
COMFORT

2 Corinthians 1:3-7

We are taking a break from our “Life in His Name” series to change pace a little bit, to talk about some other things that I hope will be a blessing to you as we close out this year and move into the new year. You might have picked up a little bit of a theme already as we started this service, as Stefan prayed for us during that transition time, during our corporate prayer time, and it’s comfort. Comfort.

I don’t know about you – it has been a wonderful Christmas season, but you know, we are tired a little bit. It’s crazy how much stuff goes on. Just this past weekend, I’m sure for many of us was a blur. Christmas – it comes, it goes. We wake up the next day and it’s like, “Okay, that’s it.” All that preparation, all that planning, all that stress and craziness, and it’s gone. It just happens, and it’s here, and it’s gone. If there’s one thing that we see in our lives over and over and over again, it is that we are a needy people. Not in a bad way. We need the Lord and we need comfort. We need God to intervene in our lives on a daily basis so that we might live – that we can have life in the fullest sense of that word.

So, I want to pray that God would speak to us through his word this morning. Father, I do ask this. We need you. Help us to realize our great need for you. Speak to us now through your word, that it would root itself deep in us and grow, that it would be fruitful in the expression of our lives, that we would not just appear to be godly, but that there would be a real sense of your life in us as we go from this place this morning. Help us. Amen.

Second Corinthians, Chapter 1, verses 3 through 7:

Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of mercies and God of all comfort, who comforts us in all our affliction, so that we may be able to comfort those who are in any affliction, with the comfort with which we ourselves are comforted by God. For as we share abundantly in Christ's sufferings, so through Christ we share abundantly in comfort too. If we are afflicted, it is for your comfort and salvation; and if we are comforted, it is for your comfort, which you experience when you patiently endure the same sufferings that we suffer. Our hope for you is unshaken, for we know that as you share in our sufferings, you will also share in our comfort.

Last week we sang that great Christmas carol “God Rest Ye Merry Gentlemen.” It is one of the oldest Christmas carols that we know of. It is from the 15th century. We really don’t know who wrote it. Sometimes we don’t know the

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authors of some of the greatest pieces of work, but it appeared somewhere around that time. It is definitely one of the most beloved Christmas carols that has ever been written. We don't sing these things often, and some of you grew up with them more than others. Even for me – I tend to sing it right around once a year here with you guys. I always can start singing the song, but I definitely need the lyrics in front of me because I cannot remember all the lyrics. It starts off great. You know: "God rest ye merry gentlemen," and then I start humming "Hmm hmm, hmm hmm, hmm hmm." I know certain key words that come out, you know, like, "Hmm hmm, Satan's power." But, the chorus comes, and we can all sing it together. Don't do it. But....tidings of comfort and joy. Comfort and joy. "O tidings of comfort and joy" over and over and over again. There is this little phrase that comes out: "O tidings of comfort and joy."

We know where this comes from. This chorus comes from the angels' announcement that Christ had been born. We know that in this season it's easy to lose sight of these great truths. That's why we gather together: so we can be reminded that Christ is important during Christmas. It is also easy to lose sight of these two emotional states – comfort and joy – during this season, because even though Christmas has ended, we know that it's not over yet. We still have this next week, and then there's New Year's. It all kind of runs together, and comfort and joy sometimes get lost in the season. The two are so closely connected and we sometimes can get it twisted.

The song is a reminder, like most good worship songs, that we are to delight in God. That's what the song is about. Even if you don't understand all the Old English that goes on in that song, you still can understand that this is a call for us to find our joy, to find our delight in God. We have tied these two ideas, these two characteristics – comfort and joy – in an unhealthy way. **Instead of seeing Christ as the source of our comfort and joy, we equate comfort with joy, meaning that we find our joy in our comfort.** "I will only be happy if I'm comfortable."

We have this issue, of course, because of our human nature. We flow towards that direction. But it is also because of the culture in which we live and how we view comfort, right? I mean, we live a very comfortable existence. I know it's not perfect for all of us, for any of us. We all have our struggles. But I think we can agree to some extent that we, compared to many if not most around the world, we live in comfort. We work really hard to make sure that our environment is as comfortable as possible.

We have a million choices in what kind of bed we sleep in. We go into the store (we recently did this) and we lie on 15 beds, and try to pick that one that is going to last you the next 10-15 years in the 30 seconds you lie on the bed. But we try. And we spend lots of money on that. And we have sheets that have gazillions of threads in them, and thread counts. We have our devices that are just built to promise us some level of security and comfort. We want our room temperature to be as comfortable as possible. We want our church to be as comfortable as possible. We do. We want you to be comfortable when you are in here. We work on it. And we sure hear it when it's not comfortable.

