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Comforting Grace

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Series: God's Amazing Grace

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Gracious God, loving Father, we worship You. Thou who art the omnipotent One. The One who spoke and the worlds came into being. Thou who art the omniscient One. The One who knows the beginning from the end. The One who knows every beat of our hearts. The One who, even every morning when we awaken, is thinking of us. The faithful One. The One who will never leave us or forsake us.

Father, we come to Thee, this morning, in awe that the Creator God who knit us together in our mother's womb, loves us with the love that will not let us go. A love that wraps its arms about us and holds us close even in the midst of our rebellion; in the midst of our sorrow; in the midst of our joys.

This morning, we come to You and just express the joy in our hearts that You are our God and our Savior. We humble ourselves in Thy presence, Father, and we admit that apart from You, we can do nothing. But the grace that is available to us, that enables us, in Christ, to be more than conquerors, overwhelms us with joy. May we appropriate that grace as we teach, as we hear, and as we go our separate ways. May we be different because we've met with Thee. Please be our teacher.

In Jesus' name. Amen.

It's a mystery, but it's really more than a mystery. It's a miracle. It's a miracle of comforting grace—that overwhelming, enabling power that takes over when we are in a crisis and lifts us up into sort of a God-surrounded cocoon of spiritual protection. It usually happens at a time in our lives when, without that protection, we would expect to come apart, either emotionally or physically.

So often, it happens when a loved one dies. You expect to

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experience hysteria. You expect to be non-functional, but somehow, something comes over you. There is an uncanny kind of peace you can't explain. You have the strength to go without sleep, to make arrangements, to face people. It's as though someone came along and lifted you up to a higher plane. It's as though someone came and you are lifted on angels' wings and carried through this period of time. And later on, people begin to come up to you and say "I have been praying for you, that God would give you grace."

Most of us tend to smile at times like that and say, "Thank you," and we don't even realize what has happened. People prayed, or we prayed and asked God to give us grace. He delights to do that. Look at Him at the grave of Lazarus, or at the side of the woman whose son had died. He is the God of all comfort. He longs to give us "comforting grace." So, when someone prays for it, He releases from His storehouse of love an all-encompassing kind of encouragement; a kind of power we have never experienced before. He allows us to pass through some time in our life, supernaturally, at a time when we could not do it naturally. When He does, it is so important that we stop and thank Him for it.

It happens when we are faced with trauma or serious illness, as well. Maybe you have been there. The doctor calls and says, "I've been looking at your tests, and his voice trails off. Or a loved one calls and says, "I hate to tell you this, but I have to go in for surgery." Immediately, you begin to tremble inside. All kinds of fears and possibilities run through your mind. You tend to be paralyzed for a moment, and your thoughts trail off to a worst-case scenario. What if...? What if, indeed.

But usually, as the process begins to run its course, there comes an unusual peace, a kind of quiet confidence in the sovereignty of God; the ability to pray "Thy will be done," and mean it. The usual panic when the doctor walks into the room is replaced with a kind of calm assurance that God is in charge, and the "heart of the king really is in the hand of the Lord" (Proverbs 21:1a). What has happened? You have experienced grace.

It happens when a sudden trauma hits you or your family. You are driving along minding your own business, when out of nowhere comes another car—you may have had it happen—only when it hits your car it feels more like a ten-ton truck. Sirens

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sound, the police arrive, ambulances screech to a halt. It's like watching one of those police dramas on television only you're in it.

At first you are shaking too much to even give them your name, but little by little, something changes. Your perspective shifts to the person in the other car, even though it was their fault. Your concern turns to your testimony, and how you can give a Godly response. And it all began when you quietly called out to God in your spirit, to strengthen you or help you. You may not have used those exact words, but in essence, what you did was ask God for comforting grace.

Comforting grace. It is one of those wonderful commodities that lies in the storehouse of God's wonders and just waits to be called on. Once called on, it flows like a river into the heart and life of the Christian until He is lifted up beyond the circumstances and into the arms of Jesus. Because beloved, truly, underneath are the everlasting arms. It is the grace of God that draws those arms up and wraps them around you when you are hurting.

Comforting grace may differ from some other forms of grace in that it is often available even when we don't ask for it. And often when we don't realize we are receiving it, we are. The passage I want us to look at is II Corinthians 1. Now, the first two or three verses have been worn out in this class, but I want to read the whole passage, and look for principles.

