

## 10 Commandments for Comforters

# Outside Were Conflicts; Inside Were Fears

### INTRODUCTION:

- A. Text: 2 Corinthians 7:4-7
- B. **[S1]** (2 Cor 1:3-4 NKJV) Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of mercies and God of all comfort, {4} who comforts us in all our tribulation, that we may be able to comfort those who are in any trouble, with the comfort with which we ourselves are comforted by God.
- C. **[S2]** (2 Cor 7:4b NKJV) I am filled with comfort. I am exceedingly joyful in all our tribulation.  
(2 Cor 7:4b NIV) I am greatly encouraged; in all our troubles my joy knows no bounds.  
**[S2A]** How is it possible to have **TREMENDOUS JOY** in times of **TROUBLE**?
- D. Consider from our text...
- I. **[S3] & [S3A] TROUBLED ON EVERY SIDE** (v. 5).
  - A. (2 Cor 7:5 NKJV) For indeed, when we came to Macedonia, our bodies had no rest, but we were **troubled on every side**. Outside were conflicts, inside were fears.  
(2 Cor 7:5 NIV) For when we came into Macedonia, this body of ours had no rest, but we were **harassed at every turn--** conflicts on the outside, fears within.
  - B. **“Outside were conflicts”**
    - 1. “What the troubles were which surrounded him he does not say” (L&S 100).
    - 2. “Conflicts” -- 3163. mache, makh'-ay; from G3164; **a battle, i.e. (fig.) controversy--fighting, strive, striving.**
    - 3. “Conflicts” – “fightings” (KJV) – “The fights without were probably assaults upon himself, or upon the churches, of the nature of **persecution**” (L&S 100).
    - 4. Elsewhere, the Apostle Paul discusses some of the things he encountered in his service to the Lord:

**[S4]** (2 Cor 11:23-28 NIV) Are they servants of Christ? (I am out of my mind to talk like this.) I am more. I have worked much harder, been in prison more frequently, been flogged more severely, and been exposed to death again and again.

**[S5]** {24} Five times I received from the Jews the forty lashes minus one. {25} Three times I was beaten with rods, once I was stoned, three times I was shipwrecked, I spent a night and a day in the open sea,

**[S6]** {26} I have been constantly on the move. I have been in danger from rivers, in danger from bandits, in danger from my own countrymen, in danger from Gentiles; in danger in the city, in danger in the country, in danger at sea; and in danger from false brothers.

**[S7]** {27} I have labored and toiled and have often gone without sleep; I have known hunger and thirst and have often gone without food; I have been cold and naked.

**[S8]** {28} Besides everything else, I face daily the pressure of my concern for all the churches.

C. ***“Inside were fears”***

1. **[S9]** Consider 2 Corinthians 2:12-13 -- (2 Cor 2:12-13 NKJV) Furthermore, when I came to Troas to preach Christ's gospel, and a door was opened to me by the Lord, {13} I had no rest in my spirit, because I did not find Titus my brother; but taking my leave of them, I departed for Macedonia.

(2 Cor 2:12-13 NIV) Now when I went to Troas to preach the gospel of Christ and found that the Lord had opened a door for me, {13} **I still had no peace of mind**, because I did not find my brother Titus there. So I said good-bye to them and went on to Macedonia.

Here “Paul tells how in Troas he had no rest because he did not know how the Corinthians situation had developed and how he had set out to Macedonia to meet Titus to get the news as quickly as possible” (Barclay 224).

2. **[S10] Inner fears are the frequent responses to outward conflicts.**
3. “Fear” -- 5401. phobos, fob'-os; from a prim. phebomai (to be put in fear); alarm or fright:--be afraid, + exceedingly, fear, terror.
4. “Fear” according to Webster’s: “to be afraid of : expect with alarm <fear the worst>; *intransitive verb* : to be afraid or apprehensive <feared for their lives>
5. **When there are outward conflicts...**
  - a. We fear its difficulty.
  - b. We fear the stress involved.
  - c. We fear the unknown
  - d. We fear negative outcomes.
6. Like Paul, we are often concerned – “fearful” – when our loved ones are involved in some conflict.
7. **[S10A] Is there any comfort for our fears?**