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We like it. And we don't like it when things start to get uncomfortable. When things go in that direction, when things start to become uncomfortable, we begin the process of relieving that discomfort. That's one of the reasons that our lives are so comfortable, because we have so many ways to alleviate discomfort. You get a headache? Uncomfortable? Man, there are shelves of stuff you can take to help get rid of it. If you get sick, there are so many things that we can do at our fingertips to remedy that. If you are sad, there is an abundance of distractions to help you forget the sadness and lift things up. We have a whole category of food that brings comfort. You can search for it online – "I want comfort food" – and it will usually include chocolate, fried things, heavy dishes.... I am not saying that these things are bad, necessarily. I think we need to be grateful for God's blessings in our lives, but there is a problem here. Life can become all about measuring joy in relation to how comfortable we are. And that is a problem, when comfort becomes the ultimate goal in our lives.

We might not phrase it that way. We would never say, "Okay, what's the most important thing? My comfort." We may not say that but boy, we can certainly maneuver our lives, position things around us in our lives to show that comfort has become essential. It becomes top priority, and that is a problem. Because when those things, even as good as they might be, take that place of ultimate authority in our lives, they become big problems.

See, the problem is that there are times when the discomfort gets a little bit too intense, when our normal efforts to alleviate the discomfort just aren't working. That's when our world tends to start unravelling a bit and we see how frail our existence is. When comfort becomes the central thing to our lives, and when comfort and joy are inappropriately tied together, we just can't take a pill to alleviate all of life's discomfort. Not every problem can be solved in a simple way, and we start to realize that maybe our whole view of comfort is incomplete, and our strategies to staying comfortable are often misplaced.

A new year is coming, right? It is next week. It's about to begin. I know that this is a time of reflection for us. We start to think about what this next year should look like. Often, for many of us, we take time to think about our goals for next year. "How can I live this next year and the next couple years in a way that will _____." Fill in the blank: make me most happy, make me most comfortable, make me most whatever. But we do hope for a better year. Hopefully, one of those goals is we want God to use us in greater ways and for him to just change the way we see things and the way that we think and ask that question: "What does God want from me?"

I want this passage to speak to us this morning and to help us think differently about how joy and comfort are tied together, and that God wants to bring comfort to your life so that you can be a comfort to others. It's not about living a comfortable life, but that God's whole plan of comfort for us is so different than we think. He cares about our comfort. He absolutely does. Just not in the way that we think.

I think for us in this passage, Paul points out and helps remind us of a few things about comfort. He gives us three

things that I want to pull out from here:

1. **The source of our comfort**
2. **The struggle of our comfort, and**
3. **The scope of our comfort**

The source, the struggle, and the scope of our comfort.

Look at how he starts. Verse 3: “Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of mercies and God of all comfort...” This may seem obvious. **When I say “the source of comfort,” this may seem very obvious, but comfort -- true comfort -- comes first and foremost from the Lord, and it comes abundantly from the Lord. But we forget this.**

There are certain things in this life that are for sure. One of those things is that we all need to be comforted. Not necessarily comfortable in the way I was describing before, but *comforted*. If we try to define comfort, at least the way bible does, we would say it means “a lifting of someone’s spirits.” It’s a lifting of our countenance. We need comforting, because even in the midst of such a comfortable life, we all know that life is hard. And no one is exempt from that. And no amount of money or material possessions, or substances can bring the kind of comfort that we really need

But we try. We try to do this. We try to soothe ourselves with the pleasures of this world, but all they are in the end are distractions. They cannot deliver on what they promise. If I were to ask you to put the top three things or places you go to immediately for comfort when things start going south in your life, where do you tend to run to for comfort? We all have them. It could be money. It could be a friend. It could be food. It could be substances. We all have our comfort places. But what happens when we go there? What happens when we go to these things? They might help for a minute. They might help for a little while. Sometimes they do, but it is short-lived. It does not sustain. It does not give us what we really need. Why? Because they cannot help us in the area where we really need help.

At our most foundational level, what we really need is God, and the comfort he brings first is a renewed relationship with him. That’s what our Christmas season is all about. That’s what *life* is all about: God invading Earth, sending his son to restore a broken relationship with his people. The comfort that Christ brought and still brings today is a rescue from a life enslaved to sin. He rescues us from a life of separation from him. We were alienated from God and he came on a rescue mission to restore that relationship, so at our most foundational level we need God. We need freedom from the power of sin, and he came to do that. That is the comfort that he brings, first and foremost.

