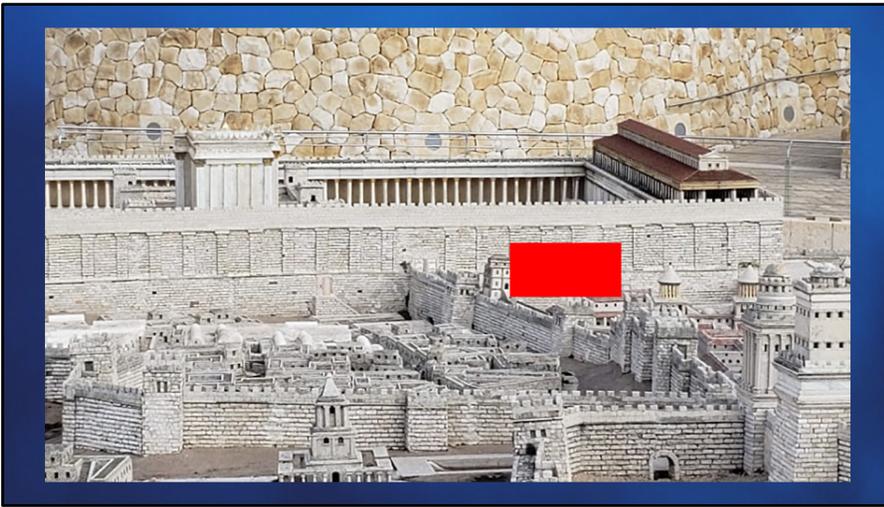




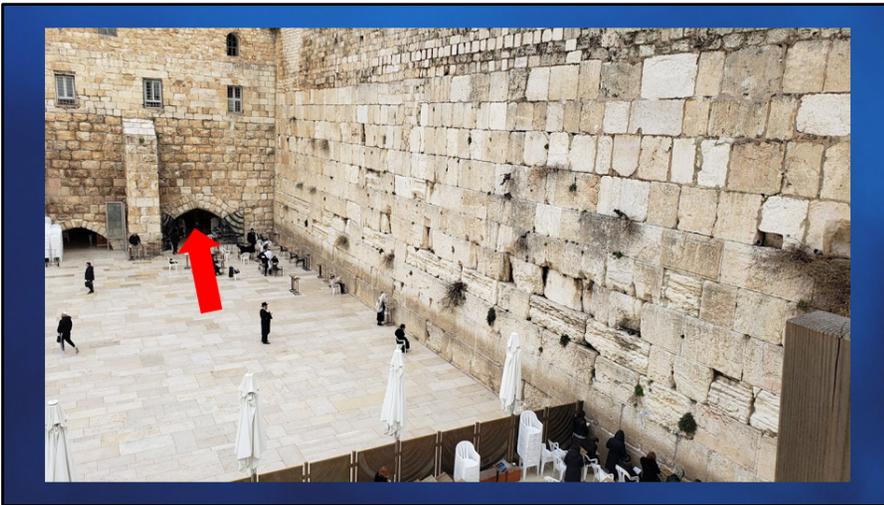
1

(Theme slide for this message)



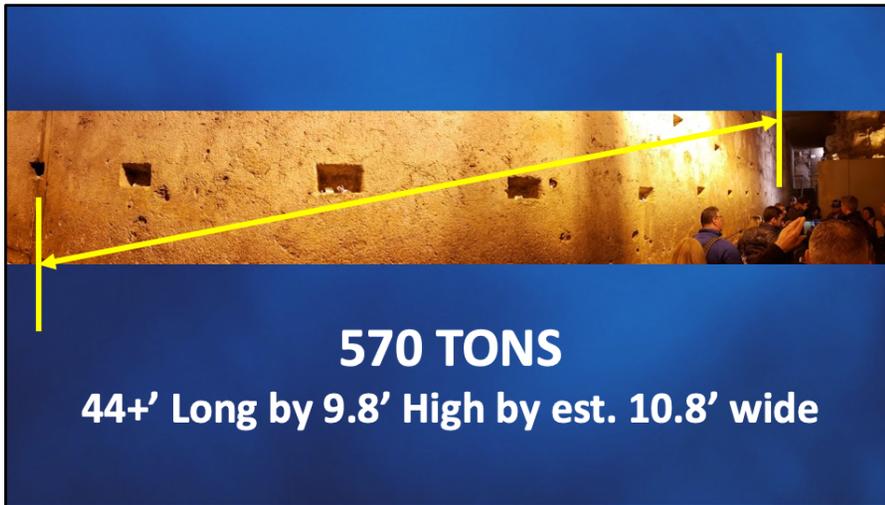
This picture of a scale model of ancient Jerusalem has a red rectangle marking the approximate location of what is commonly called the Wailing Wall.

