

Psalms 86:12-17

1st Lesson: 2Kg. 4:18-37

2nd Lesson: Jn. 11:1&3-4&17-27

Text: 2Cor. 1:3-7

THEME: GIVE THANKS AND PRAISE TO GOD FOR HIS COMFORT AND MERCY

Dearly beloved in Christ, following our text today I will like us to meditate on the theme, "Give thanks and praise to God for His comfort and mercy". If there is a passage of scriptures that highlights the existence of divine comfort, it is our text today. That is why in our text the word 'Comfort' is mentioned 10 times and it is not just any kind of comfort. It is the comfort that God brings particularly to his people who suffer. The comfort that we Christians should share with all others who are in trouble. But what is this comfort? The original Greek word used in our text for comfort means to strengthen, to encourage, to help, to stand alongside in sympathy and in support. Meanwhile the word 'fort' which is the second syllable in the word "com/fort" means strong, effort, fortitude, force, or to fortify. This means that when we are given comfort we receive strength to stand and to get on. When we receive that help from God we are fortified and we become strong again. We all need comfort in life. But from where do you find your comfort?

Many of us have become frustrated because we look for comfort in wrong places and from things that do not give us true comfort. It is unfortunate when some people think that they can find comfort in addictions; drinking, smoking, and food. Some think they can find comfort in drugs, entertainment, and romance. Others find comfort in expressing anger and bitterness, which only lead to violence, abuse and crime. Jesus Christ knew where the disciples could find true comfort and that is why he comforted them by promising that he would send them a comforter-the Holy Spirit for God is the God of all comfort (John 14:16). God comforts us in all our troubles. According to the apostle Paul in our text our God is the father of all compassion and through Jesus Christ our saviour His comfort overflows in all circumstances of our lives. There is no suffering, no challenge whatsoever that we pass through that will ever be more than the comfort of God.

The church in Corinth was found in the ancient seaport city of Corinth that was notorious for drunkenness, gambling, prostitution, and other sins and evil. In spite of the pressures from outside there was conflict inside the church. There were problems with Christians who got married to these hostile pagans and were passing through moments of trials in families, problems of pride from those who claimed that their spiritual gifts were more important than others, doctrinal problems of how to avoid meat that was sacrificed to idols before being taken to the market for sale. These and many daily conflicts were wearing the Christians of Corinth down. The word of God in our text was to remind those Christians and us today that for every affliction and for every hardship there is a consolation. Our God cannot leave us without comfort.

We live in a fallen world in which our lives are peppered with problems. Repeatedly we find ourselves in difficult situations asking why did this happen? Am I going to recover from this? What will I do now? How can we deal with this problem? In the midst of all the problems, the Word of God gives us assurance that we can cope. If other people coped with their own troubles, we too can cope with our troubles. See the stress and trauma of the woman of Shunem and the husband. They were a rich couple

but had no child and at a time that they thought God had answered their prayers and completely changed their story, the child suddenly fell dead. In the second lesson we see the crowd coming to comfort Mary and Martha over the shocking death of their brother Lazarus, the friend of Jesus. All these are the different troubles and problems we pass through in life at one time or another. Our text calls upon us to stand by one another at all times with love, kindness and gentleness. We have all received comfort from God at one time in our lives; we must also comfort one another. Above all, our God stands by us at all times and circumstances to comfort us. The way God does it, I do not know and what his plans are, I have no idea. However, what I know is that our God is the God of comfort and his comfort can never fail. All I know by faith is that God will work all things out. It may be today or tomorrow; he will always do because his comfort is eternal.

Paul who wrote the word of God in our text was released from prison at midnight after praises and prayers. Paul was an apostle of praise who gave thanks to God at all circumstances because he knew that God would always comfort him. With prayers and trust in the comfort of God the title of women like Hannah, Sarah, and Elizabeth were changed from barrenness to fruitfulness. Next Sunday is the day we are going to celebrate our Main Harvest thanksgiving. We are celebrating so many things that God has done to us. We are celebrating the comfort God has given us all especially during those difficult and tough moments of our lives. Just look at your life! No matter the hardships, our God stands always to comfort us. That is why our text opens with a doxology that calls upon us to give thanks and praise to God. Praise and give thanks to God because he is the father of our lord Jesus Christ. Let us praise and give thanks joyfully to God because he is the father of mercies. Praise and give thanks to God because He is the God of all comfort. Amen.

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