



Man Disrupted:

How Jesus changes men for the better

Devotion #3

Read 1 Corinthians 1:3-11

By nature I am risk averse. I'm afraid of heights. I don't like driving fast. I've never yearned to bungee jump.

Of course, most of the above are things I can control. It's my choice as to whether I go abseiling or not. It's my choice to drive sedately in my thoroughly boring Toyota Camry. It's my call, and that's the way I like it.

But living in a sin-wrecked world there are many risks which are outside my control. In fact, if I am living for Christ and His kingdom, I'm headed for trouble.

Serving Jesus means standing out from the pack. It involves proclaiming the good news that our only hope is Jesus, which means telling my friends that money, sex, and power are a waste of our worship. Not everybody loves that message on first hearing. Some will never love it, even after repeated hearings.

And serving Jesus means loving the stranger, indeed loving my enemies. The church is marked out as those who welcome all, including those who've been shunned by others as beyond salvation. Not everybody is a fan of enemy-love, including many who go to church!

This passage from 2 Corinthians has lots of words I like, words like 'compassion' and 'comfort'. Moreover, I love the verb Paul uses: 'comfort abounds'. You see, it isn't like God is in short supply of compassion and comfort – He has plenty in stock, and more than enough for me!.

You know what else abounds in a broken world? Suffering. Troubles. Distress. There's the kicker.

Paul knows the abundance of God's comfort because he finds it when he is at the end of himself. The beloved Apostle is way more upfront than we expect, even admitting that the pressure of being a disciple and witness for Jesus went far beyond his ability to endure. It's equal parts refreshing and sobering to realise that the Apostle Paul is far more like me than I first realised. Paul – the great hero – gets scared, gets worried, gets down. He's a flesh and blood person, whose skin bruises, whose heart breaks, and whose tears are real.

And it is in his distress that Paul sees how much comfort and compassion God has for him. Comfort abounds in the midst of sharing abundantly in the sufferings of Christ. The suffering of which Paul speaks is primarily the suffering that comes from being a faithful disciple of Jesus, as we worship and witness to Jesus' majesty.

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And Paul's point is simple. Everyone who wants to live a Godly life in Christ Jesus is going to experience a measure of suffering. But the promise is clear: no amount of suffering is ever beyond God's love, power, compassion and comfort. It will hurt, but God's comfort is deeper. Suffering will sting, but God's love always delivers.

Friend, your love for Jesus expressed through sacrificial service to others is worth it. I can't promise you an easy time but can promise you this: if you give your life away for the Gospel you will not be disappointed, and you will not be abandoned. And you can know for certain you will be delivered, because the One you follow has defeated death!

Verses for Meditation

- Psalm 63
- Romans 8:14-17

Reflection Questions

1. Where do you need comfort from God right now?
2. Are you holding back from following Jesus because you are relying on yourself and not on God?
3. What suffering do you need to patiently endure as you live a life of worship and witness?

Prayer

Heavenly Father, we praise you that your love is better than life. There is nothing we desire more than to know you and be known by you. The supreme treasure of the gospel is your presence. We repent when we have chased temporary comfort to avoid the sufferings of Christ. We repent of our failure to trust that comfort will abound even as our pains might multiply. Challenge our hearts that we can completely give ourselves to you, and you will not abandon us.

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