

***God in the Time of Trouble***  
***II Corinthians 1:3-4***

The Christian life is not trouble free. Anyone who suggests that it is, is either willfully misleading you, or they are ignorant of life and the word of God. A right relationship with God does not give you immunity to suffering.

Actually, just being a Christian can produce troubles and sufferings. The very nature of the world in which we live makes some difficulties certain if you determine to walk in the ways of Jesus Christ. Troubles must not be seen as a sign that YOU are doing something wrong. The life of Jesus reveals this. He lived the only perfect life that has ever been lived, yet He was "The Man of Sorrows, and acquainted with grief." His whole life was surrounded by trouble, and ended in an unjust death. What makes you think that things will be different for you?

Jesus did not see His troubles as a denial of God. Paul reminds us of this in this personal word of praise. He addresses God as "the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ." This ascription of praise to God comes out of his fresh experience of suffering. Even though great sufferings came to the Lord Jesus, He kept His heart set upon His God and Father right to the end. His last words were words of trust and commitment to God. So should we! We must not allow the troubles of life that come to us to turn us away from God. Rather they can be for us a time of great discovery and revelation.

What about God in the time of trouble? Paul's praise is a reflection of what he has experienced in this unnamed recent experience of suffering. It is especially focused in the names that Paul uses for God.

From them we learn two very blessed and wonderful things about our God in our time of trouble.

***I. OUR GOD IS MERCIFUL IN THE TIME OF TROUBLE***

Paul addresses God in praise the "Father of Mercies." Some of the newer translations have it as the "Father of Compassion." This word brings to us some rich insight into the reaction of our God to our times of trouble,

The word "mercy" puts a strong emphasis upon feelings. To have mercy is to be touched by the pain or hurt of another person in a feeling way. Some people have difficulty of understanding God as someone who feels. But not those who take the witness of the Bible seriously. One of the great things revealed about God in the incarnation is that He is a feeling person. The Bible bears witness to Jesus actually weeping with a family when death had touched the family circle. God wanted us to know that He feels with us when we hurt, when we are under the pressures of life.

The word "mercy" also emphasizes a responsiveness. The merciful person does more than feel, he responds. God is a responsive person. He is moved to action in our time of trouble. This was also revealed in the life of Jesus. Jesus never met a human life in trouble to which He did not respond. He was "moved with compassion" by the needs that he met. God is like that! Jesus our Lord was revealing to us what God is like.

Is this not encouraging? When trouble breaks out on every side, it is good to know that the God of this universe is a Merciful Father.

However, this title "Father of Mercies" suggests another thing. It suggests that God is the source of all the mercy that we encounter in our time of trouble. If someone comes into your life during your time of trouble with a heart full of mercy, God sends them. God equips them with the mercy they are sharing. Jesus our Lord put such a premium upon this quality that He made it one of the Beatitudes. "Blessed are the merciful for they shall receive mercy." In the constitution and equipping of His church, He went a step further, He even made mercy one of the spiritual gifts that He places in the church through the Holy Spirit. God is the Father of all mercies. This is one of the things that bothers me about the modern church, I do not see too much mercy. Our attitudes and actions do not reveal enough mercy --- especially toward people who are in trouble. Poor folks do not find as much mercy in the church as they once did. I am afraid that we have gotten our attitudes toward the social programs of the government, and our attitudes toward the poor all mixed up. We need to be careful that we do not become hardhearted toward the poor. The God of the Bible is not hard-hearted toward the poor ... rather He is very merciful toward them. He is responsive to their plight, He feels with them when they are cold and hungry, when they feel worthless.

Today we are emphasizing the Singles Ministry of our church. Many of today's singles are people who have been through some great troubles. They are scarred and skeptical. Yet it would seem that if they want to find someone to listen and to show some interest in their problems, they either have to pay a counselor or go to a bar where they can find someone who has had enough spirits that he will show some interest. When they come to the church, they have not found too much mercy. They have rather encouraged suspicions and attitudes of judgment.

If we would be like God, we must be merciful in the time of trouble. We must be able to be touched by the hurts of the world about us, and we must be responsive to the needs that we encounter. Mercy is the quality that the good Samaritan revealed. Since God is merciful to us in our trouble, should we not be merciful to others in their time of troubles, it is the merciful who find mercy.

## ***II. OUR GOD IS HELPFUL IN OUR TIME OF TROUBLE***

The other title that the Apostle used in his praise of God is "The God of All Comfort." This gives us further helpful insight into God's reaction to our troubles.

"Comfort" is a word found several times in the New Testament, and reflects a great truth about our God. The word is rather difficult to translate into English. The word means to give encouragement, to console. The root idea of the word is that of standing beside a person to give encouragement while they go through a time of trial. A comforter is one who comes along side to give encouragement and help in the time of need. Actually, the word is associated with all three members of the Godhead in the Bible. In this passage, we have it associated with God the Father, Jesus referred to The Holy Spirit as the Comforter, He also spoke of himself as giving comfort. So our God is a comforting God.

This is an affirmation of the unfailing presence of God in our time of trouble. The comforter is one who stands on long side right through the trial. Our God is this kind of God, even in the Old Testament, David was aware of this truth about God. He declared, "Yea, though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I will fear no evil for thou art with me." The valley of the shadow of death can be any time of dark trial in his life. The experience of David had brought him to such an assurance about the constant presence of God that he could face any such trial without fear. He knew that God would be with him. Now many of us can bear witness to this truth. We have been most aware of the presence of God just when the night was the darkest. The difficulty is not a denial of the presence of God, but often becomes the occasion of becoming more keenly aware of His presence.

But God is not with us in our trials in weakness, but in strength. This is the thing that prompted this outburst of praise from Paul. Whatever the ordeal was in the life of Paul, and we are not sure, God had delivered him from it. Some connect the ordeal with his experiences in Ephesus. It could have some experience in which his very life was threatened. He writes, "We do not want you to be uninformed, brothers, about the hardships we suffered in the province of Asia. We were under great pressure, far beyond our ability to endure, so that we despaired even of life. indeed, in our hearts we felt the sentence of death---He has delivered us from such a deadly peril, and he will deliver us. "Some have felt that Paul's problem in Asia was some physical affliction. They think that he was overcome with what appeared to be a deadly disease. Whatever it was, God delivered him. God encouraged him just when he needed it the most.

We must be clear about one thing. God did not save Paul from the trouble, but saved him through the trial. Paul waded right through the deep waters, but God went with him to make sure that he did not drown. God will not keep you from

suffering, but He will keep you in the suffering. He will deliver you from all your troubles.

Sometimes God ministers his encouragement to us through others. In fact, this seems to be His usual method in our way. Whenever you see a friend in Trouble, you should seriously consider whether or not God has made you aware of the need so that you might be the channel of His encouragement to the struggling person. People who are in trouble need our help and our encouragement --- not our judgments and our barbs of criticisms.

If you have received help from someone In your times of trouble, you should see that hand of God behind the help that has come to you. Our God is the God of all comfort. All or the encouragement that comes to us is from Him.