



Processing Tragedy: A Christian Perspective on Dealing with Loss

November 27, 2022

Holy Text: 2 Cor 1:1-7

2 Corinthians was written by the Apostle Paul, likely very shortly after 1 Corinthians, in the mid/late 50s AD. It is not preached from nearly as much as 1 Corinthians because of its unique personal style. Preachers tend to prefer didactic texts! Such emotional writing is also why many of its passages are so beloved by Christians. William MacDonald says of the letter:

One reason we love 2 Corinthians so greatly is because it *is* so personal. We seem to get closer to the heart of Paul here than in any of his other writings. We feel something of the tremendous enthusiasm he had for the work of the Lord. We catch a sense of the dignity of life's greatest calling. We read with silent amazement the catalog of sufferings which he endured. We experience the hot flush of indignation with which he answered his unscrupulous critics. In short, Paul seems to let us into every secret of his soul.

This letter was written out of a deep concern for the welfare of the saints at Corinth. Again from William MacDonald:

On his Third Missionary Journey, he returned to Ephesus and stayed there for two years. During this stay, a delegation from Corinth visited him, asking Paul's advice on many matters. It was in answer to these queries that 1 Corinthians was written.

The apostle later became very anxious to find out how the Corinthians had reacted to his Letter, especially to the section concerning the discipline of a sinning member. So he left Ephesus for Troas where he hoped to meet Titus. However, failing to do so, he crossed over into Macedonia. It was here that Titus came with news, both good and bad. The saints had disciplined the sinning saint—and this discipline had resulted in his spiritual recovery. That was *the good news*. But the Christians had never sent the money to the needy saints at Jerusalem, as they had intended to do. That was not so good. Finally, Titus reported that the false teachers were active at Corinth, undermining the apostle's work and questioning his authority as a servant of Christ. This was *the bad news!*

These then are the circumstances that called forth the Second Epistle to the Corinthians...

In the opening verses, we see such a heart from Paul. He is emotional due to the false teachers and other issues in Corinth. He opens the letter with a statement of his apostolic title and the a ver common apostolic greeting (vv.1-2). Then he offers praise to our God...

1. He calls God "blessed." (v.3)
2. He calls God the "Father of all mercies." (v.3)
3. He calls God the "God of all comfort." (v.3)
4. He reminds the saints that God "comforteth us in all our tribulation." (v.4)
5. The reason for this, besides His great love, is so "that we may be able to comfort them which are in any trouble." (v.4)
6. The saint can do this "by the comfort wherewith we ourselves are comforted of God." (V.4)

7. He reminded Corinth where their true consolation comes from: Christ! (v.5)
8. He reminded them of why the apostles suffered: for them! Implicit in this statement is the sovereign plan of God in suffering... (v.6)
9. He also called them to patiently endure similar sufferings... (v.6)

2 Corinthians 1:6 (NLT) *Even when we are weighed down with troubles, it is for your comfort and salvation! For when we ourselves are comforted, we will certainly comfort you. Then you can patiently endure the same things we suffer.*

10. Finally, he encouraged them in this: those who endure the sufferings will also experience the comfort that God gives. (v.7)

- These truths weren't just for Corinth; they are for all the churches, then and now. (1 Cor 1:2, 2 Cor 2:1)
- Despite physical sufferings, falsehoods, and rebellions (all of which either Paul or Corinth were experiencing), God is still able to comfort!
- God also calls His children to comfort others with such comfort!
- There is always a way to honor the LORD and serve others in the midst of difficult circumstances...

Some Pastoral Exhortations given recent (and very sad) events:

1. It's ok to be sad. Pour out such sadness before our LORD. (Ps 18:6)

Psalms 18:6 (KJV) *In my distress I called upon the LORD, and cried unto my God: he heard my voice out of his temple, and my cry came before him, even into his ears.*

2. It's ok to be angry (and yet sin not). (Eph 4:26)
3. It's ok to ask God, "Why?"

Jeremiah 12:1 (KJV) *Righteous art thou, O LORD, when I plead with thee: yet let me talk with thee of thy judgments: Wherefore doth the way of the wicked prosper? wherefore are all they happy that deal very treacherously?*

4. It's ok to mourn. (Matt 5:4)
5. It's ok to have hope!

Titus 2:11-13 (KJV) *For the grace of God that bringeth salvation hath appeared to all men, **12** Teaching us that, denying ungodliness and worldly lusts, we should live soberly, righteously, and godly, in this present world; **13** Looking for that blessed hope, and the glorious appearing of the great God and our Saviour Jesus Christ;*

1 Peter 1:3-5 (KJV) *Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, which according to his abundant mercy hath begotten us again unto a lively hope by the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead, **4** To an inheritance incorruptible, and undefiled, and that fadeth not away, reserved in heaven for you, **5** Who are kept by the power of God through faith unto salvation ready to be revealed in the last time.*