TR: Perhaps you've seen this place of prayer . . .



**. . . along the Western retaining wall of the Temple Mount.
-- It is not the wall of the Temple itself, but it is the closest place to the Holy of Holies that Jews can come, so it is a place of prayer.**

TR: What I never understood before our recent trip to Israel was that there are tunnels underneath present-day homes that follow along the wall to the north. One entrance is marked by the arrow. Deep within this excavation is the largest stone they have found so far.

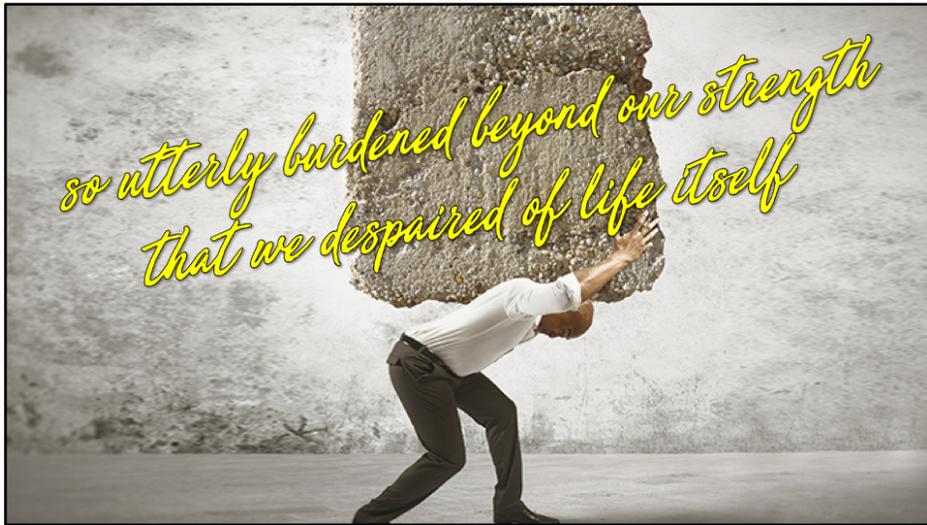


Our tour guide called it the “Ein Stein” – the one stone or first stone.

-- It is mind boggling to consider moving a 570-ton stone from a quarry to its place in the wall.

-- Consider that the huge construction cranes we see in big cities, according to the site How Stuff Works, can lift about 20 tons . . . and our jaws drop.

TR: But today we are not here to learn amazing facts of history, but to be honest with the reality that some of us feel like we are emotionally carrying Ein-Stein right now.



5

We feel SO UTTERLY BURDENED BEYOND OUR STRENGTH, maybe even to the point that we despair of life itself.

-- We begin a new growth initiative, a season of being built up in Christ, together, for more.

-- As we study in 2 Corinthians, we will be able to learn how we can be built up thru suffering, not just in spite of it or in the midst of it.

-- We'll also learn how to help others with burdens they bear.

TR: 2 Corinthians is a letter written by the Apostle Paul . . .



**... as he was traveling on his third missionary journey.
-- He was in Macedonia and had just connected with Titus, who brought news from the believers in the Las Vegas of the ancient world, Corinth.**

TR: After greeting them in the opening verses, we begin in verse 3 of chapter 1, page 1066 in the handout Bibles.

2 Corinthians 1:3-4a *page 1066 in handout Bibles*

Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of mercies and God of all comfort, ⁴who comforts us in all our affliction,

ESV

7

READ SLIDE

TR: Paul models that a person who is built up thru suffering has learned to . . .

Praise
the God of ALL comfort
for His comfort . . .

8

READ SLIDE

TR: This God of all comfort . . .

2 Corinthians 1:3-4a page 1066 in handout Bibles

Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of mercies and God of all comfort, **4who comforts us in all our affliction,**

ESV

9

. . . comforts us in ALL our affliction.

TR: This assurance is worthy of our giving worship to the LORD, isn't it.

