

Introduction

As a pastor much of your time is spent studying passages or topics for the messages you are preaching. Most of the thirty-seven years that I have been pastoring, I have worked bi-vocationally. The secular jobs that I have had were senior management, and averaged sixty hours per week or more. That left very little time to study extra passages or topics. In 2013 I took a few days of much-needed vacation time, and one of the things that I did was to study a topic that was on my heart. For several days I studied the fear of the Lord. I did not intend on preaching or teaching what I was studying; it was for my own edification and benefit. I really enjoyed my study, and at the end of my study, the Holy Spirit told me to take what I learned and share it in a men's conference. I met with one of the other Vineyard pastors and he was keen on the idea, so I organized a men's conference, and the theme was the fear of the Lord.

There is a principle to be learned from this. God gives you and I things, but we are merely channels that He uses to ultimately give what He gave us and to give it to others. I thought my study of the fear of the Lord was for me, but ultimately it was for many other men. Consider for a minute the prophets of old. They studied and made careful search of the Messiah. They wanted to know when He was coming, and what kind of suffering He would experience, and how He would be glorified. They wanted to know about it, and like me, they were doing it for their own benefit. Listen to what Peter states, "It was revealed to them that they were not serving themselves, but you, in these things which now have been announced to you through those who preached the gospel to you by the Holy Spirit sent from heaven – things into which angels long to look." These prophets of old were merely channels that God used to give us an understanding of the Messiah.

(1 Pe 1:10–12) "As to this salvation, the prophets who prophesied of the grace that *would come* to you made careful searches and inquiries, {11} seeking to know what person or time the Spirit of Christ within them was indicating as He predicted the sufferings of Christ and the glories to follow. {12} It was revealed to them that they were not serving themselves, but you, in these things which now have been announced to you through those who preached the gospel to you by the Holy Spirit sent from heaven—things into which angels long to look."

In Genesis 12, the Lord appeared to Abram and told him to leave his country and relatives and go to a land that He was going to show him. He told Abram that He was going to make him a great nation and bless him. He told Abram that he would be a blessing, and that in him all the families of the earth will be blessed. His blessing was not so that Abram would be the wealthiest person in the world and live a luxurious life; it was to be a blessing to others.

(Ge 12:1–3) "Now the Lord said to Abram, "Go forth from your country, and from your relatives and from your father's house, to the land which I will show you; {2} and I will make you a great nation, and I will bless you, and make your name great; and so you shall be a blessing; {3} and I will bless those who bless you, and the one who curses you I will curse. And in you all the families of the earth will be blessed."

In Psalm 67, the psalmist prayed, "God be gracious to us and bless us, and cause His face to shine upon us." This was not so that the psalmist and the Jewish people would be the most prosperous people on earth and live luxurious lives. Notice the purpose of the blessing: that God's way would be known on the earth, His salvation among all nations. The psalmist wanted God's blessing and grace so that all the peoples and nations would know, fear, and worship the Lord.

(Ps 67:1–7) “God be gracious to us and bless us, *and* cause His face to shine upon us—
Selah. {2} That Your way may be known on the earth, Your salvation among all nations. {3}
Let the peoples praise You, O God; let all the peoples praise You. {4} Let the nations be glad
and sing for joy; for You will judge the peoples with uprightness and guide the nations on the
earth. Selah. {5} Let the peoples praise You, O God; let all the peoples praise You. {6} The
earth has yielded its produce; God, our God, blesses us. {7} God blesses us, that all the ends
of the earth may fear Him.”

We saw in 1 Corinthians 12 that God has given each of us a gift, and it is for the common good. In 1 Peter 4:10, God tells us that we have each received a special gift and are to employ it in serving one another. The gifts, abilities, and blessings in our lives are not to be used selfishly, but are to meet our needs and those around us. We are to use what we have and serve one another. That is God’s principle. He is the Source of all things, and He gives and provides for us, and we are to use that for our own needs, but we are also to use it to bless others. That is what He told Abram, and that is the principle that Paul wrote about in our passage today.

(1 Co 12:7) “But to each one is given the manifestation of the Spirit for the common good.”

(1 Pe 4:10) “As each one has received a *special* gift, employ it in serving one another as good stewards of the manifold grace of God.”