II. **[S11] & [S11A] COMFORTED BY GOD (7:6-7).**

- A. (2 Cor 7:6 NKJV) Nevertheless God, who comforts the downcast, comforted us by the coming of Titus,  
(2 Cor 7:6 NIV) But God, who comforts the downcast, comforted us by the coming of Titus,
- B. **“Nevertheless God”**
  1. Nevertheless God is there, never leaving, never forsaking.
  2. Nevertheless God is strong.
  3. Nevertheless God is unchanging.
  4. Nevertheless God is faithful.
  5. Nevertheless God is bigger than my concerns.
- C. **[S12] “God comforts the downcast”**
  1. **[S12A] God comforts us with His Word (1 Thessalonians 4:13-18; Psalm 23).**

- a. There were Christians in Thessalonica who were confused about the destiny of those who had died in Christ. Paul wrote to comfort them...

**[S13]** (1 Th 4:13-18 NKJV) But I do not want you to be ignorant, brethren, concerning those who have fallen asleep, lest you sorrow as others who have no hope. {14} For if we believe that Jesus died and rose again, even so God will bring with Him those who sleep in Jesus.

**[S14]** {15} For this we say to you by the word of the Lord, that we who are alive and remain until the coming of the Lord will by no means precede those who are asleep.

**[S15]** {16} For the Lord Himself will descend from heaven with a shout, with the voice of an archangel, and with the trumpet of God. And the dead in Christ will rise first.

**[S16]** {17} Then we who are alive and remain shall be caught up together with them in the clouds to meet the Lord in the air. And thus we shall always be with the Lord. {18} **Therefore comfort one another with these words.**

- b. Countless people have been comforted by the **23<sup>rd</sup> Psalm...**

2. **[S17] & [S17A]** God comforts us with His Presence (Psalm 139; Hebrews 13:5).

- a. **[S18]** (Psa 139:7-12 NKJV) Where can I go from Your Spirit? Or where can I flee from Your presence? {8} If I ascend into heaven, You are there; If I make my bed in hell, behold, You are there.

**[S19]** {9} If I take the wings of the morning, And dwell in the uttermost parts of the sea, {10} Even there Your hand shall lead me, And Your right hand shall hold me.

**[S20]** {11} If I say, "Surely the darkness shall fall on me," Even the night shall be light about me; {12} Indeed, the darkness shall not hide from You, But the night shines as the day; The darkness and the light are both alike to You.

b. **[S21]** "For He Himself has said, 'I will never leave you nor forsake you.'" (Hebrews 13:5).

3. **[S22] & [S22A]** God comforts us **through His People** (2 Corinthians 7:6; 1:3-4).

a. Titus brought comfort to Paul by bringing him a good report from Corinth.

b. **[S23]** (2 Cor 1:3-4 NKJV) Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of mercies and God of all comfort, {4} who comforts us in all our tribulation, that we may be able to comfort those who are in any trouble, with the comfort with which we ourselves are comforted by God.

c. Nan Wright lost her only son at the age of 13 from a bicycle accident. Since then, she has studied a lot about grief and about helping others through their grief. She writes: "There are some who want to distance themselves from the bereaved. It may seem uncomfortable, even frightening to be around someone who is in such emotional pain and turmoil. They don't know what to say or do, so they say and do nothing. But, Children of God, in spite of the discomfort you may feel, I challenge you to learn the **skills of bringing comfort to the grieving.**"

D. **[S24]** Here are "**The Ten Commandments for Comforters**" from the book *Comforting the Bereaved* by Warren and David Wiersbe (from Nan Wright):

1. **[S24A]** ***Go to those who are bereaved as soon as possible, even if it is inconvenient for you*** (Job 2:13).

a. Cp. Job's friends -- (Job 2:13 NKJV) So they sat down with him on the ground seven days and seven nights, and no one spoke a word to him, for they saw that his grief was very great.

