



8/16/24

What's better than any comfort food? Or should I say...who? Our God and Father and the Lord Jesus Christ!!! He will comfort you and you will never feel sick to your stomach from His comfort. Hahaha

*Blessings,
Jonna*

2 Corinthians 1:2-7

If anyone understood suffering and God's comfort, it was Paul. In 2 Corinthians 11:23-28, he described what he went through as "far greater labors, far more imprisonments, with countless beatings, and often near death. Five times I received at the hands of the Jews the forty lashes less one. Three times I was beaten with rods. Once I was stoned. Three times I was shipwrecked; a night and a day I was adrift at sea; on frequent journeys, in danger from rivers, danger from robbers, danger from my own people, danger from Gentiles, danger in the city, danger in the wilderness, danger at sea, danger from false brothers; in toil and hardship, through many a sleepless night, in hunger and thirst, often without food, in cold and exposure. And, apart from other things, there is the daily pressure on me of my anxiety for all the churches." With all that suffering, how did he keep going? How did he continue to give his life for the gospel? This passage in 2 Corinthians 1 answers that question.

Vs. 2 ~ He was able to pass on the grace and peace of God our Father and the Lord Jesus to the believers because he was experiencing the grace and peace of our Father and of Jesus even through his suffering.

Vs. 3-4 ~ He even BLESSED God because He is "the Father of mercies and the God of all comfort." The Greek word for mercy also means "compassion." What does someone desperately need in the midst of their suffering? Compassion and comfort. God is the ultimate source of both. He does not leave us in our suffering. That's why we can look at people who are going through horrific trials and be amazed at their peace and hope. Those are the people who know how to run to the Lord for comfort and compassion.

He "comforts us in ALL our affliction." There is not one situation we will ever go through that God is not big enough to handle...that His arms are not strong enough to hold us.

Not only does God comfort us, but He so fully comforts us that He gives us the ability to comfort others who are suffering. We can be so filled with His comfort and compassion that it flows out of us to comfort and be compassionate with others. "Shared suffering is endurable suffering" (Bob Kelleman). First God shares with us in our suffering and then He helps us to share with each other in their suffering.

Vs. 5 ~ If anyone knew what it was to share in Christ's sufferings, it was Paul. He considered it a PRIVILEGE! In Philippians 1:29, Paul said, "For it has been granted to you for the sake of Christ, you should not only believe in Jesus, but also SUFFER for His sake." He went on to say in Philippians 3:10 that he wanted to "know Jesus and the power of His resurrection, and SHARE His sufferings, becoming like Him in his death." WHY? What does he know about suffering that I don't? He knows that when "we share abundantly in Christ's sufferings, THROUGH Christ we share abundantly in His comfort." Suffering is the avenue by which we experience the depth of God's compassion and comfort. No matter how much we suffer, God's abundance of comfort is more.

How do you know that someone is truly with you and won't leave your side? Not by their presence when things are going well, but by how they stay with you when things are going wrong. God stays with me through it all...never abandoning me in it...letting me experience His ABUNDANT comfort...full to overflowing...everything I need.

What are the sufferings of Christ? Well, Jesus knew what it was to go without food. He knew what it was to be betrayed by people He loved. He knew what it was to be hated. He knew what it was to be misquoted and misunderstood. He knew what it was to suffer pain. He even knew what it was to suffer from sin...not because He sinned, but because He took on my sin and the wrath of God that I deserve. ANY suffering I experience as a believer IN Christ, THROUGH Christ, is a suffering OF Christ. God will help me through ALL of it. And He will give me the privilege of not letting my suffering OR MY COMFORT be wasted. He allows me to have the joy of comforting others. May I NEVER think that I have more ability to comfort others or more compassion for them than God.

Vs. 6 ~ Paul said that he was willing to experience affliction if it meant that others could be saved and comforted. He said in Ephesians 3:13, "So I ask you not to lose heart over what I am suffering for you, which is your glory." Wow! He considered it a privilege to suffer so that others would be saved. The closest I can come to understanding this kind of sacrifice in my own life is when I think of my daughters and their families. Whatever I need to suffer so that they can be comforted and helped, I consider it a privilege. I also see this in my marriage. Tim has walked with me through difficult pregnancies and foot surgeries and taken care of me. And I've considered it a privilege to be there with him through his three surgeries and gamma knife radiation to remove a brain tumor that so stubbornly does not want to go away. Paul had that

same love for ALL believers because he was so filled with God's love, comfort, and compassion. That is what God wants to do in me. O Lord, please make it so!!!

When do we experience the fullness of God's comfort? This is when my cooperation gets hard...I have to "patiently endure" the suffering...just like Jesus did for me...just like Paul did for me. I know that Paul is in heaven with the Lord right now, and there is not one ounce of him that regrets what he went through on this earth. The only things he counted as pooppy garbage were those things done BEFORE Jesus became his Savior. Not one thing is wasted when I patiently endure whatever God walks me through...He is right there with me every step of the way, comforting me and pouring His abundant compassion into my heart.

Vs. 7 ~ This is the confidence Paul had. None of our suffering is ever wasted. Whatever we suffer, as we patiently endure, Paul's confidence was unshaken...God will be our comfort. Paul, who went through all the massive suffering he experienced also experienced God's massive comfort. And he knew that God shows no partiality to His kids. That same comfort Paul had from God is also for me.

To be comforted by other believers is not to have God's comfort removed...but to be the physical, tangible expression of His constant, abundant love. Knowing that my suffering is never wasted gives me hope...I love that God will use it to help others. It doesn't take away from what He does in my life, either. When I do comfort others, it's not that He stops comforting me since I've "done my job." He continues to lavish me with His comfort and compassion...and then I have even more to give. O Lord, please help me to recognize that suffering is never wasted when patiently enduring WITH YOU. It's hard! But it's never wasted...and even my suffering helps build the body of Christ as You use it to abundantly comfort others. Let my life be a blessing to You, the Father of Compassion and Mercies and the God of ALL comfort. You are better than comfort food by far!!!