Our text today is 2 Corinthians 1:3-11, and it is about being channels of comfort. The principle of being channels applies to every other area of life. We will see that God is the source of all comfort. Second, we will see that He comforts us when we are afflicted. Third, we find that we are to comfort others with the comfort that He has given to us. Ultimately, what God gives to us is not to be selfishly used just in our own lives. God blesses us so that we can bless others with what He has blessed us. We are God’s channels for all of His blessings, whether it is comfort, wisdom, financial, or any other area.

Channels of Comfort

1. Our Source of Comfort
2. Our Comfort
3. Our Comfort to Others

(2 Co 1:3–11) “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 will be able to comfort those who are in any affliction with the comfort with which we ourselves are comforted by God. {5} For just as the sufferings of Christ are ours in abundance, so also our comfort is abundant through Christ. {6} 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; {7} 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. {8} For we do not want you to be unaware, brethren, of our affliction which came *to us* in Asia, that we were burdened excessively, beyond our strength, so that we despaired even of life; {9} indeed, we had the sentence of death within ourselves so that we would not trust in ourselves, but in God who raises the dead; {10} who delivered us from so great a *peril of death*, and will deliver *us*, He on whom we have set our hope. And He will yet deliver us, {11} you also joining in helping us through your prayers, so that thanks may be given by many persons on our behalf for the favor bestowed on us through *the prayers of many*.”

1. **Our Source of Comfort** (2 Cor 1:3)

The first key about being channels of comfort is to know the source. Before we can comfort others, we must be comforted, and for us to be comforted, we need to know where to find comfort. Paul starts by blessing the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who is the Father of mercies and the God of all comfort. Our source is God. When you and I are afflicted, hurt, and in need of God's mercy and comfort, we can turn to God. He is full of mercy and compassion, and he promises to comfort us. He comforts us because that is who He is, the God of all comfort.

(2 Co 1:3) "Blessed *be* the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of mercies and God of all comfort,"

Before Jesus went back to the Father, He told His disciples that He was not going to leave them as orphans; He was going to send a Helper. The KJV says that He shall give you another Comforter. The Holy Spirit is part of the trinity, and He is the Comforter. God the Father is the Comforter, and God the Holy Spirit is the Comforter.

(John 14:16-18) (KJV) "And I will pray the Father, and he shall give you another Comforter, that he may abide with you for ever; {17} *Even* the Spirit of truth; whom the world cannot receive, because it seeth him not, neither knoweth him: but ye know him; for he dwelleth with you, and shall be in you. {18} I will not leave you comfortless: I will come to you."

A few weeks ago we sang a song in worship out of Lamentations 3:22-23. It was, "The steadfast love of the Lord never ceases. His mercies never come to an end. They are new every morning, new every morning, great is Thy faithfulness, O God. Great is Thy faithfulness." God's mercies and compassions never fail. He is the Father of mercies. He is the God of all Comfort. Every day He is ready to pour out more mercy and compassion to us. We have a fresh supply of mercy and compassion every day, and it will never run out. God is our never ceasing source of mercy, compassion, and comfort.

(La 3:22-23) "The Lord's lovingkindnesses indeed never cease, For His compassions never fail. {23} *They* are new every morning; Great is Your faithfulness."

Our passage is about being channels of comfort and God is the source of comfort. But God is our source for everything. If we need wisdom, God tells us to ask Him for wisdom. He is the God of wisdom, the only wise God, and He gives generously and without reproach.

(Jas 1:5) "But if any of you lacks wisdom, let him ask of God, who gives to all generously and without reproach, and it will be given to him."

(Ro 16:27) "to the only wise God, through Jesus Christ, be the glory forever. Amen."

If you need healing, God is Jehovah Ropha, or the Lord God who heals. If you need protection, He is a tower of refuge. He is our Keeper and our Shepherd. He guards our going out and our coming in. If you need counseling, He is our Counselor and He counsels us with His eye upon us. If you need provision, He is Jehovah Jireh, the Lord God who provides. If you need peace, He is the Jehovah Shalom, the Lord of Peace, the God of Peace, the Prince of Peace. If you are thirsty, He tells us to come to Him and He will satisfy us. If we are down and discouraged, we can go to Him because He is the lifter of our heads. If we need forgiveness, He tells us that if we confess our sins, He is faithful and righteous and will forgive us and cleanse us from all

unrighteousness. If you are being tempted, He tells us that He is faithful and will provide a way of escape. No matter what situation or circumstance you are in, God is our source to meet that need. He wants us to come to Him. He wants to meet those needs in your life.