- b. In the midst of pain, anxiety, and deep sadness the grieving one needs to know that they are not alone or forgotten. It is not enough just to call a person to tell them you are praying for them. The bereaved need to see and feel the concern and the love you have for them. The worst thing you can do is to not do or say anything. To the one grieving, silence is like a stab in the heart, injury upon injury. When they need consolation but only find silence, they feel akin to the leper who is shunned by society.
  - c. If you don't know the person very well, a card with a personal note, a phone call or e-mail is okay.
2. **[S24B] *Be swift to hear, slow to speak, and slow to react to words and feelings that may appear "un-Christian."* (See James 1:19).**
- a. A person's initial reaction to his or her loss might be anger or bitterness or despair. But we must be gentle in our response, showing them Christ's love and holding up God's promises before them. We must not condemn them for having these very normal responses to tragic loss. But by our prayers for them, and by demonstrating compassion and offering real, tangible encouragement, we will be able to see God's healing work in his or her life. Grief work is hard work. And reaching out to the grieving is not for the faint of heart.
  - b. First of all choose your words carefully and most of all be a good listener. Mary Ann Froehlich, in her book *An Early Journey Home*, put it this way: (This is the grieving person speaking)  
 "Above all, listen to me....I have a roller-coaster relationship with God right now. One minute I feel safe in his loving arms and the next moment I am flooded with doubts and questions, feeling totally abandoned by him. He can handle it. I hope that you can too. Be my safe place to talk, cry, and feel totally accepted. I need my lifeline of friends now. I know that I scare you. You are wondering if this can

happen to me, then it can happen to you. You may even try to find some reason for our loss to ease your own mind.

Please do not make packaged insensitive statements such as "Time heals all wounds," "I know how you feel," "Everything will be all right," "God will not give you more than you can bear," "At least you have three other children," "All things work together for good..." Please do not tell me about someone else's story that is sadder than mine or send me books on grief. Don't say or do anything to minimize my grief or try to fix me. This only says that you have no idea how deeply I am hurting."

- c. Be a good listener and just be there to minister and not to lecture or to figure things out.

3. **[S24C] *Do not try to explain everything.*** (Cf. Job's friends)

- a. Remember, this is where Job's friends got into trouble!
- b. A person's attempt at explanations can offer bring more pain and sorrow to the one who is already hurting.
- c. Grieving people are guilt magnets. I think this is especially true for parents who have lost a child. They are already beating themselves up for what might have been. They live with a recital of "what ifs" running through their minds. Hearing the hurtful opinions of others only causes more mental anguish and a tendency toward despair.
- d. **[S25]** (Prov 18:2 NIV) A fool finds no pleasure in understanding but delights in airing his own opinions.

4. **[S26] & [S26A] *Share the promises of God in a timely manner.***

- a. Every Christian experiences spiritual warfare. But I am convinced that the bereaved person comes

under especially hateful attacks from the enemy. Satan loves to kick us when we are down, and he has a prime opportunity to bring temptations and doubts into our minds when we are reeling under the blow of grief. One way Satan assaults us is through people's careless words.

- b. Promises of His presence and eternal reward are appropriate.

5. **[S26B] *Avoid saying "I know just how you feel." Nobody will believe you and the statement accomplishes nothing.***

- a. What you do know is that the bereaved person is missing their loved one very much. Try to get them to remember happy times with their loved one. Perhaps you have some memories of their loved one you can share. When the grieving one can talk about their loved one, and even laugh about happy times they had, then you know that healing has begun.
- b. When you mention your friend's loved one and bring up precious memories, you are assuring your friend that the one they lost is not forgotten. By doing this you assure them also that you remember their loss and you remember them. It is a special encouragement to us when family members or friends drop us a card or tell us they are praying for us.

6. **[S26C] *Words often fail, so express yourself through a loving hug, a handshake, even a simple touch. Just being there is a ministry.***

- a. (2 Cor 7:6 NKJV) Nevertheless God, who comforts the downcast, comforted us by the coming of Titus,
- b. Never underestimate the power of a touch or a hug.
- c. Charlie Walton wrote a whole chapter on hugs in his book, *When There Are No Words*. To explain the benefits of a hug, Walton begins by saying there is no way to quantify the pain of grief. He continues:



“Pain doesn't come in pounds or ounces or gallons. You just feel like you are standing before a mountain that you are going to have to move one spoonful at a time. It is a task you can never hope to complete... a mountain that you can never hope to finish moving. But... as you stand surveying that mountain of grief... a loved one steps forward with a hug that communicates clearly. You can almost picture that person stepping up to your mountain of grief with a shovel and saying, 'I cannot move the mountain for you... but I will take this one shovel full of your grief and deal with it myself.’”

It seemed to me that every hug helped to dilute the pain a little more... that every sincere hugger carried away a small quantity of the mountain [we] were facing.