He brings comfort because through him, the wrath of God is no longer aimed at us. It was absorbed by him, and that

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is comfort. It should be comforting. And if that wasn't good enough, he promises a life of continued comfort. Not the kind of comfort of fancy cars and mansions, but the comfort of having him with us through all of life. It's just amazing when we think about it. The God of the universe – this being that we cannot fully understand – cares enough about you and enough about me to bring comfort to us in all of our struggles, from the small to the great. We need to remember this. We need to remember that he is the best Comforter. He is the best because he knows what we need most and he is the only one who can give us what we need.

That reveals something – that as much as we need that initial comfort, that saving comfort, that change, that salvation – it doesn't end there. **We need more because life is long, and that brings us to the struggle of our comfort: Comfort comes through affliction.** Another way of saying it is that we wouldn't know or understand comfort if there was not affliction which needed relief. As I said before, comfort is a consolation. It's a lifting of spirit. It's a soothing, a relief in the presence of pain or trouble. We understand this, right? We don't need a lot of explanation here, because the reason that there are so many ways in this world to relieve discomfort is because there is so much opportunity for discomfort. There is a lot of affliction in this life. We see it in our passage. It doesn't take long. He is "the Father of mercies and God of all comfort, who comforts us in *all our affliction*."

In the bible there are many things that we are promised, many promises that we can live in. One thing we know for sure is that in this life, in this world, there will be affliction. There will be trouble. Look at our verse. In our verse, the most repeated word is "comfort." In just this short time, that's important. But the second most repeated word is "affliction," or some variation of it. Seven times in these few verses we see affliction mentioned or suffering mentioned. Jesus told us this, right? In John 16:33 he said, "In the world you will have affliction." But what does he say right after? He says, "...take heart; for I have overcome the world."

We see this word "affliction" and translate it a few different ways: affliction, tribulation, trials, suffering – any of those often are the same Greek word. But he says, "Take heart; I have overcome the world." This is what we need to remember. Yeah, there is discomfort in this world, but he says "Don't worry." He says "You are with me. I have taken care of it, and in the midst of the world's afflictions, *I will bring comfort*. In the midst of your trouble, in the midst of your pain, *I bring comfort*." And it's often in the midst of life's greatest challenges that we see God's grace most gloriously applied to our lives. We experience God's grace often through the trials that this world offers us.

So what do we do? We don't want to waste those times of trouble. We don't want to waste the times of trial. God uses them to teach us a lot about him. We don't pursue affliction. We don't seek it out and try to get ourselves in the most pain possible. That's not right. But we also have to see it as a means of God's grace, and that we don't despise it when it does come. One of our favorite, quotable, old-time preachers, Charles Spurgeon said, "They who dive in the sea of affliction bring up rare pearls." There is something special that happens in our lives when we experience

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trouble. We don't want it to be this way, I know, but it's often in our troubles that we grow the most.

I spent four years at a military school for college in Charleston, South Carolina – the Citadel. They design life there to fit this. The first year is spent in severe affliction, because there is something special that happens when you come to the other side of that. Anyone who has played a sport or has been in the military or has just engaged in life's troubles understands that on the other end there is something different about you. You are changed. You are stronger. It's the basic principle that our bodies function in this way. When you exercise there is a tearing, there is a stressing. You are putting your muscles through affliction because on the other end of it they grow back harder and stronger. We live in this day in and day out. It may not be always in our physical bodies, but emotionally, mentally, spiritually we are tested and tried in fire, and on the other end is something amazing.

I learned this again when my wife and I couldn't have a child for the first six years of our marriage. Every month after month after month the disappointment, the pain came again and again and again. But we say it over and over again as we recount this time in our lives: We wouldn't trade that time for anything, because we are different. We are better.

Today we celebrate my daughter's ninth birthday, my oldest, who is the fulfillment of years of prayer, and that God is faithful. And yet, if he didn't answer that prayer, would we have cursed him? Would we have left him because we didn't get what we want? I sure hope not. I'm glad we didn't have to walk through that. But some of you are in that season and you are going, "Alright, it's year two. It's year six. It's year fifteen. I don't get it. I don't feel stronger and I don't understand why this is happening."

