

“What Trials Produce,” Part 1 - 2 Corinthians 1:1-4 – June 19th, 2016

- Today's teaching will be part one of a new series I've titled, "What Trials Produce."
- I have to confess that I've really been looking forward to this first chapter here in Paul's second letter to the church in Corinth.
- This because of what God has ministered to me personally in and through this chapter over the years that I've walked with him.

- By way of introduction to this second letter Paul writes to the church in Corinth, there are a couple of things I'd like to point out.
- First, it's important to understand why it is that Paul would be inspired by the Spirit of God to write this second follow up letter.
- The reason being is, according to Timothy, he had learned that there were some there in Corinth who questioned his authority.

- It's for this reason that Paul starts the letter by identifying himself as "an apostle" of Christ Jesus by the will of God in verse one.
- I mention this because Paul usually started some of his other letters by identifying himself as "a bondservant" of Christ Jesus.
- In other words Paul finds himself needing to defend himself against the many false accusations from the many false teachers.

- The second thing that I'd like to point out before we jump in is that Paul's second letter is follow-up letter to encourage Corinth.
- It's interesting to note that throughout this letter, particularly here in the first chapter, Paul seems to be very pleased with them.
- Specifically because they had seemingly taken heed to Paul's first epistle where he bluntly rebukes them and corrects them.

- What we're about to see in this second epistle is arguably the most personal of all the letters the Apostle Paul had ever written.
- I believe that Paul is more personal because he sees sincerity and an authenticity on the part of the Corinthians to live godly.
- As such, he wants nothing more than to encourage them to endure the difficult trials they were experiencing during that time.

- It's with this understanding that I think we're now ready to jump into our text as we look at that which trials produce in our lives.

1. Peace with the Lord (Verses 1-2)

- v1 He greets them as an apostle of Christ by the will of God to the church together with all God's holy people throughout Achaia.
- v2 He goes onto express a familiar greeting saying, "grace and peace to you from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ.
- I find it rather interesting that Paul actually uses this greeting of "grace and peace," in all thirteen of his New Testament epistles.

In his book, "Why Grace Changes Everything," Pastor Chuck wrote, "Have you ever heard of the Siamese twins of the New Testament? They're the two little words, "grace and peace." They are always coupled together, in that order. We might say that the elder of the twins is grace. It is always grace and peace; we never read a salutation of peace and grace. Why? Because that would be putting the cart before the horse. The proper order is always grace and peace, because we cannot know the peace of God in our own hearts until we have first experienced the grace of God in our lives."

- I would suggest that one of the first things trials and difficulty produce in our lives is a fresh appreciation for the grace of God.
- Then, once we have experienced the grace of God in our lives, we begin tasting from the cup of the peace with and of the Lord.
- Simply put absent the grace of God my Christian life will always be tentative and uncertain making it impossible to enjoy peace.

Again, to quote Pastor Chuck, "Without grace, my relationship with God is never an established reality and it is impossible to enjoy peace."

- If there was ever a man who had been the recipient of God's grace, it was Paul, which is why he could speak to it so personally.

Charles Spurgeon of this writes, "Here was a man, who never knew but what he might be dead the next day, for his enemies were many, and cruel, and mighty; and yet he spent a great part of his time in praising and blessing God."

2. Comfort from the Lord (Verses 3-4)

- v3 Paul praises the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ referring to Him as the Father of compassion; God of all comfort.
- v4 He then says God comforts us in all our troubles, so that we can comfort those in any trouble with the comfort we received.
- What Paul is saying here is that God in His compassion for us, not only comforts us, He also uses us to comfort others as well.

- The word Paul uses for comfort is interesting such that it carries with it the idea of soothing compassion and strengthening help.
- I suppose you could say that in concert with receiving comfort from the Lord, so too are we also receiving strength in the Lord.
- Moreover this comfort from the Lord and strength in the Lord is often times for the benefit of others experiencing similar trials.

Adam Clarke - "Even spiritual comforts are not given us for our use alone; they, like all the gifts of God, are given that they may be distributed, or become instruments of help to others. A minister's trials and comforts are permitted and sent for the benefit of the Church. What a miserable preacher must he be who has all his divinity by study and learning, and nothing by experience!"

- I'm hoping you'll kindly indulge me just a bit as I share very personally how God has used this passage in my life as a pastor.
- Because I've been on the receiving end of God's comfort and strength, God has used it to minister to others who are in a trial.
- More specifically, it's because I've experienced the death of a child, that I'm able to minister to those who have had a child die.

- I think you'd agree with me when I say we're of little comfort and encouragement to others if we've never tasted from their cup.
- While we can certainly weep with them, and pray for them, it would be disingenuous for us to say that we can relate to them.
- Conversely, when we've been through what they are going through, we can comfort them knowing God will see them through.

- I'll close with a question for us to consider as it relates to the reasons God allows us to experience painful trials and suffering.
- Could the trial I'm in be that God desires to comfort me in ways only He can, so I too can comfort others He puts in my path?