

It's rough on everybody **Dr. J.B. Buffington**

Take your Bibles and turn to John 16. Last Sunday night, I kind of had a heart-to-heart talk with you. I want to do so again this evening. John 16:33: *These things I have spoken unto you, that in me ye might have peace. In the world ye shall have tribulation: but be of good cheer; I have overcome the world.*

Let us pray. Our Father, Lord, thank You that You are the God of all comfort. I pray that You would use us tonight to draw us closer to Thee and closer together. Give comfort for Thy people, and we will praise You. In Jesus' name, Amen.

I want to talk on a subject, "It's Rough on Everybody." Do you understand that? It is rough on everybody. I think of one of the best illustrations there is. Sometimes, we think that it is not rough on anybody but us. Years ago, there was a man. I will not call his name. His wife is dead now. He had a pickup truck, and he had a lot of tools in it. He had a tarp on his truck that was pulling. The rain had just started coming down. He grabbed the tarp, and his wife got on the other side. He said, "Help, Honey! It's raining!" She said, "It ain't raining over here." I do not think you got that, did you? It must have been deeper on your side than on my side. Now, what she was simply saying was, "You say, 'Hurry up! It's raining!' I am getting just as wet as you are." I was hoping that that joke did not need interpreting, but when speaking in an unknown tongue, you need an interpreter. I want you to know that it is raining on both sides. You think that it is just raining on you. I have news for you. It is raining on the other side of you. It is rough on everybody. I want to talk to you about this tonight with a little different approach.

Turn to 1 Corinthians 10:13: *There hath no temptation taken you but such as is common to man:* It is not strange. It is all of mankind. In Acts 14:22, there is a promise. Let me read; you just listen. I will read very few Scriptures tonight which is different from most of my sermons. Tonight, I want to chat with you for a little bit. Acts 14:22: *Confirming the souls of the disciples, and exhorting them to continue in the faith, and that we must through much tribulation enter into the kingdom of God.* Notice *much tribulation*. Now, I say honestly, without fear of contradiction, that I am not lying, that I would much rather go on a bum run under anti-aircraft being fired at me anytime than some of the battles that I have been in since I have been a Christian. That was Boy Scout stuff that I was in in the physical compared to that in the spiritual realm. Now, it is a promise of God that we through MUCH tribulation will enter the Kingdom of God. Turn to 1 Peter 5. This is a verse that meant much to me in my early life and still does. 1 Peter 5:7-11: *Casting all your care upon him; for he careth for you. Be sober, (That means that you had better be alert. That particularly does not have anything to do with a bottle. You ought to be sober, but this is talking about being sober-minded.) be vigilant; because your adversary the devil, as a roaring lion, walketh about, seeking whom he may devour: Whom resist stedfast in the faith, knowing (Now, you get comfort out of this.) that the same afflictions are accomplished in your brethren that are in the world. ("It is raining on the other side," is what he was saying.) But the God of all grace, who hath called us unto his eternal glory by Christ Jesus, after that ye have suffered a while, make you perfect, stablish, strengthen, settle you. To him be glory and dominion for ever and ever. Amen.*

NUMBER ONE, ALL OF GOD'S PEOPLE NEED ENCOURAGEMENT. Why? Because it is raining on all sides. If it is, then everybody needs encouragement. Now, I stood this afternoon and went through the choir. The choir did not know what I was doing. If I stood here tonight and went up one row and down the other row, I could tell different stories from this congregation, which I will not do. I know the joys and the sorrows. I know things about this congregation tonight that have been told to me that have never been told to anybody else. I am not talking about something to hurt, but I have heard their agony. I have heard their griefs. I have heard this brother's grief and sorrow. I have heard others. A box of Kleenex is standard equipment in my study, not because people have hay fever or colds. If the walls of my study could tell what they have heard, we would be deeply moved tonight and realize that it is rough on everybody. If it is rough on everybody, then we ought to realize that; we ought to love one another; and we ought to make it as easy as possible on everybody.

