

2 Corinthians 1:1-11 The Comfort of God, Part 2

Defining Moments: An event that Changes the way that you look at life and everything about it forever.

A) A 32 year old Turkish man named Cem Tocak had such an experience this week – trains hit a flat bed truck – that hits him

B) I am sure most of you saw this week – but for those of you who didn't – Check this out.

1) **Miraculously unharmed**

C) When Mr. Tocak woke up he said that he didn't remember the accident – but that he values life more now – **Life is a precious gift**

1) And that he **promised to marry his fiancé**

D) Apparently he was procrastinating moving forward w/ the wedding plans

Dating a while: Waiting for proposal – Pray he gets hit by a truck !

Defining moments are those moments when we come face to face with a truth that we didn't know – or a truth that we knew but had forgotten

A) In that defining moment that truth comes front & center – whether we are seeing it for the first time

B) Or we are seeing it in a new way – It has a way of transforming Our view of things forever
Bb) **Our view of God, our view of ourselves, view of others.**

1) Our view of relationships, friendships – gets transformed forever.

C) Here in the first part of 2 Corinthians Ch. 1 Paul is talking about the subject of suffering

1) AND how it defined and shaped who He was as a man As a follower of Jesus Christ –

2) And how The suffering he endured also SHAPED how he ministered to others **RD V.3-11**

Before we jump into the text let me give you a little more background about Corinth

A) Classical Corinth had been destroyed in 146 B.C. by the Romans and had remained uninhabited for a hundred years, until 44 B.C. when Julius Caesar rebuilt it.

B) So when Paul visited Corinth in A.D. 49–50, it was just over eighty years old with a population of 80k pp

C) Yet, during its short history Corinth had become the third most important city of the Roman Empire, behind Alexandria and Rome itself.

D) **Corinth was a growing metropolis – the new hot spot** Situated on the isthmus river of Greece, it was called the “master of harbors.”

Corinth became a favorite place for retired Roman soldiers to settle down seeking a better life for their families.

A) Corinth was also a place of *ethnic diversity* it was sort of a melting pot – people from all over the

Asia wanted to settle there. Much Like So Cal – 1,2 Californians

B) Title: Fasted growing city in Asia.

C) Corinth was a sports and entertainment center

1) Caesar had reinstated the Isthmian games in Corinth (which were second only to the Olympics).

D) The city's theater held up to 18,000 and the concert hall some 3,000.

1) Travel, tourism, sex, and religious Diversity were woven together in Corinth's new culture.

So Corinth was the happening place at the time of Paul's writings

A) Often people living in that kind of environment where things are going well, they can be a tendency to look on others who are going through times of suffering –

THINK - something must be wrong w/ them.

B) That is what some people in the Corinthian Church were doing to Paul.

1) Their thinking went something like this: If Paul is really an apostle, if he is really God's man – then why does he go through so much suffering?

C) Similar to Job's friends or counselors – Job there must be sin in your life!

Here in v.3-11 Paul reveals 4 Purposes that God has for the suffering that we encounter.

A) We looked at the first 2 last week – 4 words

B) #1 Discovery: In our times of Suffering we Discover something new about God – He meets us in the suffering with comfort

C) We noted comfort doesn't mean sympathy, or consoling only

1) Word comfort = strength – Holy Spirit comes to our aid **to Help to strengthen and to fortify**

We noted that the 2nd Purpose God has for our suffering is Ministry.

A) Our suffering allows us to have a better understanding of the pain that others are going through.

B) We are able to then strengthen them because of the strength that we have received from God.

C) So our suffering becomes an instrument for ministry in the lives of those whom God has Chosen preparing them for further Ministry,

Because Paul suffered a lot he might have been tempted to feel like Teviah in Fiddler on the roof – “God I know that we are your chosen people – but could you choose someone else of a while.”

So those were our first two words: Discovery and Ministry.

Today we want to consider two more purposes that God uses in our suffering – Centrality and Family

#3 Centrality: Focus off of ourselves and onto where it is supposed to be on the Lord. V.9

9 Yes, we had the sentence of death in ourselves, that we should not trust in ourselves but in God who raises the dead, 10 who delivered us from so great a death, and does deliver us; in whom we trust that He will still deliver us,

Now we could have made this our first point – because all too often this is **the first thing** God is doing in our lives thru suffering.

