

2 Corinthians 1:1-11

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[0 : 00] we're at in the New Testament, so we are being 2 Corinthians. As far as I know, this is the first time that I have ever preached through the entire book of 2 Corinthians. I know that it is the first time that I have preached through it here, but I think even in my pastoral ministry, this will be the first time that I have ever preached through it. I do keep a kind of list of the books that we have been through as a church, and it is exciting to see what God is doing, because honestly, what we see around us is just the fruit of the Word of God. Some of you have been with me, have been very patient with me since the very first Sunday which I came, and you understand, some of you know me now, some of you have been with me a long time, some after that. I don't believe in flashy, showy ministry, I believe in just systematically going through the Word of God, and God is faithful to His Word.

Wow, that got really loud really quick. Thank you guys, you're doing really good. Keep it down, Billy Joe, and God has been so good. I think at this time, we have went through somewhere between 28 to 30 books of the Bible together so far, and we've seen a majority of them just in deep context, and it's been so faithful to see that. So for those reasons, I'm excited to be in the book of 2 Corinthians.

This morning, we will confine ourselves to the first chapter, verses 1 through 11. So 2 Corinthians chapter 1, starting in verse 1, and we're going to read down to verse 11. If you are physically able and desire to do so, would you join with me as we stand together and we read the Word of God with one another. We'll read it, we'll pray, and then we'll set it in context so we can know how we got here.

Paul, an apostle of Christ Jesus by the will of God, and Timothy our brother, to the church of God which is at Corinth with all the saints who are throughout Achaia. Grace to you and peace from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ. Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of mercies and God of all comfort, who comforts us in all our affliction so that we will be able to comfort those who are in any affliction with the comfort with which we ourselves are comforted by God.

For just as the sufferings of Christ are ours in abundance, so also our comfort is abundant through Christ. But if we are afflicted, it is for your comfort and salvation. Or if we are comforted, it is for your comfort, which is effective in the patient enduring of the same sufferings which we also suffer.

[2 : 27] And our hope for you is firmly grounded, knowing that as you are sharers of our sufferings, so also you are sharers of our comfort. For we do not want you to be unaware, brethren, of our affliction which came to us in Asia, and that we were burdened excessively beyond our strength so that we despaired even of life. Indeed, we had the sentence of death within ourselves so that we would not trust in ourselves, but in God who raises the dead, who delivered us from so great a peril of death and will deliver us. He on whom we have set our hope, and he will yet deliver us. You also joining and helping us through your prayers so that thanks may be given by many persons on our behalf for the favor bestowed on us through the prayers of many. Let's pray. Well, we thank you so much for this day. God, we're so thankful to have the opportunity of gathering together to praise you in song, to encourage one another in fellowship. But Lord, as we've come to the reading and hearing of your word, we pray that you would speak through the power of it. God, we know that it is not the thoughts and opinions of man to have the power and the ability to affect the heart and mind of us. But Lord, we come just asking that you would speak through your spirit, through your word. And Lord, that there would be no cause for hindrance, there would be no cause for stumbling, but that your word would speak with clarity and with power and with truth.

And Lord, that our hearts and minds would be open to receive it so that our lives would be committed to it for your glory. And we ask it all in Jesus name. Amen. When Paul wrote the first letter to the church at Corinth, which we call 1 Corinthians, we know that Paul was writing to address a problem. Actually, he was writing to address a multitude of problems. We've said, as we made our way through the book of 1 Corinthians, that it would be hard pressed to find any church more wicked than the church which was at Corinth. Yet in light of that, Paul refers to them as saints by calling. They were not saints by practice because there were a number of matters which were going on. There were a number of issues which had to be addressed. There were things that were pointedly discussed in that first letter, but they were saints by calling. So who they were positionally as saints affected how Paul spoke to them practically in their behavior. And he was really rebuking them and correcting them because he was calling them to live according to who they were positionally. That is, he wanted them to live like saints. We know that if we historically follow the writings that connected in 2 Corinthians and following, that somewhere after the writing of 1 Corinthians, Paul had to make more than likely a quick trip into Corinth to try to address the problems. And even then they weren't addressed. And he wrote what he refers to as a sorrowful letter to them. We'll come upon that later in 2 Corinthians, which we know nothing of. And then he writes that letter and he doesn't really know their response, if they're behaving as they could. If you remember, it's in the book of 1 Corinthians in which Paul says that he handed a particular individual over to Satan for the destruction of his flesh.

Right? I mean, it was serious. Paul is not sure how the churches responded, but as we will see later on in 2 Corinthians, Paul carried about the daily concern of all the churches. He had a pastor's heart.