Now, all need encouragement. I have been here almost nineteen years, and I have grown a little bit in several different ways. I do not like to rebuke you. Early in the ministry, there was no problem of taking the hide off and salting it and putting it on the walls. I may do that now, but I do not like it. I love you more than I loved you eighteen, nineteen years ago. I have heard your griefs and your sorrows. I know much of them. If anybody is going to take the hide off, I want it to be me. I do not like anybody else doing that. That is my people. That is my flock. Go easy on them. Now, all need encouragement. Let us just think a little while tonight. I am just talking tonight. You can call it talk-preaching if you want to. It is different from what I normally do. I generally get my exercise when I am preaching, but I will not tonight. We have members of our church that live with pain twenty-four hours a day. They live with this thing called physical pain. I do not know how many years Billy Joe Mullahs has had pain, but I do know that he has had one operation after another. He still lives with pain. Debby Miller said that she never remembers a day when her mother was well. The only memories that she has of her mother are that of always being sick. Now, when you live with a physical illness, and you live with pain, I will assure you that not many people rejoice and have victory amidst pain. I think of Dr. Jack Hudson. He is not a member of our church, but if he had met the qualifications, we would let him join. Dr. Jack Hudson wrote a book entitled *Playing Hurt*. I gave that book away. I believe that is the title of it. I do not know anybody in the Southwide Baptist Fellowship more qualified to write that book than Dr. Jack Hudson. He lives with pain, yet you never hear him talking about pain. On his face, you see a smile. That dear brother has lived with pain all the years that I have known him. It is rough. All people need encouragement. Some of our members live with pain and live with disease. There are others of us who live with terminal illness. Now, I do not know how I would act. You do not have any idea how you would act with the death sentence written over your house. I think of Pam Matier. I know a lot about Pam Matier. You do not know about Pam Matier. Pam Matier was a little soldier. She lived and died with cancer. She had had one surgery after another and had all sorts of treatment. I stood by her bedside. When I got behind the front of that little soldier, I discovered somebody who was afraid, somebody who had problems, and somebody who had a real wrestling with her faith. She has four children. When she went to be with the Lord, her youngest one is still in diapers, maybe not in diapers, between two and three years old, if I remember correctly. Here she is; her children need a mama; and mama was ill and would not be there. A death sentence is there. She refused treatment until the fluid rose in her lungs and she was about to suffocate and to drown; then she had treatment again. Now, there are those who live with terminal illness like Eddy Feran. I talked with Eddy. Many of you saw Eddy. You must remember those that sit in here tonight. There will be some of us that terminal illness will be written across our homes in the days ahead. That is just the law of averages. It is rough on everybody. It may not hit you like it hits everybody else, but you rest assured, it will hit you. There is no life excluded from this thing called tribulation. Acts 14:22: . . . *we must through much tribulation enter into the kingdom of God*. It is a part of life. Then, I think about the folks who are here tonight, and their mates are gone. Death has invaded, and there is an empty chair. There is Mrs. Bragg. Mrs. Dobson is sick this morning. I think of Mrs. Larson. I think of Ronnie and Sandy Meeks' grandmother going to be with the Lord. I can look across the congregation and see others more recent than that — the Robsin's family with Granny Robsin. Death has invaded. It is rough on everybody. There is an empty chair. There is a room in some house that is shut away. There are memories of days gone by that remind of life. There is a little pair of booties of a little baby taken to be with the Lord. There is a cemetery lot that people go out to visit. They put flowers on it. It is rough on everybody. I think about a woman here and her sister's little boy. They have wondered what was wrong with him. He is three years old. He is autistic. He draws in from reality and lives inside, but the other day, they were examining something else. They think he might have multiple sclerosis. He is three years old. I think about that little boy. If he was my boy, it would crush my heart. The little boy is drawn within himself. I cannot communicate with him. I cannot reach him. I cannot tell him that I love him, to really get through to him. That tears my heart out. I think about disfigurement. There are some who are born disfigured. It is rough on everybody. I think about some folks here who had good jobs. You know who I am talking about. Everybody does not know, but the individual that had the good job knows. One day, they came into my office and put their head in their hands. They are in mid-life. They have lost their job. They have to start all over. Can you imagine losing everything you have, a job at mid-life, mid-way in life;

