasons is that there may that common comfort that goes on in the saints of God.

Now, Paul further explains in verse 5, he says for just as the sufferings of Christ are ours in abundance, so also are comforters abundant through Christ. John Calvin who has a happy way of citing very relevant texts says Psalm 94:19 says this and he translates it this way, “In the multitude of my anxieties within me, Thy comforts delight my soul.”

So Paul in verse 5 speaks about the thing of which he has been talking before, but he further explains and justifies what he says. Just as the sufferings of Christ are ours in abundance, so our comfort is abundant through Christ.

Now, notice the abundant sufferings are not just every suffering. Some of us suffer because we want to suffer; that is, by divine discipline, which is God’s way of correcting us. Notice what Paul says, he calls them sufferings of Christ. These are the sufferings that we undergo because of adherence to the path of life that honors the Lord. Peter calls it in his epistle suffering for righteousness’ sake. Many of us suffer for our unrighteousnesses. I’ve suffered for some of mine, and I know that you have, too. We cannot get any comfort from this text for those types of sufferings. But for those sufferings which we suffer because we are identified with the Lord and we seek to represent him, then we have some encouragement. The sufferings of Christ are ours in abundance, but the comfort that he brings is abundant also through Christ. They’re the things that we must suffer. And the apostles were taught this from the beginning. In verse 23 of Matthew chapter 20, the Lord Jesus says these things to him. He said, You don’t know what you’re asking for when you ask to sit one on my right hand and one on my left. Are you able to drink the cup that I’m able to drink? And these poor, ignorant

apostles at this point said we are able. And he said to them, “My cup you shall drink but to sit on My right hand and on My left is not Mine to give but *it is for those* for whom it has been prepared by My Father.” See, he is speaking there, incidentally, as God the mediator. But he warns them, he said, Yes, you think you are able to do and I tell you, you’re going to have to. You’re going to have to. And they found out later what he really meant when he said that because they had to.

So those are the things that Paul is speaking about when he says the sufferings of Christ. I looked out on this morning’s audience at 8:30, and I had in my notes a reference to one young lady who was in our congregation. She is a mother. When she came to faith in the Lord Jesus Christ in another city, her husband, an influential man, as a matter of fact, a medical doctor, renounced his relationship to her, divorced her, left her. She’s now happily married, and this was twenty years ago, I would say, and those are the experiences that Paul is talking about; the sufferings that fall to us because of our relationship to the Lord. I was thinking about her as I looked out on the audience this morning and suddenly I looked and my eyes went to another person in the audience and realized it had happened to somebody else in that audience, too. I thought afterwards, they’ll never know who I was talking about, or they’ll both think I was talking about them. I don’t know. But at any rate, these are the experiences of life, some severe such as those. But those are the sufferings of Christ, the relationships in our family, the relationships in our community, the relationships between husband and wife, and children and father, and mother and children because of relationship to Christ.

Everyone, I’m quite sure, has known the experience of the trial of loved ones who are not believers and who make it difficult to get along with them, make it difficult to make a Christian testimony. Those are the sufferings of Christ, and Paul encourages us by saying that for the afflictions, the sufferings of Christ though they’re ours in abundance so is our comfort abundant through Christ. We don’t really have to be upset over it, disturbed over it so that we act in such a way that we act un-Christianly. But looking to

Him, we can enjoy his comfort and very frequently see his hand working for the glory of God.

In our Lord’s case, the sufferings of Christ had before -- had a tremendous appeal for him in that he for the joy that was set before him endured the cross. He knew what the future held. We know what the future holds, too. We know the future holds for us sublime and eternal blessing and, therefore, we can endure the sufferings of the present time for that reason. His suffering had a magnificent, glorious end. Our suffering has a magnificent, glorious end. And we can count upon that.

And finally in verses 6 and 7 the apostle speaks of the confidence that they will share in God’s comfort. After all, Paul believed that God accomplished his purposes. And so he says, “But if we are afflicted, it is for your comfort and salvation; or if we are comforted, it is for your comfort, which is effective in the patient enduring of the same sufferings which we also suffer; and our hope for you is firmly grounded, knowing that as you are sharers of our sufferings, so also you are sharers of our comfort.” There’s a considerable variance in the translation of verse 6 and 7 because the manuscripts vary quite a bit. Now, I’ve read from the New American Standard Bible. What Paul says in verse 6 is that his experiences lead to their comfort. In fact, if you look at it carefully, it’s a simple little statement. It’s like this: whether we be afflicted, it’s for your good. Whether we be comforted, it’s for your good.

So it all works for the good of the Corinthians; my afflictions and my comfort. Salvation, incidentally, is a reference here to the end of his ministry, the goal of it. He labored as he labored in order that men, particularly the Gentiles, might come to faith in Christ. And he labored also that those who had come to Christ might be brought to maturity, that he might be able to present them to the Lord in maturity and, thus, as he says, is for your comfort and salvation; salvation being the beginning and the continuation of the Christian life.

Now, the confidence expressed in verse 7 is based upon the fact that God’s work cannot fail. We say being confident of this very thing that he which hath begun a good work in you, will perform it until the day of Christ. What a comfort that is. He who has begun a good work will complete it. If you’re a believer in Christ, you’re going to be glorified. I’m happy, happy for you, happy for me, too, because I’d like to see you then rather than now, of course. And you’d like to see me then rather than now. But this is our confidence that God does his work and completes it. So any service, there may be disappointments Paul would say, but there is no despair. There may be conflicts but here is no doubt. There may be afflictions but never without comfort. This is the God that Paul served. It’s the God in whom we believe.

