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Our God Who Comforts Us

1: 1-7

Our God who comforts us DIG: Why was Paul feeling so vulnerable when he wrote this letter? What other person in the TaNaKh might Paul's sufferings be compared to? How does Paul describe God in this passage? How would you describe the difference between hope and comfort? Paul provides a window into his emotional state during his trials. What are some of the key words and phrases he uses? What is Paul's perspective on the trials that he faced? Why does he believe that he was allowed to endure them?

REFLECT: Many people become negative and complain in the midst of their trials. But Paul was able to praise God in the midst of challenging circumstances. How does a person's attitude when facing suffering influence others? Do you praise God when things get really tough in your life? How can you become more able to genuinely praise God in all circumstances? Where does God reveal Himself to you in your suffering? What evidence has God provided that He delivers His children from trials? How does God comfort you?

God is the God of all comfort, who comforts us in our troubles, so we can comfort others.

All of us go through them - periods of intense, unexpected, unwelcomed **suffering**. No one lived a more dedicated, disciplined, **God**-pleasing life than the apostle **Paul**. Yet, **Paul's** life, like that of **Job**, of whom it was said: **Job was a blameless and upright man who fears God and shuns evil (Job 1:8b)**, reads like a case study in **suffering**. **Paul** could relate. He wrote from his prison cell: **I have suffered the loss of all things** and one who longed to know Messiah and the power of His resurrection, and the fellowship of His sufferings (Philippians 3:8 and 10 NKJV).⁹ Our **ADONAI** is a **God** who meets **us** and comforts **us**, and **Paul** mentions **comfort** nine times as he opens his second letter to the **Corinthians**.

From: Sha'ul, by God's will an apostle of the Messiah Yeshua, and brother Timothy. From the very first sentence **Paul** keeps his overall purpose for writing **Second**

Corinthians in mind, establishing the basis for the remainder of **his** letter. Namely, unlike **the false apostles** who claimed apostolic authority (**to see link click Af - The Problem of the False Apostles**), **Paul** paid a hefty personal price for following **Yeshua** as one of **His** true **apostles**. **He** let **his** readers know right from the start that **his apostolic** credentials were written in **his** blood. But rather than grumble about how unfairly **he** had been treated, or complain about the injustices **he** was forced to endure, **Paul** gloried in the fact that **ADONAI** had faithfully **comforted him** in **his suffering**, so that **Paul** could be a **comfort** to **others** in **their suffering**.¹⁰

*Dear Great **Father God**, Praise **You** that **You** are not some sugar daddy who spoils his child; but rather **You** are like the perfect **Coach** – lovingly training and guiding each of **Your** children so we may win many heavenly eternal rewards thru **suffering** and **trials**. **You** gifted **the Corinthians**, but **You** also sent **Paul** to help guide **them** in the pride of **their** gifts, to give the glory to **You** – rather than be proud of themselves. **You** bless and gift **Your** children so that we give **You** the praise and glory – not pat ourselves on the back. The reason we **have to experience various trials** is so **the true genuineness of our faith, which is far more valuable than gold, will be judged worthy of praise, glory and honor at the revealing of Yeshua the Messiah (First Peter 1:6c-7)**.*

***Your** love and presence is continually right there alongside each of **Your** children (**Hebrews 13:5**), both in every painful **trial** and circumstance and also in every proud moment of achievement. **You** so desire each of **Your** children to lean on **You** for wisdom, strength, and **comfort**. Thank **You** for being such a wonderful wise and loving **Daddy** who **comforts** us in our **suffering** and **trials** to bring both glory to **Your** name and joy and rewards to **Your** children. **You** are the best! In **Yeshua's** holy name and power of **His** resurrection. Amen*

To: The church of God in Corinth, along with all God's people throughout Achaia (1:1). It is striking that **Paul** should address this divided **church** by such a phrase as **the church of God in Corinth**. The very phrase is laden with irony, intended or unintended. How could such a **church of God** be in such a godless **city** and be so divided? Nevertheless, **Paul** addressed **them** as **God's people**, probably to encourage them to become what **God** graciously saw them to be.¹¹ It has been widely recognized how **Paul** combines the traditional Jewish and Greek greetings: **Grace to you and shalom from God our Father and the Lord Yeshua the Messiah (1:2)**. **God the Father and the Lord Yeshua the Messiah** jointly form a single source of divine **grace and shalom**. The deity of **Yeshua Messiah** is clearly implied here.