Grace to you and peace from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ.

Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of mercies and God of all comfort, [underline the word all]

Who comforts us in all our tribulation, that we may be able to comfort those who are in any [another good word to underline] trouble, with the comfort with which we ourselves are comforted by God.

For as the sufferings of Christ abound in us, so our consolation also abounds through Christ.

Now if we are afflicted, it is for your consolation and salvation, which is effective for enduring the same sufferings which we also suffer. Or if we are comforted, it is for your consolation and salvation.

And our hope for you is steadfast, because we know that as

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you are partakers of the sufferings, so also you will partake of the consolation.

For we do not want you to be ignorant, brethren, of our trouble which came to us in Asia: that we were burdened beyond measure, above strength, so that we despaired even of life. [We thought we were going to die. That's what it says.]

Yes, we had the sentence of death in ourselves, that we should not trust in ourselves but in God who raises the dead,

Who delivered us from so great a death, and does deliver us; in whom we trust that He will still deliver us,

You also helping together in prayer for us, that thanks may be given by many persons on our behalf for the gift granted to us through many.

For our boasting is this: the testimony of our conscience that we conducted ourselves in the world in simplicity and godly sincerity, not with fleshly wisdom but by the grace of God, and more abundantly toward you.

(II Corinthians 1:2-12 NKJV)

What an incredible passage. Paul and his friends were going through hard times. They were suffering. The Christian life had not turned out to be a religious party for Paul. It was warfare, pure and simple. Every time he turned around there was affliction, suffering, even a horizon of what appeared to be possible death. In this same letter to the Corinthians, Paul described life as a minister of the gospel. We read this just a month or two ago. We won't dwell on it, but I want to use it as a quick reminder.

From the Jews five times I received forty stripes minus one.

Three times I was beaten with rods; once I was stoned; [nearly to death, in other words] three times I was shipwrecked; a night and a day I have been in the deep;

in journeys often, in perils of waters, in perils of robbers, in perils of my own countrymen, in perils of the Gentiles, in perils in the city, in perils in the wilderness, in perils in the sea, in perils among false brethren;

In weariness and toil, in sleeplessness often, in hunger and thirst, in fastings often, in cold and nakedness —

(II Corinthians 11:24-27 NKJV)

Sounds like a real picnic. If anyone had a reason to become bitter, I think it would be Paul. From a human perspective, he

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had given up everything to serve the Lord, and if he was going to have our mentality, he would probably be thinking, “At least the Lord owes me as comfortable and trouble-free an existence as my unbelieving friends. Right?” Wrong.

No, his unbelieving friends, circumstantially at least, would probably have fewer problems. Most of them had not been beaten, shipwrecked, stoned, or left cold, hungry or naked. Most of his unbelieving friends were still going to work every day in their first century version of business suits, taking their first century versions of two-hour lunch breaks, and going home to their first century versions of the happy home. Paul, meanwhile, having given his life to Jesus after that incredible encounter on the Damascus Road, was living a Job-like existence. By man’s standards, nothing was going right. He was being picked on, made fun of, attacked, and finally jailed. He was innocent, but he was suffering. He was doing the will of God, but he was being maligned, persecuted and abused.

What Paul is saying to us is, something incredible was happening that only he knew about. Paul was experiencing grace, and the more he suffered, the more he was comforted. The more he was persecuted, the more he was enabled to stand. It was just a few verses further into the letter, when Paul began to explain how God’s strength or His grace was made perfect in weakness and trouble (II Corinthians 12:9). God’s grace was released when he was trapped, imprisoned, traumatized, or sick. In other words, he received supernatural power when his natural power was impaired or threatened.

It is that incredible, comforting grace of God. So profound is it that He actually named His Spirit, the “Comforter.” So important a part of His silent ministry is it, that He was able to say in this passage that He is “the God of all comfort.” That means all real comfort originates with God; it comes from Him. His Spirit is our comfort, because He is our Comforter. Comforting grace—it only comes from God.

Secondly, not only is He the God of all comfort, the passage goes on to say that, “He comforts us in all our tribulation.” It does not say He comforts us only when we ask. It does not say He comforts us only when we feel or experience it. Whether we ask and thus open our hearts to realize it or not; whether we feel that comfort or not, the Scripture says He is comforting us. Now how

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do we know that? He told us so, and He does not lie. He comforts us in all our tribulation, in all our sorrow, in all our times of trauma, persecution, grief, and despair. At that moment, He is releasing comforting grace.

