

3 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 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. 2 Corinthians 1:3-4

Paul was no stranger to suffering and pain. In fact, he and his companions had once been so badly afflicted that Paul thought he had received the sentence of death (2 Corinthians 1:9). But, through this trial, Paul and those with him experienced God's comfort. In these verses, Paul reveals to the Corinthians one of God's purposes in providing this comfort. It was so the Apostle and his fellow saints might comfort others who are hurting with the same comfort they received. You too have been afflicted, you too have experienced God's true and lasting comfort, and you too know lots of people who are suffering around you. So, I want to encourage you to go and comfort those who are hurting with the comfort God has given you.

Pain and suffering are a normal part of life in a fallen world. Things were once "very good", but the transgression of our first parents plunged the world into a condition of sin and misery. Sin affects the physical world (there is sickness and death) and the spiritual world (apart from Christ, all men are under God's wrath and curse). Affliction is now ever-present.

Though affliction is common, God is always worthy of your blessing. To bless God is to praise Him for who He is. His attributes are manifold. He is the same glorious God in your suffering and pain as He is when you are free from affliction. He is always good and just. He works everything for your good and for His glory. Even what others meant for evil against you, God uses for your good. His character doesn't change. So, praise God at all times. He is worthy!

God is the Father of King Jesus. God loved the world in this way, He sent His Son to this world of affliction to save sinners from His wrath. In taking on human flesh, God the Son experienced pain and suffering both in His life and in His sacrificial death on the cross. Unlike us, Jesus never sinned in His affliction. He conquered the grave and ascended to heaven where He now reigns at the right hand of the Father. The King is coming again to judge the living and the dead and with Him will come the new heavens and earth, which will be free of all afflictions.

God is also the Father of mercy and comfort. You can *give* mercy and comfort, but He *is* mercy and comfort. As a result, the Father draws you near to console you, and show you compassion when you are hurting.

This comfort is applied to you through faith in Christ. If you believe, you can know you are filled with the Holy Spirit who is The Comforter. True and lasting comfort comes from knowing Jesus is King and recognizing the benefits you have as His subject, benefits won through His affliction as your substitute. You are forgiven and set free from sin, guilt, and shame. You have a glorious affliction-free future ahead of you to spend with the King. What great comfort God has and will continue to give you in your suffering.

God graciously gave you this comfort so that you could give it to those who are hurting all around you. The afflicted will never know true comfort apart from Jesus, so preach the Gospel to those who are hurting and to yourself! By all means, meet the physical needs of the afflicted, but don't fail to comfort them with God's comfort. This is something only the children of God can provide. And don't fail to receive the comfort others give you when you're hurting. It is so tempting to say, "*I've heard the Gospel before!*". Rest assured, you need to hear it again for there you will find comfort.

Affliction will always be part of a fallen world. But you serve the blessed Father of King Jesus, the Father of comfort and mercy. He has comforted you, so that you might go now and give His comfort to others.

In Christ,
Pastor Rich