ADONAI is the God of all comfort (1:3): If you really want to know **God** you must understand **His** character. One of the problems in our world today is that there are a lot of people who think they know **God**, but they don't truly know **God's** character. They see **YHVH** as vindictive, full of rage and wrath. But the fact is, if you say you believe in **God**, but you have a wrong understanding of who **God** is, you are not that much different from the world. You have to understand **God's** character. And you go to **God's Word** to find that out. And what does **God's Word** say about **Him**? It says **He** is **grace** and **love** and **kind** and **light** and **forgiving** and full of **mercy**. But it also says that **He** is **the God of all comfort**. **Praised be God, Father of our Lord Yeshua the Messiah, compassionate Father, God of all comfort (1:3).**

Compassionate means that **God** sees your pain and **suffering**. **He** knows what you are going through. This is a common theme in the TaNaKh (**Ps 51:11, 86:5, 94:19; Lam 3:22; Isaiah 51:12, 63:7, 66:13; Dan 9:9**). **Psalm 103: 13 and 17** declares: **Just as a father has compassion on his children, ADONAI has compassion on those who fear Him . . . But the mercy of ADONAI on those who fear Him is from eternity past to eternity future, and His righteousness extends to His children's children.** The **love** and **mercy** of **ADONAI** are usually praised in the traditional Jewish liturgy before the recitation of the Sh'ma (see the commentary on **Deuteronomy**, **to see link click Bw - Sh'ma Isra'el**): "Oh our Father, merciful Father, ever compassionate, have **mercy** upon us."¹² **ADONAI's comfort** is also seen in the B'rit Chadashah: **For we do not have a High Priest unable to empathize with our weaknesses; since in every respect he was tempted just as we are, the only difference being that he did not sin (Heb 4:15).** However, there is a difference between sympathy and **empathy**. It is one thing to *feel* someone else's **suffering**, but it's something else to *do* something about it. So the Bible says that **Messiah** not only feels your pain, but **He** does something about it. **He** is **the God of all comfort**.

Today the word "comfort" means emotional relief and a sense of well-being, physical ease, satisfaction, and freedom from pain and anxiety. Many in our culture worship the cult of "comfort" in a self-centered search for ease, but it lasts only for a moment and never fully satisfies. The **comfort** that **Paul** has in mind has nothing to do with a lazy feeling of contentment. It is not some tranquilizing dose of grace that only dulls pains, but a stiffening agent that strengthens one in heart, mind, and soul. **Comfort** relates to encouragement and help when **the trials** of life come. **God's comfort** strengthens weak knees and sustains sagging spirits so that one faces the troubles of life with unbending resolve and unending assurance.¹³



In this life we will have suffering (1:4a): Who comforts us in all our suffering (Greek: *thlipsi*, meaning *persecution, affliction, distress and tribulation*) **(1:4a)**. The example of the apostle **Paul** in the book of **Acts** is certainly that of someone who had to endure a great deal of **suffering**, sometimes facing death (**Acts 9:23-25, 14:19-20, 16:19-20, 18:9-11**). There is an authentic comfort, and there is a counterfeit comfort. People turn to all sorts of things for **comfort**. There is a whiskey called “Southern Comfort,” but that isn’t real **comfort**, which can only come from **God**. **Paul** understood that, and reminded **the Corinthians** of the same eternal truth: **ADONAI is my Shepherd; I lack nothing. He has me lie down in grassy pastures, he leads me by quiet water. He restores my inner person. He guides me in the right paths for the sake of His own name. Even if I pass through the valley of the shadow of death, I will fear no disaster; for You are with me; Your rod, to protect me, and staff, to guide me, comfort me (Psalm 23).**

It’s fascinating to note that **Paul** never attempted to answer the question of *why* we **suffer**. The Bible simply acknowledges that every person *will* **suffer**. In fact, the Bible *promises* that we will. **In the world, you will have trials. But be brave! I have conquered the world (John 16:33)! Job’s “friend” Eliphaz observed that people are born for trouble as surely as sparks fly upward (Job 5:7).** Likewise, **Paul** promised young pastor **Timothy** that **all who want to live a godly life united with Messiah Yeshua will be persecuted (2 Timothy 3:12).**¹⁴

The Greek word for **comfort** is *parakaleo*, which means *to call alongside of*. **The Ruach Ha’Kodesh** is called **the Paraclete**. He is called to our side. When **the Lord** promised to send **the Spirit of God**, He said: **I will not leave you comfortless (John 14:18 KJV).** And He said to **His own apostles**: **It is to your advantage that I go away; for if I don’t**

go away, the comforting Counselor will not come to you. However, if I do go, I will send Him to you (John 16:7). What is the Comforter then? He is not someone who merely kisses your bruise and makes it alright. He comes to us as a helper, a strengthener, and an advocate. He is the One who can help us and strengthen us, to relieve our loneliness, ease the grief, and calm the fears. He means help for us in times of terrifying trouble. So we cry out: Hear me, ADONAI, and show me Your favor! ADONAI, be my helper (Psalm 30:10)! That is the cry of the soul who needs the Comforter, and ADONAI is the God of all comfort.¹⁵

Don't waste your sorrows (1:4b): YHVH came alongside us during our trials, so that we can come alongside others during their trials in their moment of need. The Ruach Ha'Kodesh inspired Paul to write that ADONAI is the God of all comfort Who comforts us in all our suffering so that we can comfort others in whatever trials they may be undergoing with the comfort we ourselves have received from God (1:4b). The question for believers is not why we suffer, but how we suffer. What do we do with it when it comes? Paul decided not to wallow in his suffering. Not to feel sorry for himself. He chose to channel his suffering in a positive direction by using his pain to comfort others.¹⁶

ADONAI never wastes our suffering! In fact, your greatest ministry will most likely come out of your greatest trial. Who could better minister to the parents of a Down Syndrome child than another couple who have a child afflicted in the same way? Who could better help an alcoholic recover than someone who fought that disease and found freedom. Who could better come alongside those who have had their young son or daughter molested? Who could better comfort a wife whose husband has left her for another woman, than a woman who went through the same agony herself?