Praise
the God of ALL comfort
for His comfort . . .
in ALL our afflictions,

10

READ SLIDE

- if we suffer for our sin, that's on us.
- **BUT** if we suffer to following Christ and seeking to be faithful to Him, then this is part of **ALL** our afflictions.
- What is amazing is that God, the Father of mercies, will return to us even if we are suffering for our sin, as soon as we return to Him.
- But I believe the focus here is not the afflictions we have by sharing in Christ's sufferings.

TR: We can praise God because His comfort results in . . . or as verse 4 continues, is . . .

2 Corinthians 1:4b-c

so that we may be able to comfort those who are in any affliction, with the comfort with which we ourselves are comforted by God.

ESV

11

READ SLIDE

TR: These linking words, SO THAT, tell us the result or perhaps the purpose of God's comforting us. This assures us that . . .

Praise
the God of ALL comfort
for His comfort . . .

in ALL our afflictions,
that ALWAYS has a purpose,

12

READ SLIDE

-- comfort in ANY affliction, because we have been comforted.
-- especially true when we've gone through a similar affliction,
but the idea of ANY affliction says that we can always minister to
others.

TR: Peter, one of the disciples closest to Jesus, also called Simon,
was going to be greatly tempted and even falter, denying Jesus 3
times before the rooster crowed but Jesus said to him ahead of
time . . .

Luke 22:31-32

"Simon, Simon, behold, Satan demanded to have you, that he might sift you like wheat, ³²but I have prayed for you that your faith may not fail. **And when you have turned again, strengthen your brothers.**"

ESV

13

READ SLIDE

-- Peter's faltering, that ultimate was not a complete failure of his faith, and his restoration by the God of all comfort, would allow him to then **STRENGTHEN** his brothers.

TR: We praise the God of all comfort for His comfort that **ALWAYS** has a purpose. The text continues . . .

2 Corinthians 1:5-6

For as we share abundantly in Christ's sufferings, so through Christ we share abundantly in comfort too. ⁶If we are afflicted, it is for your comfort and salvation; and if we are comforted, it is for your comfort, which you experience when you patiently endure the same sufferings that we suffer.

ESV

14

READ SLIDE

-- Note that it is **THROUGH CHRIST** that we share abundantly in comfort.

TR: We will experience this comfort . . .

2 Corinthians 1:5-6

For as we share abundantly in Christ's sufferings, so through Christ we share abundantly in comfort too. ⁶If we are afflicted, it is for your comfort and salvation; and if we are comforted, it is for your comfort, which you experience **when you patiently endure** the same sufferings that we suffer.

ESV

15

. . . when we patiently endure the afflictions God allows in our lives.

TR: The sharing abundantly in sufferings AND the sharing abundantly in comfort tells us that we can praise God for His comfort . . .

Praise
the God of ALL comfort
for His comfort . . .

*in ALL our afflictions,
that ALWAYS has a purpose,
that is ALWAYS enough,*

16

. . . that is ALWAYS enough.

TR: Even as Paul had written to the Corinthians in his first letter . .

.

1 Corinthians 10:13

No temptation has overtaken you that is not common to man. God is faithful, and he will **not let you be tempted beyond your ability**, but with the temptation he will also provide the way of escape, **that you may be able to endure it.**

ESV

17

READ SLIDE

-- As has been said, "God's will shall not lead you where His grace cannot sustain you."

TR: Our passage continues . . .

Our hope for you is unshaken, for we know that as you share in our sufferings, you will also share in our comfort.

ESV

18

READ SLIDE

- Our hope, not our worldly “hope” of a wish for a pleasant future . . .
- **BUT** our **HOPE**, the capital H kind of hope . . . is unshaken.

TR: Why?

2 Corinthians 1:7

Our hope for you is unshaken, **for we know** that as you share in our sufferings, you will also share in our comfort.

ESV

19

Because we KNOW . . . we have assurance that our sharing in sufferings will also mean sharing in comfort.

TR: When we are carrying heavy burdens of affliction, we must . .

.

Praise
the God of ALL comfort
for His comfort . . .

*in ALL our afflictions,
that ALWAYS has a purpose,
that is ALWAYS enough,
that brings unshakeable hope!*

20

READ SLIDE

TR: Our exaltation and adoration of the Father of mercies and the God of ALL comfort doesn't stop there.

**Praise
the God of ALL comfort**

21

TR: We are to praise Him, even . . .

Praise
the God of ALL comfort
amid our afflictions . . .

22

READ SLIDE

TR: For those caring heavy burdens, like “Ein Stein,” that may feel like salt in our wounds if we think this is coming from someone who has experienced no afflictions themselves.



