

From The Pulpit Of



IMMANUEL BAPTIST CHURCH

The God of All Comfort

No. 1
Series: 2 Corinthians

2 Corinthians 1:1-7

May 31, 2026
Nathan Carter

Text

1 Paul, an apostle of Christ Jesus by the will of God, and Timothy our brother,

To the church of God that is at Corinth, with all the saints who are in the whole of Achaia:

2 Grace to you and peace from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ.

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. 5 For as we share abundantly in Christ's sufferings, so through Christ we share abundantly in comfort too. 6 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 endure the same sufferings that we suffer. 7 Our hope for you is unshaken, for we know that as you share in our sufferings, you will also share in our comfort.

Introduction

This story showed up in my feed this week:

From Bible college student at Moody to widow and mother at 25, Holly Snell's story is one of deep loss, unwavering faith, and restoration. ❤️🕊️

Holly came to Moody Bible Institute in 1993 with dreams of music ministry and quickly fell in love with fellow student Scott Nesbitt. After marrying in 1996, the couple moved to Vermont to help launch a Christian adventure camp for inner-city teens.

But in 2000, tragedy struck when Scott and Holly's brother-in-law, James, were killed in a canoeing accident while scouting river locations for the camp. Holly was just 25 years old and had a young daughter.

"My whole world was upside down," Holly shared. "I was a widow at 25."

In the middle of grief, Holly says God met her in a deeply personal way:

🗣️: "It was as if He was right next to me..." 🗣️

Through worship and songwriting with her sister, healing slowly began. Eventually, Holly met musician Aaron Snell, and the two later married and entered ministry together. 💕

Today, Holly serves as executive director of Hope Women’s Center in McKinney, Texas, helping women facing crisis pregnancies, trauma, abortion recovery, and difficult life circumstances. 🙏

Under her leadership, the ministry has expanded counseling services, adoption support, maternity housing, and care for women in need.

Her message to others walking through pain:

🙏: “God does His deepest work in the dark... When I couldn’t hold on to Him, He held on to me.”¹

It sounds kind of similar to the story of Ruth which we just finished up last week, doesn’t it? Widowhood, bitterness, redemption. And it also illustrates the main point of 2 Corinthians 1:1-7 which we’re looking at today. It’s just this: **in our sufferings there are deep channels of comfort coming from God that we can tap into.**

2 Corinthians is a book about suffering. It’s written by a guy named Paul. Look at v. 1 – “Paul, an apostle of Christ Jesus by the will of God.” “Apostle” was an authoritative office in the early stages of the Christian Church. Paul says here that “he is not an apostle by self-appointment but by divine appointment (cf. 10:8; 13:10)”² – “by the will of God.” In the book of Acts we see how Jesus intercepted him and completely turned his life around. Paul had been inflicting suffering on the body of Christ. But now he had undeniably met the risen Christ and was given a new commission to build up the body of Christ, which he did all around the first-century Mediterranean world.

Yet some people were viewing Paul with scorn. They were trying to discredit his authority by saying that his life was too full of suffering for him to be someone special, someone worth listening to. This is the backdrop for this whole book that we’re launching into today – a false assumption that the Christian life should be easy, victorious, triumphalistic.

But from the beginning of Paul’s apostleship Jesus had said, “I will show him how much he must suffer for the sake of my name” (cf. Acts 9:16). And the book of 2 Corinthians shows how true that was. This book is raw. This book is unpolished, unfiltered, sometimes stream of consciousness where Paul is letting us in on the intense hardships he faced. Next week we’ll see him saying that at times he was “so utterly burdened... that [he] despaired of life itself” (v. 8). In ch. 4 he describes his experience as – “afflicted in every way... perplexed... persecuted... struck down.” And just wait until we get to ch. 11 and the litany of sufferings he endured! This guy has been through it! And far from discrediting him, it actually makes me want to listen to what he has to say. He really believed what he was saying, even though it didn’t get him riches or fame or comfort... well, the kind of comfort we usually think of – Air Conditioning, Tempur-Pedic mattresses, four weeks of vacation, 401(k) retirement contributions... 2 Corinthians is about how much the Apostle Paul suffered and yet how adamant he was that Jesus was worth it.

