

Be Encouraged

Father, thank you for our time of worship, praise, prayer and giving. And our father, we worship you through the preaching of your word. Sanctify your words that goes forth. Speak to your people a Rhema word that will minister to the challenge, the struggle, the conflict, the problem and the pain. The complexity that they deal with today. May you strengthen them in the inner person that they may stand firm in their faith knowing that you are able and you are willing to sustain and bless them in the midst of. Thank you that there's a blessing in the storm. As we trust in you, you will show us how to maximize stumbling blocks as stepping stones to greater growth and greater development in you. Let the words of my mouth and the meditation of my heart be acceptable in your sight, O Lord, our strength and our Redeemer. Speak Lord, in Jesus name we pray. Amen.

We're starting a new series today, the Anatomy of Encouragement. This morning's topic is Be Encourage. No matter what's going on he will make it all right. But you got to stay strong. Encouraged. No matter what's going on. And you gotta be strong in your faith. You got to stay strong in your faith and allow God to work in you and through you. In 2 Corinthians, 1:3-5, the Word of God reads as follows. "Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of mercies and the God of all comfort, who comforts us in all our affliction so that we may be able to comfort those that are in any affliction, with the comfort with which we ourselves are comforted by God. For as we share abundantly in Christ sufferings, so through Christ we share abundantly in comfort too." Be Encourage. When life is tiring, when you are struggling with relationships, when family members aren't saved, when bills aren't paid, when school is difficult, when work is exhausting, when your health is failing, when your loved ones are hurt, when the future is unsure and when a good friend leaves, it is easy to be discouraged. Discouragement is a thief. It steals your vitality, your zeal, your joy, your peace and your contentment. If discouragement lives long with you his "friends" will soon follow. The friends of discouragement are fatigue and hopelessness, despair and self-pity, depression doubt and bitterness. Discouragement is dissatisfaction with the past, distaste for the present and distrust for the future. It is the result of spiritual blindness. It is ingratitude for the blessings of yesterday, indifference to the opportunities of today and insecurity regarding the strength for tomorrow. It is unawareness of the presence of God, is unconcerned for the needs of others and unbelief in the promises of God's word. If we have nothing to rely on or we forget our blessing and look to our circumstances, then that is when discouragement begins to take hold. Instead, what we need is encouragement. We need hope and peace and knowledge that the Lord knows our troubles, that he has great concern and compassion for us and he is not leaving us unloved and uncared for. Keeping you eyes on Jesus is the best way to be encouraged. See in him you can have comfort and peace and encouragement. You need to find him and his words, and by

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faith rest in him. I want us to receive by Faith Paul's 3 affirmations of encouragement from this text. There's three affirmations.

The first affirmation is in verse three it says, "Blessed be the God and father of our Lord Jesus Christ, the father of mercies and the God of all comfort". **That first affirmation is that you can be encouraged because God is a God of mercies and comfort.** Oh, I like the paralysis of the word mercy there, "He's the God of mercies and comfort". God is called in our text the Father of mercies, meaning that mercies originate from him. He created them. In the Greek language, the word mercy means compassion and pity, longings or mercy. It is something that is felt in the heart. It is God's very heart. He feels mercy toward us. That's wonderful that he is not a non-emotional creator but he has emotions because you have emotions. He has a will, you have a will. He made you like Himself. You have an intellect, He has an intellect, right? He has thoughts, you have thoughts because you're made in God's image. God as our Heavenly Father by faith, through Jesus Christ, he becomes something more intimately known and that is that he is a God of mercies. Lamentations 3:22 and 23 says, "the steadfast love of the Lord never ceases, His mercies never come to an end; they are new every morning; great is thy faithfulness." That's wonderful. That's a promise to stand on. That the mercies of today are not the mercies of yesterday. The mercies of today will not be the mercies for tomorrow. God is going to give you when you wake up in the morning new mercies. Mercies for that day. Mercies for that challenge. Mercies for that distraction, that frustration, that problem and that perplexity. He gives us new mercies each day. He is the author of mercies. And what is mercy? That God takes away from me what I do deserve. Oh my God, thank you, Lord. That you remove from me what I do deserve and then you give me your grace what I don't deserve. He's the God of mercies. His mercy toward you brings the salvation that you have, the faith that you experience, the the forgiveness of sins that you experience, the deliverance from internal condemnation that is your hope. This all comes from this God of mercies. And it's because of Jesus and because of his sacrifice, because of his shed blood on the cross for you, that you can experience the God of mercies even in your discouragement. See, God is the God of mercy that psalms 86 verse 5. The psalmist says, "You are forgiving and good, oh Lord, abounding in love to all who call to you". The Greek noun for comfort in our text is Paraklesis. "Para"- alongside, "Klesis" - to call. To call alongside in order to encourage. Isn't that wonderful that the God of mercies, he will comfort you in your discomfort. He will encourage you in your discouragement. He will empower you in your weakness because he will come alongside of you and speak words of encouragement. Words that will build you up when you feel torn down. That's what our God does. Because of our relationship with his son Jesus Christ, he calls his comfort to our side to encourage, to exhort, and to empower us. And how does he do that? He does that through the spirit of God who lives in us. And he does that