Hebrews 12:11 says: "For the moment all discipline seems painful rather than pleasant, but later it yields the peaceful fruit of righteousness to those who have been trained by it." God uses these things in our lives to shape us, to sharpen us, to mold us into something different. We cannot just be the whiny child that always wants the most comfortable life possible. And I am a whiner. I am. I love comfort. As I was preparing this, I was going, "Ugh, I just need to grow up."

Affliction has a purpose. I know it's hard to see it when you are in the middle of it. So when we go through trials – real, intense trials, the kind that aren't solved with simple distractions – we need to be patient. We need to trust that God is working, that God is using this trial to rip the world from us, to rip our attachment to things of this world and to help us see that life is more than the American dream of comfort and ease.

Listen to this quote by an old pastor, J.C. Ryle, a theologian. He wrote this: "There is nothing that shows our ignorance so much as our impatience under trouble. We forget that every cross is a message from God and intended to do us good in the end. Trials are intended to make us think, to wean us from the world, to send us to the bible, to

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drive us to our knees.” If we were honest, we would say that we are most tuned in to who God is and what he is doing when we are struggling, that we are on our knees much more during times of trouble than times of prosperity. It’s just the way that we are built. We are sinful, and when things are good we are happy, when things are bad we are not. We need God to come in and change our minds.

Sometimes we are just too comfortable, just too attached to what this world is offering that we forget about God and we can live as though he doesn’t exist. So God comes and he lovingly, lovingly allows discomfort to enter our life. I say lovingly because it’s the most loving thing for God to do when he wakes us up from the dreams that are lies, the dreams that we are so tempted to believe, that stuff will make us happy, the dreams that substances will bring real relief, that comfort and ease is the path to true happiness. **So he lovingly allows discomfort to come in so that we remember that he is the best, that he is the Comforter, and that he is the only way to a joy-filled life.** We then understand true comfort.

Just recently I was experiencing severe physical pain for an extended period of time. Man, there was a day I realized things were getting better, and there is that moment of comfort and you just go, “Yes!” I don’t think about that part of my body until it is hurting. Then when it’s not hurting anymore I appreciate comfort. That’s life. We see comfort only at the end of or in the midst of affliction, and we don’t want to despise it. It’s in our most uncomfortable times that we realize what’s most important.

Just like all the truths of our life with God, it’s not just about us and God, but it’s about us and us. That’s the final point: **The scope of our comfort.** We looked at the source. We looked at the struggle. This is good. This is the good stuff right here: **The scope of our comfort.**

As good as it is that God comforts us in our afflictions – and that is good and we need that first and foremost – it doesn’t end there. It leads us to action. **We are comforted so that we may be able to comfort others.** Look at verse 4: “...who comforts us in all our affliction, so *that* we may be able to comfort those who are in any affliction, with the comfort with which we ourselves are comforted by God.” You wouldn’t write this sentence normally, because it’s almost a tongue twister: there’s comfort, comfort, comfort coming all over, but there is a point to it. **He comforts us. We comfort each other. This whole passage is about how we turn the love God shows us outward to other people.** We are to be a comforting people. As God comforts us, so we comfort others. We need this, because, listen – many of us have trouble here. I think that we tend to fall into two traps here. We agree in principle that people need comforting, but we sometimes disagree that I need to be the agent of comfort in others.

Here is the first trap I think we fall into: We think we are ill equipped to help. We don’t think we are able to. If I were to say, “Raise your hand if you think you are able to handle any problem that comes your way from a friend...” It’s

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hard, right? It's daunting. But Paul says something amazing here. He says, "We are comforted so that we can comfort those who are in *any* affliction." He says, "**in any affliction.**" That means *you* are equipped to help with *anything*! And you are like, "No, I am not!"

But what does that do to us? This should shape the way that we think, right? This verse should stop us in our tracks when we start thinking, "Well, I just can't help because I haven't experienced what he has been going through. Who am I? I have no understanding of his struggle." Or, "I can't help her because her problem is so big! Who am I to offer any kind of advice?" We often think like this. So we become hesitant and fearful to bring comfort to a given situation because we don't think we are equipped or are able to say or do anything helpful. But Paul tells us that all of us are able to comfort everyone in any affliction. Isn't that amazing?

Listen, we may not all be as equally comforting. Some people are just excellent at comforting. Someone once told me – this is not a boast, I think it's just funny because I don't think of myself as always having the most comforting demeanor (some of you have shared that with me) – but someone once told me that I was like a pillow. I was so comforting to him, he said, "You are like a pillow. I can just tell you all kinds of things." I was like, "Wow! That's really nice, because I don't get to hear that a lot." He doesn't go to church here anymore.

