

# the comfort of God

## 2 Corinthians 1:1–11

### Scripture Text

*Paul, an apostle of Christ Jesus by the will of God, and Timothy our brother,  
To the church of God that is in Corinth, including all the saints throughout Achaia:  
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 the God of all consolation, who consoles us in all our affliction, so that we may be able to console those who are in any affliction with the consolation with which we ourselves are consoled by God. For just as the sufferings of Christ are abundant for us, so also our consolation is abundant through Christ. If we are being afflicted, it is for your consolation and salvation; if we are being consoled, it is for your consolation, which you experience when you patiently endure the same sufferings that we are also suffering. Our hope for you is unshaken; for we know that as you share in our sufferings, so also you share in our consolation.*

*We do not want you to be unaware, brothers and sisters, of the affliction we experienced in Asia; for we were so utterly, unbearably crushed that we despaired of life itself. Indeed, we felt that we had received the sentence of death so that we would rely not on ourselves but on God who raises the dead. He who rescued us from so deadly a peril will continue to rescue us; on him we have set our hope that he will rescue us again, as you also join in helping us by your prayers, so that many will give thanks on our behalf for the blessing granted us through the prayers of many.*

### Service Outline

#### "Blessed be..."

Our gathering songs invite us to "come," for God is already in this place. We sing "God is Here Today" and "Come and Fill Our Hearts" affirming that God is before all things, and it is he who invites us to "Come Away from Rush and Hurry." Acknowledging that we have all come from different places, both of location and emotion, we unite our voices in the spoken call to worship. God calls us from our pain, our joys, and our distractions; God calls us from our habits, our exhaustion, and our enthusiasm; God calls us all to worship him. It is into this place of Spirit-given grace, love, and hope that we are called and together sing the words of Psalm 84, "How Lovely Is Your Dwelling."

## **"Not unaware..."**

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Although we long to dwell in God's presence, we are sometimes distracted and distanced from life within the courts of the Lord. Our God of compassion and comfort calls us to confess our sins before him, for Romans 8 reminds us that nothing can ever separate us from the love of God that is in Christ Jesus our Lord. We are forever God's chosen ones, and so we sing with assurance, "Children of the Heavenly Father."

## **"On him we have set our hope..."**

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When our Father God feels far away, we cry to him from the darkness of the pit, knowing that he is faithful. With the Psalmist in Psalm 88, we recount that we have experienced the shadows of life, overwhelmed by sorrows. We have borne our troubles to God, and as Paul says in 2 Corinthians 1:1–11, God is faithful and hears us. It is this comfort and hope that we hear about in the sermon, and it is with this assurance that we can respond with the words of Heidelberg Catechism Question and Answer 1: "What is your only comfort in life and in death? That I am not my own, but belong, in body and soul, in life and in death to my faithful Savior Jesus Christ..." For this, we praise God. For this, we rejoice. On this assurance, we set our hope. In response to the message, we sing "Praise the Lord Who Heals."

## **"Join in helping us..."**

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It is in this assurance that we are sent forth into the world. God is our stronghold; God heals us; God makes us whole; God brings us comfort and hope. We respond to this assurance in prayer for the suffering, pain, sorrow, and injustices in this world using the refrain "Gbemi, Jesu/Lift Me, Jesus" and end our time of prayer with words of hope and words of comfort found in Philippians 4. Our final hymn, "God of Grace and God of Glory" is the service's final prayer: "Grant us wisdom, grant us courage, serving you whom we adore, serving you whom we adore." We hear the benediction with confidence, knowing that God is always at our side as we go forth to serve him, and in that assurance, pass the peace of our Lord to one another.

The music for this service is led by David Cherwien and C. Michael Hawn. The liturgist is María Cornou and our preacher is Timothy Blackmon.