Now, technically, this letter could be called 4 Corinthians. We recently went through 1 Corinthians together, and that book could really be called 2 Corinthians. In 1 Corinthians 5:9 Paul refers to a previous letter – the real 1 Corinthians (which we don’t

have). Then he sends 1 Corinthians (which is really 2 Corinthians). And in this letter (2:1-4) he says that he wrote them another letter, a tearful letter, which would be 3 Corinthians (if we had it). And now he's writing them this letter, probably around late 54/early 55 A.D. from Macedonia – what we call 2 Corinthians, but what could really be called 4 Corinthians.

Throughout all this back-and-forth, Paul has also employed his associate – Timothy, sending him to check on things in Corinth when Paul couldn't be there because he was working with other churches elsewhere (cf. 1 Cor. 4:17, 16:10). This letter, you'll notice, is written when Timothy was with Paul. "Paul, an apostle of Christ Jesus by the will of God, and Timothy our brother." Most likely, Timothy "is a co-sender rather than a coauthor."³

Paul says that he is writing "[t]o the church of God that is at Corinth." This is the church that we have become familiar with during our time in 1 Corinthians, a church that Paul had helped to found and cared deeply about, but a church that had a lot of drama. But this letter wasn't solely intended for the Corinthian church. Paul adds, "with all the saints who are in the whole of Achaia." There were other churches in this area of Greece, like the ones at Cenchreae and Athens. The issues Paul addresses in this letter have application to the whole region and he wanted them to read it too.

One commentator put it this way – "Paul was [often] conscious that his written words were significant for the whole Church of God, and not merely for the particular local churches at which they were first delivered. It is probable that these local churches kept copies of his letters forwarded to them by their neighbours, and so came to possess small collections of their own. These would continue to be read out at their gatherings for worship along with the Old Testament Scriptures, containing, as they did, a divine message mediated through the apostle."⁴ This is why and how we're still reading it in Chicago today.

After introducing himself and identifying his audience, Paul gives a version of his customary greeting – "Grace to you and peace from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ." As hard as his life has been, as difficult as the Corinthians have been, I'm amazed at Paul's demeanor. He was clearly in touch with a God not just of sheer power, but also of tender, Fatherly affection, who had revealed his heart in Jesus the Christ, a God from whom boundlessly flows grace and peace. As one scholar I read wrote – "In no other religion is God called Father with such a sense of intimacy and assurance as in the New Testament."⁵

So there's a little orientation to this book and explanation of the opening vv. 1-2. As we dive in to the first main section – vv. 3-7 – let me remind you of the main point. It's just this: **in our sufferings there are deep channels of comfort coming from God that we can tap into.**

And let's pray...

Who Is God?

So Paul is writing at least his fourth letter to this church... and he's writing to the saints across Achaia... and in a sense to us. He's suffered so much in his life and even a church that he's poured into so much is not making life easy for Paul. You'd think he'd be dry, exhausted, angry, and cynical. But no.

How does Paul begin the body of this letter? With gushing praise to God, despite his circumstances. He's still astonished at this great God, an infinite wellspring who continually replenishes him. Paul is not mopey because he is not man-centered – "How could God do this to me?" He is radically God-centered, fixated, mesmerized by the glory of God. And he calls us to look at what he sees. He says, "Blessed be... God." "Blessed" means to be spoken well of, praised, honored, worshiped, adored.

Who is this God whom Paul says should be blessed? "Blessed be... God" echoes traditional Jewish prayers. "Blessed be the God and Father..." Father was a less frequent means of address for Jews, but when it was used it was usually in connection with him being the Father of Israel. But Paul identifies this God as the "God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ." He is the God revealed in the divine person of Jesus Christ – the LORD.