7. **[S27] & [S27A] *Do not be afraid to "weep with those who weep"*(Romans 12:15).**
  - a. Grieving people need to feel free to grieve. Rushing a grieving person to get better is like trying to send someone home from the hospital while they are still on life support. Simplistic advice like, "Just turn it over to the Lord" is not helpful. Healing takes time. And the comforter, the one coming alongside, must walk the fine line of pointing the bereaved to Christ, holding up the promises of God without being judgmental. We must be in the valley with the one who is in pain, but lovingly, patiently show the way up.
  - b. God does not hurry us along or trivialize our grief. Ecclesiastes 3:4 tells us there is a time to weep and a time to mourn.
  - c. **They Wept Together**  
Once during Queen Victoria's reign, she heard that the wife of a common laborer had lost her baby. Having experienced deep sorrow herself, she felt moved to express her sympathy. So she called on the bereaved woman one day and spent some time

with her. After she left, the neighbors asked what the queen had said.

“Nothing,” replied the grieving mother. “She simply put her hands on mine, and we silently wept together.”

-- Source unknown

8. **[S27B] *Remember that grieving is a difficult process that takes time. Be patient with those who mourn and try not to say, "Aren't you over it yet?"***
  - a. A person who has experienced a traumatic loss can heal, by the grace of God. But they will not be the same person they were before. They are forever changed. In their recovery they will find a new "normal." In this sense they will never be "over it." There will always be those things which trigger the memories of their loved one. And with the memories come the emotions connected with them.
  - b. Emotions are not governed by checklists. We do not grieve for four or five months and then one day decide we are done with grief. The things our loved one left behind resurrect memories for us every day. Common everyday places are filled with emotional land mines. For instance, the grocery store is full of the foods our loved one enjoyed and some he/she hated.
9. **[S27C] *Visit regularly during the weeks after the funeral.*** Cf. James 1:27.
  - a. Not only does the bereaved one need visitors who will sit with him, weep with him and encourage him, but he or she needs real help. Remember that the grieving person is in shock and has trouble concentrating. He is not only in pain, but he has trouble doing simple tasks.
  - b. The family will need meals, cleaning done, errands run, babysitting if there are young children in the home, or perhaps yard work may need to be done.

10. **[S28] & [S28A] *Keep confidence. Don't turn the experience into a sermon illustration unless the family gives you permission*** (Proverbs 11:13).
- a. (Prov 11:13 NIV) A gossip betrays a confidence, but a trustworthy man keeps a secret.
  - b. The grieving person needs to trust the one he pours his heart out to. He will need to talk about his pain, his anger, his guilt, and his regrets. He needs to know that he can speak freely and that what he says won't be repeated.

#### CONCLUSION:

- A. **[S29]** “Outside were conflicts, inside were fears” (2 Corinthians 7:5). I think ALL of us understand the reality of that statement.
- B. I also pray that each of us will realize the reality of this statement:  
**[S29A]** “Nevertheless, God comforts the downcast” (2 Corinthians 7:6).
- C. INV.
- D. **[S30]** (blank slide)

#### SOURCES:

Barclay, William. The Letters to the Corinthians. Revised edition. *The Daily Study Bible Series*. Philadelphia, PA: The Westminster Press, 1975.

Lipscomb, David. A Commentary on the New Testament Epistles. Volume III: Second Corinthians and Galatians. Edited, with additional notes, by J.W. Shepherd. Nashville, TN: Gospel Advocate Company, 1936.

Wright, Nan. “The Hope Within Us: Bringing Comfort to the Bereaved.” April 2005. <http://www.agapeindia.com/steve/hopewithin.htm>. [Nan is the mother of Stephen Wright, who died at the age of 13 from a bicycle accident.]

(2 Cor 7:7 NKJV) and not only by his coming, but also by the consolation with which he was comforted in you, when he told us of your earnest desire, your mourning, your zeal for me, so that I rejoiced even more.

“Paul was not only comforted, his sorrow had been turned into joy, as he heard Titus tell of the longing of the Corinthians to see him, and their mourning over the pain they had given him..., and of their eagerness to make amends for their conduct” (L&S 101). These things caused Paul to “rejoice even more” – “My joy was greater than ever” (NIV).