Some people have gifting to help in extraordinary circumstances, and that should not be discounted. But I want to tell you that each of you is able to help and comfort others in their trouble. Why? Because you have been comforted by God. You understand something. You understand a truth. At your deepest level you have been changed. You have been comforted by God, and what's helpful is that Paul tells us how we can do this. He says, "...to comfort with the comfort with which you yourselves have been comforted by God." Right? He tells us – he says that our act of comforting needs to come from God. It needs to come from his source of counsel and wisdom and strength.

This is important. We need to be careful that we are using godly words, godly wisdom, godly counsel. When someone is in trouble we can sometimes be like, "Well, you know God helps those who help themselves." You know, that's not a biblical truth. That's not helpful. That's poor counsel. You want to look at poor counselors? Read the book of Job. Job had some terrible friends who gave him terrible counsel. They were not comforting. We want to use God's words to come through.

The second trap I think that we fall into, the reason we can be bad comforters, is that we just don't care. I know that may sound harsh, but often we are just too self-interested, too focused on our own junk to even realize that someone else is hurting. This is a growing problem in our population. We have a hard time with empathy. Studies have been done showing that especially the younger generation called millennials, their scores on empathy tests have just plummeted since the early 2000's. There are a lot of theories on why this happens, but it's not hard to realize or

imagine a world where I am just too focused on my own problems to care about what's happening with you. You know, I am much more distracted these days because I can pick this phone up, and if I'm walking and see someone in trouble, I can pretend I don't see them and just walk right on by. I can tweet what I had for lunch, and talk about my wonderful trip, and make my life seem perfect on Facebook so that everybody looks around and thinks, "Man, they don't have any problems at all." We can live this life of distraction and self-interest to where people are *dying* around us and we don't give a rip.

I remember when my aunt's dog died. This was maybe years seven, eight, or ten years ago. I was a young adult, and her dog died. She didn't have any kids. This was her pet, her love in her life. She had a lot of problems. Her dog died and I was oblivious. I didn't call. I didn't say, "I'm sorry." I didn't do anything, and she let me know that I messed up. It was an awakening moment. I keep that in my mind all the time, to think about. I just don't always do well in putting myself in other people's shoes. Something that for me seems insignificant is *huge* for someone else, and this is how we are to live our life. We just cannot be focused in on what has happened to us.

We have to be careful of those two traps. You are equipped, and remember that other people have problems too. So I want to just give a few tips for being a better comforter. There are five things. They all start with the letter "P" to help.

1. **Be perceptive.** Keep your eyes open. Pay attention to other people. Pick your head up from your device and pay attention to the people in your life. Ask questions about how they are doing. Look for opportunities to bring comfort. This requires empathy. Empathy is putting yourself in someone else's shoes, to say, "Wow, man, what would it be like to wake up with cancer this morning? What would it be like to wake up after my father just died? What would it be like to wake up after losing my job?" Boy, that just changes things. We can take time to meditate on those things and to just remove the distractions. We are not all born with this empathetic self. It can be cultivated and grow with effort and work in our lives. It's just that we are prone to apathy. We need to work on empathy. We are prone to self-centeredness. We need to work on being others-focused. So be perceptive. It's a skill. It needs to be sharpened.
2. **Be present.** Presence matters. Sometimes the greatest form of comfort is just being there, just being there with someone in need. Sometimes we go on pastoral visits. We go somewhere and we will take someone else, a person from the church who perhaps connected us. They are like, "Okay, what do I say? What do I do?" It's great to say, "Man, just you being here is going to be such a big help." I know it's scary at times to walk into a situation when it's really intense and to not know what to say or do, but sometimes just being there matters. Remove the distractions. When you are at a table talking with people and there is real,

intense conversation, ignore the vibration in your pocket. Ignore the ring. Ignore the distractions of the world and *listen*. Be in the present with who you are helping.

