

SPIRIT OF COMFORT
'GOD IS' SERIES - WEEK 6
Ben Rudolph

Good morning Life Fellowship. It is so good to see you here this morning. And I appreciate all the well wishes that I got this past week, after Dan filled in for me last week, because I thought I had the corona virus. (*Laughter.*) I am not sure if you have been that sick yet this year, but I had something that lasted nine days. It was one of those times when I looked at my wife and I said, *'I think I must have got the corona virus. It skipped over the Pacific and it landed here in Denver, North Carolina on me.'* I am still fighting a little stuffiness and congestion, but I am glad to be here and able to share God's Word with you.

Let's turn in our Bibles to II Corinthians Chapter 1 as that is where we are going to be this morning. We are in this series called, 'The Spirit of.' We believe that as a church in order to have a dynamic relationship with God we must understand the Holy Spirit. We know that God is a Trinity - God the Father, God the Son and God the Holy Spirit - three persons in one. And when it comes to having the active ongoing empowered Christian life we cannot do that apart from the Holy Spirit.

We have said this every week - we can either ignore the Holy Spirit or we can abuse the Holy Spirit. And what we want to do is look at what the Word of God says about how we should relate to the Holy Spirit in a way that is active and vibrant in our Christian walk. And so every week we have been talking about the work that the Holy Spirit does including the Spirit of presence, the Spirit of life, the Spirit of help, and the Spirit of conviction. Every week we have been going through this series talking about the different roles that the Holy Spirit plays in our lives.

This week we are going to be talking about the Spirit of comfort. This is one of those sermons that I believe really affects every single one of us. And this is why - every single one of us struggles with pain. Every single one of us goes through difficulties in life. And comfort is one of those core foundational needs that our soul has. We all want comfort. We all are looking for something to help us in life when things don't go right. We are going to read a story about Paul here in just a moment that tells us how he found comfort from God, and how we can find comfort from God as well.

Let's look at this passage in II Corinthians Chapter 1 and verse 3: ***"Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of mercies and God of all comfort, who comforts us in all our affliction, 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."***

"For as we share abundantly in Christ's sufferings, so through Christ we share abundantly in comfort too. If 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

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endure the same sufferings that we suffer. Our hope for you is unshaken, for we know that as you share in our sufferings, you will also share in our comfort.”

“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. Indeed, we felt that we had received the sentence of death. But that was to make us rely not on ourselves but on God who raises the dead. 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. 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.”

This is a powerful passage of Scripture. What Paul was saying is that they had gone through a very difficult time. They struggled with hope. They thought they had the sense of death, as they were afflicted in suffering. He uses those words over and over again in this passage ‘*we were afflicted and we were suffering.*’ What Paul was saying was that they were hurting, they were in pain.

And when we come into a room like this I think many times we carry with us the wounds and the pain and the affliction and the suffering that we face on a daily basis. Week by week we walk in here and I just wonder what the pain is that we are carrying in here this morning. I kind of have this picture, and I don’t know if it is because I have been reading a lot of war history books or not, but I have also been listening to a lot of history podcasts and studying a lot about World War I. And I have this idea of what happens to us week by week. And that is we throw these sin grenades around us. When a hand grenade is thrown it just explodes and shrapnel goes everywhere.

And I think what happens is we walk through life and as we walk in our family relationships and our work relationships, and just in our own personal walk with God, and whether it is the sin that we do, or it is the sin that is happening around us that people do to us, we are constantly being lobbed by grenades. We are constantly being lobbed by hurts, and by attacks on us. And the sin explodes and the shrapnel hits us.

So you might be walking in here this morning with some wounds. You might be walking in here with some hurts and some afflictions because of the sin that has happened around you and to you. You might even be walking wounded in the room this morning because of some sin you have committed yourself. You may have some self-inflicted wounds.

And it is in those moments that we have to wonder about Paul and think, ‘*How was he able to find comfort.*’ And that is because when it comes to pain, we all want to avoid it. And here is the main idea I want to give to you this morning, and it is - your

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pain is the doorway to true comfort. Your pain is the doorway to true comfort. It was the pain, the affliction, it was the suffering that Paul experienced that led him to discover how he could have true comfort. And we need to look at this and we need to think about this journey that Paul was on. How did Paul discover this comfort that he received from God?

I know for me I don't like being in pain. When I was sick for two weeks, I was like, '*Get me out of this.*' If I had read on the Internet to drink bug juice, I would have been drinking bug juice. I was willing to do whatever it took to get out of pain. When it comes to pain we want to escape it as much as possible.