And he was concerned so much that he sent Titus to go see how things got back and how things happened. And Titus finally comes back to him and Paul is refreshed because he finds out that they indeed were broken, sorrowful, he will say later, to the point of repentance, which by the way, godly sorrow always brings about repentance, not just remorse. So they had a godly sorrow that had rested upon them. Their lives had been transformed to be more aligned with who they were positionally.

And now this is where we find ourselves. Paul pens this letter. Now Paul, in penning this letter, is not rebuking them. He is not correcting them. He is really admonishing them.

[6 : 11] If we had to put a theme on the letter 2 Corinthians, I would theme it living authentically. Paul wants them to live an authentic life in the midst of society that God has put them.

If you wanted to have key verses, which every time I open up a new portion of scripture and I'm studying a new book, I always kind of want to see what the theme is. I want to see what the key verses are. And this can be different, I would say, for every other person. It's just the verses that really seem applicable to me as I'm studying. I'm just reading through it. I'm reading through the entire book in its setting and just continuing to go through it. It seems to me that the key verses are 2 Corinthians 5, 20, and 21. 21 you should be very familiar with because even in our own mini-series we spoke of the reality where it says that he made him who knew no sin to be sin on our behalf. So that's 21. But verse 20 says that therefore we are ambassadors for Christ, imploring and begging men that they be reconciled unto God. So that God has called his people to be ambassadors living in a world that he placed them in and left them in. He wants them to live it authentically. That is, he wants them to live, again, not needing to correct their mistakes, but just living as they should because of who they are. There are two books that I'm currently reading and they are really as diverse as they are in authorship as they are in time. One was written in the late 1700s. The early, the next one was written in the earlier 1900s. So one about 1794, the other one about 1930. But both of them carry this same theme. That is, what you profess to be publicly, you ought to live privately. That you ought to live authentically. The first, William Laws, a series called A Holy and Devout Life. He really is admonishing the church members that how do we say that we're this and then we're, we go out and we live such and such a way in all of society and really we ought to be authentic. The second one is the life story of the Martin Lloyd-Jones. I love

Martin Lloyd-Jones and one of the themes that he spoke of, he said, I really don't get upset at the world. I don't get upset at the world that the world doesn't want anything to do with Christ. He said, that's not my concern. God has made me a pastor of the church. He said, all I ask of the world is the same thing I ask of the believers. Be consistent. Made a lot of truth. He said, if you want nothing to do with Christ, if you want nothing to do with the Savior, then just be consistent.

When life falls apart, don't come looking at the church for help. Don't come to the church because all of a sudden you need something. Just be consistent. If all your hope is found in the world, then when everything falls apart, go to the world. He says, be consistent. And I was like, that? Amen, brother. I can go with that. Anybody realize why he wasn't so popular among the preachers and the people of his world, right? And he said, and he asked the same thing of the church members.

If you claim to follow Christ, then be consistent. Let all your joy, let all your anticipations, let all your hope, let all your expectations be found in Christ. Be consistent. What is it? Living authentically. And it's exactly what Paul is admonishing the church at Corinth to do.

[9 : 15] And as we, we don't really have to give a lot of background the way we did when we opened up 1 Corinthians because you already know the city of Corinth was such a mission field because it was such a conglomerate of individuals. It was a trade port at that time. Now, today, it's really nothing because of the silt and the coming down of the deforestation of the land and all the silt came down and the rivers clogged up in the land now. So it's very far. The coast is very far from the city now is what I'm trying to say. But at that point, being an isthmus, they could drag ships across it. It was safer to drag ships across the isthmus than to go around the isthmus because of all the seas, see Paul and his shipwrecks in Acts, and in the chapter, Acts 27, okay? So anyway, Paul knew of these things. So because of that, there were all these different people there. And the church, more than anyone else, was situated in such a position that if they lived authentically, they could really touch a great multitude of people around them. It was a place of multiple nationalities. It was a place of multiple cultures. But it was also a place of false worship. We know that there was one of the grand wonders of the ancient world that was there. It was the temple of Artemis. It was also the bank. That's where they kept their money of the Roman Empire and all the wealth. And that's why that was actually in Ephesus. That was up the road a little bit. But the

Corinthians were pointing to that as well. And all this stuff that is going on, this area, this grand region, had the opportunity to minister to a multitude of people. But Paul says it only happens if the church is authentic, if it's real. And so he calls them out to that. He wants them to do that.