What kind of God was on display in Jesus? A kind God. Paul calls him "the Father of mercies and God of all comfort." Not just mercy, but mercies; mercy upon mercy upon mercy. Mercy cascades forth from God. "Pliny the Elder, a first-century Roman naturalist and Stoic, wrote [-] "that [a] supreme being, whatever it be, pays heed to human affairs is a ridiculous notion."⁶ But the Bible paints an entirely different picture. "As a father shows compassion to his children, so the LORD shows compassion to those who fear him" (Ps. 103:13). And so as "we face harsh circumstances in life," writes George Guthrie, "we may be tempted to doubt God's attention, feeling as if God has abandoned us to our difficulties. Yet here in 2 Cor. 1:3 Paul reminds us of this aspect of our Father's character: our cries are answered by his compassion, the natural concern of a father for his children."⁷ God is not unfazed. He cares for his children.

"Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of mercies and God of all comfort." Paul orients us to ponder and praise God for who he is. There's a dynamite little book by the Puritan George Swinnock that I've found helpful for meditating on who this God is. It's titled *The Blessed and Boundless God*. Listen to him elaborate on this God that Paul is praising:

He is the greatest good that ever was, ever will be, and ever can be. He is more than heaven and earth. He is the King of kings, the Lord of lords, the God of gods, the blessed and glorious Potentate, the first Cause, the original Being, the self-sufficient, the all-sufficient, the absolutely perfect God. He is the high and lofty One who inhabits eternity – to whom a thousand years are but a moment. His duration is incapable of the least accession. He is boundless in His being, omnipotent in His power, unsearchable in His wisdom, inconceivable in His grace, and infinite in all His perfections. He dwells in light that is inaccessible. Angels (the highest of creatures) veil their faces before Him. The whole creation is less than nothing in comparison to Him. He made all things out of nothing. He supports all things and influences all things. He is all things, and He is infinitely more than all things. He is such a necessary good that we are undone without Him. He is so plentiful a good that we can be perfectly happy in Him (Ps. 144:15). We do not need anything else. He is the heaven of heavens (Ps. 16:11). This God is the well of salvation, the Lord of life, the God of all comfort – a hive of sweetness, paradise of

pleasure, and heaven of joy. He is the richest grace, dearest love, surest friend, highest honor, greatest beauty, and fullest joy. He alone can enlarge all the faculties and satisfy all the capacities of a heaven-born soul.... God is a universal good – not one good, but all good. He is riches, honors, pleasures, friends, family, health, life, earth, heaven, and infinitely more. He is an eternal good – a good that will stand by us and abide with us when all other good things fail (Ps. 73:25).⁸

Isn't that good? And it just scratches the surface of who God is.

I think we start off in all our discussions and thoughts about suffering and hardship with way too low, too small, too harsh, too simplistic a view of God. We try to figure out the problem of pain by trying to put God under a microscope and examine him. But Paul begins by blessing him, because he is infinite in size and cannot be contained. And “by example he calls the Corinthians [and us] to consider [our] own response to the circumstances in which [we] find [our]selves, challenging [us] to bless God in the midst of suffering.”⁹ Lift your eyes up in humility and wonder. This God and Father of the Lord Jesus Christ has shown himself to be infinitely powerful and infinitely merciful in Christ, the fulfillment of all his promises, who was crucified for our sins, risen from the dead, and reigning right now at the Father's right hand. God is worthy to be blessed! Don't ignore your pain, but still find reasons in your pain to praise him for who he is and what he's done. In one of the rawest books in the OT about suffering it says that God's “mercies never come to an end; they are new every morning” (Lam. 3:22-23).

“Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of mercies and God of all comfort.” That's who he is. Let's drill down a little more and look now at what that last phrase means – “God of all comfort.” How does he comfort us?

How Does He Comfort Us?

“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.” The word translated “affliction” here is other times translated as “tribulation” or “trouble” or “suffering.” The word “carries the idea of ‘pressure’ felt inwardly resulting from difficult outward circumstances usually associated with Christian ministry and witness in the face of hostility.”¹⁰ So it's both external and internal turmoil, pain, heartache, struggle, tension. Ever felt that? We have to be clear – affliction is to be expected in the Christian life. Jesus said plainly, “In this world you will have trouble” (Jn. 16:33; NIV; same word). We'll talk a little more about why this is when we get to v. 5, but here just note that affliction is inescapable.