A Christian Perspective on Dealing with Loss

1. Perspective: Fight to maintain a Biblical one!

Through the pain of unforeseen or difficult circumstances or unimaginable loss, remember:

- God is Sovereign

Psalms 115:3 (KJV) *But our God is in the heavens: he hath done whatsoever he hath pleased.*

Daniel 4:35 (KJV) *And all the inhabitants of the earth are reputed as nothing: and he doeth according to his will in the army of heaven, and among the inhabitants of the earth: and none can stay his hand, or say unto him, What doest thou?*

Isaiah 46:9-10 (KJV) *Remember the former things of old: for I am God, and there is none else; I am God, and there is none like me, **10** Declaring the end from the beginning, and from ancient times the things that are not yet done, saying, My counsel shall stand, and I will do all my pleasure:*

- God will Recompense

Hebrews 10:30-31 (KJV) *For we know him that hath said, Vengeance belongeth unto me, I will recompense, saith the Lord. And again, The Lord shall judge his people. **31** It is a fearful thing to fall into the hands of the living God.*

- God will Comfort!

Isaiah 51:3 (KJV) *For the LORD shall comfort Zion: he will comfort all her waste places; and he will make her wilderness like Eden, and her desert like the garden of the LORD; joy and gladness shall be found therein, thanksgiving, and the voice of melody.*

Isaiah 61:1-3 (KJV) *The Spirit of the Lord GOD is upon me; because the LORD hath anointed me to preach good tidings unto the meek; he hath sent me to bind up the brokenhearted, to proclaim liberty to the captives, and the opening of the prison to them that are bound; **2** To proclaim the acceptable year of the LORD, and the day of vengeance of our God; to comfort all that mourn; **3** To appoint unto them that mourn in Zion, to give unto them beauty for ashes, the oil of joy for mourning, the garment of praise for the spirit of heaviness; that they might be called trees of righteousness, the planting of the LORD, that he might be glorified.*

Revelation 21:1-5 (KJV) *And I saw a new heaven and a new earth: for the first heaven and the first earth were passed away; and there was no more sea. **2** And I John saw the holy city, new Jerusalem, coming down from God out of heaven, prepared as a bride adorned for her husband. **3** And I heard a great voice out of heaven saying, Behold, the tabernacle of God is with men, and he will dwell with them, and they shall be his people, and God himself shall be with them, and be their God. **4** And God shall wipe away all tears from their eyes; and there shall be no more death, neither sorrow, nor crying, neither shall there be any more pain: for the former things are passed away. **5** And he that sat upon the throne said, *Behold, I make all things new.* And he said unto me, *Write: for these words are true and faithful.**

2. Press into Serving others

Sometimes, we simply don't have all the answers. Yet Scripture instructs us to:

- Be there for others, regardless of what they are going through:

Romans 12:15 (KJV) *Rejoice with them that do rejoice, and weep with them that weep.*

- Bear one another's burdens

Galatians 6:2 (KJV) *Bear ye one another's burdens, and so fulfil the law of Christ.*

- Comfort one another in the Gospel

1 Thessalonians 4:13-18 (KJV) *But I would not have you to be ignorant, brethren, concerning them which are asleep, that ye sorrow not, even as others which have no hope. 14 For if we believe that Jesus died and rose again, even so them also which sleep in Jesus will God bring with him. 15 For this we say unto you by the word of the Lord, that we which are alive and remain unto the coming of the Lord shall not prevent them which are asleep. 16 For the Lord himself shall descend from heaven with a shout, with the voice of the archangel, and with the trump of God: and the dead in Christ shall rise first: 17 Then we which are alive and remain shall be caught up together with them in the clouds, to meet the Lord in the air: and so shall we ever be with the Lord. 18 Wherefore comfort one another with these words.*

3. **Pray** for our Land

Oh let us not forget the salvation of our God and all His benefits! (Ps 68:19-20) Remember the power of prayer:

James 5:16-18 (KJV) *Confess your faults one to another, and pray one for another, that ye may be healed. The effectual fervent prayer of a righteous man availeth much. 17 Elias was a man subject to like passions as we are, and he prayed earnestly that it might not rain: and it rained not on the earth by the space of three years and six months. 18 And he prayed again, and the heaven gave rain, and the earth brought forth her fruit.*

2 Chronicles 7:13-15 (KJV) *If I shut up heaven that there be no rain, or if I command the locusts to devour the land, or if I send pestilence among my people; 14 If my people, which are called by my name, shall humble themselves, and pray, and seek my face, and turn from their wicked ways; then will I hear from heaven, and will forgive their sin, and will heal their land. 15 Now mine eyes shall be open, and mine ears attent unto the prayer that is made in this place.*

