

2Corinthians 1.3-11

The God Who Raises the Dead

No matter where you are in life right now you are facing a whole slew of things that only God can solve. The problem with that reality is that you are most likely living like YOU can solve them, maybe you will go so far as to acknowledge that God is your CO-Pilot on a bumper sticker, but that just means you are in His seat! Now, that part of what I need to tell you is the easy part... but here is the rest. Whatever that problem is, whatever issue you face, whatever illness, financial burden, undue difficulty at work, marriage problem, family issue, rebellious child - you name it; whatever it is - God has brought it into your life for the singular purpose of teaching you that your human resources are utterly bankrupt and ONLY HE can deliver you. Here is the truth that we get a fleeting glimpse of in the moment of our conversion when we cry "mercy!"... the answer to ALL of life's issues is God. God in Christ Jesus IS the meaning of, the reason for and the purpose in this life. NOTHING ELSE means anything... and I mean NOTHING ELSE!!

Here is the simple answer to the question every humanist asks "why do bad things happen to good people". First, there are no good people, but honestly, that dodges the spirit of their very fair question. IF God is God, then the shape of the world means one of three things.

Either He is impotent, incompetent or He is working out a plan that runs much deeper than we can understand... Paul gives us the answer here. And spoiler alert, it's the last one. And with this answer to the question given, another question immediately surfaces... can such a God be trusted? His plans seems to be so very cruel... Well, Paul gives us the answer to that as well. God Himself undertakes to sustain us, comfort us AND redeem our very difficulties so that in the end we give praise to God both IN them and FOR them! It's a tall order... but my God is up to the challenge!

I. PRAISE BELONGS TO GOD

We begin with the assertion. Praise is something that God deserves. It is something that belongs

to Him in a way we don't fully appreciate. Paul gives us some things to consider.

a. God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ – formal title which brings the covenant relationship into full focus. This covenant relationship is something that we need to at least briefly consider... it is the eternal covenant of grace and you are NOT a part of it.

It is a covenant between the three persons of the Godhead, in which:

- God covenants to elect a people;
- Christ covenants to redeem them by his blood, satisfying both the law of God and the full wrath deserved by that people's rebellion;
- and the Spirit covenants to call them and seal them against the day of redemption.

Pay attention to who is NOT IN this covenant. You. If you are a child of God you are so by the work of another, according to the plan of another and kept by the power of another... it

is something that we ought to be praising God for all the days that He grants us life!

- i. He is the Father of Christ's divine nature by eternal generation
- ii. He is the Father of Christ's human nature by miraculous conception in the womb of the virgin
- iii. He is the Father of Christ the God-man, our Redeemer the mediator of the new covenant
- iv. And through that same Mediator, He is the God and Father of all who belong to Christ by His act of mediation on our behalf...

John 20:17 (NKJV)

17 Jesus said to her, "Do not cling to Me, for I have not yet ascended to My Father; but go to My brethren and say to them, 'I am ascending to My Father and your Father, and to My God and your God.' "

- b. Father of mercies
 - i. His Tender mercies are renewed for us daily

Lamentations 3:22–23 (NKJV)

22 Through the LORD's mercies we are not consumed, Because His compassions fail not. 23 They are new every morning; Great is Your faithfulness.

ii. His mercies are multitudinous

Psalm 69:16 (NKJV)

16 Hear me, O LORD, for Your lovingkindness is good; Turn to me according to the multitude of Your tender mercies.

iii. His Mercies are based and rooted in His word and in His promises

Psalm 119:77 (NKJV)

77 Let Your tender mercies come to me, that I may live; For Your law is my delight.

Psalm 119:156 (NKJV)

156 Great are Your tender mercies, O LORD; Revive me according to Your judgments.

- iv. His mercies are the flavor of the attitude He holds towards His children ALWAYS even when they are being chastised.

Isaiah 54:7–8 (NKJV)

7 “For a mere moment I have forsaken you,
But with great mercies I will gather you. 8
With a little wrath I hid My face from you
for a moment; But with everlasting kindness
I will have mercy on you,” Says the LORD,
your Redeemer.