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through the word that he's given us. And I love this part, he does it through one another. He does it through the fellowship, the household of faith. He encourages us through each other. In fact, a form of this word Paraklesis is the word Parakletos. This is the word that is used for the Holy Spirit. The Parakletos comes alongside us, and he calls us and summons us to receive from him the encouragement and the strength that we need in the inner man to endure the outer problems. When you struggle with the outer pain, he lives there, so he calls you to himself within yourself, 'cause He's the Holy Spirit. He's the indwelling presence and he whispers in a way that your consciousness can hear. And he tells you that you're going to stand firm in this. That this temporary. This is a test of your faith that there is a providential reason why God allowed it to come into your life. And that you need to take courage while you go through it. The Holy Spirit will speak to you from the inside. The body of Christ speaks to you from the outside. The word of God speaks to us directly as well. The Holy Spirit is called in John 14, the Comforter or the helper. John 14:26 Jesus said, I have to go away. 'Cause, if I don't go away, he can't come. And when I go away, he's gonna come and he's going to do something in your life. He's gonna make my life relevant to your life. He's gonna take my life and make it your life, and you're going to experience everything that I am, through him, the Holy Spirit. In John, 14:26 says "but the comforter (the Parakletos) the one who gives encouragement, the Encourager himself, who is the Holy Spirit, whom the father will send in my name, He shall teach you all things, and bring all things to your remembrance, whatsoever I have said to you." In the NASB translation, the word "Rendered Holy Spirit" is helper. That's Parakletos or teacher or guide. All this shows you that God is a God of comfort, exhortation and encouragement. You can be encouraged because God is a God of mercies. And he uses the Holy Spirit, he uses the word of God and he uses the church to encourage and empower us in our times of discouragement. All comfort comes from God who is the God of comfort, Mercy and love. It isn't an Angel that this comes from, nor a cosmic force that this mercy and comfort comes from — psychotherapy, a quick and clever slogan that warms your heart temporarily and lifts you up momentarily, it is the God of mercy and comfort himself.

But you may ask, "how is the encouragement received from God?" It is received by faith. How do you receive your salvation? By faith. You heard the message and you believed that you were sealed until the day of redemption. (Ephesians 1:13 and 14). Romans 10:17, "faith comes by hearing and hearing the word of God". That's all by faith. And so your encouragement comes by faith. You must believe by faith that the God of comfort who sent the comforter, who is the encourager on the inside, will strengthen you and that the church outside will come alongside of you and strengthen you so that you don't have to be alone in your struggle. So you receive by faith. Because God says that he is the God of comfort and he sent the Comforter, then you need to believe it. You need to act upon that. That is you need to trust

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him and receive the comfort as he provides it. And then another way we can receive this from others in the faith. I'm saying your brother and sister in Christ. God uses people to comfort you. When you have a problem, doesn't the Lord send someone within the courage word, a helping hand or shoulder to cry on. Take that as a blessing from God and not just happenstance. When you pick up that phone and you call someone in your times of discouragement and they give you a word from the Lord and it's scriptural. You better take that. Cause, sometimes scripture words don't come very easily out of the mouth of the modern day Christian. It is also through his Word, the Bible. When we read the word and we hear the word, then faith is engendered within our souls we sense some strengthening. We sense a level of release, clarity, confidence comes back to us. Because we're receiving the word that we read and hear. The words of God are transforming and are therefore our instructions and our encouragement. This is by the Holy Spirit. He is called the Parakletos, the comforter, He indwells us but he wants to feel us. Yes, he's resident but he wants to be president. He wants to rule and reign in our hearts and minds so that we can experience the look, the strength and the wisdom and the Council and the comfort and the encouragement that's available.