and all of a sudden, you have to start at the bottom and start all over again? Can you think of the tremendous shock and trauma? Can you think about that? There are folks sitting here tonight that know exactly what that is all about. It is rough on everybody. There are those of you here tonight who maybe are young now or maybe are older now, but early in life, adult responsibility was put on your young shoulders. Daddy was gone, and you had to carry the load of a family. You had to carry the responsibility. You had to make a living for mama and sister. You did not know what teenage years were like because you never had time to be a teenager. You were a man early in life. It is rough on everybody. There are others who have been deserted by their mate. Folks have walked into my office and said, "My mate walked in, did not say anything, just walked in, and out of the clear blue sky, said, 'I just don't love you any more, Goodbye.'" This young man who sang tonight — he is deserted. It is rough on everybody. Husbands and wives have left. Here is a husband or wife with children to take care of. One party cops out, and the other one is gone. I will tell you that it is rough on everybody. I think about "martyr-wives." I think of women who have fallen in love with somebody and said, "... death do us part." That man has squeezed every bit of joy, every bit of life, every bit of vitality out, and drained that individual. There is nothing left. There are women who are members of this church who live a living death. They never hear, "I love you." There is never a word of kindness. There is never a word of encouragement. There is never a word of appreciation. I think of ladies who have talked to me. But oh, my, my! what they have gone through! They have lived with a drunkard. He spent everything that he could get for alcohol. Then gambling, he spent everything he could get going gambling. He mortgaged the home and mortgaged the car. He did everything else. He lost the job and started all over. There were times at night when the gun was caulked, put between their eyes, and they were threatened. I could tell you just over and over again of that story. I am simply saying to you folks tonight that it is rough on everybody. It is rough on everybody.

I think of the aging processes. We were young and never going to get old, but somehow, it just catches you. Paul believed in the return of the Lord. He said in 1 Thessalonians 4:15: *For this we say unto you by the word of the Lord, that we which are alive and remain unto the coming of the Lord shall not prevent them which are asleep.* I think of the aging processes. I do not think this will offend the dear lady, but I prayed with a lady this morning in the flannel graph room. She is sitting right here. Irene Davis used to visit and go soul winning. We wept and cried about that. Then, the Sunday school class cut out, and visitation cut out. Now, she is about to lose the opportunity to even work in the flannel graph room. It is rough on everybody. There are folks whose minds are clear, but their body will not respond. They think fast, but their hands and their legs will not keep up with them. It is rough on everybody. I think of members tonight who have tragedy. I think of a lady. I sat with her yesterday for thirty minutes. The woman was raped and shot twice. Her life will never be the same, an emotional wreck. She told me what a comfort she was to somebody else, but she could not have been a comfort to somebody else if she had not drank of the cup of bitter woe and sorrow. She told me about a lady who lost a young man who was sixteen years old. He died of leukemia. "I have not seen her smile in months. I told her if she needed somebody to talk to, to get on the phone, and I would be glad to talk to her. The lady said, 'You will?' I said, 'Yes, I will.'" She said, "I think I saw a little smile come on her lips." I listened to this tragedy. It is rough on everybody.

I think of folks who lived a very active life, and now, they are sitting in some nursing home somewhere. It is rough on everybody. I think of young people who live with critical parents. They never do anything right. You see, it is not just all the child's problem; it is the adult's problem. Sometimes, a boy or girl grows up in a home, and they never, never do anything right. It is rough on everybody. I think of wives who have to carry the load. Their husband is sick and unable to work. They have to carry the whole responsibility of making the decisions for that home. It is rough on everybody. I think of parents who have given everything in the world for their children, and their children are ungrateful. They never say, "Thank you." They take everything they can get and more. It is rough on everybody. Then, I think of others, in the midst of all that, that are having tremendous conflict with their faith. Turn to Psalm 73. I am just about through. Psalm 73 is a Psalm of a man who is afraid to share what he has to say. God puts it in the Word of God so that you could hear from it and receive lessons from it. He said, "Now, if I really told what I was thinking, I would offend somebody; so I will keep my thoughts to myself." There are folks here who never would open their mind and tell of the