A) Moving us away from that tendency that we all have to trust in ourselves.

B) That is why suffering can be such a defining moment – it transforms how we see ourselves and how we see God

C) Truth be told – if we are honest – we all have a tendency to try and be self sufficient

D) There are habits that we have learned in life – **survival traits** that we carry into our Christian experience.

Example: In my life – Athletics played a major part of my life for 15yrs – I achieved some success in sports

A) But I wouldn't have said that I was one of those athletes that was gifted with natural ability.

I wasn't, my ability was decent at best

B) But I achieved success in athletics by working harder than everyone around me – more hrs in practice – in the weight room Running etc

1) I would do more – and it would pay off.

C) Well I have to admit that I carried that mentality into my Christian experience.

D) I thought I would excel as a Christian by trying harder than everyone around me – Read more / pray more / do more – **God would Bless me**

Problem was my Christianity was all about being accepted because of my performance

A) **Lacking greatly in grace** – The blessing that came into my life I felt like I deserved because I was trying so hard.

B) Well God wants to strip us of that mentality

C) So He Allows us to encounter situations where no matter how **hard we try** we discover I can't change this situation at all.

Trusting in ourselves can be a constant thing that all of us can have a tendency to revert back to:

A) I don't think Paul was an exception – I think that is why Paul would write in Phil 3 – after 30yrs of following Christ

B) Paul is giving his testimony of who He was in his flesh – his upbringing his religious standing as a Pharisee -

C) Referring to all his training and religious upbringing all his religiosity

Paul said: **I have counted it as loss** { Past tense

I continue to count it as loss

I have suffered the loss of all those things

I continue to count those things as Dung or manure.

Why Paul would also say in 1 Corinthians 15:31 **“I die daily.”**

D) Paul's Daily focus was to know Christ more

Sometimes our trust can be in a religious system rather than in God – preconceived ideas about Him

A) We have the tendency to believe that if we do ABCD then XYZ is going to be the result

B) If we do ABCD God is going to do XYZ.

C) We put God into this system: Into this box where we define how He is supposed to act and respond.

D) That system shapes the way that we do things and how we approach God

Examples: Do we have morning Devos because it is a part of our spiritual routine like eating breakfast is a part of our Physical routine?

A) Or do we have **morning Devos** because we are desperate to Know God –

And we realize that one of the clearest ways that God reveals himself is in the word ?

B) Do **we worship** hoping it makes us feel better or because today we feel like it –

1) Or do we worship because God is worthy of all Praise and honor we can give Him?

C) Do **we tithe** in order to get a blessing from God because we have been taught – You can't out give...

1) Or do we tithe because we understand that all we have has been given to us by God

D) **We are stewards** of what He has given and all he asked for is the tithe

1) because one of the greatest demonstrations in our lives that we Love God & faith in God is when we are willing to trust God **in the area of our provision!**

E) Do **we go to Church** because it is our religious duty or ritual – or do we go to Church because we realize that we are a part of **a body, a community**

1) And our participation in that body is vital to our spiritual health and the health of that body ?

Listen our suffering has a way of being a defining moment that strips from us all of those wrong motives for doing what we do in this thing called faith

A) And drives us to a place where I realize all I have is God – and God alone. I am undone!
Desperate

“When I come to the end of myself – I get to the beginning of God.”

Suffering causes us to wrestle w/ our preconceived ideas about God. Gets God out of the box.....

A) Been said: “Suffering colors life” – our problem is we want to pick the colors

B) Suffering brings us to a place where we say: Ok God you can pick the color!

It's a great day when a man finally comes to the end of himself and realizes, 'I don't need to go to another seminar or call another counselor; I don't need to enroll in another program or come up with another creative idea. All I need is You, Lord. I'm going to wrestle with You. I'm going to cling to You. I'm going to depend on You because I need to be governed by You.' **Courson**

So our sufferings have a way of stripping us from that tendency to trust in ourselves or to trust in some preconceived idea about God – simply trust God

A) Paul reveals two things that form the basis of that trust – 1st is He is the God who raises the dead.