- Jehovah Ropha (Ex 15:26)
- Tower of Refuge (Ps 61:3)
- Keeper (Ps 121)
- Shepherd (Ps 23)
- Counselor (Ps 32:8)
- Provider (Phil 4:19)
- Peace (Phil 4:6-7)
- Thirsty (Rev 22:17)
- Lifter of our heads (Ps 3:3)
- Forgiver (1 John 1:9)
- Help in time of temptation (1 Cor 10:13)
- Weary (Matt 11:28-30)
- Wisdom (James 1:5)

2. **Our Comfort** (2 Cor 1:4-5, 8-11)

When Paul wrote this letter to the Corinthians he had been suffering and going through many afflictions. In verse eight he wrote, “For we do not want you to be unaware, brethren, of our affliction which came to us in Asia, that we were burdened excessively, beyond our strength, so that we despaired even of life.” He was suffering so much that he despaired of life. This tells me that it was not a moment of suffering, but a season of suffering and affliction.

(2 Cor 1:8) “For we do not want you to be unaware, brethren, of our affliction which came *to us* in Asia, that we were burdened excessively, beyond our strength, so that we despaired even of life;”

The word, affliction, is used four times, and the word, sufferings, is also used four times. Why did Paul write that God was the Father of mercies and the God of all comfort? He wrote this from personal experience. He was afflicted and suffering and in the midst of his suffering, God had mercy on him and comforted him.

(2 Co 1:3-8) “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 will be able to **comfort** those who are in any **affliction** with the **comfort** with which we ourselves are **comforted** by God. {5} For just as the **sufferings** of Christ are ours in abundance, so also our **comfort** is abundant through Christ. {6} 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**; {7} 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**. {8} For we do not want you to be unaware, brethren, of our **affliction** which came *to us* in Asia, that we were burdened excessively, beyond our strength, so that we despaired even of life;”

Have you ever been in so much pain, discomfort, affliction, or suffering that you despaired even of life? Paul had been through unbearable suffering and affliction. In the Old Testament, Job suffered so much that he despaired of life. He lost his children. He lost his wealth. He lost his friends. He lost his social status. He lost his health. He suffered greatly, and I am sure that Paul probably thought about Job in the midst of his afflictions and sufferings.

Paul goes on to say that they had the sentence of death within themselves, so that they did not trust in themselves, but in God who raised the dead; He was now banking on being raised from the dead, since he had lost all hope of living. One of the times that Paul despaired of life was on his voyage to Rome as a prisoner. Luke records that the sun and stars had not appeared for many days and it was no small storm that was assailing them. He wrote, “from then on all hope of our being saved was gradually abandoned.” They thought they were going to die in the storm.

(Ac 27:20–26) “Since neither sun nor stars appeared for many days, and no small storm was assailing *us*, from then on all hope of our being saved was gradually abandoned.”

At the time that Paul wrote this letter, he had not gone through this storm yet. The shipwreck in Acts 27 was Paul’s fourth shipwreck. Listen to Paul share some of the suffering that he has been going through. He was beaten times without number, often in danger of death, five times he received thirty-nine lashes, three times he was beaten with rods, once he was stoned, three times he was shipwrecked, and he spent a night and day in the deep. He was in all kinds of dangers from rivers, robbers, countrymen, and Gentiles. He went through many hardships, like hunger and thirst, cold and exposure, and sleepless nights. When Paul wrote this letter, he had already suffered all of these things.

(2 Co 11:23–27) “Are they servants of Christ?—I speak as if insane—I more so; in far more labors, in far more imprisonments, beaten times without number, often in danger of death. {24} Five times I received from the Jews thirty-nine *lashes*. {25} Three times I was beaten with rods, once I was stoned, three times I was shipwrecked, a night and a day I have spent in the deep. {26} *I have been* on frequent journeys, in dangers from rivers, dangers from robbers, dangers from *my* countrymen, dangers from the Gentiles, dangers in the city, dangers in the wilderness, dangers on the sea, dangers among false brethren; {27} *I have been* in labor and hardship, through many sleepless nights, in hunger and thirst, often without food, in cold and exposure.”