The second affirmation in this letter is that you can be encouraged because God is there in your afflictions. If you don't like the word afflictions in your situation (as my uncle would say in your "sissuation") then in your circumstance, your perplexity, in your trouble. Whatever you want to put there, put it there, it's still an affliction. Why? Because it's causing you unrest. Is it causing you discomfort? You can't think right? You don't sleep, when you eat, you get sick, when you get encouragement from others, then you go home and you're by yourself and you become discouraged again. That's an affliction. It's mental and emotional. You heard a good sermon and you go back and you still despondent at home after a worship service because you're dealing with an affliction. You're dealing with an psychology angst that feels like it will never get better. *"I will never be accepted. I will never be loved. I will never be affirmed. I would never overcome this. I would never feel happy. I will never be able to handle that. I will never be able to be what God wants me to be."* And people go home with those thoughts, even after a worship service. It's an affliction. 2 Corinthians 1:4 says, "He comfort us use in all our afflictions. You can be encouraged because God is there in your afflictions. When the disciples was on the Sea of Galilee and they were scared and afraid and thought they were going to die, Jesus was in the boat. In their despair he was there. He's there in your despair. He's there in your boat of life. He hasn't left, you left him. He never moves from where he sits, You moved from him in proximity. Because your mind is not stayed on Jesus, your mind is on your trouble. Your mind is on your doubts, your mind is on your emotions, your mind is not on Jesus' sufficiency. Your mind is not on Jesus' presence with you in the Holy Spirit. You're not understanding that Jesus is the victor over your circumstances. He conquered death, Hell in

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the grave, surely he can conquer what you're going through today. Surely, he can overcome what you're struggling with today. If he can cast out demons and legions of demons and heal the sick with just a word, can't he take care of you? Can he see you through? Can he hold you up? If he can do that, you have to believe that he's there with me. See, here it again, the the word comfort again, Parakleo, that means to call to one side for exhortation, for consolation and encouragement. That's what God, the Holy Spirit and the church does to the one who believes.

Now this is similar to the role of the New Testament prophet in 1 Corinthians 14:3. Paul was debating that those who have the gift of tongues shouldn't speak their gift if they don't have an interpreter. And that non-believers can learn more out of three or four simple words than a whole bunch of gibberish. And I don't mean aesthetic utterance at that point, I just mean using a lot of words that people don't understand. They can learn more in simple words and they can go away saying, "man, I was really edified by what that person was saying because I understood". Now this is what he's saying in this context, he says in verse 3, "On the other hand, the one who prophecies speaks to people for their edification (or some translation they're upbuilding) and encouragement and consolation." Well, that's the same thing that God does through the Spirit and in the word, by faith in the believer. He does the same thing through us, through our trials and our troubles. What he does for us is edify, He builds us up and then he encouraged us, He speaks a word of counsel in solace and strength to us. He does the same thing that the New Testament prophet should do when he is preaching the gospel to people. He does this in your affliction. The NASB translation says, "trouble". The NIV translation also uses the word "trouble". The Greek word is "thlípsis" is translated as tribulation, trouble, anguish, persecution, a burden and of course affliction. Affliction comes in all different shapes and sizes. Your affliction may not be my affliction but it's still affliction nevertheless, because your soul is heavy. You're in the slough of despondency. There have been many Christians so discouraged that they opted out for suicide. Because their souls were in the slough of despondency and they didn't see a way out, they didn't see an exit, they didn't see light at the end of the tunnel, and they gave up and they gave in. They took their own lives because of affliction. Afflictions can be sickness, financial difficulty, loss of a loved one and unsure future, an automotive accident, a severe terminal situation that needed surgery. But also, this is something very important, the affliction occurs not in the circumstances, they occur in your heart. Whatever you're experiencing physically gets to you mentally, emotionally and spiritually. See, this is the real problem. It's one thing to handle something externally, it's another thing to handle the internal effects of that external pain. That's a difficult thing for some people. When a person is sick in their body, sometimes they can be sick in their soul. Then some can deal with the outer sickness and still have inner joy. They're struggling with their

