



## **Sermon Notes:**

Preacher: Di Timberlake

Text: 2 Corinthians 1:3-4

Title: Comfortable Dysfunction

Date: 18th August 2019

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Can we all agree that life is hard. Suffering is an inevitable part of the Christian life. Jesus said that we would have troubles and challenges. Stuff happens and we could have unanswered questions and don't feel like there is any relief. We find ourselves wrestling with our faith. Let me encourage you straight away and say that God is there with you. He does hear your cry. He has compassion for you and will give you the strength to work through your troubles.

Our text this morning talks about these troubles and is found in 2 Corinthians 1:3-4

*<sup>3</sup>Praise be to the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of compassion and the God of all comfort, <sup>4</sup>who comforts us in all our troubles, so that we can comfort those in any trouble with the comfort we ourselves receive from God."*

We stand out as Christians not in the good times but how we handle and live through the tough times. Those times when nothing seems to be going right and the world seems to be against us. We do this because of God's comfort to us.

### **What does it mean for God to comfort us in our troubles?**

There is a difference between Godly comfort and human comfort. God's comfort in this text means encouragement. Encouragement - all for one goal – for us to learn, grow and develop our character to become more like Jesus. His comfort gives us peace in whatever trouble we are going through. His comfort brings hope by assuring us that He will walk with us every step of the way. He will never let us go. He will listen to us. He will guide us. He will answer our prayers.

Again, all for one purpose, for one goal. For us to learn from the trouble, to grow and develop our character while we are in this trouble and to transform us into becoming more like Jesus.

**Human comfort** is also listening and supporting someone in their troubles. It is being there for them. For understanding what they are going through. But here is the difference – human comfort

does not encourage that person to move through their troubles. There is no encouragement for that person to learn and grow through the trouble. It creates a place where that person can become stuck simply because it is more comfortable this way. It is nice when people continue to comfort them. It feeds their need to feel loved and supported.

So, why change?

Let me give you an example of **Godly comfort** versus **human comfort**.

Say your goal is to run the comrades marathon. You get a coach and tell him that you struggle with your energy. On your first session you repeat to your coach that you are struggling with energy to train. What if the coach then says, "Ag shame. I am so sorry you are struggling. Let's not train for today and you can tell me what is going on. I am here for you." The next day when you come to training, your coach asks if you are still struggling and you say yes. He then comforts you and says he will listen and support you. So you land up not training but you feel good about the sessions you are having with him. Every day this is repeated, it reinforces your feeling of being understood and cared for.

This human comfort prevents you from moving forward, for overcoming your struggle, and you land up quite comfortable with it. You become comfortable in this dis-function of struggling with your energy. And, what happens to your goal of running the comrades?

Yip, you don't!!

**Godly comfort** is helping you through your lack of energy always with the goal in mind.

If you were to run the comrades, the coach will push you, challenge you and encourage you to keep going. To push through the pain because only then will you reach your goal.

God's goal for us will always be for us to become more like Jesus. It's painful to get there. It is not a comfortable journey.

**So God's question to each one of us is this:**

What have you become comfortable with in your life that is keeping you from growing and reaching His goal of becoming more like Jesus? What is your comfortable dis-function?

**Let me give you an example of what comfortable dis-function looks like.**

I was taught to be independent. I was told never to be a burden on others and if I could do it myself, do it. I came to believe that I could not allow others to do things for me that I could do myself. So, when somebody did something for me, I said in my mind that this person clearly thought that I am not able to do it myself. I then reacted by not being thankful for that help

because that person was actually interfering with my ability to do it myself. When someone supported me, I didn't accept it because then it meant I was weak. I found it difficult to share my struggle and pain with others because that would mean I am a burden on them and that I should know how to handle it myself. I then became judgemental on how others handled situations because they must just "get on with it". This became a pattern of my thoughts and my behaviour. I became comfortable with my dysfunction in doing it all myself. I was comfortable with justifying my behaviour because "that is just who I am."

The result was that I isolated myself and damaged my relationships with others.

With the Lords help, I am working on breaking this pattern, this dysfunction. It's a painful process. God is teaching me to rely on Him and not on my own abilities. To know that I don't have to have all the answers and that it is okay to seek other people's advice or help.

### **So, what are your comfortable dysfunctions?**

What are the repeated patterns you have in your thoughts, what you say or how you behave that happen again and again? What have you accepted as normal because "that is just who I am." or "This is just my lot in life?"

Let me ask some questions that may help you.

How comfortable are you in the dysfunction of sin and the trouble it brings? Do you have dysfunctional relationships? There are some people that are good TO us but not necessarily good FOR us. Your comfortable dysfunction could be feeling unworthy or insecure. Or maybe it is unforgiveness or pride? What about jealousy or judgement of others? How about your anger or having a short temper? How about coming late for church and not wanting excellence for God? How does that honour God? How do these things affect the way you speak, think of behave?

In this passage, most people stop reading at the part where God comforts them in all their troubles. This results in them coming to church expecting to be comforted. And they are offended when this comfort is not given.

**But there is a condition in this passage.** Let us read it again;

*<sup>3</sup> Praise be to the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of compassion and the God of all comfort, <sup>4</sup> who comforts us in all our troubles, so that we can comfort those in any trouble with the comfort we ourselves receive from God."*

**God's comfort has a specific function. A purpose.**

We are comforted SO THAT we can comfort others with the same comfort we have received from God. Could it be that your comfortable dysfunction is keeping you from your ability to reach

others? You cannot give Godly comfort if you have not received it and experienced it for yourself first. God promises to comfort you but He will never want you to stay where you are. He wants you to learn and grow SO THAT you can give Godly comfort to others.

**This morning, God wants to confront you in your comfortable dysfunction.**

**Mark 1:21-28 and Luke 4:31-37** tell of a man in the synagogue of Capernaum who was plagued by demons. This man sat in the synagogue for many years accepting his disfunction. The demons were happy because nothing changed. Jesus then comes onto the scene and the demons were then confronted. The demons knew who Jesus was and why he came. These demons said, "You have come to get rid of us. You have come to destroy us."

The church people missed it. They were still taking notes and saying prayers when the demons were shaking knowing what Jesus was there to do.

Not only does God want to confront your dysfunction. He wants to get rid of it. He wants to get rid of what you have called normal and call you into something greater.

**So, what now?**

- Make a decision this morning that you want to become more like Jesus. That this is your only goal.
- Submit yourself to His authority and allow Him to work in you.
- Ask Him to reveal what disfunction he wants to get rid of.
- Ask for forgiveness for it.
- Be intentional in your journey. Make use of every situation to transform you into being more like Jesus.
- Seek His comfort that will challenge and encourage you.
- Then find others who will give you Godly comfort.
- Be intentional in your journey.

And then .... Seek out others so that you can give Godly comfort for them to grow.