Now, let me conclude. Who doesn’t need comforting? If I were to ask you to raise your hands, those of you who do not need any comforting. I believe if you were honest, there wouldn’t be anyone who would say he didn’t need comforting. The experiences of life are such that we need comforting. I don’t think anyone can say I don’t need comforting, if he’s honest with himself. I know that Bill Clement says that he doesn’t need anything. He’s been born once. He doesn’t need to be born again. Once is enough, he said a few years back. Maybe four years has taught him something. I don’t know. But there may be some people very wealthy who think that money is everything, and they don’t need any comforting. But deep down within the heart, most of the time, as God says, has no peace. We need comforting.

Look, listen to his man. You seem to imagine that I have no ups and downs but just a level and lofty stretch of spiritual attainment with unbroken joy and equanimity. By no means; I’m often perfectly wretched and everything seems most murky. Who said that, some simple little Christian? Well, a little Christian. Look. That was said by the greatest preacher in the English-speaking world, according to some people, Dr. John Henry Joward. He pastored leading churches, preached to huge congregations, wrote books that were best sellers, he said I’m often perfectly wretched and everything seems

most murky. Dr. Joward, probably many people felt he needed no comfort at all when he preached. Read his books and you wonder, marvelous the things that he can say. But he needed comfort.

Here’s another, listen to this. I am the subject of depressions of spirits so fearful that I hope none of you ever get to such extremes of wretchedness as I go to. Who said that? There are some of you theologically-minded, you would say some Arminian said him, some big Arminian. Arminians with their doctrine should be up and down. As a matter of fact, most of them are up and down. But they should be up and down, but who said that? Oh, I’m almost embarrassed to say: Charles Haddon Spurgeon, the greatest Calvinistic preacher of the nineteenth century in England. Discouragement is no respecter of persons. Mr. Spurgeon could feel it, too.

Someone has said discouragement seems to attack the successful far more than the unsuccessful; for the higher we climb, the farther down we can fall. But comfort is something needed by all, Arminians and Calvinists, the strong and the weak, we need comfort. I love the statement I found in one of the books about Mr. Barry. He said concerning his mother, he said -- she lost her dearest son. He said, “That’s where my mother got her soft eyes and why other mothers rushed to her when they had lost a child.” Suffering, affliction, that’s where she got her soft eyes, the tenderness and the sense of the divine comfort that she experienced and others rushed to her.

So in those afflictions, in those trials, remember Him and your Father, the Father of mercies. Afflictions, trials, distresses are often God’s paths to Him himself so that we’ll enjoy *Christus Consolator*, Christ the Consoler, the living, loving accessible divine help that we have. There’s a marvelous incident in our Lord’s life that I close by describing for you. It’s Mark chapter 4, verse 35 through verse 41. It’s found in the other gospels, the Synoptics as well. It’s the story of the storm on the Sea of Galilee. You know it. When the evening came after a long day of hard work, the Lord Jesus said to the apostles, “Let’s go over on the other side.” And leaving the multitudes, they took him along with them

just as he was, Mark says, in the boat and other boats – it was a little flotilla of vessels. He had been ministering and they had been helping. And while they were making there way across the Sea of Galilee, there rose a fierce gale of wind and the waves were breaking over the boat so much that the boat was already beginning to fill up. And the Lord Jesus was in the stern of the boat asleep on the cushion, and they awakened him, and they said to him “Teacher, do you not care that we are perishing?” And aroused, he rebuked the wind and said to the sea, “Hush. Be still.” And the wind died down. It became perfectly calm, a double miracle. Not only a nature miracle in which he calmed the elements but anyone who has ever been in a storm knows that the waves move back and forth, surging back and forth for quite a time after a storm. But there was an immediate calm. The Lord Jesus looked around to them and he said, “Why are you so timid? How is it that you have no faith?” They became very much afraid and they said one to another, “Who then is this that even the wind and the sea obey him?” What a compelling argument for faith and trust in one’s Father. Think of it: the storm raging, the fisherman whose life was on that little lake who knew it as no other people knew it. This was a storm different from anything they had ever seen. They were terrified. It must have been terrible and the Lord Jesus asleep on a pillow. Why?

The lake of Galilee was God’s sea. Furthermore, the wind, the waves, the storm, the darkness of the night, those are God’s things. The winds are his, the storms are his, the darkness is his, the sea is his. And underneath it all are the everlasting arms. Listen. You and I, we never have had it so good as to have a Father who is the Father of mercies. Why would anyone ever want anything other than the relationship with the Father who is the Father of mercies and the God of all comfort? And it’s the privilege of the ministry of the word of God to present the Lord Jesus Christ as Savior of sinners and his Father is the God of all comfort.

If you’re here today and you’ve never believed in Christ, we invite you by his grace to recognize your sin, your lost condition, to acknowledge that to the Lord God and

to flee to Christ and give yourself to him. May God help you to see yourself as the word of God sets you forth, as a sinner abiding under divine judgment, may you flee to him and receive as a free gift this freedom of -- but for by grace are you saved through faith and that, none of yourselves. It’s the gift of God, not of works lest any man should boast. Come to Him, receive as a free gift the forgiveness of sins and with it, the God of all comfort and the compassionate Father. Come to Christ, believe in him, trust in him, enjoy his comfort, his strength, his blessing, the present and the future, for Jesus’ sake.

Let’s bow together in a moment of prayer.

[Prayer] Father, we are grateful to Thee for these magnificent words from the Apostle Paul. Lord, we do begin to see how this man of God gave himself so fully and so completely to Thy grace. Enable us to follow in his train.

For Jesus’ sake. Amen.