If you really desire to be used by God, you must understand a powerful truth: The very experiences that you have resented or regretted most in life – the one's you've wanted to hide and forget – are the very experiences God wants to use to help others. They are your ministry! Therefore, for God to use your trials, you must be willing to share them. You have to stop covering them up, and you must honestly admit your faults, failures, and fears. People are always more encouraged when we share how God's grace helped us in weakness than when we brag about our strengths. Paul understood this truth, so he was honest about his bouts with depression (see **Aj – Our God Who Delivers Us**). Only shared trials help others. What will you do with what you have been through?¹⁷

Paul offers an explanation of how he is able to comfort others through his suffering. For

just as the Messiah’s sufferings overflow into our lives (see the commentary on **Hebrews Cv - Faith Through Trials**), **so through the Messiah our comfort also overflows (1:5)**. The apostle probably had in mind the suffering **he** experienced in Asia which he referred to in **1:8**. To **be conformed into the image of Messiah (Romans 8:29)** is to identify with **the suffering** that is an essential part of **His** earthly ministry. What **Paul** says here is, in essence, what **Yeshua** taught **His disciples**.¹⁸ **He** said if you want to follow **Me**, you must say “No” to yourself. **He said: Whoever wants to be My disciple must deny themselves and take up their cross daily and follow Me (Matthew 16:24; Mark 8:34; Luke 9:23)**. This clearly illustrates that **Messiah’s** Kingdom is exactly the opposite of most of our natural inclinations. In addition, to **take up their cross** means to identify with **Messiah’s** rejection. A true **disciple** is one who will follow the **suffering** role of **Messiah**. Self-sacrifice is the hallmark of **Yeshua** and **His** followers. By submitting to **Him**, we are, in reality, merely giving back to **Him** what is rightfully **His** to begin with!

So if we undergo trials, it is for your comfort and salvation (1:6a). What does **Paul** mean when **he** says that **his affliction** is for **their salvation**? **He** certainly does not mean that **he** is the one who saves **them**. Rather, when **they** participate in **the sufferings of Messiah** as **Paul** does, then **they** will understand the paradoxical message of the gospel that **God** is at work in **weakness (12:9)**. Therefore, **Paul’s** own example and preaching become **an aroma of life for those being saved**. If, however, **they** do not understand this, then the paradoxical **Word** of the gospel will become **an aroma of death for them (2:15)**. The relationship between **affliction** and **comfort**, then, becomes yet another way for **Paul** to state the paradox of the gospel. For **God**, who condemns the wicked, is the same **One** who **comforts** the **afflicted**.¹⁹

Believers are in a partnership with each other and must never view their **suffering** in isolation. **And if we are comforted, that should comfort you when you have to endure sufferings** (Greek: *hypomone*, meaning *steadfastness in the face of unpleasant circumstances*) **like those we are experiencing (1:6b)**. Therefore, **the comfort** received by **the Corinthians** as a result of **Paul’s** harsh circumstances parallels **the comfort the Corinthians** received while enduring the same kinds of **suffering** that **Paul** and **his** missionary team experienced. The only way **the Corinthians** could experience this type of **comfort** was through **suffering**. With reference to the **suffering** endured by **the Corinthians**, it may be that **Paul**, in part, has in mind the pressure put on those who stood firm with **him** against **the false apostles** who claimed apostolic authority, but that is not clearly indicated by the text.²⁰

Because of what **Paul** wrote in **First Corinthians**, we know all about the culture of

compromise that was flourishing in the church at **Corinth**. This helps us to understand the incredible pressure that was placed on the people who were living godly lives within that congregation. Just try to imagine what it must have been like to maintain a consistent godly lifestyle with everything that was going on around them. When they went to church on Sunday morning in the hope of receiving much-needed instruction and inspiration to make it through another week, they were hit in the face with false teaching and a culture of compromise inside the church that mirrored everything going on outside the church. To these faithful believers, **Paul** offered these words of encouragement from one **suffering** believer to another: **Moreover, our hope for you remains unwavering, because we know that as you share in the sufferings, you will also share in our comfort (1:7).**²¹

A renowned psychiatrist was once asked how to overcome depression. His advice? “Get dressed, lock your home, go find someone who is in need, and serve that person.” In other words, get the focus off yourself and look for ways to help others. This others-centered mindset is to be the hallmark of every believer’s life. **Yeshua** constantly lived to serve others, and **the apostle Paul** did likewise. In a situation where lesser men would have decided to throw a major “pity-party,” licking their wounds and lamenting about their woeful condition, **Paul** turned to **God** for **comfort**. **He** then picked up a pen and determined to write a letter that would help **the Corinthians** think and live in ways that honored **ADONAI**.²²