4. **Praise** our LORD regardless of Circumstances

Psalms 34:1-5 (KJV) *A Psalm of David, when he changed his behaviour before Abimelech; who drove him away, and he departed. I will bless the LORD at all times: his praise shall continually be in my mouth. 2 My soul shall make her boast in the LORD: the humble shall hear thereof, and be glad. 3 O magnify the LORD with me, and let us exalt his name together. 4 I sought the LORD, and he heard me, and delivered me from all my fears. 5 They looked unto him, and were lightened: and their faces were not ashamed.*

Psalms 34:7-8 (KJV) The angel of the LORD encampeth round about them that fear him, and delivereth them. **8** O taste and see that the LORD is good: blessed is the man that trusteth in him.

Psalms 34:15-19 (KJV) The eyes of the LORD are upon the righteous, and his ears are open unto their cry. **16** The face of the LORD is against them that do evil, to cut off the remembrance of them from the earth. **17** The righteous cry, and the LORD heareth, and delivereth them out of all their troubles. **18** The LORD is nigh unto them that are of a broken heart; and saveth such as be of a contrite spirit. **19** Many are the afflictions of the righteous: but the LORD delivereth him out of them all.

5. **Push** Forward

- In the Gospel!

Hebrews 7:25 (KJV) Wherefore he is able also to save them to the uttermost that come unto God by him, seeing he ever liveth to make intercession for them.

- In Spiritual Warfare!

Ephesians 6:12-13 (KJV) For we wrestle not against flesh and blood, but against principalities, against powers, against the rulers of the darkness of this world, against spiritual wickedness in high places. **13** Wherefore take unto you the whole armour of God, that ye may be able to withstand in the evil day, and having done all, to stand.

- In the building of Godly Homes!

Colossians 3:18-21 (KJV) Wives, submit yourselves unto your own husbands, as it is fit in the Lord. **19** Husbands, love your wives, and be not bitter against them. **20** Children, obey your parents in all things: for this is well pleasing unto the Lord. **21** Fathers, provoke not your children to anger, lest they be discouraged.

- In Faith!

Jeremiah 32:26-27 (KJV) Then came the word of the LORD unto Jeremiah, saying, **27** Behold, I am the LORD, the God of all flesh: is there any thing too hard for me?

Mark 9:23 (KJV) Jesus said unto him, *If thou canst believe, all things are possible to him that believeth.*

1 Peter 5:7 (KJV) Casting all your care upon him; for he careth for you.

- In Joy!

John 15:9-11 (KJV) *As the Father hath loved me, so have I loved you: continue ye in my love. **10** If ye keep my commandments, ye shall abide in my love; even as I have kept my Father's commandments, and abide in his love. **11** These things have I spoken unto you, that my joy might remain in you, and that your joy might be full.*

Romans 14:17 (KJV) For the kingdom of God is not meat and drink; but righteousness, and peace, and joy in the Holy Ghost.

Final thoughts:

Psalms 34:17-22 (KJV) The righteous cry, and the LORD heareth, and delivereth them out of all their troubles. **18** The LORD is nigh unto them that are of a broken heart; and saveth such as be of a contrite spirit. **19** Many are the afflictions of the righteous: but the LORD delivereth him out of them all. **20** He keepeth all his bones: not one of them is broken. **21** Evil shall slay the wicked: and they that hate the righteous shall be desolate. **22** The LORD redeemeth the soul of his servants: and none of them that trust in him shall be desolate.

Romans 8:18-21 (KJV) For I reckon that the sufferings of this present time are not worthy to be compared with the glory which shall be revealed in us. **19** For the earnest expectation of the creature waiteth for the manifestation of the sons of God. **20** For the creature was made subject to vanity, not willingly, but by reason of him who hath subjected the same in hope, **21** Because the creature itself also shall be delivered from the bondage of corruption into the glorious liberty of the children of God.

Keep believing. Keep trusting. Keep obeying. Keep making disciples. Keep your mind on Jesus. Keep comforting, serving and blessing others. Keep rejoicing!

Philippians 4:4-7 (KJV) Rejoice in the Lord always: and again I say, Rejoice. **5** Let your moderation be known unto all men. The Lord is at hand. **6** Be careful for nothing; but in every thing by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your requests be made known unto God. **7** And the peace of God, which passeth all understanding, shall keep your hearts and minds through Christ Jesus.

Never forget that Christ wins!

1 John 5:4-5 (KJV) For whatsoever is born of God overcometh the world: and this is the victory that overcometh the world, even our faith. **5** Who is he that overcometh the world, but he that believeth that Jesus is the Son of God?

John 16:33 (KJV) These things I have spoken unto you, that in me ye might have peace. In the world ye shall have tribulation: but be of good cheer; I have overcome the world.

Amen!