Let's go through that passage in II Corinthians 1, for just a moment and look for some principles or statements that will help us understand the grace of comfort.

1- God's comfort is not primarily designed to make us feel better.

It does that, but it is designed to give us a way to communicate God's love and grace to others.

a) It is designed to equip us to have a ministry. It says, "the God of all comfort comforts us in all our sorrow, that we may be able to comfort them, which are in any trouble" (verse 4a). Comforting grace is a reproducible commodity. It is stored in a spiritual warehouse in our soul and it's kept an inventory on record in the computer of our heart. It makes a lasting impact so that when someone else comes into our life who needs comfort, God sends a signal to the inventory manager who calls up some of the comfort we've received, and sends a signal to the brain that says, "Don't you remember how you were comforted? Pass it on."

b) The second aspect is, not only is it to equip us to minister, it helps define our ministry. The same verse goes on to say, "We are to comfort them with the same comfort wherewith we ourselves are comforted of God" (verse 4b). The man or woman who has suffered great pain has a message to share with those who are in pain. There is grace to endure it; there is growth to come from it. The man or woman who has suffered the loss of a loved one has a message to share with those who are grieving. There is comforting grace for them. The man or woman who has experienced deep trials with their children have a ministry. It is to pray for and reach out to other parents who may not realize there is someone else who has gone before them and experienced comforting grace.

The man or woman who is struggling with rejection or persecution has an ally. It is the one who has been there and received grace. The alcoholic needs to hear from someone who has conquered the battle. The rejected wife or husband needs to know that God is sufficient when the heart is broken. The God of all comfort comforted someone in days past, and that someone

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has a message and a ministry to share with someone who is hurting today. So often you will sit down with people and say, “Tell me about your ministry. What is God doing in your life?” And they will look at you and say, “Well, I’m just not equipped to minister.” Nonsense. This passage proves you are. Think about the valleys you have gone through, if nothing else, and the grace you have received, and ask God if He will bring into your life, people who need the very same grace. That’s one reason God gave it to you.

2- Our comforting grace will be proportionate to our need (verse 5).

Paul said, “As the sufferings abound, so our consolation abounds.” The deeper the pain, the greater the grace. The darker the sky, the brighter the grace. The more awesome the need, the more awe-filled the power. God has different-sized packages of grace. That’s what Paul is saying. He knows the depth of your need and He has a box of grace just the right size. “God is faithful. He will not allow you to be tested beyond your ability.” (I Corinthians 10:13). Praise God. The grace is always sufficient; it is custom-designed. God knows.

3- Others are watching while you receive grace (verse 6).

“Whether we be afflicted, it is for your consolation and your salvation, which is effectual in the enduring of the same sufferings we suffer; and even when we are comforted, it is for your comfort, your consolation and your salvation.”

In other words, Paul is saying, not only are Christians consoled, unbelievers find salvation by watching Christians as they are lifted into the heavens while living in the throes of life’s crises. If you think no one is watching you, think again. The working of grace in our trials is a living motion picture on the screen of the unbelieving heart, and the moral to the story is: only God can sustain you when your world falls apart; when the thermostat of life goes out of control.

4- Be willing to be honest about your problems, but don’t focus on the problems, focus on the grace.

Paul says:

For we do not want you to be ignorant, brethren, of our trouble...
(I Corinthians 1:8a NKJV)

Paul is saying, “I’m not pretending this is an easy life. In

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Asia we were really in trouble. We were pressed out of measure, pushed to our limits beyond strength or above strength.” In other words, in our own energy we couldn’t handle it. We were through. Without some kind of supernatural intervention, it was over. Enter grace. Paul was just as specific about the depth of the grace as he was the depth of the problem.

5- Paul says that the prayers of the saints made a difference (verse 11).

“You helping together by prayer for us.” That’s another reason we need to communicate our needs. They needed to know the depth of his sufferings so they could pray for the kind of grace he needed.

6- The whole matter hinges on the appropriation of the grace of God.

For our boasting is this: the testimony of our conscience that we conducted ourselves in the world in simplicity and godly sincerity, not with fleshly wisdom but by the grace of God, and more abundantly toward you.

