

27. CONSOLATION

BLESSED BE THE GOD AND FATHER OF OUR LORD JESUS CHRIST, THE FATHER OF MERCIES AND THE GOD OF ALL CONSOLATION, WHO CONSOLES US IN ALL OUR AFFLICTION, SO THAT WE MAY BE ABLE TO CONSOLE THOSE WHO ARE IN ANY AFFLICTION WITH THE CONSOLATION WITH WHICH WE OURSELVES ARE CONSOLED BY GOD.
2 CORINTHIANS 1:3-4

Consolation and Desolation

One of the most difficult issues Paul must confront in writing to his churches was the combination of suffering and joy they were experiencing. Their allegiance to Jesus sometimes brought on persecution from their neighbors and the ruling authorities.

Elation and sadness can both be “leading indicators” on our journey into our callings—but both require interpretation. Often in his letters to churches, Paul speaks of how the hardships he endured in his ministry have actually strengthened his deep love for and commitment to the churches. Likewise, it’s hard to miss the joy and purpose and passion he feels for his calling—consolation and desolation weave together in his “called life,” and we see the same woven threads in our own journey.

In a discombobulated world,
During moments of pervasive confusion,
Bewildered by barriers, challenges, and obstacles,
Befuddled by circumstances, pandemics, and social unrest,
Disoriented by conspiracy theories, fake news, gossip, and unhealthy expectations,
Can leave us feeling forsaken and ashamed,
Expressing lament,
Enveloped in grief,
Eloped in loneliness,
Experiencing wilderness temptations,
Crying out in lament,
Waiting for a response.

Exploration Questions

- In what ways did Erik’s story of his work with students surprise you?
- What emotions are you experiencing now as you are living out your calling—how are you feeling consoled and how are you feeling desolate?
- On the whole, do you find yourself talking to others about the ways you’ve been consoled in your journey, or the ways you’ve felt desolate? Why?
- Looking back, how do you see both consolation and desolation woven into your story?