Notice that even though Paul was suffering and in a great deal of affliction that he found comfort from God. He said, “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...” When Paul was suffering and being afflicted, he turned to God. He went to the Father of mercies and God of all comfort. Paul knew his source for comfort. He said that God comforts us in all our affliction. It does not matter how you are being afflicted. It does not matter how much or how little you are suffering, God cares and wants to show His mercy and compassion to you and to comfort you.

(2 Co 1:4) “who comforts us in all our affliction so that we will be able to comfort those who are in any affliction with the comfort with which we ourselves are comforted by God.”

When Paul was in the storm and they had despaired of their life, God sent an angel to Paul on that ship, and told him, “Do not be afraid, Paul; you must stand before Caesar.” Paul was greatly comforted. He went from despairing of his life and without any hope of surviving to being full of faith that he would survive and stand before Caesar in Rome. God comforted Paul in his affliction.

(Acts 27:23-24) “For this very night an angel of the God to whom I belong and whom I serve stood before me, {24} saying, ‘Do not be afraid, Paul; you must stand before Caesar; and behold, God has granted you all those who are sailing with you.’”

Luke does not tell us what Paul was doing when the angel of the Lord met with him on that ship, but I believe he was praying and worshipping the Lord. I believe he was pouring out his heart to the Lord, and that the Lord sent an angel to him in response. When we call upon the Lord, he responds. We do not always get the answer right away. Daniel prayed and God sent an angel to him, but the angel was delayed for twenty-one days by the prince of Persia, a demonic spirit over the country where Daniel was living. But Daniel did get a response from God about his questions. We need to pray, and make our requests known to God. We might need to fast and pray, which is what Daniel did.

(Da 10:10–14) “Then behold, a hand touched me and set me trembling on my hands and knees. {11} He said to me, “O Daniel, man of high esteem, understand the words that I am about to tell you and stand upright, for I have now been sent to you.” And when he had spoken this word to me, I stood up trembling. {12} Then he said to me, “Do not be afraid, Daniel, for from the first day that you set your heart on understanding *this* and on humbling yourself before your God, your words were heard, and I have come in response to your words. {13} “But the prince of the kingdom of Persia was withstanding me for twenty-one days; then behold, Michael, one of the chief princes, came to help me, for I had been left there with the kings of Persia. {14} “Now I have come to give you an understanding of what will happen to your people in the latter days, for the vision pertains to the days yet *future*.”

In 1 Samuel 1, there was a certain man named Elkanah. He had two wives, Peninnah and Hannah. Two wives is a recipe for trouble and strife. God designed marriage between one man and one woman and the two shall become one flesh. It was not three shall become one flesh. There will always be rivalry and strife. Peninnah was able to bear children, but the Lord had closed Hannah’s womb. Peninnah, her rival, would provoke her bitterly to irritate her. One day, when they had gone to Shiloh to worship, she poured her heart out to the Lord. Samuel wrote, “She, greatly distressed, prayed to the Lord and wept bitterly.” She prayed, “O Lord of hosts, if You will indeed look on the affliction of Your maidservant and remember me, and not forget Your maidservant, but will give Your maidservant a son, then I will give him to the Lord all the days of his life, and a razor shall never come on his head.” Eli, the priest was watching her move her mouth, and he thought she was drunk. He poured salt on her wound, saying, “How long will you make yourself drunk? Put away your wine from you.” That is not the mercy and compassion she was looking for. Job had some friends that did not console him in his affliction. We need to turn to God for mercy and compassion in our time of need. Hannah answered graciously, saying, “No my lord, I am a woman oppressed in spirit; I have drunk neither wine nor strong drink, but I have poured out my soul before the Lord.” She poured out her soul before the Lord in her time of need and affliction. God did answer her. We read that “the woman went her way and ate, and her face was no longer *sad*.”