So what we are going to do this morning is look at the journey that Paul took and I want to invite us to take the same journey that Paul did. We are going to look at the need for comfort, the search for comfort, the solution for comfort, and the opportunity for comfort. So we are going to look for the need, the search, the solution and the opportunity for comfort.

Let's look first at the need for comfort because here is what we have to understand. We cannot really put our minds around comfort until we have put our minds around affliction. Right here in verse 4 Paul says this: "***Who comforts us in all our affliction.***" This word 'affliction' means 'to be hard pressed.' That is a good picture sometimes of life where we just feel like the circumstances around us, what people are doing to us, or what they are saying about us, makes us feel hard pressed and crushed by the stings and the attacks of other people.

In fact this is so bad that look what it says in verse 8: "***For we do not want you to be unaware, brother, of the affliction we experienced in Asia. For we were so utterly burdened beyond our strength that we despaired of life itself.***" Think about that for a moment. Some of you may have had a really bad week this week, but how many of you were ready to die? Now don't raise your hands. This was the level of affliction that Paul had, and I think it is important that he said this because many times we can read Scripture and be like, '*Yeah, but that was back then, and they don't have a clue what I am going through today in my life.*'

What Paul was saying was they were in such despair, they were in such need of God and for comfort, that they didn't know where to turn. The hope they had had was now lost. And for us we need to look at our pain and ask, '*Why is this pain here?*' And I think it is related to the word 'hope.' Paul mentions hope twice in this passage. Verse 7 says, "***Our hope for you is unshaken,***" and he also says this in verse 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.***"

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I believe that when it comes to our pain, and when it comes to our affliction, that many times there is an attack on our hope that we have deep within our souls. There is something inside of us that says, *'This is the way I want my life to work out. This is the way I want my marriage to look. This is the way I want my kids to look. This is the way I want my career to be. This is the way I want to experience life.'* And when all of those things that we have our hope in seem to be crashing down, what do we do in that moment? What do we do in that kind of pain and disappointment? Paul said that when they were facing that kind of affliction and pain, that was when they found comfort.

Now what is comfort? We talk about comfort a lot because we need comfort when we are in pain. The word 'comfort' has two beautiful words in the Hebrew and the Greek. And I love these pictures that the Bible gives to us. The first word for comfort comes from the Old Testament and the word literally means 'to take a deep breath and sigh.' It kind of means we are experiencing compassion.

Remember when you had young children and they get a boobo, they scratch their knee, or they fall down? What did you do as a parent? You get down on their level and softly say, *'Oh, let me see your boobo.'* And then you kiss it, right? And we know that kiss doesn't heal anything, does it? Some of you moms are glaring at me and thinking, *'Don't you dare mess this up. That kiss is real.'* But we know that when kids are sort of hurting, they just want some sympathy and that is when we comfort them. And God knows there is this sense in all of us where we want to have someone feel our pain with us, and to show us compassion.

And then there is this Greek word which is *parakaleo* meaning 'to show comfort.' And *parakaleo* is related to a word that Dan preached on two weeks ago, which was *paraclete* and that means 'helper.' And it is mentioned in John Chapter 15 and 16 where the Spirit was going to come to help the disciples. The Holy Spirit was coming to do all this work. And the verb form of that word *paraclete* is *parakaleo* and it means to comfort, it means to come alongside someone.

This is the definition I believe that we need to take away for what true comfort is. True comfort is compassionate presence that assures us of hope. What you and I need is someone to come to us when we are in pain to say, *'It is going to be okay. It is going to be alright. I'm here. I love you.'* And that is what our soul longs for when it comes to comfort. So knowing that we need comfort, we need to examine our pain to see what it is saying to us right now. What is the affliction that I am carrying and what is the desire it is giving to me right now?

Again, I was struggling with this virus for about nine days, and I don't know about you but when I was a kid my mom would always buy me Saltine crackers when I

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was sick. So now whenever I get sick, you know what I say to Liz? *'Babe, I need Saltine crackers.'* And she is like, *'Saltine crackers? Seriously? They are not going to help you.'* And I am like, *'I don't care. Whenever I am sick I have this craving for Saltine crackers.'* I know this is weird because there is no nutritional value to those whatsoever, but there is something about when I was a child and my mom gave me Saltine crackers that made me feel better. So even today whenever I am sick I still associate those crackers as a solution for my pain and sickness.

