

October 29, 2017

## ***The Most Excellent Way***

***"I always thank God for you because of his grace given you in Christ Jesus. For in him you have been enriched in every way—in all your speaking and in all your knowledge—because our testimony about Christ was confirmed in you. Therefore you do not lack any spiritual gift as you eagerly wait for our Lord Jesus Christ to be revealed."***

I Corinthians 1:4-9

***"Praise be to the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of compassion and the God of all comfort, who comforts us in all our troubles, so that we can comfort those in any trouble with the comfort we ourselves have received from God."***

II Corinthian 1:3-5

All around us we see people who are hurting, people who are struggling, and even people who are dieing. In just this past year we have seen the results of war and famine, earthquakes, floods, hurricanes and forest fires. People have lost their homes, their livelihoods, and even their lives. Invariably when such chaos comes someone will ask why a loving God would allow such horrible calamities to touch our lives and the lives of so many others.

The Apostle Paul answers this question in the first chapter of his second letter to the believers in Corinth. The Apostle reminds us that God is ultimately a God of compassion who, as his Son says, ***"...causes the sun to rise on the the evil and good, and sends rain on the righteous and the unrighteous."*** (Matthew 5:45) God loves all of his creation and he longs to comfort all who are hurting, believers or not.

As is often true however, God cannot show his great love and compassion if there are no hurts, if there is no chaos. Our Father allows his creation to suffer various trials, in part so that he can demonstrate his great love and compassion for us through the comfort he brings. Sadly, most of us would never turn to God for comfort if we never faced trials. It is only in our struggles in the face of our many trials that we turn to God for help. If our lives are going well and we have no struggles we sadly believe we do not need God.

So, in the face of the storms of life, no matter the scale, we turn to God for comfort and he comforts us because that is fundamentally who he is. What then should be our response to God's comfort? The Apostle tells us, ***"...comfort those in any trouble with the comfort we ourselves have received."*** In our troubled world there are many who don't seem to understand this aspect of our relationship with a compassionate God. In a time when many are encouraging us to be anything but compassionate, our God commands us to pass the comfort we receive on to others.

Many of us find ourselves trapped in this quandry. God commands us to ***"...do to others what we would have them do to us."*** (Matthew 7:12) and to love others as our Lord has loved us. (John 13:34) But our world influences us to do nothing of the kind. Our fears lead us to shut down our compassion for the victims of this world's hurts.

We see pictures of struggling families fleeing war torn countries and our fears lead us to deny them our help. We see reports of entire communities destroyed by hurricanes and the world influences us to keep our hands in our pockets. We read about hungry children and struggling families and we refuse to support programs that feed and house and heal those same people.

You and I need to decide what our faith really means in our lives. As we noted last week, true faith in the gospel of Jesus Christ transforms us into his living, breathing image. We no longer