But Paul says that God “comforts us in all our affliction.” “Affliction can come from many sources, but real comfort in every affliction can only come from God alone,” writes David Garland. He continues, “Abandoning Christ might seem to offer an escape from suffering, but suffering comes also to unbelievers, and abandoning Christ means that one has also abandoned the only source of comfort. [Someone else] observes that ‘the sufferings of the world are vinegar without honey, and as they increase, so do desolation and mourning and woe.’ God's comfort does not always remove the affliction, but God gives us the grace to face it through.”¹¹

The word translated “comfort” is also translated as “encouragement.” It’s more than a simple solace. It’s empowering. “It is not some tranquilizing dose of grace that only dulls pains but a stiffening agent that fortifies one in heart, mind, and soul.”¹² God’s comfort keeps you going. It prevents you from giving in under the pressure. It boosts you to bear up under it and not give in to despair. **In our sufferings there are deep channels of comfort coming from God that we can tap into.**

Have you been comforted by God in an affliction? Do you know what that means? How do you tap into the God of all comfort? We’ve already touched on worship – blessing God. But God comforts his children with his words, through experiences, and through people.

(1) The primary way that God comforts us is with his words. Imagine a terrified child running in to your bedroom at night because he heard a noise and is scared. How do you comfort him? You will probably hold him, hug him. But you will inevitably talk to him, tell him something true that interprets the situation and reassures him so that he can go back to bed and sleep. You may say, “Look, it’s just the wind blowing the branches of the tree against the window.” Or, “There are no monsters under your bed.” Or, “I locked the door and if any bad guys broke into the house, they’d have to get past me first.”

Words. God comforts us with his words, found in the Scriptures. We read the Bible and we hear his voice. He explains things to us. He makes promises to us. He comforts us by speaking to us. Do you draw comfort out of God’s Word? This usually requires more than a cursory, superficial reading or hearing, not always, but usually. The deep comforts come from deep reflection – what’s called meditation. This is where you “suck the sweetness from the flowers as the bees do.”¹³ As the Puritans would say, “Reading brings me meat, meditation brings forth the sweetness. [It’s like chewing the meat.] Reading brings the coals to the wood, meditation makes the flame.”¹⁴

Deep comforts for the deep pains and afflictions takes deep attentiveness. If you’ve tried reading the Bible for comfort and found it unhelpful you probably didn’t really engage with it as words from the blessed and bountiful God, the Father of mercies. As Thomas Watson would say, “Meditate so long till thou findest thy heart grow warm.”¹⁵ There is where the comfort is found. Psalm 119:23-24 – “Even though princes sit plotting against me, your servant will meditate on your statutes. Your testimonies are my delight; they are my counselors.” Memorize, mull over, meditate on God’s Word and you will find consolation in your sorrows. God’s Word is a deep channel of comfort that you can tap into.

(2) Secondly, in relationship with God he sometimes brings ecstatic experiences that overwhelm you with a sense of God’s love and nearness that make you feel his presence and that even though you don’t know exactly how, you know that “all shall be well and all manner of thing shall be well.”¹⁶ This is kind of like the hug that the mom gives the kid along with the words of comfort when he’s scared. These are mystical and hard to describe, but they are real. They can’t be relied on alone. And they can’t be expected to happen every day. But God does comfort us this way.

I was talking with a friend this week. He is facing a debilitating disease that could likely end him up in a wheelchair in a few years. He’s not sticking his head in the sand. He’s honest about his fears and sadness. And yet he’s not hopeless. He’s leaning in further to God. And he described this overwhelming experience he had recently. He

and his wife stopped in to a garden nursery and they were walking through the plants and came to a place where there were tons of flowers: a vast array of different types and colors and shades and textures of flowers. And the beauty of it just overtook him. He was overcome with emotion and had to rush out and went to the car and for five minutes he just sobbed, but he described them as tears of joy.

