

The God of All Comfort

2 Cor. 1:1-11

"... What he ran into was mutiny to add to all the rest of the stuff, the new problem, the arrival of the false apostles claiming authority from Jerusalem and demanding allegiance to both themselves and their teaching at the expense of Paul and the truth. They attacked Paul every way they could. They attacked his apostleship, said he wasn't a true apostle because he didn't have the qualifications of the originals. They questioned his authority, they said he was self-authenticated. They questioned his honesty, said he doesn't tell the truth. They questioned his purity. I believe even accusing him of doing what he did for sexual favors for women. They questioned his love and affection for the church. They used every conceivable angle to attack his character. They even accused him of embezzling the money that was given for the poor saints in Jerusalem and putting it in his own pocket. And they were doing all of this to rip him down, to destroy him so they could take his place. And then according to chapter 11 verse 2 and following, preach another Jesus and another gospel from hell." (MacArthur)

- I. Paul clearly understood that his identity came from Christ, not from how he was being treated or from what people said about him. Christ was his life, his hope, his passion and his joy. Therefore, as one of his saints, he was more concerned about being conformed more and more into the image of Christ than he was in being conformed into the image of the expectation of man. He learned to put into practice, *"in God I trust and am not afraid. What can man do to me?" (Ps. 56:11).*

2 Cor. 1:1-2

Romans 8:29

1 Cor. 16:13

Joshua 1:9

"Christian selfhood is not defined in terms of who we are in and of ourselves. It's defined in terms of what God does to us and the relationship he creates with us and the destiny he appoints for us. God made us who we are so we could make known who he is. Our identity is for the sake of making known his identity." John Piper

Hebrews 12:1-2 ¹Therefore, since we are surrounded by such a great cloud of witnesses, let us throw off everything that hinders and the sin that so easily entangles. And let us run with perseverance the race marked out for us, ²fixing our eyes on Jesus, the pioneer and perfecter of faith. For the joy set before him he endured the cross, scorning its shame, and sat down at the right hand of the throne of God.

- II. Paul came to rely on the character of God on an intimate personal level. He knew that his primary source of compassion and comfort came from him alone. He also understood that as his paraclete, the Lord would come along side to comfort him in ways that would keep him strong and courageous in the midst of the trials God was allowing in his life (**James 1:2-3**). He also understood that the Lord was enabling him to come alongside others as a paraclete to help them be strong and courageous through the trials they were going through.

2 Cor. 1:3-7

John 16:33

Rom. 8:17

ὑπομονή hypomoné - steadfastness, constancy, endurance. In the NT the characteristic of a man [or woman] who is not swerved from his [or her] deliberate purpose and his [or her] loyalty to faith and piety by even the greatest trials and sufferings

Psalm 103:13-14 *As a father has compassion on his children, so the LORD has compassion on those who fear him; for he knows how we are formed, he remembers that we are dust.*

- III. Paul learned through the trials he was going through, that God was teaching him to trust him to deliver him from the pressure of the overwhelming and despairing difficulties he was going through. He also learned to covet the prayers of the saints who were praying for him knowing that there is power in prayer. Through it all, God came along side to comfort, change, empower, and give him hope as taught him the value of a steadfast enduring faith.

2 Cor. 1:8-11

2 Corinthians 12:8-10 ... *"My grace is sufficient for you, for my power is made perfect in weakness." Therefore I will boast all the more gladly about my weaknesses, so that Christ's power may rest on me. 10That is why, for Christ's sake, I delight in weaknesses, in insults, in hardships, in persecutions, in difficulties. For when I am weak, then I am strong.*