This leads us to our second point - the search for comfort. When we are in pain what you and I will do is try to figure out a solution. We want to feel better; we don't want to feel like this any longer. And what we need to understand is for many of us when it comes to our pain and affliction we make one big mistake that Paul teaches us not to make. Look what he says in verse 9: ***"Indeed, we felt that we had received the sentence of death. But that was to make us rely not on ourselves but on God who raises the dead."***

You see one of the biggest mistakes that we make when it comes to comfort, when it comes to our pain and our affliction, and when we don't want to feel like this anymore, is that we believe that we know what is best for us. We believe we know what is going to make us feel better. We believe when it comes to the compassionate presence that assures us of hope, when that hope is being attacked in our lives bringing on the affliction and the pain, then we become willing to do whatever it takes to restore that hope, and we trust in ourselves and not in God.

When it comes to our search for comfort, one of the mistakes we do is we say, *'Okay, for me I know what I need to do to feel better.'* And what we do is we turn to things, or we will do things that we believe will give us relief, because we don't want to be in pain. And many times we will run from pain. And there are two big mistakes we make when it comes to relying on ourselves. The first one is we try to numb our pain by going after substitute comfort. We go after substitute comfort to numb the pain. Maybe we aren't feeling good because we have this shrapnel in us and maybe we feel bad about this relationship, or bad about our marriage, or bad about our kids, or bad about our career. We have this pain inside of us.

And do you know what we do? We turn to all these things around us, some of them good, some of them destructive to give us that moment of relief. We have a horrible day at work and we say to ourselves, *'You know what I need? Four hours of Netflix.'* Maybe our kids are driving us crazy so we think we need that third glass of wine. Maybe things are not going well in our marriage so we decide to look at porn. There are all these things that we can do to rob us of genuine comfort that God wants to

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give to us. Instead of using our pain as a doorway to genuine comfort, we use our pain to search after other comforts, whether it is food, like a cheeseburger, or whether it is a two hour shopping spree, or we decide to go to this party and to seek love and affection from people.

Whatever it is, we will look for whatever substitute we can find to numb that pain for just a while. And when we do that we rob ourselves of God truly giving us the comfort He wants us to have. So we have to look inwardly and ask, *'What am I turning to for comfort when I am in pain and affliction? When I am going through suffering what do I turn to? What is it that I go to all the time to escape the pain that I am in.'* When we do that we rob ourselves of genuine comfort.

Another mistake we make is we just try to stay busy. Maybe that is you. Maybe you are not doing destructive behavior, but you are doing whatever you can from the time you wake up till you go to bed to stay busy and to not do the hard work of looking inside and asking yourself why you are in such affliction, why you are carrying around this shrapnel causing so much hurt and pain. But instead you just stay busy. You stay busy at school, you stay busy at work, you stay busy at church, and you stay busy at home, because you want to fill your life with enough stuff so that you can ignore the problem instead of having to deal with it.

And when we do that, again we forget that God is trying to do something. God is working inside of us to show us that when it comes to our pain, our pain is there to make us cry out to Him. And when we ignore the pain, we forget to cry out. C. S. Lewis said that God speaks to us, that He shouts to us in our pain. And we as Americans are running from it as fast as we can in the other direction. We become numb, we distract, because we are afraid to do the hard work of looking at these things and asking God to show us why we feel this way, and asking Him to show us what He is doing.

So not only do we have the need for comfort for our pain, and the search for pain that can go the wrong way, but we also have the solution for comfort. The thing that Paul knew was he understood where true comfort lies. He used his pain as the doorway to true comfort. We see this when we read where he said, ***"But that was to make us rely not on ourselves but on God who raises the dead."*** Why is that so significant? Paul said they did not rely on their own selves, they did not trust their own selves, they did not depend on their own selves to know what was best for them. No, they believed that God knew what was best for them. They were going to trust in God and His solution, and His plan, because His ways of giving comfort were far greater than what we could create for ourselves.

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When we rely on God we understand that He could raise the dead. Why was Paul saying that? It was going back to the idea of how comfort is tied to hope. When hope inside of us dies, it is a really dangerous place for us to be in because we despair and we are discouraged. And because we don't like to feel like that, we will turn to whatever we can to fill that void in us. Paul is saying when God starts chipping away at the hope in our lives, what He wants to do is give us new hope. He wants to give us a new resurrected hope that comes from Him, and not from ourselves.