(I Corinthians 1:12 NKJV)

Paul is saying, “The Christians have been encouraged. The unbelievers have stood in awe, because God has given strength when we didn’t have it and wisdom beyond what we could even understand. It had to come from God. So, the praise has to go to God. It is all of grace.

The comforting grace of God. It is God-sized power in a heart-shaped box. It is a measure of eternal love applied to a world of broken hearts. It is supernatural energy translated into real-world encouragement. It is the power to be, when there is no reason to be, but God. It is available to every Christian, every time he or she passes through any kind of difficulty, and it’s available in exactly the measure we need. It is carefully released in such a way, that not only are we encouraged, but the world is amazed, unbelievers are saved, and hurting people are brought across our paths who need that same grace. That’s what it says. It is part of our witness, and a source of our ministry—this incredible grace of God. Don’t you get excited about it?

Don’t we sometimes realize that we have been receiving it and not been grateful for it? Have you experienced it? I know you have. The question is, have you recognized it and thanked God for it? Have you shared it with other believers in such a way as

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to give the glory to God? Have you allowed it to be demonstrated in your life in such a way, that it would sweep itself into the lives of searching unbelievers around you, who need to know that there really is comfort in pain, at the edge of death, on a bed of sickness, and in an ocean that sweeps over you when your heart is broken? There really is! It comes from the Comforter. Then you need to explain to them, that to receive the comfort, you have to receive the Comforter. And to receive the Comforter, you have to believe upon the Son, who alone is worthy to be praised. It is an integral part of your salvation. When you came to Christ, He placed in your heart a receptacle designed to receive comforting grace. He controls the flow of the power into that receptacle based on your need and your willingness to allow it to flow into the lives of others. The more you allow it to flow, the more He allows you to grow.

Now what does it mean to comfort someone? And when God promised to comfort us what did He mean? Why did He call His Spirit the Comforter? Well, if we study the words that are used in our English Bible that define comfort, I think we will get a few answers.

First of all, in the Old Testament, the first Hebrew word that we are dealing with is primarily the only one that is defined comfort. It is used over 100 times in the Old Testament, and over half of those are translated “comfort.” Interestingly enough, most of the other times, it is translated as “repent.” The word literally means “to be consoled or comforted.” But generally, that follows in Scripture, “being sorry over something,” or “a need that sometimes leads to repentance.” Hence, the word: נָחַם nacham {naw-kham}. It is found in such verses as:

For the LORD will comfort Zion, He will comfort all her waste places; He will make her wilderness like Eden, and her desert like the garden of the LORD; Joy and gladness will be found in it, Thanksgiving and the voice of melody.

(Isaiah 51:3 NKJV)

To proclaim the acceptable year of the LORD, And the day of vengeance of our God; To comfort all that mourn,

(Isaiah 61:2 NKJV)

As one whom his mother comforts, So I will comfort you; And you shall be comforted in Jerusalem.

(Isaiah 66:13 NKJV)

In the Old Testament, Jehovah is the Comforter. He is the

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One doing the comforting. Usually, Israel is the recipient of His comfort. It means He has heard their cries. He has seen their despair, and He's ready to rush to bring them comfort and hope.

In the New Testament, there are several Greek words, very expressive words actually, that define comfort in our English Bible. The first one basically is the word, παρσεω *tharseo* {*thar-seh'-o*}. It means "to be of good cheer" or "to be encouraged."

But Jesus turned around, and when He saw her, He said,
"Be of good cheer, daughter; your faith has made you well."
And the woman was made well from that hour.

(Matthew 9:22 NKJV)

The second Greek word is, παρεγορια *paregoria* {*par-ay-gor-ee'-ah*}. It sounds a little bit like a medicine we used to rub on our kids' gums when they were teething a few hundred years ago. And I think that is basically what it did. It gave them comfort; it gave them relief. It relieved the pain.

These are my only fellow workers for the kingdom of God who are of the circumcision; they have proved to be a comfort to me. [They helped relieve my pain.] (Colossians 4:11b NKJV)

The third word is παρακλεσι *paraklesis* {*par-ak'-lay-sis*}. It is very similar, but it actually means "to call someone to comfort them," or "that which affords comfort or calls alongside for the purpose of comforting."