So that's kind of our overview of the entire book. But this morning, what I want you to see, just the first 11 verses, is how we can live authentically in a broken world. And the reason we say broken world is because it's a world of suffering and pain and distress and all of our vexations and all the things that we have going on. And how we are called to live authentically in that world. Because the reality is, is the moment we come to Christ, things don't get better.

Right? The moment we come to Christ, there's still suffering. There's still pain. There's still all of this stuff that happens in the world. And the question is, why? And there's reasons. We'll get into that in just a moment. But Paul calls us here to live authentically, even in the midst of that. One of the things that we see that he does in the book of Romans, and he also does it here, is he said God does these things in these trials and sufferings, not by taking us out of the trials and sufferings. Because we're called to live it out in the midst of them, not apart from them.

If someone could live authentically, and if everything was perfect, and everything was grand and glorious, and say, well, if there wasn't all these trials, and if it wasn't all these struggles, and if there wasn't all this pain, if there wasn't all this suffering, then it would be easy to live for Christ. It would be easy to live in a faithful relationship with God. Oh, I'll go all the way back to the Garden of Eden, and Adam and Eve couldn't do it. Or if you say, well, if I just had more money, if I just had more pleasure, if I just had more, then go to Solomon and find in the book of Solomon, even Solomon couldn't do it. Say, what we find is we are called to do it in the midst of it, and we're to be authentic even when things aren't always pleasant. And that's how Paul starts his letter. Now, he's going to get to the practical issues, but here he writes from personal experiences. The first thing that we notice about living authentically in a broken world, and we said it when we looked at 1 Corinthians, and we'll say it again here, because Paul is so quick to point out to it. Notice, first of all, the position of the believer. The position of the believer. By the way, you're going to see one thing here at the end of this that is repeated three times. I need to go ahead and tell you now, or I know my mind. I'll forget about it. You'll see it in chapter one, you'll see it in chapter four, and you'll see it in chapter nine. And that is the life lived by the authentic believer leads to the multitude praising God. Okay? Authentic living leads to multitude's praising. That's one of the grand things that we see through this. Why do you live authentically? It's because not so that someone could say, oh man, you're really genuine. No, because the

[13:16] Lord our God is a jealous God. He is a consuming fire. Deuteronomy 4 24. Remember, that's my favorite verse. For the Lord our God is a jealous guy. God is going to be praised. And the call of the church is to live in such a manner that more people praise him, not praise us. Right? And one thing that we find in 2 Corinthians, we'll find it here in verse 11, but you'll find it also in chapter four, you'll find it in chapter nine, that when we live accordingly, more people praise God for the life, not only that we live, but for the life that God is calling them to. Right? So we see this, this kind of rampant theme. So we see the position of the believer. First of all, it says, Paul, an apostle of Christ Jesus by the will of God. Just stop right there. Because Paul refers to himself positionally first.

He says, Paul, an apostle of Christ Jesus by the will of God. Now he will contrast this again by the time we get to the 11th chapter. There'll be this contrast with the false teachers. And, and we need to understand what's going on here because Paul says he's an apostle. All right. Now he refers to himself in other letters as an apostle born out of due season. He refers to himself as the least of the apostles and all this other realities. So he's not prompting himself or puffing himself up. As a matter of fact, in 2 Corinthians, we'll get one of the greatest defenses for the apostleship of Paul than in any other thing in the New Testament. Right? Paul will say why he really is qualified to be a proclaimer of the gospel, not because of his own efforts, not because of his own words, but by the calling of God. So he tells us here that he is an apostle of Christ Jesus by the will of God. The false teachers, which we meet in the 11th chapter, Paul will say that they are transforming or disguising themselves as apostles. So he's directly putting himself in contrast with those who make themselves apostles and those who are called as apostles. Now this is important because Paul reiterates the reality that he is an apostle according to the will of God. That's a good way of saying I am what I am because this is what God wants me to be. Okay? God has called me and it's his will that this is what he wants me to be. Paul didn't choose it. He didn't seek it. He didn't earn it. He didn't keep it. There are things that he sought and that was to be the greatest Pharisee that he could. There are education that he pursued and those things were counted as nothing in light of the calling of God in Christ Jesus. So what he is saying is what I am positionally is according to the will of God. Now, now you just want to understand this here.

Okay? Because you say, well, that's good. Paul's an apostle. Wait a minute. What you are positionally in Christ Jesus is according to the will of God. I really believe that God calls every individual to be something positionally, not only saints, right? We are saints by calling, not saints by practice, but I'm a pastor because it's God called me and it's the will of God. I didn't seek it. I didn't pursue it.

