

PRESSED OUT OF MEASURE

2 CORINTHIANS 1:4 – 20



~ My nation — the United States of America — and, indeed, most of the civilized world — claim to believe in God; but they do not read or study Scripture in any meaningful way. Overwhelmingly, most Americans make a profession of faith in some concept of “Jesus,” however vague that notion may be. In these United States, almost every home has at least one Bible; but it is rarely, if ever, opened. When it is opened, the illiteracy concerning it is absolutely frightening.

Overall, understanding, reading comprehension, and topical retention is almost nonexistent in our contemporary culture. Interestingly, religious programs — particularly laughable and blatantly wrong theology — are more likely to draw masses than repel them. A total and complete ignorance of the Word of God is the problem. Religion offers a trance-like state that only requires emotions. Anyone can get emotions from a bottle. Make a note. Now that I have spent several decades writing this so-called safari, I have discovered Americans aren’t interested in learning sound doctrine. It seems to be the world outside of this supposedly God-fearing United States who are crying out and genuinely interested in learning the Bible properly, correctly and completely. That’s shameful, Mia Americanos.

This Spiritual Safari expedition through the entire Word of God was ordained by God Himself. It is a layman’s undertaking geared to helping the local church — and, by de facto, the foreign church — because they all need His help. I think many people honestly want His help, too; even though they are reluctant to admit it. It is difficult for all of us to express our need, because that requires us to humble ourselves, lay aside pride, and ask for help. Well, that’s how we grow. And we all need to grow in the Lord.

Very few so-called Christians are truly saved today. Only the grace of our merciful God, using the few remaining men who actually believe Him at His

Word in this present hour, can continue to bring lost men and women to Himself in times such as these. The Word of God is living, and it works in our lives – why don't we learn how to use it for His glory today? We all certainly need truth in our life today. Does your neighbor even know how to accept Jesus as their Savior? Christianity isn't as easy as most seem to think it is. Are you capable of explaining to your neighbor what being a Christian means?

Our expedition concluded on a precariously high note in our last report as we read. "... Blessed *be* God, even the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of mercies, and the God of all comfort...." "*Comfort*" is not an idle word of sentimentally sweet nothingness. We're talking about that which is as real as raindrops are wet; it means help, advocacy and strength. Only the True and Living God can relieve our loneliness and assuage our intense grief; and calm the fears of terrifying troubles — bringing us true and genuine comfort in every area of our life. It is so utterly important for us to understand that reality, friends. If you haven't yet recognized that we *ALL* need a comforter – you will – I promise you that....

⁴ Who comforteth us in all our tribulation, that we may be able to comfort them which are in any trouble, by the comfort wherewith we ourselves are comforted of God.

~ When the sun is shining brightly in our lives, and we have a pocket full of money, we don't think much about being comforted. Unfortunately, every one of us will reach a time of calamity in our lives; irrespective of our current condition and situations. Paul has some real problems brewing on the horizon of his life at this time in which we are studying; and he is going to fill in the details as we move along in this epistle. We're going to see how God comforted Paul in his times of trouble. Do you need assurance of the presence of God in the circumstances of your present life for comfort? I do.

See, "*Christianity*" is nothing in the world but a theory to the average self-professing believer. It is the regurgitation of an afterthought. Most people treat Christianity as a garment reserved for special occasions. Christianity, for most people, is a stagnant ritual comprised of an empty vocabulary and meaningless, laborious requirements and demands. Very few seem to

realize that the proof of our faith called Christianity is the way it walks down the sidewalk in shoe leather. It should fit, should be comfortable, and should protect and help. Faith was no theory with the apostle Paul; and we know that because Paul says God comforts us in all our trouble. The make-believer can never make that statement....

⁵ For as the sufferings of Christ abound in us, so our consolation also aboundeth by Christ.

⁶ And whether we be afflicted, it is for your comfort and salvation, which is effectual in the enduring of the same sufferings which we also suffer: or whether we be comforted, it is for your consolation and salvation.

⁷ And our hope of you is stedfast, knowing, that as ye are partakers of the sufferings, so shall ye be also of the consolation.

⁸ For we would not, brethren, have you ignorant of our trouble which came to us in Asia, that we were pressed out of measure, above strength, insomuch that we despaired even of life:

⁹ But we had the sentence of death in ourselves, that we should not trust in ourselves, but in God which raiseth the dead:

¹⁰ Who delivered us from so great a death, and doth deliver: in whom we trust that he will yet deliver us;

~ This passage explains why God permits us to have trouble in our life. It explains poverty, loneliness, hurt, dire circumstances, and even sicknesses and diseases that we *all* experience – or will experience. When Paul says he had the “*sentence of death*” in him, I believe the doctor had told Paul that Paul didn’t have long to live. Many people think this refers to the incident in Ephesus when the mob came; and they wanted to tear Paul limb from limb, you will recall. That *MAY* be the experience Paul is referring to – we just don’t know – but what we *DO* know is that Paul knew he had a death sentence pending.