(1 Sa 1:6–18) “Her rival, however, would provoke her bitterly to irritate her, because the Lord had closed her womb. {7} It happened year after year, as often as she went up to the house of the Lord, she would provoke her; so she wept and would not eat. {8} Then Elkanah her husband said to her, “Hannah, why do you weep and why do you not eat and why is your heart sad? Am I not better to you than ten sons?” {9} Then Hannah rose after eating and drinking in Shiloh. Now Eli the priest was sitting on the seat by the doorpost of the temple of the Lord. {10} She, greatly distressed, prayed to the Lord and wept bitterly. {11} She made a vow and said, “O Lord of hosts, if You will indeed look on the affliction of Your maidservant and remember me, and not forget Your maidservant, but will give Your maidservant a son, then I will give him to the Lord all the days of his life, and a razor shall never come on his head.” {12} Now it came about, as she continued praying before the Lord,

that Eli was watching her mouth. {13} As for Hannah, she was speaking in her heart, only her lips were moving, but her voice was not heard. So Eli thought she was drunk. {14} Then Eli said to her, “How long will you make yourself drunk? Put away your wine from you.” {15} But Hannah replied, “No, my lord, I am a woman oppressed in spirit; I have drunk neither wine nor strong drink, but I have poured out my soul before the Lord. {16} “Do not consider your maidservant as a worthless woman, for I have spoken until now out of my great concern and provocation.” {17} Then Eli answered and said, “Go in peace; and may the God of Israel grant your petition that you have asked of Him.” {18} She said, “Let your maidservant find favor in your sight.” So the woman went her way and ate, and her face was no longer *sad*.”

In Genesis 21, Hagar was sent away by Sarah and after she and Ishmael ran out of water, she was desperate and thought she was going to die. She cried out to the Lord. We read that God heard Ishmael’s cry and sent an angel to her. God hears when we cry out to Him. He hears the voices of children, and sometimes the cries of our children get God’s attention faster than our prayers. We need to teach our children to cry out to God whenever they have a need.

(Ge 21:15–19) “When the water in the skin was used up, she left the boy under one of the bushes. {16} Then she went and sat down opposite him, about a bowshot away, for she said, “Do not let me see the boy die.” And she sat opposite him, and lifted up her voice and wept. {17} God heard the lad crying; and the angel of God called to Hagar from heaven and said to her, “What is the matter with you, Hagar? Do not fear, for God has heard the voice of the lad where he is. {18} “Arise, lift up the lad, and hold him by the hand, for I will make a great nation of him.” {19} Then God opened her eyes and she saw a well of water; and she went and filled the skin with water and gave the lad a drink.”

We only do this when we are in a relationship with the Father of mercies and God of all comfort. When we know God in this way, we will go to Him in our time of need. In Psalm 9:10, God tells us that those who know His name will put their trust in God, and He does not forsake those who seek Him. It is important to know the names of God. His names reveal who He is. His names reveal His character and nature. Since He is the Father of mercies and the God of all comfort, we can go to Him for mercy in our time of need and for comfort. That is what Hannah did.

(Ps 9:10) “And those who know Your name will put their trust in You, For You, O Lord, have not forsaken those who seek You.”

This is also what Paul did. In verse nine, he said that they had the sentence of death within ourselves, so that we would not trust in ourselves, but in God who raised the dead. In our time of need, God wants us to trust in Him. Paul set his hope in Christ, and trusted Him to deliver him. That is also what you and I need to do in our time of need. We need to know the names and character of God, put our trust in Him, and call on Him in our time of need. Paul was confident, saying, “And He will yet deliver us...” Paul was not done suffering. He knew that here on earth we have tribulation, afflictions and suffering. He was going to continue to look to God to comfort him. Paul also asked the churches to pray for him. He wanted the Corinthians to join with him in thanking God for His favor on his life.

(2 Cor 1:9-11) “indeed, we had the sentence of death within ourselves so that we would not trust in ourselves, but in God who raises the dead; {10} who delivered us from so great a *peril of death*, and will deliver *us*, He on whom we have set our hope. And He will yet deliver us, {11} you also joining in helping us through your prayers, so that thanks may be

given by many persons on our behalf for the favor bestowed on us through *the prayers of many.*”

Paul wrote that “just as the sufferings of Christ are ours in abundance, so also our comfort is abundant through Christ.” Paul suffered a lot, but in his abundance of sufferings, he found an abundance of comfort through Christ.