- v. For He DELIGHTS in mercy

Micah 7:18 (NKJV)

18 Who is a God like You, Pardoning iniquity
And passing over the transgression of the
remnant of His heritage? He does not retain
His anger forever, Because He delights in
mercy.

c. God of all comfort

- i. He IS the comforter

ii. He gives the comforter

John 15:26 (NKJV)

26 “But when the Helper comes, whom I shall send to you from the Father, the Spirit of truth who proceeds from the Father, He will testify of Me.

iii. His personal attributes comfort us in the abundance of His strength and power

Psalms 23:4 (NKJV)

4 Yea, though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I will fear no evil; For You are with me; Your rod and Your staff, they comfort me.

iv. Regardless of how terrible our circumstances might be, God is the One who can comfort us in them

Psalms 94:16–19 (NKJV)

16 Who will rise up for me against the evildoers? Who will stand up for me against

the workers of iniquity? 17 Unless the LORD had been my help, My soul would soon have settled in silence. 18 If I say, "My foot slips," Your mercy, O LORD, will hold me up. 19 In the multitude of my anxieties within me, Your comforts delight my soul.

II. GOD IS THE SOURCE OF OUR COMFORT

The comforts of Christ are direct descendants of His sufferings...

- i. He owns our suffering when we suffer for His name
 1. Actively - when we are persecuted and hated by the world
 2. Passively - when we are suffering because of the work of sanctification going on in our lives. It is his plan and purpose to shape in us the character of Christ. And He will not fail... but he is NOT unfeeling about our pain.

- ii. He abundantly pours out the grace that His suffering purchased
- b. He is the fountainhead of the Grace of God
- c. He shares His own comfort with us so that we might comfort others
- d. The intent is that we share what we have been given
- e. There is a direct and powerful connection between the sufferings of Christ in us and the comfort we receive

III. BOTH OUR COMFORT AND OUR AFFLICTION ARE LARGER THAN OURSELVES

- a. Both are for the consolation and salvation of those who we love and who love us
 - i. God testifies of Himself in the lives of His own
 - ii. God offers to us the opportunity to participate with Him in His central work of grace

iii. Both our sufferings and our consolation are part of that work

b. Both comfort and the affliction which that comfort eases are used of God for the transformation of our character

i. Christ is made manifest

ii. Peace and patience are formed in us

iii. The world's hold on us is loosened when we suffer and when we are comforted

iv. More importantly, our hold on the world is loosed

c. Both comfort and affliction are evidence that He has accepted us as children

d. Both comfort and affliction are tools in the hand of God for the true aim of this life

1Peter 1.6-17

1. Knowing God

2. Trusting God

3. Vindicating God's righteousness
4. Vindicating God's plan

Ephesians 3.8-13

IV. COMFORT IS MEANINGLESS IN THE ABSENCE OF AFFLICTION

- a. Hope in anything but God is both pointless and rebellion
 - i. God leads our days into the valley of the shadow so that we might understand the value of His presence
 - ii. He is determined that His children learn to lean on Him and Him alone

Lamentations 3.1-33

- iii. The glory and power of God are best displayed in the context of apparent hopelessness
- iv. when all other hopes are emptied, God proves His abundance

- v. When all other sources have proven worthless and impotent, God displays His omnipotence
- vi. When all other schemes have failed, God reveals His eternal plan and purpose
- vii. When all other efforts, works, labors and allies have become exhausted, God comes in to renew our strength and carry us on the wings of eagles
- viii. When life itself appears over, all our hopes are cast upon the God of life.

b. There is no context in which this is not true

- i. The life of nations
- ii. The life of individuals
- iii. The skeezy world of politics, seeking to assert control and dominion over all for the simple goal of personal power
- iv. The tragic toll of sin in the lives of individuals ruined by the fall, seeking to assert self for the simple goal of pretended divinity
- v. In the helpless systems of humanitarian efforts
- vi. In the helpless body of the terminally ill

- vii. In the broken culture of the sin ravaged nation
- viii. In the broken lives of the determined rebel

V. GOD ALONE

Here is the heart of whatever you are facing -
God is the **ONLY** answer that will ever supply
your need, and no matter what He brings into
your life

- a. if you belong to Him it is designed by Him
 - i. to show that all other things are void
 - ii. That He **ALONE** can be trusted
 - iii. That the end of all things is worth the pain of the journey
 - iv. That nothing is ever outside of His power and purpose
 - v. At the end of all things, God alone remains; He is our hope, He is our home, He is our life and He **IS** our great reward... fix your eyes upon Him and upon Him alone!

- b. If you do not belong to Him
 - i. If your eyes are opened at all by your circumstance it is His divine invitation to repent
 - ii. If your heart is at all stirred by your pain to cry out to God it is His divine command to repent
 - iii. If your hopes have been exhausted and nothing remains except your need and the hope that God might answer your cry, it is the divine display of His mercy and the opportunity of grace to lead you in that kindness to repent
 - iv. For at the end of all things, God alone remains; He is our hope, He is our home, He is our life and He IS our great reward... fix your eyes upon Him and upon Him alone!