I didn't run from it, but I really didn't desire it either, right? So what I am positionally is according to the will of God. I also know that God puts together the body of Christ according to his own good pleasure. So what you are positionally within the body is according to the will of God.

Now that's important because if you are where you are and if Paul is where he is and if I am where I am because it's the will of God, then that means that everything that flows as a result of my position is in alignment with the will of God. I'm going to say that one more time. If I am walking in the will of God, everything that comes my way after that is according to the will of God. Okay? Paul suffered as an apostle, but he was an apostle according to the will of God. Therefore, his suffering must be in alignment with the will of God because he was where he was supposed to be.

[16:53] I think when Jesus put the disciples in the boat and sent them to the other side while he went up on the mountaintop to pray, right? You remember what happened, right? You say, yeah, Jesus came walking to him on the sea. It was a really cool story. Yeah, but do you remember what happened right before that? It was the will of Jesus that they get into the boat and go to the other side and they struggled for hours in the sea. So that was according to the will of God. I think when Jesus is in the boat and he's asleep in the bow of the boat and the waves are tossing so much so that the fishermen are scared to death thinking they're going to drown. It was the will of Jesus that they be in the midst of the storm, right? So he had put them in these positions and put them in these places according to his will. Now, some of us, that type of theology messes up our whole life system because we think that the will of God is pleasant and sweet and a soothing aroma. No, our lives ought to be a pleasant, sweet, soothing aroma unto him. Our sweetness and soothing and peacefulness comes later, my friends.

That's why the tears are wiped away when we stand before his face. That's why there's no more pain, no more suffering, no more dealing in glory because we don't get it yet. But one thing that we do notice that if we are living positionally according to the will of God, you need to stay with this, everything that comes our way therefore is according to the will of God. Is it the will of God that sometimes things are uncomfortable? Yes. And is that okay? It better be because he is God and we are not. And that's just, that's surrender, right? So Paul refers to that first. He wants you to know this is who I am. Why? Because by the time we get to the end of this section, he talks about what happens to him because he's an apostle, despairing even to the point of death, the descendants of death was upon them. Why? Because he was an apostle according to the will of God. We understand this, right?

So now positionally, he has aligned himself under what God wills for him and therefore he can accept anything that comes his way. This is why it's so important to be walking in the will and way of God.

You say, well, how do I know what the will of God is? Well, I got good news for you. You walk by faith and not by sight, but faith is not ignorant. God has given us 66 books right here. Genesis is the book of Revelation so that he can reveal the will of God. And it's Henry Blackaby who passed away not too long ago, used to say, when you get done doing all this, come talk to me and I'll let you know if there's anything new. We haven't done it all, right? We haven't done the complete full will of God. And God has called us to live according. We begin to live out scripture. All of a sudden, these things come about. So he says, the apostle of Christ Jesus by the will of God. Now let's keep going on.

And Timothy, our brother. Now you say, okay, well, Timothy's with him there too. That's his child in the faith, right? But just stay with me. And Timothy, our brother to the church of God, which is at Corinth. By the way, I love that. He doesn't say to the Corinthian church.

[19 : 51] He doesn't. He says it's to the church of God, which is at Corinth. That's a big difference, right? Because we don't have Corinthians in the adjective position defining what kind of church it is.

We have, it's the church of God. It just happens to be located at Corinth. Therefore, the people that are of that city do not get to dictate what kind of church it is. They just get to be a part of what kind of church exists among them. See how that's important? Because we at War Trace do not get to dictate what kind of church it is. We just get to be part of the church that God puts among us. That's what's important about it. That's understanding who we are positionally, right? He writes to the church of God, which is at Corinth with all the saints who are throughout Achaia. Now, now he's not just referring to the believers at Corinth as saints. He's referring to all the saints. Now, this is the second part of this position I want you to see. Not only does Paul understand that positionally he is in the will of God, Paul also understands practically he ain't walking alone. Almost said ain't, and I should have said it because it would have made more sense. He ain't walking by himself. See, he refers to his connection. He says, and I'm not only writing to you on my own, I have Timothy who is our brother. Your brother, my brother. And I'm writing to the church of God, which is at Corinth, which is important because he has been ministering to churches at Ephesus. And by this time he's out of Ephesus, he's in another locale and he's ministering to churches there and he's ministering to churches there. So he's ministering to church there. So now it's in the connection goes further than just even Corinth. Now it's to all the churches of God. And then he's referring to all the saints of the Achaia region. So what he is saying now, this is important based upon what follows positionally. He's walking in the will of God and he's walking with the people of God.