This is very practical for us today because God permits the church and Christians to suffer for very definite reasons; some of which we can neither understand nor see. What we can be assured of is that there is a very definite reason and purpose for our problems. God intends to work it out for our good when we are in the Lord Jesus Christ. See, when we have experienced those sufferings, we become capable of helping and comforting others. Paul deals with the realities of the Christian life; and, my friends, we're getting ready to get down to the nitty gritty of it all as we finish this report.

Paul is saying God has delivered us, He delivers us presently, and will deliver us forevermore. On that basis, Paul appeals for prayers in a dire and dark hour. See, anything we have today we have because of the *mercy* and kindness of God. No other reason. We are given material things and environmental considerations for the benefit of others! Make a note. I don't care what it is that you have in your possession it was given to you that you might share it with others. If you have a gift, talent, youth, health, or wealth — or if you have suffering — you have them for the comfort of other believers. Paul suffered, my friends — make no mistake about that; and that's what qualified him to ask these embarrassing questions he is asking these people.

What about you, reader — are you suffering for Christ? If you are truly believing in and trusting Him, then nothing happens to you that He does not permit. That's very difficult medicine to swallow, to be sure. So, how about it — do you believe David when he said goodness and mercy shall follow us all the days of our lives? Do you believe Paul when he says that God will deliver us? You're simply going to have to reconcile all of this in your heart if you are to continue with Christ in this hour in which we live. That's going to mean walking softly and appealing to others for prayer....

¹¹ Ye also helping together by prayer for us, that for the gift bestowed upon us by the means of many persons thanks may be given by many on our behalf.

¹² For our rejoicing is this, the testimony of our conscience, that in simplicity and godly sincerity, not with fleshly wisdom, but by the grace of

God, we have had our conversation in the world, and more abundantly to you-ward.

¹³ For we write none other things unto you, than what ye read or acknowledge; and I trust ye shall acknowledge even to the end;

¹⁴ As also ye have acknowledged us in part, that we are your rejoicing, even as ye also are ours in the day of the Lord Jesus.

¹⁵ And in this confidence I was minded to come unto you before, that ye might have a second benefit;

¹⁶ And to pass by you into Macedonia, and to come again out of Macedonia unto you, and of you to be brought on my way toward Judaea.

¹⁷ When I therefore was thus minded, did I use lightness? or the things that I purpose, do I purpose according to the flesh, that with me there should be yea yea, and nay nay?

¹⁸ But as God is true, our word toward you was not yea and nay.

¹⁹ For the Son of God, Jesus Christ, who was preached among you by us, even by me and Silvanus and Timotheus, was not yea and nay, but in him was yea.

²⁰ For all the promises of God in him are yea, and in him Amen, unto the glory of God by us.

~ Interestingly, trouble in one's life generally won't turn them away from God. No, harboring sin that we refuse to give up is what turns us away. Even the hard-core atheist cries out to God when the psycho-killer murders their family and places a gun to their head. Actually, atheism is the one religion that loses more of it's devotees on the death-bed than any other; but I digress, sort of. Honestly, it's positively dangerous when a church has it too easy. The same principles all apply to the individual Christian, too. When we have no problems, we invariably begin to compromise with the

flesh, the world, and the devil; and that's exactly what multitudes are doing today.

So, our Spiritual Safari is moving along rather hurriedly through this section of Scripture; which makes it difficult to digest. However, this is all extremely important – I just cannot stress the importance of what we are seeing in this leg of our expedition. Our natural "*wisdom*" will have no effect in helping other people in this world in their day of calamity. We may think we know everything but, if we do not know these Biblical truths Paul is telling us about then, may I say: we just don't know anything. Period. Full stop. These profoundly simple issues become extremely complicated to any sincere student of Scripture who loves the True and Living God.

Paul had told these Corinthians he was going to come back; but when he didn't immediately return, the enemy seized the opportunity to criticize him, and attempts to undermine him began. Of course, his teaching and method were ridiculed, too. They said Paul wasn't sincere. Well, Paul was sincere; when he said yes, he meant yes — and when he said no, he meant no. Believers need to follow this Scriptural example today. We need more honest and sincere Christians who will stand by their word – and we need their word to be the Word of God! The Gospel is yes, and it is positive – always. Even when it negates us! God means good for you and for your life; if you are God's child – wherever you are as you read this epistle – God loves you – very much ~

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