(2 Cor 1:5) “For just as the sufferings of Christ are ours in abundance, so also our comfort is abundant through Christ.”

3. **Our Comfort To Others** (2 Cor 1:6-7)

God is a God of mercy and comfort. We are to trust Him and go to Him in our time of need. Then, we are to give what He has given to us to others in need. We are God’s channels of comfort. Paul wrote that the God of all comfort “comforts us in all our affliction so that we will be able to comfort those who are in any affliction with the comfort with which we ourselves are comforted by God. We are God’s channels of comfort to others.

(2 Co 1:4) “who comforts us in all our affliction so that we will be able to comfort those who are in any affliction with the comfort with which we ourselves are comforted by God.”

Our family went through some afflictions and suffering. I lived in the hospital with my daughter as she was going through chemo-therapy and a bone marrow transplant. When I meet people who are going through cancer treatments or have children who are going through it, I can comfort them. One year I was calling on Helmerich and Payne, a drilling contractor, and I met Randy, one of their drilling superintendents. I found out that his daughter had leukemia, and was going through chemo-therapy. I was able to tell him how my daughter had leukemia and had gone through chemo-therapy. I was able to comfort and encourage him. If I had never gone through those experiences, I would not have been able to minister to Randy like I did. We are comforted in our afflictions so that we can comfort others with the same comfort that we were comforted with. We are channels of God to give comfort to others.

A few years ago, I was speaking with a pastor friend of mine who had planted a church. The pastor that led the church after he left did some things that caused the church to shrink in size. The pastor did not want any help from the planting pastor. My friend was disheartened because it looked like his labor was in vain. Because of some experiences that I have personally gone through, I was able to comfort him with something that the Lord had shared with me. The Lord shared with me that what I had sowed into peoples’ lives would not be lost. The church is not an organization, but people, and what we sow into people is never lost. That really helped me, and when I shared this with my friend, it really comforted and encouraged him. Had I not gone through a time of discouragement and poured my heart out to the Lord, I would not have been able to comfort my friend. I was a channel of God’s comfort to my friend.

Notice what Paul said next. “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.” Paul knew that when he was afflicted and comforted, he could comfort others with the comfort that he had received. Paul knew that he was a channel that God would use to comfort others. Paul’s hope was firmly grounded, and he knew that the Corinthians would be sharers of the comfort that he had received.

(2 Co 1:6–7) “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; {7} 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.”

In Acts 27, when Paul was visited and encouraged by the angel of the Lord, he stood up in the midst of the other men, and encouraged them. He said, “Yet now I urge you to keep up your courage, for there will be no loss of life among you, but only of the ship. ‘For this very night an angel of the God to whom I belong and whom I serve stood before me, saying, ‘Do not be afraid, Paul; you must stand before Caesar; and behold, God has granted you all those who are sailing with you.’” Paul was despairing of life and any hope of staying alive. He was encouraged by the angel of the Lord. Then, he encouraged the men aboard the ship with the same message of encouragement that he had received. He knew that He was a channel of comfort to others.

(Acts 27:21-26) “When they had gone a long time without food, then Paul stood up in their midst and said, “Men, you ought to have followed my advice and not to have set sail from Crete and incurred this damage and loss. {22} “*Yet* now I urge you to keep up your courage, for there will be no loss of life among you, but *only* of the ship. {23} “For this very night an angel of the God to whom I belong and whom I serve stood before me, {24} saying, ‘Do not be afraid, Paul; you must stand before Caesar; and behold, God has granted you all those who are sailing with you.’ {25} “Therefore, keep up your courage, men, for I believe God that it will turn out exactly as I have been told. {26} “But we must run aground on a certain island.”

Conclusion and Applications

Our passage is about being a channel of comfort. God wants you and I to receive help from Him in our time of need. When we are afflicted and are suffering, we should go to the Father of Mercy and the God of all Comfort and receive His comfort. The comfort we receive from Him may not be something that we give to others that week, or even that year. But God will give us opportunities to take what He has given to us and give it to others. That is a kingdom principle.