Now, this friend is not a blubbing mess all the time. He's educated and rational. He's theologically solid. I asked him if this has ever happened to him and he said not quite like this. He takes it as a kind grace from God, a Spirit-wrought encounter with him in his suffering that brought him into deeper fellowship and hope. He quickly connected this experience in his soul to Scripture, where Jesus says, "And which of you by being anxious can add a single hour to his span of life?... Consider the lilies of the field, how they grow: they neither toil nor spin, yet I tell you, even Solomon in all his glory was not arrayed like one of these. But if God so clothes the grass of the field, which today is alive and tomorrow is thrown into the oven, will he not much more clothe you, O you of little faith" (Mt. 6:27-30). He said it just hit him that if God has imbued this world with such diversity of color and beauty, what must he be like and what must heaven be like?

The "God of all comfort, who comforts us in all our affliction." Immerse yourself in his word, and be open to those moments of sublime spiritual experience where he gives you a "peace... which surpasses all understanding" (Ph. 4:7).

(3) Thirdly, God comforts us not just through his Word alone or through private experiences, but also through other people. This is another **deep channel that we can tap into**. Sometimes our suffering is a lonely solitude. We don't always have access to other people that can encourage us. We have to learn to draw comfort from God on our own. David in the OT had a close friendship with Jonathan. I love the description 1 Samuel 23:16-17 where it says, "And Jonathan... rose and went to David at Horesh, and strengthened his hand in God. And he said to him, 'Do not fear.'" Isn't it great to have friends like that? But they aren't always there. We find a little later in 1 Samuel 30:6 where it says, "And David was greatly distressed, for the people spoke of stoning him.... But David strengthened himself in the LORD his God." We have to learn to draw comfort from God directly, but also through other people.

Flip just a couple pages ahead in your Bible to 2 Corinthians 7, starting in v. 5. Are you there? Paul's recounts how in Macedonia he was "afflicted at every turn – fighting without and fear within. But God, who comforts the downcast, comforted us *by the coming of Titus*." How did God comfort Paul? By the coming of Titus. Dietrich Bonhoeffer, a 20th century believer who was acquainted with suffering during WWII Germany said, "The physical presence of other Christians is a source of incomparable joy and strength to the believer."¹⁷ Just having someone there, a shoulder to cry on, a listening ear, and who can deliver a "word fitly spoken" (Prov. 25:11) is a powerful boon to the soul.

This is why God has given us the church. What a comfort? What an encouragement? In your suffering, in your sadness, in your confusion and hurt, don't isolate yourself from the church. Lean in further. Put yourself in those places where you can hear God's Word on the lips of a brother or sister, in the liturgy, in the singing, in the sermon, in the after-service conversation, in being prayed for. Find some people to open up your soul to. You can't get a literal hug from Jesus right now, but he can hug you through the arms of his body on earth, the church.

In our sufferings there are deep channels of comfort coming from God that we can tap into. His word. Experiences. Other people. And this leads us to our third point. We've seen a little glimpse of who the blessed God is. We've seen a little bit of how he comforts us. Now let's look at why he comforts us.

Why Does He Comfort Us?

“Blessed be... God... 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.” “God’s comfort... is not to terminate on the receiver.”¹⁸ You can become one of those people that God uses to bring comfort to a sufferer. Your suffering is never wasted. God uses it to draw you nearer to him. And he uses that experience to encourage and bless others. The comforted become the comforters.

Suffering is the best preparation for a life of service to God. You can't really grow without struggle. A pre-requisite for pastoral ministry, I think, should be some testimony of God's testing through hardship. As Leo Tolstoy put it, “It is by those who have suffered that the world has been advanced.”¹⁹ It shapes and fashions us. “Behold, I have refined you, but not as silver; I have tried you in the furnace of affliction” (Is. 48:10). Our sufferings are hot, but they are purifying us, taking us deeper into God and further away from finding our comfort in idols. They are preparing us for something. Remember when Jesus said to Peter just before Peter fell and denied Christ, “I have prayed for you that your faith may not fail. And when you have turned again, strengthen your brothers” (Lk. 22:32).

God “comforts us in all our affliction” through his Word, through experiences, through other people “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.” There is something special about meeting someone who has gone through what you're experiencing. I remember a few years after my mom lost her baby, she met a woman who was experiencing that grief and was able to walk with her and care for her in a special way. But we must be careful here. We can always find ways to think that our suffering is unique. *Well, she lost her baby at 10 days old; I lost mine at 2 years old; she doesn't understand.* We can't play that game. Notice: Paul says, “...that we may be able to comfort those who are in any affliction.” If you've suffered deeply and you've met God in the deepest part of you, you have something to offer anyone who is in the thick of anything. It's the same God that comforted you, who can comfort them.