Then the churches throughout all Judea, Galilee, and Samaria had peace and were edified. And walking in the fear of the Lord and in the comfort of the Holy Spirit, they were multiplied. (Acts 9:31 NKJV)

For whatever things were written before were written for our learning, that we through the patience and comfort of the Scriptures might have hope. [The Scripture comes along and gives you comfort.] (Romans 15:4 NKJV)

Blessed be God, even the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of mercies, and the God of all comfort; [the one who comes alongside]. (II Corinthians 1:3 KJV)

The fourth word is παρακαλεω *parakaleo* {*par-ak-al-eh'-o*}. Basically, it's the call itself, more or less. It's the same root word. It's "someone calling you alongside to admonish and encourage you," or "the one receiving it."

Therefore comfort one another with these words.

(I Thessalonians 4:18 NKJV)

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Now may our Lord Jesus Christ Himself, and our God and Father, who has loved us and given us everlasting consolation and good hope by grace,

Comfort your hearts and establish you in every good word and work.
(II Thessalonians 2:16,17 NKJV)

This word is also used to describe the calling process. It is closely related to the word used for the Holy Spirit, Himself. That word is, παρακλητό *parakletos* {par-ak'-lay-tos}. It is literally “one who is called alongside.” It is often the person doing the comforting.

If you look in Strong's Concordance, you will see it defined this way: “One who pleads another’s cause; one who counsels for the defense or acts as an advocate, thus an intercessor.” Then it says, “This word is used of Christ in His exultation at God’s right hand, pleading with God the Father for pardoning of our sins.”

It then goes on to say, “It is used of the Holy Spirit destined to take the place of Christ, with the Apostles after His ascension, to lead them into a deeper knowledge of truth, and give them divine strength needed to enable them to undergo trials and persecutions on behalf of the Kingdom.”

So, there you have a literal definition of grace and the work of the Holy Spirit described as He gives comforting grace. He enables us to undergo trials and persecutions. He comes alongside and He lifts our burdens from us—the burdens that weigh us down. The burdens of grief, sorrow, pain, weariness, fear and anxiety. And as they overpower us, One who is called alongside suddenly appears and says:

Come to Me, all you who labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest.

Take My yoke upon you, and learn of Me, for I am gentle and lowly in heart, and you will find rest for your souls.

For My yoke is easy and My burden is light.

(Matthew 11:28-30 NKJV)

It is why Peter could say:

Therefore humble yourselves under the mighty hand of God, that He may exalt you in due time,

Casting all your care upon Him, for he cares for you.

(I Peter 5:6,7 NKJV)

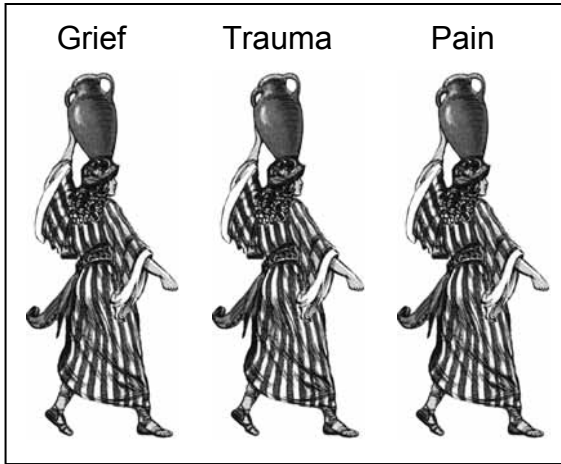
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Listen closely please. When the load gets heavy and we need someone else to come alongside, Jesus is there waiting, literally pleading with us to give the load to Him, the load that is crushing us. He is saying His burden is light because His Father carries it. And our burden will be light because He will carry it by giving us the grace we need to endure whatever situation He brings our way. To do that we have to humble ourselves under the mighty hand of God, and accept the fact that we can't do it. That's all He waits for. He wants us to come in humility and cast our cares on Him.

In the New Testament there is more than one word for "casting." There are two, really. One used of fishermen in Mark 1:16. It speaks of throwing something or casting it with no idea where it will land or what's going to happen to it. But the word used in this passage, in I Peter, speaks of someone releasing or throwing something into a container, or to a given place or person, knowing what will happen to it. It says, you can cast all your cares upon Him. You know where He is and you know where it will land, and you know what He will do. He cares for you.