So we see in verse 4 that God comforts us in our affliction. God wants to comfort us, He wants to sit with us in our pain, and He wants us to address the pain in our lives. He doesn't want us to ignore it, and He is not ignoring it. The key to learning to rely on God is by understanding who Jesus is and why He did what He did.

Look at verse 5 again. "***For as we share abundantly in Christ's sufferings, so through Christ we share abundantly in comfort too.***" So we want a solution for our pain. We don't want to be in pain anymore, we want comfort, so how do we get there? Paul says to understand comfort and to escape the pain, we have to understand Christ. Here is what he is saying. For us to understand how we find the solution for our pain and find comfort, we have to look to Jesus. Every pain, every affliction that we feel, Christ can identify with us. The shrapnel that is in us right now, in our soul is understood by God because we serve a God who has experienced suffering. We serve a God who went to the cross, suffered, and died for us.

If you are experiencing injustice right now in your life, guess who experienced injustice at the farthest extreme? If you are experiencing betrayal right now, guess who was betrayed far more than any of us? If we are experiencing hurt, disappointment, mockery or hate, we need to remember the beatings and torture physically Christ suffered. Every single emotional hurt, pain and affliction, every physical pain and affliction that we feel, or have felt, we have a God who has felt it with us. See, what we need is someone who can put their arm around us and say, '*I know how it feels.*' Part of comfort is identifying with the pain, and we have a God who knows what that is like.

I remember my dad sharing this story with me. He has been in ministry for forty years, and he shared with me how as a pastor many times he has had to be the first person to arrive at a family setting to bring comfort to them by the ministry of presence in those moments. And I can tell you that during those moments in my own life where there has been very little to say, the comfort is just by someone being there and present.

My dad told me this story of when he was young and in Bible college learning a lot of theology, which can be very dangerous when you know a little of theology but don't have a lot of experience in applying it. He came home from college when his

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grandfather died and he knew his grandmother was mourning. So he went over to see his grandmother because he wanted to comfort her in that moment. So he said all these things to her that were theologically true, but they were not helping. And my dad said he would never forget when the widows of the town showed up at his grandmother's house. They had just all came to be there with my grandmother, and she just melted as she fell into their arms. And that is when my dad saw what comfort looked like.

We have Jesus and the Holy Spirit, who is His presence, and who has been given to us so that when we are hurting, when we are in affliction, He can say to us, '*I have been there too. I know you are hurt and you can trust me to comfort you.*' And what we need to do is invite Jesus into our pain. And when we invite Jesus into our pain, we start letting Him start defining what that pain is really for. Instead of ignoring it, or just numbing ourselves to it, He can start helping us to understand it, to define it, and to give us comfort.

One of my favorite names for God in Scripture is the name *Yahweh-Rapha*. I think I have shared this with you before, but this name *Yahweh-Rapha* means 'the Lord our healer.' And we need to understand God as healer. Whenever you look in the Old Testament as God was revealing Himself, He would give Himself these names like *El Shaddai* and *Yahweh-Rapha* after taking the children of Israel out of their bondage and slavery in Egypt. He kills Pharaoh and his army and says, '*I am Yahweh-Rapha, the Lord your healer.*' The word *raphe* literally means 'to sew together.'

What God loves to do is take those things that are torn, the things that are broken in our lives, and when we let Him have His hands on it, He will start to sew things back together again. I don't know what is torn in your life this morning. I don't know what brokenness you are carrying with you, but I do know that God is a healer. And what Jesus wants to do is to heal us and to make us whole again.

Maybe you are thinking, '*Ben, you don't understand. What I feel is so difficult. How can He heal me?*' And this is the beautiful thing because it is something you can only experience yourself. I can only tell you that when I have fought my own affliction, my own hurt, my own pain my own way, all I did was make it worse. But when I turned my hurt and my pain over to Him, He was able to bring the healing and the purpose and vision to what I needed.

There are two other passages we need to read because once we learn to give our pain to Jesus we will start looking at our pain differently. This is what happened to Paul. He wrote about the word affliction in two other passages of Scripture. The first one is a couple of chapters over in II Corinthians Chapter 4. We saw that Paul used the word

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affliction in Chapter 1 where he said they had felt like dying, where he felt they had received the sentence of death.

Now in II Corinthians Chapter 4 and verse 16 Paul says this: ***“So we do not lose heart. Though our outer self is wasting away, our inner self is being renewed day by day. For this light momentary affliction,”*** - whoa, time out. ***“Light momentary affliction?”*** All right Paul, what are you talking about? He just wrote three chapters before that he wanted to die and now he is saying his affliction was light and momentary. What is he talking about - because what I feel is real, and it is deep, and it is difficult.