I pray that this passage not only comforts someone here today, but that it also encourages a culture of counseling one another in the body. That we are sharing our heartaches with each other and that we are growing in being present for each other and listening well to each other and “weep[ing] with those who weep” (Rom. 12:15) and “speaking the truth in love” (Eph. 4:15). As someone has pointed out, this passage “calls into question the individualism of modern Christianity and the sense of remoteness within and among many contemporary churches.”²⁰ So share your struggles! And share your testimonies of God's grace in how he met you in those struggles. **In our sufferings there are deep channels of comfort coming from God that we can tap into.** Let's be a church where those channels are flowing freely. If you know God through Jesus Christ as your Father of mercies and God of all comfort, then you have something offer others! You are called to seek to encourage others!

In v. 5 Paul roots all this in a theology of union with Christ. “For as we share abundantly in Christ’s sufferings, so through Christ we share abundantly in comfort too.” To be joined to Jesus is to be pressed into his cruciform life. It will involve loss and persecution and death. As he suffered, so too will we. But as he endured and overcame and rose to glory, so to will we. And we experience glimpses of that glory even in the here and now, in the comfort that overflows to us as we are in him. As we take up our cross and lose our lives, we find that we find them (cf. Mt. 16:25).

In vv. 6-7 we see this all applied to how Paul has engaged the Corinthians. “If we are afflicted, it is for your comfort and salvation.” Paul has sacrificed greatly for them. “[A]nd if we are comforted, it is for your comfort, which you experience when you patiently endure the same sufferings that we suffer.” Paul has shared what he has learned about God with them to help them when they face the same things. “Our hope for you is unshaken, for we know that as you share in our sufferings, you will also share in our comfort.” What optimism! He’s not jaded. He’s not ignorant of how messy things can be, but he is an incurable optimist about God’s people who have his Spirit, that no matter how hard, no matter how circuitous, no matter how long the path, they will persevere and experience enough of God’s comfort to keep going until that Day when “God himself... will wipe away every tear from their eyes, and death shall be no more, neither shall there be mourning, nor crying, nor pain anymore” (Rev. 21:3-4).

“Therefore encourage one another with these words” (1 Thess. 4:18). Don’t give up personally. And don’t give up in trying to comfort others. May your hope be unshaken.

Conclusion

Do you want to hear one more story that illustrates all of this that’s kind of cool? Did you know that Dietrich Bonhoeffer was engaged to be married? He wrote letters from prison to his fiancée – Maria von Wedemeyer. One included a poem entitled “New Year 1945” which has this stanza:

*Should it be ours to drain the cup of grieving
Even to the dregs of pain,
At thy command, we will not falter,
Thankfully receiving all that is given
By thy loving hand.²¹*

Bonhoeffer, in his afflictions, had **tapped into deep channels of comfort coming from God**. Three months later, just before the war ended, Bonhoeffer has hanged by the Nazis in the Flossenbürg prison. He and Maria never married. Maria move to America and had a hard life in many ways.

Well, “some eighteen years after Bonhoeffer’s words of comfort to Maria... in America... another bride-to-be was grieving the death of her fiancé and found much comfort in Bonhoeffer’s poem. Her fiancé, who died from injuries in a sledding accident, was the son of author Joseph Bayly and his wife Mary Lou. When she mailed Bonhoffer’s poem to them, Joe and Mary Lou also found comfort in ‘New Year 1945.’

“Twelve years after this (thirty years after Bonhoeffer’s death), Joe Bayly received a letter from a pastor-friend in Massachusetts relating that he had visited a

terminally ill woman in a Boston hospital for some period of time and had given her Joe's book of poems, *Heaven*, as comfort for her soul. The pastor said that the dying woman had stayed awake late the previous night to read it and told him of the comfort and help she had received from it. A few hours later she died. The woman, the pastor revealed, was Maria von Wedemeyer-Weller, Bonhoeffer's fiancée three decades earlier!