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afflictions, that's what they're struggling with. Why do we have afflictions? Why do they come? The affliction occurs in the heart in that place where we get frustrated, confused, angry, hurt, mad at God. *"Why this in my life at this point? Haven't I done enough? Haven't I suffered enough? Haven't I gone through enough? I'm already dealing with this family member, now you're bringing this family member. I'm dealing with this coworker not here come another coworker. I'm struggling with this friend now this friend acting crazy on me, Jesus. Am I Job now? Why do I have to be here?"* That's what happens to the soul when the external affects the internal. So why do we have these affliction? Because we live in a morally and spiritually fallen world. Oh, it's not perfect world. You could put everything perfect. "Ducks lined up in the row", as they say. You can have the "T"s crossed and the "I"s dotted and you can have your plan 5,10,15, 20 years down the road and guess what, something is going to happen to mess it up. Because life is not that controllable. It's not that perfect because you're dealing with imperfect people, you live in an imperfect world, and then you have the devil, the flesh, and the world constantly at you. Also it takes a world with trouble in it to train you as a Christian. If God removed all of your troubles away from you from the time you were saved, you would always be an infant in Christ. You will never grow. It's like a woman having a baby and the baby stays one day old, something is wrong with the baby. There is some kind of developmental deformity or disability in that baby's DNA. If God was to remove at the point of our salvation, afflictions, we would not grow. In elementary school, I was very talkative. The teacher said, "you're vociferous". I was talking too much. While the teacher was trying to talk, I'm talking. And so he sent me to Principal Mr. Hobart Grey. He was the Principal at Wiser Park. He told me, "I hear that you run your mouth too much in class". I said, "no, sir". He said "bend over, I'm gonna apply this Board of Education to the seat of your learning". And when he took one swing, Whack! Guess what? I never talked again in class. I never violated that principle because when that board hit me it went through my body to my soul and I had to hold my tears in. I didn't want to cry after I get hit. He walked away. I ran the bathroom and cried like a baby. I went to class like nothing happened. Went to my seat thinking I conquered. I conquered nothing. I remain so quiet that the people that used to talk with me said "why you so quiet?". I said, "because we are in class". I wised up very quickly, because of that Board of Education applied to the seat of my learning. I'm trying to share with you that God will allow you the boards of conflict and affliction to the seat of your learning so that your faith can grow. He will allow it. He does it from Genesis to Revelation in the lives of his choicest Saints. They suffered the most for their growth, for their endurance, the strengthening of their faith so they can be overcomers in the world. So it takes a world of trouble to train the Christian for the higher calling. To carve upon our souls the features of the face of Jesus Christ. James said it this way in James 1:2 and 4. He says, "Consider it all joy, my brothers and sisters, whenever you

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experience various kinds of trials because you know that the testing of your faith produces endurance.” That’s what he wants to develop in us. That’s why he allows the afflictions and with the affliction he gives the comfort. And, he said, “let endurance have his full effect so that you may be mature and complete, lacking nothing.” So then, afflictions are a way of making you better, not bitter. That is how they should be viewed; as the testing and the strengthening of your faith through the encouragement and mercy of Jesus Christ. You don’t have to worry whether or not he’s going to come through for you. He’s gonna have your back. He’s gonna take care of you. He already has. It was *at the cross, at the cross, when we first saw the light and all the burdens of our hearts rolled away, it was there by faith we received our sight and now we are happy all the day.* He demonstrated that at the cross. God demonstrated his love toward us even while we were yet sinners, Christ died. Oh, he’s already done it. And then he rose from the dead on the third day to validate it. And he will continue to care for you until he sees you or you see him face to face. After all aren’t you more valuable than the sparrows? And he cares for the sparrows. Aren’t you more valuable than lilies? And he clothed the lilies. Jesus said the lilies are adorned by God more than the great garments and clothes that Solomon wore because God cares about it. It’s your perspective that navigates your progress through the pains of life. It’s your perspective. And if your perspective is that this is a thing that God is robbing me of something, this thing is negative, this thing is a curse, this thing is a problem in the pain and a disgust, “I don’t understand why a loving God would do this to me”. If that’s your perspective you will stay in that affliction. But if your perspective is this is the providential hand of God. And God is sovereignly allowing these issues, challenges, and situations to come into my life so that I may become more like his son, Jesus Christ, then you experience joy, then you experience comfort, then you experience encouragement. Now you’re being empowered because you understand the right perspective on what you’re going through.