struggles they have had with their faith and their doubts and their fears and the attack of their faith. Nobody would have ever guessed it. So God wrote it in the Word. I read in Psalms 73:1-18: *Truly God is good to Israel, even to such as are of a clean heart.* (It begins with a statement, *God is good.*) *But as for me, my feet were almost gone; my steps had well nigh slipped.* (He said, "I was just about to fall on my face.") *For I was envious at the foolish, when I saw the prosperity of the wicked.* (He said, *I was envious.*) *For there are no bands in their death: ("I have watched them die.") but their strength is firm. They are not in trouble as other men; neither are they plagued like other men.* (Here is a child of faith watching the unsaved.) *Therefore pride compasseth them about as a chain; violence covereth them as a garment.* (Their very clothing is violent. They are proud in their attitude.) *Their eyes stand out with fatness: they have more than heart could wish.* (They do not just have the necessities, but they have luxuries upon luxuries.) *They are corrupt, and speak wickedly concerning oppression: they speak loftily. They set their mouth against the heavens, and their tongue walketh through the earth. Therefore his people return hither: and waters of a full cup are wrung out to them. And they say, How doth God know? and is there knowledge in the most High? Behold, these are the ungodly, who prosper in the world; they increase in riches. Verily I have cleansed my heart in vain, and washed my hands in innocency.* ("I have searched my heart and cleansed my heart before God.") *For all the day long have I been plagued, and chastened every morning.* ("I cannot get away with anything. God chastens me, and God corrects me." Now watch.) *If I say, I will speak thus; ("If I told out loud what all the convulsions in my mind were going over, if I said this . . . ") behold, I should offend against the generation of thy children. (" . . . I would cause somebody else to stumble.")* *When I thought to know this, it was too painful for me; Until I went into the sanctuary of God; then understood I their end.* He said, "I got a long-range look." God is saying, "It is rough on everybody." Young people, it is rough on all young people. Adults, it is rough on all adults. Guys, it is rough on all men. Ladies, it is rough on all ladies. It is rough on everybody.

The first main point was that all need encouragement. Turn to 2 Corinthians 1:3-4. **NUMBER TWO, ALL RECEIVE ENCOURAGEMENT FROM THE LORD, IF WE LOOK TO HIM.** He will do it in various ways. The Father encourages us with His Word. The Son encourages us with His work. The Holy Spirit encourages us with His witness. 2 Corinthians 1:3-4: *Blessed be God, even the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of mercies, and the God of all comfort; (or encouragement) Who comforteth us in all our tribulation, that we may be able to comfort them which are in any trouble, by the comfort wherewith we ourselves are comforted of God.* What happens? It is rough on everybody, and God comforts His people in His own time. He comforts His people. Why does He comfort His people? Because He has compassion on them.

NUMBER THREE, ALL ARE TO SHARE THE ENCOURAGEMENT THEY GET FROM GOD. You are to share it with somebody else. Verse 4: *Who comforteth us in all our tribulation, that we may be able to comfort them which are in any trouble, by the comfort wherewith we ourselves are comforted of God.* What happens? God leads me through deep water, and God comforts me. One day, I come along and find someone in deep water. I take the comfort God gave to me, and I am able to comfort them. They look at me in amazement and say, "How did you know? How did you understand?" Has anybody ever talked to you and rings your bell, and you wonder, "How in the world did they know?" I will tell you how they know. They have been where you are. God comforts us. With the comfort you get from God, you are to turn around and comfort. There is a brother that is going through the same thing that I have been through. I have gotten comfort from God. I have been able to put my arm around him and comfort him. He gets comfort. What happens? He walks through life and finds somebody in the same position. What happens? He goes to this brother and tells this brother, "Hey, God has sustained me." He is a source of comfort to somebody else. God never comforts you for that comfort to die with you. It is to be passed on to somebody else.

Turn to 2 Corinthians 7. When we get into trouble, we think that nobody understands us, and that is what makes it so different. There is somebody who understands you. If you will just start talking and if they would listen a little bit, they could tell you, "If you will just be quiet, I will tell you the rest of the story." They are quiet, and you tell them the story. They say, "How in the world did you know?" Well, it just so happens that the same temptations or afflictions are accomplished in your brethren that are in the world. I have been there,

