



SERMON RECAP: WHAT DID THE TEXT MEAN? WHAT DOES IT MEAN?

We learned this week that God allows overwhelming experiences in our lives not only so that we can receive comfort from Him in our time of need, but so that we can reach out to others in their time of crisis and extend similar comfort to them, as well.

WARM UP

Read 2 Corinthians 1:3-7

On a piece of paper, write down a time when you were completely overwhelmed.

- List 3 words that would best describe your state of mind during this season.
- Now write down how God extended mercy to you in that experience and brought you comfort.
- Now write down 3 words that characterized your state at that point.

Read 2 Corinthians 12:7–9 and James 1:2–4.

- Note some of the traits that God wants to develop in us in times of trial.
- Imagine that you are friends with Paul and James.
- What would they say God is wanting to do in your life?

Back to the main passage in 2 Corinthians 1:

- Notice in verse 3 that Paul praises God for His comfort. Give thanks and praise to God for the comfort He provides.

Read verse 3 of the primary passage, plus the first 7 words of verse 4 again.

Who is the source of our comfort?

- When you are faced with suffering, how do you react right away?
- Where do you run for comfort?

Look at the following verses, and note how quickly David turned to God for comfort in his distress:

Turn to me and be gracious to me, for I am alone and afflicted. (Psalm 25:16)

Draw near to me and redeem me; ransom me because of my enemies. (Psalm 69:18)

May Your compassion come to me so that I may live, for Your instruction is my delight. (Psalm 119:77)

Turn to me and be gracious to me, as is Your practice toward those who love Your name. (Psalm 119:132)

What are some ideas that would help us to grow in our dependence on God when experiencing suffering?

- As a group what are some ways we could encourage each other in developing endurance through suffering?

Now look at verse 4.

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- How often is Paul saying we can draw comfort from God in our trials?
 - If the trials may not end right away, but comfort is guaranteed, how does that change our expectations when we are overwhelmed?
 - How does this change the way we pray when we are inundated by adversity?
 - How does this change the way we pray for one another and talk to one another when we are distressed?



THE TEXT: WHAT DOES IT MEAN FOR ME?

Keep verse 4 in mind, while listening to Exodus 23:9 and Deuteronomy 10:19.

- Based on these verses, what does God want us to do as a result of our own overwhelming circumstances?
- Based on verse 4 of our main passage, what exactly are we to offer to others?
- When we are reaching to others in comfort, who is actually providing that comfort—God, us, or both?

Look at the first part of verse 6.

- What is the reason Paul mentions for his own afflictions?
- If you realized in the middle of your trial that God might be bringing this affliction into your life so that you can in turn comfort others, what would your reaction be?



DIGGING DEEPER

Think about someone you know who is overwhelmed, and take time to pray for that person.

Think about others around you, as well.

Ask God to place people in your path this week who need God's comfort.

Commit to be prepared to extend God's comfort to them.

What are some practical ways we as believers can share God's comfort with others?

- Why do we often not respond right away to reach out to others in their time of need?
- What is going through our minds?
- What can we do to retrain ourselves and our thinking?

Ask God specifically to help you push through those thoughts that keep you from reaching out, to be proactive in sharing the comfort that you yourself have received.



CLOSING THOUGHT

The Scriptures we have discussed emphasize that we extend the same mercy we have received. Keep in mind that Jesus also taught that those who extend mercy also receive it (Matthew 5:7). Be ready to both give and receive mercy this week as God extends it to you and through you, and to you again.



STUDY NOTES

The passage we have studied contains the word "comfort" 9 times. A nearby passage, 2 Corinthians 7:4-7, also uses the same word a lot. Read that passage, noting especially the role that the mere presence of a believer can play in providing comfort. Remember that your merely being with a distressed person can make the difference for them. When a crisis develops, be willing to drop by and be the presence that is so deeply needed.