So who we are positionally is never a display of our individual reality. Rather, it is authentically living in a broken suffering world, knowing that we are connected to other people. It is living out our connection. And then we've looked at this before, but the reason we have to keep repeating this is because every time I open up the New Testament, it comes back up. Have you ever noticed that? Every time you open up the New Testament and you're reading the New Testament, the authors of the New Testament keep bringing up this reality that they're just not in it by themselves. One thing that I've been encouraged by and even challenged by is every time Paul writes, he has other people around him. I mean, if Paul, you know, met the risen savior on Damascus road, was blind for a little while, you know, had scales on his eyes. If Paul, who had all this zeal and all this education, all this training, who spent three years in Arabia wilderness by himself being tutored by Jesus himself, Paul, who took his time out there and Jesus was his college. He didn't go to any kind of, you know, seminary or Bible college. He went to the master's college, literally, like Jesus met him in the wilderness, you know, that type of thing. If that man needed other people, then don't I.

He always had somebody around him and he was always dependent upon somebody else and he always had them there. As a matter of fact, Paul, the one who would be so greatly used by God, was completely and wholly dependent upon a rather unknown disciple who was in Damascus, Ananias, who was told of the Lord to go lay hands on Paul. You ever thought if Ananias never went and laid hands on Paul, we would have never had Paul. We just still had a blind man named Saul laying in the bed in there with scales on his eyes. He needed somebody else. Why? Because there's this connection, because the position is he is in the will of God with the people of God. He's not doing it alone.

And he's reminding the church of Corinth because he's going to encourage them. You're going to live authentic in the midst of a broken world, but I'm not asking you to do it alone. I'm not asking you to do it by yourself and I'm not asking you to do it on your own strength. Remember who you are positionally. Number two, we see the provisions of the father. Not only do we see the position of the believer, we see the provisions of the father. Verses two and three are kind of this doxology that he, he declares, not the doxology we sing, but a doxology that he declares. Here's his, he says, grace to you and peace from God, our father and the Lord Jesus Christ. First of all, we see the confident expectation of the believer is that grace and peace come to us from God, right? Grace to you and peace from God, our father through the Lord Jesus Christ. So two things that we can expect are grace and peace, but then we get down to verse three. Blessed be the God and father of our Lord Jesus Christ. Look at this, the father of mercies and God of all comfort. Now in Jewish thought, in Jewish thought to be the father meant you were the originator of. So if you are the father of your family, then you're the originator of your family. That is, your family finds its origin through you.

[24 : 31] So that's when Jesus told the people that they were of their father and their father was Satan, the father was the father of lies. He is declaring to them that Satan is the originator of lies, which is an absolutely true statement because the first lie we find in scripture comes from the mouth of Satan. He is the originator of lies and they are lying, constantly lying. Jesus says, just like their father did, the originator of lies. So to be the father means to be the originator thereof. So what we have Paul telling the people here is that mercy originates from the father.

All mercy. He is the father of mercies. It's his provision. It's that God almighty in heaven is the one who came up with mercy. He's the one who came up with this wonderful provision for our suffering, this wonderful provision for our discomfort and our discord and this wonderful provision that we so desperately need. And he's the God of all comfort. You know, as much as the world tries to find comfort and consolation and so many other things, true comfort is only found in one place because the God of all comfort is the father of the believers. You can seek for it. You can search for it. You can prod for it. You can push for it in all other places, but that isn't true comfort because we have this great declaration here, this provision of the father. There is grace, peace, mercy, and comfort. I want you to notice that Paul declares the father's provisions before he even talks about man's problems. Because what you need to realize before the problem comes, you need to know where the provisions lie. Most people want to talk so often and so much, and I find myself doing it too.

We declare and decry our problems without really promoting his provisions. Paul is going to acknowledge the problems. Paul is going to acknowledge the suffering. Paul is going to acknowledge the pain. But before he does all of that, he tells you what the father has.

And he wants you to know that because everything we face really finds its roots of being solved and overcome in the father. He knows who he is positionally, and he knows what the father can provide provisionally, which leads us to the third thing, making our way as quick as we can.

We see the purpose of suffering. Now, I've used this passage in funeral services. As a matter of fact, I've used 2 Corinthians in probably more funeral services than I have any other book of the Bible, save the gospel of John. But not always this particular passage, because there's a number of passages throughout 2 Corinthians that really allude to it. And you say, well, what have you used in the gospel of John? It's because it's in the gospel of John that we find declared to us that he who believes in Jesus Christ has already passed out of death and into life.