In the real-world, beloved, as we close, it means coming to a place in the midst of your need when either you or some intercessor cries out to God for you. Now, let's get practical. Let's say you are carrying the burden of grief. A loved one has passed away; your heart is breaking. But your prayers go up to heaven and on your behalf, others are praying for you. They're saying, "Lord, Mary is carrying a load of grief. She will be crushed beneath it. Please send Your Spirit alongside." And suddenly, something happens. Jesus, your intercessor in heaven, sends His Holy Spirit who lives *in* Mary to walk *alongside* Mary and take the load *from* Mary. She still senses her grief, but it is as though the load has been lifted because it has.

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Many of you have been in foreign countries where people carry loads in big boxes on their heads. Maybe you have seen pictures of it if you haven't been. Maybe you get a headache just thinking about it. I do. Now try to picture in your mind, people walking along the highway of life with these huge boxes on their heads— heavy loads—walking uphill. Now watch them, and watch the load begin to shift from side to side. They are struggling to keep their balance. Now, look carefully. Suddenly, someone walks alongside them. Someone they seem to know. And look what He is doing. He is reaching up and removing that big box from atop their head. He is carrying it. It seems so light to Him. Now look at the person who just lost the load. There is a smile on their face, a glow of gratitude. They are still climbing, but the burden is gone. The One called alongside is carrying it for them. That, beloved, is comforting grace.

Just minutes after my fourth grandchild came into the world, each of the other three were waiting to hold the new baby. You know, nowadays, everything takes place in one room and everyone is a part of it. I can't get used to it, but it's going to happen whether I do or not. Anyway, the seven-year-old was a little timid, but quite delighted to hold her baby brother. The six-year-old was beaming as he got his turn. Then the two-year-old was told it was her turn. They sat her down and took this newborn baby, incidentally, weighing a little over nine pounds, and placed him in her arms.

Her little eyes got big. She looked down at this weight in

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her arms, then she looked up at her father, and uttered those memorable words, "Too heavy!" That's all she said. But that's all she had to say. For her little arms, nine pounds was more than she could bear. (Some of us will do anything to get our grandchildren's pictures up.) So, she called for her father to take what, to her, was more than she could handle. Lovingly, her father reached down and took it from her. I'll never forget that.

So often, as we go through life we seem to be walking uphill, but as we trudge along, often reeling beneath the load on our heads, still managing to make a little progress, something happens. Something comes into our life we didn't expect, and it causes the load to get even heavier. It may be a serious illness, the grief over the loss of a loved one, the trauma of an accident, or the ongoing weight of constant pain or disappointment.

What God wants us to do when that happens, is simply cry out, "Too heavy!" When we do, the minute we do, He reaches down, He takes the burden and He begins to walk alongside carrying it for us. He is the God of all comfort, and He is in the process of comforting us in all our tribulation, all our sorrow, all our grief. He has a reason; He wants us to pass that comfort on in the days to come. But for now, He is simply enabling us supernaturally, to endure; to carry the load we cannot carry naturally.

Are you struggling from a weight of grief? Cry out to God in your heart this morning, "Too heavy!" He will come alongside and lift the weight of that burden. You'll still hurt for the loss, but there will be a peace and a freedom that defies human understanding.

Are you living daily with the weight of constant pain? From time to time, does it just become more than you can bear? Cry out to God, "Too heavy!" and just feel the weight lifted. The pain may remain, but somehow the burden of the pain, the fear of the pain, the weight of the pain will evaporate into the arms of the pain-bearer.

Are you struggling over family problems that seem to have no solution? Do you awaken in the night, filled with fear or frustration over what might happen next? God understands. But, beloved, before you trudge a foot further with that box of fear on your head, why not turn to God and say, "Too heavy!" He will reach over and take it and He'll give you comforting grace. Oh, the problems may not vanish, but the weight of them will disappear and you will be able to see more clearly. Why? Grace.

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Maybe you are facing uncertainty in your life because of a serious illness. It isn't just the disease, it is the weight of the disease, the uncertainty, the decisions, the fear. Like a huge box marked "heavy load," it seems to rest on your head, putting pressure on your heart. And the more you think about it, the heavier it gets. Beloved, cry out to God, "Too heavy!" He will take the burden from you. Will He take the disease? Maybe, maybe not. Only He knows what will most glorify His name. But He can. He can make it go away in the twinkling of an eye, or over a long period of time, using the process to change our perspective, or He may not make it go away at all. He may just give you more grace. But regardless, we were never intended to carry the weight. It's too heavy.