Thirdly, this is verse 4 Part B of that verse it says, “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.” **The third affirmation is you can be encouraged because you are an instrument of encouragement to others.** Oh, that’s wonderful. When you go through, what you go through and God gives you the strength that go through it and God builds your faith in it and God causes you to have a sense of comfort and consolation and confidence, that’s for you to take to somebody else. He took you though, so they can get through. This is just not your test, this is a test for others. It’s not just your problem that you’re going to solve this problem, you’re going to help other people to go through it in a way that they can solve it. God is allowing us to go through what we go through on behalf of others. But he chose you because he know you will remain faithful like he chose Job. He knew Job would not curse him to his face. He knew Job would say, “the Lord, give the Lord take it away, blessed be his name”. He knew that Job

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will not sin against God and call God unfair. He knew that. So God allow Job to go through what he went through so that Job's life can help us to go through what we go through. God comforts you, he strengthens you, he enables you, he empowers you so you can come through and strengthen and enable, empower someone else. That's the whole point. You are the now the instrument that God uses to bring comfort to others in their affliction. Why? Because you were afflicted once too, and you came through it with joy. You came through with the strengthened faith, a clear perspective on what life is all about in the Christian experience. And you know what this does? It glorifies God. To comfort others brings God glory. It's good for that person, but it brings God glory. It builds up your faith even more 'cause you're being used by God. Being used by God makes you feel good, doesn't it? That isn't the only reason to help someone but it does feel good when the Holy Spirit uses you to do good to someone else, and they benefit from what God is doing through you for them. What a dynamic inter-relational dynamic. You need to praise God that you have had in affliction so that you can be able to help others. There's some Christians that I like to call "*Good for Nothing Christians*". You know, Jesus talked about them in Matthew chapter five. He said, "some Christians are like salt with no saltiness and what they do, they take that salt and throw it down and it's trampled by men." So he was saying, there are some people who claim my name that they're good for nothing. They don't have the ability to influence anyone. They're like benchwarmer Christians, they've never been in the game. They watched the game, they applauded, they raise their hand but they never participate. They have on the jersey, they are dressed to play. {I was on the YBL basketball team. Sky blue jersey. Went to practice every Friday and Saturday, the games was on Saturday. I practiced on Friday after school. I went through the drills like the other players went through the drills and I sat that bench the whole season. I never played in any of the reindeer games. Never. They treated me like I wasn't able to participate. I wanted to participate but the coach never called me.} God is calling you. He said get off the bench. You got my jersey on. My blood washed you. My Spirit seals you. I'm living on the inside of you. You can do more than you're doing. You can share your faith more than you're sharing. Put fear aside and overcome with faith. Get in the game of evangelism. Get in the game of living the Christian life. Speak up like you speak up on everything else. Speak up on Jesus and what he did at the cross. He wants you to be an instrument in his sovereign and providential hands to affect the unsaved. That's what he wants to do through us. You can be encourage because God wants you to be an instrument now that you've been in a place of discouragement. You've been in a place of trouble. You've been in a place of angst and negativity, and now you're out of that. Well, he needs you, he wants you because there are some other Saints in that same situation you were in. And they just need somebody to get off the bench and tell them that they can win, they can run and they can overcome. See what I'm saying? How many of you, because of a

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trial, have been able to help another better because of that trial? Oh yeah, 'cause, now you're going off believing and experience. I believe it, I went through it, I have the experience, I have the knowledge, and I'm gonna share it with you. It's always been there, we just never made application of it. You see, God does not come for you to make you comfortable but to make a comforter. You get to be like the Holy Spirit now. You get to comfort folks because he's using you as an instrument. Light houses are built by shipwrecked sailors. Roads are widened by mangled motorists. Hospitals are built by those who were sick. Where nobody suffers, nobody cares. When you suffer, you learn to care. When you struggle, you learn to care about those who struggle. If you had an addiction, you care for those who are addicted. If you've been in abusive situation, you have compassion on those who are in abusive situations. This is why God does not comfort us to make us comfortable but to make us comforters. But don't forget he suffered first. He's the example of suffering for everyone.

In the last affirmation, verse 5, "for as we share abundantly in Christ sufferings, so through Christ, we share abundantly in comfort too." Paul says it this way in verse six, "if we are afflicted it is for your comfort". Oh, I love that. If I'm afflicted, that's for your comfort and salvation. "And if we are comforted, it is for your comfort, which you experience when you patiently wait and endured the same sufferings that we suffer". Here's the Greek word again for comfort, *paraklesis*, is to call alongside of and to summon someone to come close so that you can give them a word that will keep them standing instead of falling. This is beautiful. Paul uses his word *paraklesis* and *parakletos* six or seven times in these four or five verses. In this verse you can see he uses three times. If we are afflicted, it is for your comfort (*paraklesis*) and salvation, if we are comforted (*Paraklesis*) it is for your comfort (*paraklesis*) that would you experience when you patiently endure the same sufferings as we suffered, to call alongside, to assist, to counsel, to empower, to enable someone to tell that person in the name of Jesus and through the power of his Spirit that lives in you, you can overcome this too. This means that all comfort, all encouragement and hope that you receive through people, through the word, or through circumstances are filtered through Jesus Christ. Do you see that? That's what he means in verse 5, "For as we share abundantly in Christ, sufferings, so through Christ we share abundantly in comfort too". So all that we go through and we received the comfort of God, we take what we've learned and experience by going through and by God strengthening us, we give that person all that we have. And when we give that person all that we have, all of that is filtered through the sufferings of Christ. And the sufferings of Christ were redemptive. They were not wasted. They were not capricious, they were not unfair, they were not unjust. God was a picking on him and he's not picking on you either. It has a purpose, a redeeming purpose, and that purpose we call sanctification. To conform us to the image of Christ. You can't have that kind of transformation of the soul without the suffering to the body. Now that

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renewed soul is living in a fallen body and you're fighting. "Why I still feel the way I feel before I was saved?" Because the flesh is still in you. You need to get ahold of that flesh before that flesh get ahold of you. You need to understand that Paul says nothing good dwells on me, that is in my flesh and not in him, because good dwells in him. The Holy Spirit dwells in him, he's a new creation. And Paul told those brothers and sisters in First Corinthians chapter 3 verses one through five, "I wanted to share with you deeper things of God, but you were of the flesh." Notice that he didn't call them in the flesh, because if you're in the flesh, you're dead in sin, you're not a Christian. But they were Christian, so he said, "I wanted to give you deeper truths of God's word, but you're like babes, you're like mere men, you're still fighting personality clashes, you're still fighting on who's the best, who can preach the best, who can sing the best, who is more popular than the next. He said, "you're acting like the unsaved. You are of the flesh." You're not in the flesh, but the flesh is in you and you gotta fight that flesh everyday. Beloved, God providentially uses afflictions to help us with curbing our fleshly appetite. Therefore comfort is pure, it's good and right. It is received by faith. When our sufferings are abundant, so is our comfort. If you think "I'm going through more than I deserve", well, you gonna get more comfort than you deserve. It's coming your way. You're gonna be strengthened more. Your faith is going to be renewed. You're going to have a greater level of endurance. So that you can help another Christian who's weak and failing and struggling in their Christian walk. Oh, we need somebody to give us an example of what we're talking about. We have talkers and no examples of what we're saying. Everyone says, "I'm an imitator" but no one is imitating. Everyone is saying I wanna be more like Christ, but we're less like Christ. God needs to take us through afflictions, so that appetite for selfishness can be suppressed and then we can be comforted and strengthened, and then we go to our brother who is struggling and pour in the comfort we received. When we discipline our children, some do it with avoidance or taking away things that they want and others do it with, you know, the Board of Education to the seat learning, especially when they're that young for that and they respond to it, it's good for the character building of the person. That's what discipline is for, to build character. That's what the afflictions do, they build godly character and they build encouragement within. So this comfort is a spiritual comfort, received by faith and by active joy. Encouragement is a spiritual fruit and gift that belongs to the body of Christ. You don't have to live in doubt, fear and frustration over your present situation. You have the God of encouragement living in you, in the person of the Holy Spirit. You have the body of Christ that you're in relationship to, who are called to be encouragers. You have the word of God that ministers to you as you read it and hear it and obey it. You have all that you need to live a life of godliness. And to work through your depression and distress and discouragement in a way that edifies and builds you up so that you can build others up who are in your same situation. If we are afflicted, it is for your

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comfort and your salvation, your deliverance. And if we are comforted, it is for your comfort, your encouragement, your building-up which you experience when you patiently endure the same sufferings that we suffer. These are the first affirmations of encouragement from the apostle Paul as we deal with this new series, the Anatomy of Encouragement. Let's pray.

Lord of Hope please encourage your people with your love and your truth that indwells them. I pray that you lift us out of despair and doubt to gain your perspective on the situation that produce the emotional outcome. That it is for our good and it's not for our destruction. It to build us up, and not to tear us down. In difficult time, please counsel and guide us with your word. Help us to rise above our circumstances and place our confidence in your comfort and in your compassion. In your mercy and in your comfort, for your mercies are new every morning. Give us new mercies each morning to face what we have to deal with. And Holy Spirit, remind us that we can do all things through you, for you are our strength and our song. In Jesus name we pray, Amen.