[27 : 26] And so I love that one. It's a funeral of a believer. As a matter of fact, if I get the opportunity to preach my own funeral, which, you know, if I record it and you guys hit play, then there we go. That's what you're going to hear is that though you may be looking at a body lying still, my moment of death came many years earlier, because he who has already believed in Jesus Christ, he who believes in Jesus Christ has already passed out of death and into eternal life.

Present tense. That's what it says. I got a little carried away there for just a minute, because what Paul is saying is that moment of death already came and you already entered your moment of life. So really the laying down of the body of the believer, as Paul says, that's nothing other than the stepping across the threshold, right?

It is living out experimentally what you have already possessed positionally. That is, I get to live eternally the way I've already been living since I put my faith in Jesus Christ. That's why John is so important, man. It's good. That's good passage for believers.

But anyway, this one is too. So what we find here is now the purpose of all the suffering and everything else that comes our way. Now, you need to understand that we're not going to carry all of it here because we need to say this in reality. One of the purposes of suffering, one of the purposes of suffering, there are multi-purposes, and Paul is going to cover just a few of them here. But one of them that's not covered here because Paul speaks to it later on in this book, because he has already written to them concerning it in 1 Corinthians.

You think 1 Corinthians chapter 11 when they're taking the Lord's Supper in vain and people are falling asleep, you know, aka dying because they're doing it. Suffering is a disciplinary action of the Father for the sins of the believers, right? Suffering can be used to discipline and to rebuke and to correct sinful actions in the life of believers. It can be. That is, if we're walking in disobedience, then God can bring discord and pain and things of that nature to our lives as a meat of discipline.

[29 : 05] And we need to acknowledge that because he is both Lord and Savior. We've seen that on making our way through the Old Testament, 1 Samuel, not 1 Samuel, 1 Kings chapter 11. Solomon had a problem. King Solomon had a problem. I'll get my mind right in just a minute. And the problem wasn't that he had all these people opposing him. The problem was the Lord raised up adversaries to oppose him. So as we've said, when God is your problem, you've got a problem, right? All these people were causing him problems, but his big problem was, is that God was trying to get his attention. Now he didn't repent of those problems and he died. So we find that, right? The kingdom was taken out of his hand. We will see that. We're moving to his son, Rehoboam, tonight. But anyway, we see that God uses suffering at times as a disciplinary action. But that does not mean just because things are going bad, let's not go book a job on you, right? That since things are going bad, you must be doing wrong. That's not all the purpose of suffering. And praise be to God, Paul highlights that here. Look at what it says. He says, blessed be the God and Father, verse 3, of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of mercies and God of all comfort, who comforts us in all our affliction. Affliction is a powerful word we don't use much, right? Who comforts us in all our affliction so that we will be able to comfort those who are in the affliction with the comfort with which we ourselves are comforted by God. Here's one purpose of suffering. One purpose of suffering is that God uses it to prepare us to minister to other people, right? The greatest to be able to minister to those who are hurting are people who have hurt themselves. The people who can speak the truest into a situation are the people who have walked that situation. Carrie and I have had that. My wife and I have had that over the years. We've had people speak truth to us who've walked through similar situations as our family dynamics. And Carrie, very early on, we were going through time and one of the ladies of this church very lovingly walked up to her and says, honey, I know where you've been there. I did that too. We didn't even know they'd walked through the same adoption journey we did. We didn't know they'd dealt with all the same stuff we had done with. He said, I've dealt with that. She said, I've dealt with that too. And Carrie goes, oh great, does that mean it gets better? She said, honey, I didn't say it'd get better. I just said you'd live, right? And so she was just speaking reality and just telling her that you'll make it through it. And sometimes, I mean, let's just be honest. You need somebody to tell you you're going to make it through it. Well, it's easy if you've never been through it to say that, but you want to hear from somebody who's already made it through it or is in the process of making it through it, right? You need that. So sometimes one of the reasons you are suffering and going through affliction, as Paul calls it, and God comforts you there is so that he could take the comfort you have been given and you can give that comfort to someone else. This is why the ministry of the body is so powerful.

It's because when we look across the room, even this size, so many of us have been comforted in such a broad spectrum. Look at the ministry, which we can extend to people who are hurting in this world. We know the God of all comfort. And I have not experienced all of it and you have not experienced all of it, but together we have experienced a lot of it. And we know how to speak into that situation.