Paul goes on to say this: ***“For this light momentary affliction is preparing for us an eternal weight of glory beyond all comparison, as we look not to the things that are seen but to the things that are unseen. For the things that are seen are transient, but the things that are unseen are eternal.”*** What God is trying to do in each and every one of us is He is working to bring His glory into our lives. And many times He will use the pain in our lives to produce a greater glory in us.

What Paul was saying was we need to understand the work that God is trying to produce in us, that the hope that we have that has been crushed, the hurt that is weighing us down, we need to understand that this crushing weight is really light and momentary compared to the glory that God wants to give us. This is where we have to rely on God and trust in Him, and this is difficult. Remember Paul said they didn't rely on themselves but they relied on God who raised the dead.

One of the greatest challenges you will have this morning after hearing this sermon is asking yourself, *‘Am I going to keep trusting in my own solutions, in my own way for comfort, or am I going to trust in God’s ways for comfort?’* God has a purpose and if we invite Jesus into the pain, and we let Him bring the healing, if we give Him the control of it, He will do some things far greater than you or I could do.

We again see this purpose to our affliction in Romans Chapter 5 and verse 3. It says, ***“Not only that, but we rejoice in our sufferings.”*** Paul first said that their afflictions were light and momentary, and now he is saying that they rejoice in their sufferings. What is he talking about? Well, Paul goes on to say this: ***“We rejoice in our sufferings, knowing that suffering produces endurance, and endurance produces character, and character produces hope, and hope does not put us to shame, because God’s love has been poured into our hearts through the Holy Spirit who has been given to us.”***

There is that word ‘hope’ again. See what God wants is to give us a greater hope than what has been crushed. He can take out the shrapnel that is inside of us and turn it

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into a seed that is going to grow and become something beautiful. It is our hurt that is the doorway to comfort. And when we let God have His way in us, and we let Him comfort us, He multiplies our comfort.

So we have the need for comfort, the search for comfort, the solution for comfort and lastly we have the opportunity for comfort. Now here is the thing, when God comforts us He doesn't just leave us alone. Look what Paul says in verse 4, "***The God of comfort who comforts us in our affliction that we may be able to comfort those who are in any affliction with the comfort with which we ourselves are comforted by God.***"

This is what He says over and over again - there is an interconnectedness between God's comfort and other people. What Paul said was he was going to invite people in. And we have to be very careful, but many times we take our pain and our affliction and we bury it. We don't tell anybody about it. But Paul says first here in Chapter 1, '*Guys, I was struggling.*'

And this is why the church is so important. This is why relationships in this body are so important, because God does not want us to go through our affliction alone. That is why we have Life Communities, so that we can come into a small group, and we tell our story, tell our struggles, tell about our pain. And then when we are feeling that pain, the people around us can help be the hands and feet of Jesus. Here is what Paul was saying - when we experience the comfort of God and what He does, we can take the comfort that we have experienced and we can then pour it out on others.

One of my favorite things to do is when there is another person that has struggled with something that I have struggled with is to be able to sit down and talk with them. They tell me their struggle that is going on in their life, and because God has brought me further along in my journey than this person, then I can tell this person that there is hope. I can share with them that God is going to keep working in them because that is how He helped me.

And this is how we multiply the comfort with the opportunities that God gives to us. But many times we don't share our stories. We keep our stories hidden. And the comfort that we have received from God we don't share with other people. And God is trying to let us know that not only does He want us to experience His comfort, but He wants us to pour out the comfort we have received to others. This is one of the best ways that we can share the power of the gospel with other people. We need to understand when we have received the comfort of Jesus through His death, resurrection and forgiveness, and we have been given His righteousness and reconciliation, that when we received the comfort for our own sins we are now to share this comfort with other people.

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This is how comfort is multiplied. And this is how God wants to work and move in us today.

I am super excited about what is going on here next weekend. We are having our heart, mind and soul seminar and we have a ton of people signed up for it. If you have not already signed up for this, please do so, as there is just a little bit of room left. It is going to be a time where we are going to learn how to build grace and truth relationships with people within the LGBT community.

And one of the things I am excited about is next Sunday Jim Childs will be speaking. Jim Childs will be one of the main presenters at the seminar. And next Sunday he will be sharing his gospel story. He was someone who was entrapped in a homosexual lifestyle for decades and then tells how God rescued him out of it. It is powerful. I hope that you will come and that you will bring friends that need to hear this.