What are the afflictions and struggles that you have experienced? How did God comfort you in those situations? Be alert and ready to comfort others that are going through a similar situation.

The principle of being a channel for God to use applies in many other areas of our life. For example, in Matthew 18, Jesus taught on forgiveness. There was a king who went to settle accounts with his slaves. One slave owed him ten thousand talents, and he did not have the means to repay. The king ordered him to be sold, along with his wife and children, and for repayment to be made. The slave fell to the ground and prostrated himself, and pleaded for patience. The king felt compassion and released him and forgave him the debt. But that slave went out and found a fellow slave who owed him a hundred denarii, something far smaller than what he had been forgiven. He demanded payment, and began to choke his fellow slave. The fellow slave fell to the ground and pleaded for patience, but the slave threw him into prison. Some of the other fellow slaves saw what had taken place and reported it to the king. The king brought the slave in and said, “I forgave you all that debt because you pleaded with me. Should you not also have had mercy on your fellow slave, in the same way that I had mercy on you?” The king was moved with anger and handed him over to the torturers until he paid back all that was owed. God forgives us, and He expects us to forgive others in the same way He has forgiven us.

(Mt 18:23–35) “For this reason the kingdom of heaven may be compared to a king who wished to settle accounts with his slaves. {24} “When he had begun to settle *them*, one who owed him ten thousand talents was brought to him. {25} “But since he did not have *the means* to repay, his lord commanded him to be sold, along with his wife and children and all that he had, and repayment to be made. {26} “So the slave fell *to the ground* and prostrated himself before him, saying, ‘Have patience with me and I will repay you everything.’ {27} “And the lord of that slave felt compassion and released him and forgave him the debt. {28} “But that slave went out and found one of his fellow slaves who owed him a hundred denarii; and he seized him and *began* to choke *him*, saying, ‘Pay back what you owe.’ {29} “So his fellow slave fell *to the ground* and *began* to plead with him, saying, ‘Have patience with me and I will repay you.’ {30} “But he was unwilling and went and threw him in prison until he should pay back what was owed. {31} “So when his fellow slaves saw what had happened, they were deeply grieved and came and reported to their lord all that had happened. {32} “Then summoning him, his lord said to him, ‘You wicked slave, I forgave you all that debt because you pleaded with me. {33} ‘Should you not also have had mercy on your fellow slave, in the same way that I had mercy on you?’ {34} “And his lord, moved with anger, handed him over to the torturers until he should repay all that was owed him. {35} “My heavenly Father will also do the same to you, if each of you does not forgive his brother from your heart.”

Concluding Prayer

Father God, we praise You because You are full of mercy and compassion. We praise You because You are the God of all comfort. We praise You because Your love is steadfast and Your mercies are new every morning. We praise you because You are faithful and no matter what we need, You are there to help us. You are our source and our goal, and we love You. Father, help us to draw near to You in our time of need. When we are afflicted, help us to pour our hearts out to you like Hannah did. Help us to seek You like Paul did. Help us to be channels that pass on to others the comfort that You give to us. Help us to be channels in all areas of life. When You bless us financially, help us to bless others. When You forgive us, help us to forgive others. When You give grace to us, help us to give grace to others. When You are patient with us, help us to extend patience to others. Help us to be transparent, humble, vessels that You can use at any time to those that need a touch from You. I pray this in Jesus’ name. Amen.

Channels of Comfort (2 Cor 1:3-11)

Introduction (1 Pe 1:10–12, Gen 12:1-3, Ps 67:1-7, 1 Cor 12:7, 1 Pet 4:10, 2 Cor 1:3-11)

1. **Our Source of Comfort** (2 Cor 1:3, John 14:16-18, Lam 3:22-23, Jas 1:5, Rom 16:27)

2. **Our Comfort** (2 Cor 1:4-5, 8-11, Ac 27:20–26, 2 Co 11:23–27, Acts 27:23-24, Dan 10:10-14, 1 Sa 1:6–18, Gen 21:15-19, Ps 9:10)

3. **Our Comfort to Others** (2 Cor 1:4, 1:6-7, Acts 27:21-26)

Conclusion and Applications (Mt 18:23–35)