We know how to speak rightly into that situation because thankfully and prayerfully, God was there to walk with us throughout it. And one of the reasons that we say God has allowed us to live in a broken world and things aren't always right is because God knows there's other people in the midst of that broken world who need to know there's hope in the midst of it. And he brings you through it to show you the hope so that you can declare it to someone else. This is why we have to be open about it.

We'll get to that in just a moment. Right? So one of the purposes is so that God is preparing us to minister to other people. He says so that we can comfort those with the comfort which we ourselves have been comforted. May we not ever be those who attempt to give what we have never received.

I try to be honest when I talk to people and I go through, I say, listen, I've never experienced what you're going through. I cannot imagine. We've never walked through somebody in somebody else's shoes. We've never been in the midst of it. And I don't want them to, I don't ever want to come to somebody and go, well, I mean, that seems bad, but let me tell you my story. If they're in the midst of that pain, they're in the midst of that hurting, I want to look at them and go, you know what, I have no idea, but let me get you around some people who've walked in that shoe with you. Let me, let me see if I can help you find some people who know what you're going through. It's okay to say, hey, I haven't felt that.

[33 : 25] Right? Book of Proverbs says that the one who, who sings and, and shouts at the top of his mouth joyfully and someone in a house of mourning is really bringing discord and is breaking the heart.

I know that's paraphrased, right? You're not helping any. You just need to look at them. There's a time for laughter. There's a time for weeping as well. There's a time for mourning and there's a time for comfort and there's a time to ease that.

Sometimes we just need to be honest and say, you know what? I have no idea what you're walking through, but let me find you somebody in the church because I promised you someone in the church who's been there, done that, and let's see if we can help them. So God says he's preparing us for that.

Just as the sufferings of Christ are ours in abundance, so also our comfort is abundant through Christ. But if we are afflicted, it's for your comfort and salvation. Or if we are comforted, it's for your comfort, which is effective in the patient and during of the same sufferings, which we also suffer. This is exactly what Paul is saying. Paul says, everything I'm going through is so that I can share it with the churches that God has given me to pastor, right? That God has given me these churches so that I can equip them. It's not necessarily just so much about me. God is equipping me and he keeps going on. And he says, our hope for you is firmly grounded, knowing that as you are sharers of our suffering, so also you are sharers of our comfort. Now let's get to this purpose here. Look at what it says in verse eight. For we do not want you to be unaware, brethren, that our affliction, which came to us in Asia, that we were burdened excessively beyond our strength so that we despaired even of life. I'm going to stop right here. Adrian Rogers, who, by the way, one of my favorite all-time preachers, I kind of cut my teeth on Adrian Rogers preaching whenever I first came to Christ. Adrian Rogers said it this way. He said, God will absolutely put on you more than you can handle. And he said it in light of this verse. We always say, well, God will never give us more than we can handle. Well, Paul says we were burdened beyond our abilities. But what God will not do is he will not put on you more than he can handle. God will put more on you than you can handle. Finish the verse, right? Finish the chapter. What does he say? Paul says that we were burdened beyond our strength so that we despaired even of life. Indeed, we had the sentence of death within ourselves. He said, I just wanted to die. I thought I was going to die so that we would not, here it is, so that we would not trust in ourselves. One of the purposes behind suffering and brokenness and affliction is it removes self-confidence, also known as pride. Paul says, God put such a burden upon my heart and burden upon our lives. It was all within the will of God. It's not my own choosing. I didn't sin. These things didn't come. Think Job, right? Read the book of Job. Job had the money. He had the prestige.

He had the position. He had the livestock. He had the kids. He had the family. It wasn't until Job had nothing that he could trust in. Even his own wife told him to curse God and die. His friends forsook him. Then God spoke. When there was nothing else. Read the book of Job. You know, there's four friends there. Three of them are talking. The fourth one's silent and three of them are talking and everybody's like, well, maybe there's hope in that fourth one. Well, the fourth one finally talks for a couple of chapters and there's no hope found in him either. And then when all hope is gone, it says, then God said, you know what Job found at the end? It wasn't me. You know what Job's friends found at the end? It wasn't Job. Had nothing to do with Job. Why? So that we would not trust in ourselves. You know, one of the things that God does in affliction and brokenness and suffering is he removes our self-trust. And that's a good thing. There are moments in our life where we can't pull ourselves up by our own bootstraps. We cannot handle it on our own. It's more than we can bear. It's more than we can handle. And that's exactly what God is doing. And he wants us to understand it. Why? But in God who raises the dead. He says, we had to send us a death upon ourselves so much so that I knew I was going to die. So I was just trusting. In the midst of that, what did Job say? The very first mention of the resurrection in scripture, by the way, the book of Job, right? Job said, though he slay me, I know that

[37 : 30] I will see my redeemer in the land of the living. Job is saying, I'm going to see him alive and I'm going to be alive. He may kill me, but I'm going to see him while I'm alive. You know what that is? That is declaring the resurrection. God can kill me, but I'm believing in the resurrection.

