2 Corinthians and The God of Comfort

Jess Woodliffe – 20th September 2026 (watch talk here)

Introduction to 2 Corinthians

David Miller introduced our new sermon series in 2 Corinthians - a letter from Paul to a church he knew and loved, but with whom his relationship had sometimes been strained. Paul had started the church in Corinth, a diverse city where Christians were surrounded by competing beliefs and ideas about how to live. Paul writes because he wants them to **become more Christlike, more "Jesusy."** Among all the cultural currents pulling them in different directions, he calls them to **stay in the way of Jesus**.

Paul's starting point is simple: **Remember what God is like.**

Paul repeatedly draws their attention back to God's character because **the God we see shapes the lives we lead**. To become more like Jesus, we first need to see what Jesus is like. Throughout 2 Corinthians, we'll therefore keep returning to the same invitation: **look at God, see what he is like, hold onto that, and allow what we see to shape how we live.**

Jess kicked off this series looking at the first characteristic Paul highlights: that God is **"the Father of compassion and the God of all comfort."** (2 Cor 1:3). In our suffering, our God of comfort meets us with his 'paraklesis', the Greek word translated as 'comfort' meaning 'consolatory strengthening'. God then invites us to become carriers of that same comfort to others (2 Cor 1:4).

Reflect and discuss

Key passage: 2 Corinthians 1:3–4

1. What strikes you?
Read 2 Corinthians 1:3–4 again. What word or phrase particularly stands out to you, and why?

2. What is God like?
Paul describes God as the **"Father of compassion"** and **"God of all comfort."**
How does that description compare with the way you naturally picture God when life is difficult?

3. Where do you turn?
When you're stressed, hurting or overwhelmed, where do you instinctively go for comfort?
Are there good things that can sometimes become substitutes for actually turning to God?

4. How have you experienced God's comfort?
God's comfort can come through Scripture, prayer, worship, other people or simply an awareness of his presence. Can you think of a time when God met or strengthened you during a difficult season?

Remember: nobody should feel pressured to share something painful or personal.

5. Becoming a comforter
Read **2 Corinthians 7:5–7**. God comforted Paul through Titus.

- Who might God want to comfort **through you** at the moment?
- What might offering comfort practically look like?

Pray

In 2s/3s, pray for one another, naming the things people are carrying and inviting God's comfort. Pray too for opportunities to comfort others this week.