Aa) Note that Description: Always intrigued by the descriptions that HS uses in inspiring –

B) He could have said: God who created the earth –

1) God who is King – God who is Just

C) God who raises the dead is significant because when we are suffering something in us is dying

1) Death our joy – our strength – our hope!

He is the God of Resurrection! Rez in our hearts.

A) Jesus restores – Brings dead things to life

One of the older commentators remarks that “raises” is a “timeless present participle expressing a permanent attribute” of God.

B) **Bringing dead things to life is a part of God's Character/ It is who He is – The God of Rez**

Maybe your marriage seems dead.

A) Quit trying to figure it out and fix it in your own energy. Call on The God of Rez –

B) Submit yourself to Him – Humble...before Him

C) We spend yrs trying unsuccessfully in our own strength to bring life back to that which has died

1) But God is able to fix in rather quickly what we fail to do in our strength – when two pp humble themselves and surrender to Him / His word!

Paul will say in 2 Corinthians 4:11 **“For we who live are always being given over to death for Jesus' sake, so that the life of Jesus also may be manifested in our mortal flesh”**

A) Christ's call to take up the cross and follow him is nothing less than a call to embrace this cycle.

B) Cycle of daily death to self that God might meet us with his Rez Power

As C. S. Lewis said, “Nothing that has not died will be resurrected.”

C) But death sets in motion the unstoppable process of resurrection.

B) So we trust God because He alone has the power to raise the dead.

2nd Basis of our trust – He is faithful

10 who delivered us from so great a death, and does deliver us; in whom we trust that He will still deliver us,

I love this. God has delivered us in the past: He does deliver us in the present; and He will yet deliver us in the future. **He is Faithful**

So the #3 Purpose of Suffering is Centrality Focus off of us and on to trusting Christ

But there is one more defining thing that comes out of our suffering: suffering is sent to us to show us that we are not individuals living all alone in life.

A)#4 Family: We are members of a family, we are members of a Body, and we need each other.

11 you also helping together in prayer for us, that thanks may be given by many persons on our behalf for the gift granted to us through many.

B)When you have a difficulty or a trial, there can be a tendency to want to isolate yourself – wrong!

1)That is another manifestation of that tendency toward self sufficiency { Handle it on my own

C)God wants to purge us of that – that is why you need to share it with others so that they can pray with you, Pray for you.

D)Prayer chain line should be ringing off the hook

Sometimes I feel bad when all I can do for someone is pray for them. – I want to fix their problem

A)In reality – Praying for them is the best thing I can do for them – Because God can fix the Problem

“In prayer, human impotence casts itself at the feet of divine omnipotence. Thus the duty of prayer is not a modification of God’s power, but a glorification of it.”

That is what is ment here by Paul when he says you are helping in prayer and many are blessed & encouraged when they see the answers.

A)Paul fully understood the human side of deliverance and resurrection power—and that is why his letters bear repeated requests for prayer.

“[Pray] also for me, that words may be given to me in opening my mouth boldly to proclaim the mystery of the gospel” (Ephesians 6:19).

“For I know that through your prayers and the help of the Spirit of Jesus Christ this will turn out for my deliverance” (Philippians 1:19).

“Pray also for us, that God may open to us a door for the word, to declare the mystery of Christ” (Colossians 4:3).

“Finally, brothers, pray for us, that the word of the Lord may speed ahead and be honored” (2 Thessalonians 3:1).

Praying for someone is one of the best ways to minister the comfort of God – we are calling on God to meet that person in their moment of weakness

Meet them with His strength and Rez power

As we close our service today:

A) You realize – I have been doing life on my own

B) Trust in Christ – who died ... sins – Rose give life

Perhaps you are a Christian you have trusted Christ for salvation – but you realize “I have been trusting in myself – leaning on my own strength to get thru a trial or a problem”

Seeking in your own strength to revive something that has died

Today repent of that – Turn to the Lord say I trust you – you pick the color

Trust has been in a system – I am doing ABCD so God should be doing – XYZ

God I am sorry – Have your way –

We need to pray for you – you need to let us

Sing – You stand -