Here is the thing - some of you may struggle with sexual sins or same sex attraction. This is a ministry that Jim can have and a comfort that he can give that some of us cannot. I don't know that struggle, you may not know that struggle, but he does. And just like Jim we have been given a story and if we have been given a story of comfort that God has redeemed us from, what He wants us to do is to multiply the comfort that we have experienced and to share it with others. We can't just keep it to ourselves because this is how the gospel goes forward in our community.

Some of you may be thinking, *'Okay Ben, that is great, but what if I am around someone and they are going through a hard time with affliction and pain, and I haven't had that same pain, so what can I do?'* Well, the opportunity for comfort is still there because look at verse 11. ***"You also must help us by prayers that many will give thanks on our behalf for the blessing granted to us through the prayers of many."***

One of the best things we can do even if we don't understand the pain of others is when we hear stories of people struggling is we simply pray with them. One of the things I would love to see as a shift and culture change in this church is before and after every service to see a lobby filled with people who are praying. We want to see people who are sharing what is going on. Not just, *'How are you doing this week?'* *'I'm doing good, how are you doing?'* *'Life is great, isn't it?'* The reality is that we have shrapnel in us. It is okay to share when we are going through a hard time.

And if you are on the receiving end of that, pray with that person. Pray for their hurt. Pray for wisdom. Pray for comfort. We need to be a body where the comfort of God that we are experiencing is being multiplied out. The opportunities for comfort are all around us. Are we aware? Are we listening? Are we watching?

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I have three questions and I will be done. Number one - who or what are you turning to for comfort that is leaving you empty? What is the false comfort that you are turning to? If pain is the doorway to true comfort, why do we choose the wrong path many times? And we have to stop making the same mistake, the cycle of searching after false comfort. What is the chain that you need to break in your life so that you can stop turning to that and start turning to Jesus?

Number two - what pain or affliction do you need to invite Jesus into? What is the pain or affliction that you are either ignoring, or you are numbing yourself to it, or you are running from? It is time to invite Jesus in and to let Him do His work of comfort in you.

Number three - who needs to hear your story? Some of you need to share your story of pain so that others can help you, can surround you. Others of you need to share your story of comfort so that you may be able to share the comfort of God with them.

What is it that God wants you to do this morning? We have a Spirit of comfort that is living inside of us but are we using Him? Let's bow our heads and close our eyes. As we get ready to respond, I want to first start with this. I want to give you a moment to invite Jesus into your pain. Would you do that? Whatever pain you are feeling, maybe it is pain from a relationship, maybe it is pain in your family, or maybe the shrapnel is a self-induced wound from your own mistakes and sins. Would you invite Jesus, the holy one, the one who bled, died and rose for you to come in and bring you comfort?

Some of you this morning might have questions about what it really means to find the comfort of God, and if you have questions about how to really know for sure if God can take away your sins and your pain, we would love to talk with you. We have a pastor up front, or there is a counselling room as you leave here located at the far right in the lobby and someone there would love to connect with you.

Maybe you just need prayer, and if that is you I invite you to go to one of the crosses and pray. Or maybe you want to pray with someone, again there are some people up here to your right or there is a prayer room where people would love to sit and pray with you. Maybe you want to go to one of the tables and remember the affliction of Christ as you partake of the Lord's Supper. No matter what you are feeling right now, Jesus identifies with you. Whatever pain you are feeling, whatever pain you are carrying, let's take it to the cross and invite the Spirit in to do His work of comfort inside of us.

Father, we are bowing our hearts before you now. We are inviting you in. God speak to us through your Spirit and through your Word today. God help us to stop running from you and to stop running from our pain. Help us to understand that you

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meet us in our affliction to give the comfort and the hope that will transform us. God if there is anyone here this morning that is relying on themselves, may your Spirit do a work of conviction, that they would surrender to you. There is no one like you, God, that has felt what we have felt and has overcome what plagues us. So God, we come to you today with open hearts and open arms asking you to do your work. You are the God of all comfort, so please do your work in us today. We pray this in the name of Jesus. Amen.

The preceding transcript was completed using raw audio recordings. As much as possible, it includes the actual words of the message with minor grammatical changes and editorial clarifications to provide context. Hebrew and Greek words are spelled using Google Translator and the actual spelling may be different in some cases.