

Jan 11 1970 H m -

BLESSINGS OUT OF BUFFETINGS

2 Cor. 1-11

First letter - instructions and corrections.

The second letter is outcome of first.

News came to Paul from Titus and Timothy (2 Cor. 7:7) of the mixed reception of his first letter - many repented and a minority challenged his authority and suspected his motives and questioned the validity of his ministry.

He Talks of his ministry - defense and interpretation of the work of himself as an Apostle.

Remember, there were those who opposed Paul - this fact makes these verses beautiful and tender.

Word had come, undermine the truth as it had been revealed to him.

Greeted them with affection - spoke to those less likely to be interested.

V. 1 - Struck a note of authority - by the will of God.

V. 2 - Salutations

V. 3-5 Thanksgiving - remarkable passage.

These verses open to us a ministry which is unique. Not everyone is called to preach the word of God in public. Not everyone is called upon to testify before a crowd.

If anyone knows the Lord Jesus in reality then God opens a ministry.

A ministry of comfort - which is simply to communicate Holy Spirit Life to others.

Such a ministry is costly. They live richly and therefore are used mightily.

Bringing spiritual life to a broken heart.

V. 5 - Sufferings of Christ is lacking in the one thing that really matters.

I wonder if ever that was a greater need for a ministry of comfort - you do not

have to look far to find broken hearts, broken lives, and broken homes.

Have you ever felt deep down in your soul the plight of men and women without God and without help in the world.

All parts of the world - veneer of civilization.

Often heard it said - that you cannot bring help and comfort to someone else, unless you have been through his trouble.

True in a limited sense.

Deep bereavement - you sit with someone - never suffered this.

Desperate physical pain and you know little of that.

Does that mean you are excluded from a ministry to such persons?

Surely not!

Paul speaks of his ministry of comfort - having come out of an experience of his own life which has qualified him for such a ministry.

V. (4) - Look again - see something of (training) He passed through.

Something has happened to him, an experience of affliction. Deep inner affliction.

Speaks about some deep experience through which he passed and speaks V. 5 about the sufferings of Christ abounding in us.

Therefore he makes it perfectly clear that if we would qualify to bring blessing to one poor needy life, one broken heart, it is going to require a spiritual experience of suffering on a deep level.

I want to try to show you what that means - here are some questions.

Have you ever felt the throb in the heart of God over a soul without a Saviour?

Have you ever felt in your own soul the pain, the agony of the cross, the concern in the heart of God for a soul without Christ.

Have you ever been really caused to take hold of God in prayer for someone who seems to be so helpless, so hopeless, so lost? Perhaps your next door neighbor? Does it give you five minutes concern?

You can never bring any blessing to someone in need unless first it has touched your own heart.

The moment it begins to grip you, you will be led into a school of suffering about which an unbeliever knows nothing.

There is nothing in physical pain which in itself produces holiness - but the sufferings of Christ, which are the outcome of our union with him.

Here Paul is speaking about a training which he has passed through for his ministry - that he might bring comfort to others.

He had been comforted in his own tribulation - found that comfort and experience of God in affliction.

He is made a channel of blessing to another in need.

Remind you - Heavenly comfort and help to one poor broken heart cannot be brought by a mere pat on the shoulder. It is something that is going to cost us deeply.

Resources has come from affliction, far deeper than spiritual.

Word comfort is word for Holy Spirit!

Deep tribulation part of God's people - comforter - precious comes to us in all our affliction. J. 16:33.

Simple principle - if you and I are going to be a blessing to someone in need, perhaps first to someone whose heart is broken, who is without God, without hope - if we would have this sacred ministry - precious ministry - this is absolutely impossible for us by ourselves, talent, ability, college, school, only something that the Holy Spirit will give to us - He is our endurance.

You do not have to go far before you find that the people of God through out the world and going through times of unprecedented pressures and tensions and problems.

It would seem as though God is allowing times of testing to come to his people.

Not that they might despair but that as they share in the fellowship of the sufferings of Christ they may know in a new measure the endurance of the Holy Spirit.

Out of this pressure of affliction, the church will begin to fulfill again the tremendous ministry of comfort and blessing which is a unique and glorious task.

I feel these days of pressure upon the church have a very special significance in the mind of our Lord.

Paul is speaking about the enablement which will accompany only a man who has really submitted to and accepted the affliction.

In a spiritual sense the ability to bring comfort depends upon having submitted to the suffering which God imposes upon His people.

What is that suffering? We are not left in doubt - not physical but a spiritual principle on life. School through which the Lord puts his people - accept the discipline.

→ LOOK AT THE PRICE

V. (8-9) Tremendous words.

Pressed out of measure.

Above strength.

We despair of life. We had the sentence of death in ourselves. The burden was more than we could bear - the fact took hold of us, we knew it was the end.

V. (9) Answer - that we should not trust ourselves but in God which raiseth the dead.

We had this experience of coming to the end of our tether that we might learn

God has one purpose for his people above everything else.

It is to destroy in us forever any possible confidence in the flesh.

Bring us to place where self confidence has passed into history and exchanged for confidence in God who raises the dead.

Pressed out of measure - above strength - ship heavily laden - gradually sinks under pressure of load - fatal condition.

Far beyond strength.

Paul - I've been through this in spiritual sense had sentence of death passed upon myself - I have despaired even of life.

I have been brought to such a place as this - I knew in myself I was helpless, hopeless, and could do nothing - somehow everything went to pieces. I had the sentence of death in myself.

And why?

So, that I should no longer trust in myself - replaced by a trust in the Lord who raises the dead.

Here is the price of our ministry to others! It is amazing.

If you would bring blessings to one heart in trouble, one thing is going to stand in the way and make it absolutely impossible.

If in your life there is still that confidence in the flesh, then your ministry is lost. For this ministry is a ministry of the Holy Spirit alone.

Remarkable Paul speaks about this.

Seems more than any other he had been delivered from self confidence.

He had it all shattered - meet Master road to Damascus.

Lord knew perpetual peril of its recurrence.

Do you not find in your life that the flesh is very subtle along these lines?

Little voice - you can get through on your zeal - you pray a little and boast of spirituality.

All the time trusting in your self.

Walk corridor of soul-examine what goes on there.

Remember you had high hopes for your self but those hopes have been shattered.

Prayer life shattered.

Bible is stale.

Doubts in your mind.

Boasting of what I can do!

God - loss trace of - confidence in you.

Rom. 7:18 in my flesh - dwelleth no good thing.

Simple illustration

If called upon rescue somebody who is drowning - wait until going down 3rd time.

Intervene at any point while kicking, resisting, fighting for himself, be in a danger of being drowned with him.

At end of his strength - no confidence left in his own deliverance - be weak and still - there seemed no way out.

God's great purpose with his people - pressure - tensions - that might be brought to an end of self-confidence.

No longer trust ourselves but in God who raiseth the dead.

Everyone is brought into the scope of this ministry so tender, delicate, Holy Spirit's life to another life.