Like someone who stayed at a hotel on the shores of the Dead Sea, also called the Salt Sea.

TR: What does someone who . . .



. . . floats effortlessly in the salty water, reading a newspaper, have to say to people oppressed by affliction?

TR: But the Apostle Paul's words are not the theoretical words of someone who hasn't experienced afflictions. Read in verse 8 . . .

2 Corinthians 1:8-9a

For we do not want you to be unaware, brothers, of the affliction we experienced in Asia. For we were **so utterly burdened beyond our strength that we despaired of life itself.** ⁹Indeed, we felt that we had received the sentence of death.

ESV

25

READ SLIDE

-- What a powerful corrective to folks who think that following Jesus makes every day an easy one.

TR: If we are to be built up thru suffering, it will be because we seek the Spirit's help to . . .

Praise
the God of ALL comfort
amid our afflictions . . .

that can make us despair of life,

26

READ SLIDE . . . EVEN in the weighty afflictions that can make us despair of life.

-- Let us not minimize the real pain that others may feel.

-- EX: walking out of the Holocaust Museum's memorial to the murdered children. It was not a place for pictures, but as the names of each child were read as we walked through the reflected five lights that seemed to uncountable and go on forever . . . I walked out balling like a baby. Later I would find out that others on the tour imagined I must have known someone personally because I sobbed, covering my face with my handkerchief.

-- Wouldn't we sob if today, on Sanctity of Human Life Sunday, the names of the babies killed were read out loud. Not 2 million but some 30 times that number.

-- Perhaps you sob today because you had, or you pushed a woman to have, an abortion. You know it was wrong and if you return to God, He will return to you. He even extends forgiveness to murderers.

-- The point though is this . . . some of us are grieving not just under the weight of so much pain others have born . . . but under our own pain. Not a pain necessarily from sinful choices we've made but those inflicted upon us. We are called to do what is most difficult at times to do . . . to praise the God of all comfort while not minimizing the anguish of our despair.

TR: Let our deliberate praise remind us that God allows these affliction to flow through His loving fingers into our lives for a purpose . . . verse 9 continues . . .

2 Corinthians 1:9b

But that was to **make us rely not on ourselves but on God** who raises the dead.

ESV

27

READ SLIDE

TR: To be truly happy, filled with an unshakeable hope and joy, we must be close to God. He allows afflictions and we can praise Him amid them and even for them because . . .

Praise
the God of ALL comfort
amid our afflictions . . .

that can make us despair of life,
*that **STILL** have great purpose,*

28

. . . they still have a great purpose.

-- How much of our lives is an attempt to NOT have to rely on God? We want to insure ourselves and insulate ourselves from afflictions.

-- But when the burdens truly weigh us down, and at some point in our lives they will, the wise person admits they need God.

TR: Paul spoke with a confidence of a life sold out to God, a life that included deadly peril and stories of God's faithful deliverance. Verse 10 says . . .

2 Corinthians 1:10

He delivered us from such a deadly peril, and he will deliver us. On him we have **set our hope** that he will deliver us again.

ESV

29

READ SLIDE

-- Paul had experienced peril and deliverance. Therefore he **KNEW** that we had bedrock on which we could **SET OUR HOPE**.

TR: We read of this hope back in verse 7, an unshakable hope. Paul can praise the God of All comfort amid his afflictions because he **SET HIS HOPE** on God.

Praise
the God of ALL comfort
amid our afflictions . . .

*that can make us despair of life,
that STILL have great purpose,
that cannot shake our hope!*

30

WE must do the same.

TR: All the time, but especially when we are afflicted with heavy burdens, we must praise God, blessing the Father of mercies and the God of All comfort for His promises.

God's Promises:

- *comfort in ALL our afflictions,*

31

For His promise to comfort us in ALL our afflictions.

TR: For His promise that the comfort will be . . .

God's Promises:

- *comfort in ALL our afflictions,*
- *abundant, proportionate comfort,*

32

... abundant and proportionate to the weight He asks us to carry.

TR: His promise to us that He is not toying with us, nor has He forgotten us, knowing that . . .

God's Promises:

- *comfort in ALL our afflictions,*
- *abundant, proportionate comfort,*
- *nothing He allows is wasted.*

33

READ SLIDE

TR: This results in . . .

God's Promises:

- *comfort in ALL our afflictions,*
- *abundant, proportionate comfort,*
- *nothing He allows is wasted.*

→ an unshakeable bedrock that gives us a sure place to set our hope!