Maybe that load will appear on your head today or tomorrow or sometime in the future. Maybe you'll be walking along, riding along, or sitting and minding your own business, when a totally unexpected tragedy or trauma comes into your life, like that auto accident we were talking about earlier. Prepare your heart now, so that when it happens, you won't try to carry the weight. You were never meant to. Put the seed now in the computer of your mind. What you are to do is cry out in that hour of need, "Too heavy!" and rest.

Beloved, your God is a load-bearing God. He is omnipotent. There is no load He cannot carry. And your God is perfect mercy. He understands the load you are under. He is perfect grace. He wants to carry it for you. Learn to pray for others when the weight of the load they are carrying is more than they can bear. That is what intercessory prayer really is. It is bringing to God people who are in situations that need supernatural wisdom or power and giving them to Him. He knows what to do. He gives them comforting grace. Don't be bashful. Don't apologize. Ask Him. He has told us He is the God of all comfort, and He comforts us in all of our sorrow, all of our tribulation. It is not an imposition to Him. It is a joy. It's what He wants to do.

Beloved, when the load you are carrying begins to weigh you down, be willing to humble yourself under the mighty hand of God, and just say to Him, "Lord, too heavy!" Remember, He understands. He knows. He cares. He just told us. He cares for you. Give that burden to Him. Cast it in His direction. And I promise you—or better put, He promises you that when you do, He will give you rest.

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“TOO HEAVY, LORD”

“Too heavy Lord,” we cry aloud
Filled with fear and despair.
“Lord, I just can’t stand it;
It’s more than I can bear.

The weight of the pain is out of control,
The load is breaking my heart.
Dear Lord, I need some comfort,
My world is falling apart.

Help me, Lord. Too heavy,”
With all your heart you cry.
And then amazed, you turn around
And guess who’s standing by?

Your God has sent the Comforter
To walk that weary road.
And suddenly, He reaches down
And lifts from you that load.

Yes, the crisis and maybe the pain
May continue on.
But the weight that was crushing the life from you
Suddenly is gone.

Oh, beloved, trust Him,
His promises are true.
When you cry out, “Too heavy,”
Your God will comfort you.

Let’s pray.

Dear Father, many listening today are struggling beneath different kinds of loads. The load that each of us carries, Father, is so different from those around us, and yet, in many ways so similar. What a wonder that the God of all comfort is comforting us even now in all our tribulation.

Father, we come to you this morning, rejoicing, asking that You would give us the wisdom when the load gets heavy, instead of complaining and instead of sorrowing, instead of falling down beneath it, to learn to look up and cry out, “Lord, too heavy,”

Comforting Grace

and watch the Comforter come alongside.

Give us comforting grace as we need it Father, and then give us the grace to be willing to take that grace and pour it into the lives of others with the same comfort wherewith we ourselves are comforted of God. What a precious privilege. What a joy. What a God.

In Jesus' name. Amen.

A Challenge to Further Study

1- Do a Bible search of the word "comfort". What other passages do you find that shed light on God's use of that word?

2- What names do you find in verse 3 of II Corinthians 1 that describe God? What do you think it means that God is "the God of all comfort"?

3- If God is comforting us in "all our tribulation", why don't we always "feel" comforted?

4- Write out II Corinthians 1:2-12 in your own words. Cross-reference and define each word that you think is significant.

Comforting Grace

A Challenge to Further Application

1- What loads have you been carrying lately? Ask God to reveal to you as you pray, the names on the boxes you have been balancing on your head. Are you afraid to ask for more grace? Do you think it is presumptuous to ask for grace?

2- How do you pray for others who are carrying loads that seem too heavy? How can you discern when it's a load that God should be carrying? What kind of prayer can you pray for them that you know is in the will of God? Do you usually pray for the pressure to go away, or for God to give them more grace?

3- Ask God to make you sensitive to your own breaking points. Ask Him to show you when the joy departs, the fear envelopes, the power is gone. What should you do then? Are you willing to think of that imaginary box on your head and cry out to God, "too heavy!"? If not, why not?

A Challenge to Scripture Memory

Memorize 2 Corinthians 1:3,4 and I Peter 5:6,7.

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