"God's comfort circulates among his children – and sometimes it comes full circle, as it did from Dietrich Bonhoeffer to Maria von Wedemeyer in her grief to Joseph Bayly, Jr.'s grieving fiancée to Joe and Mary Lou Bayly in their grief and then back to Bonhoeffer's one-time fiancée as comfort in her dying hours."²² God is sovereign. As we saw in the book of Ruth, he has the whole picture in mind. We can trust him. And we can find comfort in him. And we can pass it on to other people and trust that God will use us.

The Lord's Table

Another way that God comforts us is through the eating and drinking at the Lord's Table. The Belgic Confession puts it this way: "This banquet is a spiritual table at which Christ communicates himself to us with all his benefits. At that table he makes us enjoy himself as much as the merits of his suffering and death, as he nourishes, strengthens, and comforts our poor, desolate souls."²³

The Lord's Table is a means of grace where God's people commemorate what Christ has done to save them and commune with him together as a family. Therefore, only those who are part of God's people should partake, which in ordinary circumstances are those who have been baptized and are members of this church or another gospel-preaching church.

If that's you, come and be comforted by collecting these elements and taking them back to your seat and reflecting on what they signify as we sing and wait to eat all together.

This sermon was addressed originally to the people at Immanuel Baptist Church, Chicago, Illinois, by Pastor Nathan Carter on Sunday morning, May 31, 2026. It is not meant to be a polished essay, but was written to be delivered orally. The mission of Immanuel is to be a multiplying community that enjoys and proclaims the Good News of Christ in the great city of Chicago.

End Notes:

-
- ¹ Posted May 27 at 11:54 AM on the Moody Bible Institute Facebook account.
- ² Paul Barnett, *The Second Epistle to the Corinthians*, NICNT (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1997), 59.
- ³ *Ibid.*, 58.
- ⁴ R.V.G. Tasker, *The Second Epistle of Paul to the Corinthians: An Introduction and Commentary*, Tyndale (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1974 [1958]), 39-40.
- ⁵ K. Schelkle, *The Second Epistle to the Corinthians* (New York: Herder & Herder, 1969), 8.
- ⁶ David E. Garland, *2 Corinthians*, NAC (Brentwood: B&H, 1999), 61; citing Pliny, *Natural History*, 2:5:20.
- ⁷ George H. Guthrie, *2 Corinthians*, Baker Exegetical Commentary on the NT (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2015), 67.
- ⁸ George Swinnock, *The Blessed and Boundless God* (Grand Rapids: Reformation Heritage Books, 2014 [1672]), 153-55.
- ⁹ Guthrie, 65.
- ¹⁰ Barnett, 72.
- ¹¹ Garland, 63-64.
- ¹² *Ibid.*, 60.
- ¹³ Campegius Vitringa, *The Spiritual Life*, trans. Charles K. Telfer (Grand Rapids: Reformation Heritage Books, 2018), 121-22.
- ¹⁴ Nathanael Ranew, *Solitude Improved by Divine Meditation* (Grand Rapids: Soli Deo Gloria, 2019), 110.
- ¹⁵ Thomas Watson, *Discourses on Important and Interesting Subjects* (Glasgow: Blackie, Fullarton, 1829), 1:254.
- ¹⁶ Julian of Norwich, *Revelations of Divine Love*.
- ¹⁷ Dietrich Bonhoeffer, *Life Together*, trans. John W. Doberstein (HarperSanFrancisco, 1954), 19.
- ¹⁸ Barnett, 73.
- ¹⁹ Qtd. in Philip Yancey, *Where Is God When It Hurts?* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1990 [1977]), 143.
- ²⁰ Barnett, 73.
- ²¹ Dietrich Bonhoeffer, *Letters and Papers from Prison*, ed. Eberhard Bethge (New York: Macmillan, 1953), 221.
- ²² R. Kent Hughes, *2 Corinthians: Power in Weakness* (Wheaton: Crossway, 2006), 21-22.
- ²³ Belgic Confession, Article 35.