3. **Be prayerful.** Often you won't know how to help someone. The problems are going to be too big. I experience this all the time. As a pastor, we have a unique experience of hearing many problems all at once from different places. You will engage certain situations and sometimes things are very clear. Other times, man, it's just like, "I don't know where to begin to help this person." While they are talking I am listening, but I am praying, "Oh God, help. Help. Give me the words to say. Give me something. Give me anything that can help this person right now." Pray. Don't just refer them to the pastors. Pray in the moment and seek God, saying, "How can I help this person?" You will be amazed at how God will give you the words to speak. Or he will let you know to be silent. I think of Romans 12 when Paul says to "Rejoice with those who rejoice and to weep with those who weep." This is a true mark of a Christian. There is no indication that there are words being spoken. There is just you and that person and they are a mess. They are crying, and you just sit there and you put your hand on their shoulder and you cry with them. There is life that comes from that. Sometimes we just need to weep with someone. We don't have to speak at all, but pray. Go to God and say, "God, help."
4. **Be patient.** God doesn't work on our time table. He doesn't work on your time table. Comfort often is a process. I know we just want it to be done in that time, like: "You tell me your problem. I'll tell you the answer. Good. Let's go enjoy life." But it doesn't happen that way. It takes time. There is a process, so we have to be patient with the other person. Maybe they don't want to be comforted. We have to be patient. That doesn't mean that we now are off the hook, like: "Oh good. I don't have to help. I don't have to be a comforter." No, no, no. There is a way to be patient. And it also goes into #5.
5. **Be persistent.** We want to go that extra length to help others. Put yourself in contexts where you can be a comfort. Listen, if you are all alone, all the time, by yourself, never around other people, it's going to be very easy to not have to worry about this. But we don't have that option. We need to be around one another. There are people in front of you, behind you, left and right of you right now who need comfort. This may not be the best place to do that, but that's why we offer other environments that you can do that in. We offer home groups, which we feel are essential to the caring of our community, to the building of the community. That's where you will see real life take place. You will hear people's problems and you will go, "Man, I don't know what to do," but it's good because you learn how to grow in these areas. In leading a home group for about 15 years, we have seen God do amazing things from the persistent and patient care of one another in

a small group setting. It is terrifying at times. I understand that. But it is worth it. Break through those barriers where you just want to be comfortable, and go to these uncomfortable situations, because that's where you are going to find life and joy and where you will get to live out God's word! You have been comforted, so now you can go and be a comfort to others. You know what? You are going to be a mess the whole time when it happens. If you wait for yourself to be all ready to comfort others, you are going to be waiting a long time. Follow up with people. Don't grow weary when you are dealing with helping other people. It's a sacrifice to walk with others through difficult times, but you know what, it is a privilege.

Let me just say this final thing: **Allow yourself to be comforted.** There are some in here who are like, "Yeah, I'm great being a comfort. I love helping other people, but no one is going to help me. I'll figure it out." Oh man – that's a dangerous place – to never open up, to never share, to never allow God's word to be used in the public setting or in a small setting. I don't mean here necessarily, but in those settings where we just always want to be a help to other people, but never letting anybody speak into our lives. It is pride at its most deceptive, because you will talk yourself into believing, "I am doing great. I am helping. I am being used by God to do other things." That's only half the story, and you are not allowing other people to live out God's word in your life. You are withholding a means of God's grace, for them and for you.

I know that's hard for some, but we just need to think. Think about how God brought us comfort. Once we realize the gospel, and we realize how we have been comforted by God, it humiliates us. It humbles us to the point where we can no longer say things like, "Well, I am okay. I will help others, but no one can help me," because you have been helped beyond what you could ever have imagined. You can never help enough to make up for what has happened. And you know what? Life exists and goes on, and we are in need of God to continue to do work in our lives. He needs to do it and he does it through other people as well. It is a *privilege* to live this kind of life, and it is a *sacrifice*.

This time of year is unique. It can be a difficult time. Some of you stood today in an act of humility to receive prayer. Maybe someone sees you standing up and they are like, "I had no idea anything was going on." Wow, what an opportunity now to engage close people in your life. Just say, "Hey, you might have seen me stand today for prayer. I need help in some of these areas. I know you don't have all the answers, but I just want to share them with you so we can walk this out together."

A new year approaches. Maybe you or someone you know is struggling during this season. This is the perfect time to renew your efforts, to think deeply, and to humble yourself to give and receive comfort. The one thing

Special Messages – Comfort

2 Corinthians 1:3-7 | Sunday, December 27, 2015 | By Adam Greenfield



that's clear in this passage is that no one is fully trouble free. And we can't wait for tomorrow to deal with these things.

Afflictions – they come to take our eyes off of ourselves, and in the midst of our own affliction we can be a source of comfort to others. God has done an amazing thing in our lives. We need to remember that, and that will break down the barriers that keep us from living this out.

Let's pray.