He said, I can't trust in myself. I can't trust any of this, but in God who raises the dead, who delivered us from so great a peril of death, look at this, and will deliver us. He on whom we have set our hope. Friend, you will only set your hope on that which you know you can trust.

And as long as you think you can trust yourself, your hope is found in your own self. But until God gets us to the point of desperation, until God gets us to the point of realization that all self-trust and self-confidence can be thrown out the window and we only have one place to set our hope, then we're on good ground. Hope is a confident expectation of things to come.

And we only set that confident expectation upon God when he becomes all we can find. The preachers throughout history that have done the greatest for the sake of the kingdom have not been those who told men they have no problems. It has not been those who tried to solve the social problems. It has not been those who have attempted to cause, to really cure the concerns of the world.

It has not been those who have always addressed the public affairs. It has not been those who have always been the most current. It has not been those who have been the most update. Friends, study church history. The most effective pastors have been those pastors who decried and declared to the people who sat before them, on your own, you can't do it. And he created, and they created a need in the people that they realized that the people in themselves could not trust in their own efforts, could not trust in their own words, could not trust in their own abilities. And then those people before them finally came to the reality that their only hope was found in God alone. And the people would fall upon their faces, and they'd cry out to the Father, and they would set their confident expectation upon God, and set it upon him alone. And they would go live in a world that was so broken, and show the world there is a place that is greater. There is one who can handle it. There is one who can cure the problem. And there is one who has all the comfort. Because the people lived as if the hope in Christ was confident, because they knew that in their own abilities, they were no good. And it was those people that God used to shape and transform the world throughout history. And this is what God does with suffering. Fourth and finally, and I'm done, I promise. We notice, and I told you we would see it, the praise of the multitude very quickly. Verse 11. Paul has been very public about his suffering, his pain, his affliction. He's declared it. By the way, we try to, again, it goes back to that position.

[40 : 11] Paul knew positionally he was connected to other people. His wasn't a private faith. And therefore, positionally, he lived publicly among them in all of his affliction. We like to say, well, we're connected publicly, but privately, we're going to keep our problems private. Problem with that is we don't get to verse 11. You also joining and helping us through your prayer so that thanks may be given by many persons on our behalf for the favor bestowed on us through the prayers of many. That is, when the problem becomes public, the praise begins to be multiplied. Right? When Paul declared that he had a problem of suffering and affliction and these things, and God was doing something in the midst of that, and he was dependent upon the people around him, and he made his problems public, and he let people realize that he wasn't perfect, and he needed the people to walk with him, then when God answered the need in the moment, the praise became public as well. Right? He wanted to promote the praise of God, not just the praise and recognition of man. So he went public with his problems so that the praise could be coming from a multitude of people. Because Paul knew it's not really about who he was, but who God was in the midst of the people. He was calling them to live authentically in a broken world, and it's the same call he gives us today. But he does, he asks us to do it in connection with other people. Friend, people may know your problems, that's okay. You may depend upon people, that's okay.

You need to be real and honest with the people around you so that you say, I may lose face, and people may not think as highly of me as they ought to think of. No, but when God meets that problem in the midst of this broken world, then God gets the glory, you don't. And that's exactly what Paul is saying here.

So that the giving of praise by many persons may be raised up to the Father who meets the need. This is how we live authentically in a broken world. Let's pray. God, I thank you. I thank you so much for this day. And God, I know this day doesn't always bring ease. It doesn't always bring peace. Sometimes it brings discord and affliction, and sometimes it brings uncertainties. God, we know that you're the Father of mercies and the God of all comfort. So Lord, I pray that we would run to you and turn to you in every moment, in the joyous moments, in the difficult moments, and in the saddest moments of our life. But Lord, may we not do it in isolation. May we do it in connection with those around us. Because God, we want you to get the greater glory and the greater praise. Lord, may it not just be a concern that people think we're all right. Lord, may it be the concern that people know who you are. We ask it all in Christ's name. Amen.

Amen. Amen.

Amen.

[44 : 14] Amen. Amen.

Amen. Amen.

Amen. Amen.

Amen. Amen.

Amen. Amen.

[46 : 45] Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen.