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Comfort/encouragement from Second Corinthians ...

## The God of all Comfort

So, who could use some encouragement? Saints in the first century, just as modern brethren, faced all kinds of challenges in their daily walk as they sought to serve the Lord in each of their congregations. They needed real encouragement, or as often translated, *comfort*. God, then, through the Holy Spirit and the apostle Paul — intensely interested in the spiritual success of these brethren — offered them this encouragement. This is not mere “hype,” empty encouragement and false hope. This is the real comfort that comes from an all powerful God, the

God who also knows how many hairs are on the head of each person (He knows the details of our lives, in other words), the God who understands and is able to give His saints the encouragement they seriously need.

- ▲ **In all affliction** — God allows Christians to suffer for a number of reasons, one of which is to eliminate the dross of character. “For a little while, if necessary,” observed the apostle Peter, “you have been distressed by various trials, *that the proof of your faith*, being more precious than gold which is perishable, even though tested by fire, may be found to result in praise and glory and honor at the revelation of Jesus Christ” (1 Peter 1:6,7). It is important to remember that what the Father is looking for is real faith, and that the testing goes on among Christians to find out who is for real and who is not. Those who have successfully gone through suffering in the flesh for the faith, as Peter put it, have “ceased from sin,

so as to live the rest of the time in the flesh no longer for the lusts of men, but for the will of God” (1 Peter 4:1,2). Hence Paul opens his address to the Corinthians with these words: “Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of mercies and the God of all comfort, who comforts us in all our affliction ...” (2 Corinthians 1:3,4). God is indeed blessed when He finds those who will walk in the faith of Christ, who will continue to believe in His mercies and strength, who will continue to move forward with the gospel despite opposition and persecution; that makes Him very happy! As the God of mercies, God is willing to grant mercy to those who have such faith, willing not to count their trespasses against them in the day of judgment. And, as the God of all comfort, He is willing and able to provide whatever comfort is necessary, regardless of the severity of the affliction!

▲ **Comfort** — The word translated *comfort* has the same root as *paracletos*, the word for the Comforter or Helper, the Holy Spirit who has come to strengthen the saints in the inner man. The word picture, in the case of *comfort*, is that of someone coming along and putting his arm around the shoulder of the afflicted one, thus showing compassion and providing encouragement and consolation. When Paul speaks of “us” in the context of the opening of this second recorded letter to the Corinthians, he is speaking of himself and fellow workers such as Timothy. God, then, says he, “comforts us in all our affliction so that we may be able to comfort those who are in any afflictions with the comfort with which we ourselves are comforted by God.” The apostle understood that the comfort he received from God was not to be kept to himself, but rather he was now to extend that same comfort to other suffering brethren.

Therefore, since the brethren often suffer intensely for the faith, it is good for them to know that the God whom they cannot see understands their suffering, and is indeed able to comfort and encourage them — if they will pay attention to what is written. God’s mercies are great, and His comfort is great. May each one found in Christ Jesus participate in His mercies, and may each be strengthened through God’s tremendous comfort!

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