and God comforted me. God will see you through. God will get you out. God will take you to the other side. What happens? "I have met somebody who has been there and understands me. He has felt like I feel. God brought them out; He will do the same for me." Sometimes, people think like Mrs. Davis who said awhile ago that she was glad to here that my children are normal. Of course, she looked at me and wondered how in the world they could be normal. Being a preacher does not make them supermen; they are just people. Sometimes, we have the idea, "Oh my, they would not understand me. I could not communicate with them. They do not understand me." Read the sermon, and hear the sermons that have touched your heart. Those preachers who touched your heart have walked where you walk and have sat where you sit. That is the reason they are able to minister to you. You are a child of God tonight. You said, "Lord, make me a blessing." I will tell you what God will do. He will make you a blessing, but you will have to walk in some dark valleys and some dark shadows. We want everything to go our way and to be a blessing. No! No! That is not God's way. God's way is, "You will be a blessing, but you have got to receive a blessing to be a blessing." When you receive a blessing, you receive comfort. You go to a suffering and broken world and are able to give out of the experiences of life. It is very easy to have all the answers but to have never been there. That is like rearing children. You stand up and tell everybody how to rear children, but you have never had any. Anybody know what I am talking about? You have never had any. That is a little different. You surely have to have some experience. I can tell you a whole lot about rearing children that I never got out of a book. It is very easy to walk into the hospital room where the doctor has just come back in and said, "You have terminal illness." I say, "Cheer up, Brother. *And we know that all things work together for good to them that love God, to them who are the called according to his purpose.*" Yes, that sounds mighty good. He does not hear it. Sometimes, I wonder if preachers know what they are doing. For instance, I do not know, but I doubt very seriously, if much of what is said at a funeral home is heard by those who are in shock. A preacher stands up to preach and goes on and on and on. The folks are dazed and shocked. The reality of the death has not gripped their hearts and lives. Now, what happened? More than a sermon, they need to know that I understand. I believe Romans 8:28, but there are a lot of pharisees. It is easy for you to walk up to them with the Scriptures and say, "That is what I have done. You do the same thing." It is easy for us to take the Scriptures and say, "Here is what the Bible says. That is what the Bible says, and that is what you have to do." But oh, my, my, my! When I have been where the Bible gave verses to help, it is a whole lot different. It is a whole lot different. It is like Dr. Jay Vernon McGee. I heard him talk about when he went to pray with folks who were going into surgery. He prayed, "Now, God be with your dear brother. God will be with you." He said that one day, he was going into surgery. He said that it was different. Somebody came in to pray with him, and he said, "I'm scared to death." I appreciate Dr. McGee because he is honest. He said, "I am scared to death! It is just different when you are upon the meat wagon. They have given you your happy shot. You are going into surgery. It is a whole lot different when you are there." When you open the Bible and read Hebrews 13:5: *I will never leave thee, nor forsake thee* and you are going back out into the waiting room sitting down, it is a whole lot different going to the surgery room than to the waiting room. Now that he has been to the surgery room, he says, "God will be with you. I know what the Bible says, but I have been there, and this is what the Lord did for me." That is why God gives us experiences. We want to be a blessing. God breaks us and allows things to happen, and out of it, we get sweetness. We take that sweetness and say, "Lord, make me a blessing." We hand it to somebody else. Now I cannot verify this, but somebody told me that Dr. Lee Roberson never preached until he lost his child, his baby. They said he preached, but he preached differently! Blessing, what happens? We have to know what it is to be in need. Look at 2 Corinthians 7:5. You would not think that Paul needed any encouragement. He had been to Heaven, caught up to Heaven, the third Heaven. Who would believe that Paul would need encouragement? He would never get down in the dumps, but I read about it in 2 Corinthians 7:5-6: *For, when we were come into Macedonia, our flesh had no rest, (That is physical.) but we were troubled on every side; without were fightings, within were fears. Nevertheless God, that comforteth those that are cast down, comforted us by the coming of Titus.* Paul was cast down. God sent Titus around the Sea.

Let me say one other thing, and I am through. Do you know that when people come to you for encouragement, it is when you do not feel like encouraging them? God has encouraged you way back there.

They come and unload on you, and that is the time you feel like, "Why come to me?" Well, you have already gotten encouragement from way back there. What do you do? You take, and you give to them the encouragement when you do not feel like encouraging. There are times when we miss it. We do not want to encourage somebody else because we are wrapped up in our present problems. God gave you the past problems and deliverance to help somebody else with their present problems. While we are trying to encourage someone, we are encountering some more problems. All along, God is letting us build experiences to pass it on, to pass it on, to pass it on, to pass it on. Has anybody sent somebody to your house? Has God comforted you by a knock on the door, by a telephone call, by a letter, or by a visit? Has somebody lifted you up? It is rough on everybody. Since it is rough on everybody, we need each other. Did you know that? We need each other. We need each other. Let us help each other. Let us encourage one another. Let us lift up one another because it is rough on everybody.