

Some letters Paul wrote are addressed personally to an individual believer (4), some to a specific assembly (4), one to assemblies in a state or region, and several to all the individual believers in a certain town (4). Both letters to the Corinthians are addressed to the Assembly of God there, this second one also to Achaia, the part of Greece in which Corinth was located. It's addressees are more limited than the first which specifically includes all who call upon the Lord **everywhere**. This is significant as the first epistle particularly is one most ignored or set aside by Christians today. Evidently it was set aside early in the history of the church or Christendom would not be in the state it is today.

Paul greets them with a blessing and then praises God for the mercies and comfort he has received in this tumultuous period of his life. He is so relieved that they had accepted his first letter to them that it makes up for all of the suffering and dangers he has been encountering in Ephesus. Yet his first reaction to this encouraging news was that he would now be better positioned and equipped to comfort others going through difficult trials. Rather than moping and moaning about his troubles he focuses upon the good news. But rather than dwell on the relief he obviously felt, and taking a moment to just relax and feel good inside, he immediately looks for ways to turn his comfort into encouragement and blessing to others. And especially for others like him who face a delicate task to rebuke and admonish their brethren about their ways. God truly is the Father of mercies and the God of all comfort.

The word "comfort" is translated from *paraklesis* meaning "a calling to one's side" (to help). It is used in 28 verses in the New Testament, 11 in 2Corinthians, 5 in this first chapter. It is also translated "consolation," "encouragement," "exhortation" and "entreaty." The same word *parakletos* is used by the Lord of the Holy Spirit, "another Comforter" to be sent after He, the Comforter then with them, departed. John 14:16. This Comforter is referred to in John 14:26; 15:26; & 16:7 as well. He is the One called alongside. The "Advocate" with the Father, referring to Jesus Christ the righteous, spoken of in 1John 2:1 is the same word. God is truly One who comes along side us to help. We are to "pass it on," not only the gospel to sinners, but the marvelous, consoling, encouraging comfort of God to beleaguered saints in whatever difficult situations they find themselves, while seeking to live and work faithfully for the Lord in this hostile (or seducing) world.

Paul projects and applies the benefits he has received on to the Corinthians and anticipates their rejoicing in his rejoicing. He calls out what is their heart's, Christian feelings of affection, perhaps dormant or latent, and their fellowship in his sufferings. And he turns them to the sufferings of some amongst themselves

as well. In the first letter he implies some of them were experiencing sufferings and the others unresponsively ignoring them, being too taken up with their own comfort and advancement, 12:26-27. One benefit from the hardship and suffering we are given to experience is that we are enabled to approach another in a similar situation. After my heart bypass surgery I received a get well card from a friend who had had a similar operation a while before. He simply wrote: "Been there. Done That. It gets better." Nothing mushy, but full of meaning and encouragement with masculine impact. When we see or hear of someone experiencing a difficulty similar to our's we can say "been there," **be there for them**. **Come along side and help**. If nothing else we can pray for them and tell them so. That shows we care. If they already know of our similar experience our contact will carry much meaning. We become channels of God's blessing and love.

Paul experienced life threatening danger in Ephesus. He experienced "consolation and salvation," spiritual deliverance from paralyzing fear and physical deliverance from death and bodily harm. Not that the threat and danger was not real. It was very real! "We despaired even of life." And there is no guarantee that one if once spared won't suffer bodily or be taken home to glory as a martyr next time. Paul reminds us of the ready prospect of being raised from the dead. A refresher from chapter 15 of his first letter to them. While he had been writing them about resurrection he was enduring danger that might result in his early death. Nothing like a close brush with death to put us back in a sense of the Father's care. Not that he wasn't ready, but he assures them their prayers would lead to his deliverance to visit them again for their blessing. I suppose he felt as he did later when writing the Philippians.

Philippians 1:19 For I know that this shall turn to my salvation through your prayer, and the supply of the Spirit of Jesus Christ, 20 According to my earnest expectation and my hope, that in nothing I shall be ashamed, but that with all boldness, as always, so now also Christ shall be magnified in my body, whether it be by life, or by death. 21 For to me to live is Christ, and to die is gain. 22 But if I live in the flesh, this is the fruit of my labour: yet what I shall choose I wot not. 23 For I am in a strait betwixt two, having a desire to depart, and to be with Christ; which is far better: 24 Nevertheless to abide in the flesh is more needful for you. 25 And having this confidence, I know that I shall abide and continue with you all for your furtherance and joy of faith; 26 That your rejoicing may be more abundant in Jesus Christ for me by my coming to you again.

Note again his appeal to the Corinthian's affections. Throughout this epistle he seeks their affections, to stimulate their hearts for Christ. Our hearts too!

By Ron Canner, April 7, 2004