34

READ SLIDE

TR: Where are we SETTING our hope?

→ an unshakeable bedrock that gives us a sure place to set our hope!

***SET OUR HOPE →
GOD'S PROMISES →
GOD'S CHARACTER***

35

The only unshakeable bedrock is on His promises that are anchored in God's unchanging character.

-- He is the same yesterday, today, and forever!

TR: There's one more powerful insight from our text today. If we are to be built up thru our suffering, we must . . .

**Praise and Pray to
the God of ALL comfort**

READ SLIDE

TR: Look with me at verse 11 when Paul for the first time asks the Corinthians to do something.

2 Corinthians 1:11

You also must **help us by prayer**, so that many will give thanks on our behalf for the blessing granted us **through the prayers of many**.

ESV

37

READ SLIDE

-- Paul is asking them to help him and his compatriots **BY PRAYER**.

TR: Knowing that **THROUGH THE PRAYERS OF MANY . . .**

You also must help us by prayer, **so that many will give thanks** on our behalf for the blessing granted us through the prayers of many.

ESV

. . . MANY WILL GIVE THANKS to God.

-- Even this call to prayer is with the anticipation of further glory and praise to God.

TR: When we see others burdened under the weight of affliction, we must . . .

**Pray to
the God of ALL comfort**

helping those in afflictions,

39

help them by PRAYING TO THE GOD OF ALL COMFORT.

**TR: There are a lot of take-aways from this powerful passage.
Working our way through it one more time, we see we must . . .**

Our Responsibilities:

- ***comfort others,***

40

Remember that there is purpose to our sharing in Christ's sufferings . . . so that we can comfort others with the comfort we have received.

-- Ask God if there is someone He is asking you to connect with to share the comfort you have received?

TR: We are all responsible to . . .

Our Responsibilities:

- *comfort others,*
- *share in Christ's sufferings,*

41

READ SLIDE

-- If we are suffering for our sin, we must repent.

TR: But if we are sharing in Christ's sufferings, we must . . .

Our Responsibilities:

- *comfort others,*
- *share in Christ's sufferings,*
- *patiently endure,*

42

READ SLIDE

-- Patient endurance is only possible if we have a confident, capital H Hope that Jesus will come back and make all things right.

-- That's why PATIENT ENDURANCE is called for and expected in the final book of the Bible, Jesus' Revelation to the Apostle John.

-- Will you patiently endure today by praising the Father of mercies and the God of ALL comfort, thanking and trusting Him in ALL circumstances?

TR: Patient endurance doesn't mean we pretend things aren't hard. God's Word has made clear through Paul's example that we can . . .

Our Responsibilities:

- *comfort others,*
- *share in Christ's sufferings,*
- *patiently endure,*
- *be honest about the burdens,*

43

READ SLIDE

TR: Will we stop with the anger at God for allowing the weighty circumstances and . . .

Our Responsibilities:

- *comfort others,*
- *share in Christ's sufferings,*
- *patiently endure,*
- *be honest about the burdens,*
- *learn to rely on God,*

44

READ SLIDE

TR: Even as we . . .

Our Responsibilities:

- *comfort others,*
- *share in Christ's sufferings,*
- *patiently endure,*
- *be honest about the burdens,*
- *learn to rely on God,*
- *set our hope on God's faithfulness in providing deliverance,*

45

READ SLIDE

TR: And, finally, will we accept our responsibility to . . .

Our Responsibilities:

- *comfort others,*
- *share in Christ's sufferings,*
- *patiently endure,*
- *be honest about the burdens,*
- *learn to rely on God,*
- *set our hope on God's faithfulness in providing deliverance,*
- *help others through prayer*

46

READ SLIDE

- I've realized that in my youth I often felt that prayer was a weak response to helping others carry the burdens God allows.
- As I've matured, I have begun to realize that when I don't pray, I shirk my loving responsibility.
- The Apostles delegated waiting on tables so that they could devote themselves to the Word and Prayer.
- Will you ask the Spirit to help you accept this most critical responsibility?
- Will you humble yourself when you are utterly burdened, and maybe even quietly despairing of life itself, and ask for prayer support?

TR: Will you take a moment . . .



THE SPECIFIC ACTION STEP GOD IS
CALLING ME TO THIS WEEK:

47

**. . . and ask the Holy Spirit to impress upon your heart what He wants you to do this week?
-- Let's not be just hearers of the Word, but doers!**