

The God of All Comfort, Part 2

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[0:00] 2 Corinthians 1, verse 1, Now, if you were here last week, you may remember, hopefully you remember, that I introduced 2 Corinthians to you as we begin what I intend to be a journey through this epistle, and that's as I have the opportunity to preach.

So I think I share with you that my intention is that in the weeks and months to come, as I have other opportunities to preach, that we will come back and sort of pick up where we left off. With 2 Corinthians. Last week, I shared some introductory thoughts about 2 Corinthians as a whole. And so for those of you who maybe weren't here, now I'm not going to take a long time to do sort of a refresher, an introduction, but I do want just to briefly remind you if you were here or if you weren't here to catch you up.

So, hey, listen, Jeff often comments about how between he and I both together, we have half a brain from a memory perspective. And so I get it. I get it. Memory, repetition, reminders are good. And so that's what I plan to do. So if you remember, last week I kicked off, I had read this in a couple of Bible commentaries, that when one looks at 2 Corinthians, as opposed to all of other of Paul's epistles, and by the word, epistle, that's just a fancy way of saying letter, okay?

[1:54] So I'll use those interchangeably, epistle and letter. So when you look at 2 Corinthians, as opposed to probably the more prominent letters of Romans, or even 1 Corinthians, maybe Ephesians, or maybe even the pastoral epistles that Paul wrote to Timothy and Titus, that perhaps 2 Corinthians is one that just doesn't garner the amount of formal study and formal attention.

That perhaps it should. And if you were here last week, I even did sort of an impromptu survey. And I asked, hey, so let's do a quick survey to validate whether this is true or not, you know, just for giggles.

And so I'd asked if anybody had been either led a formal study on 2 Corinthians or if you've participated in one. And last week, and by the way, I excluded my wife because I know she had led a study 10 years ago or so in 2 Corinthians.

And I think maybe one or two of you indicated that, yeah, you had been a part of a formal study or maybe led one. But for the most part, for many of you, 2 Corinthians is sort of an uncharted territory. And that's quite all right. But interestingly, you know, paradoxically, perhaps, 2 Corinthians is full, chock full of familiar verses.

[3:11] Right. We went through, I don't know, I read 10 or 15 verses and most of you were able to sort of fill in the blank. And so be encouraged that while you may have not formally studied 2 Corinthians in your lifetime, perhaps as you've studied other gospels or epistles or other places in the Bible, that that some cross-referencing and scripture, interpreting scripture has led you to 2 Corinthians.

So we talked about that last week. And then I just suggested to you, you know, three characteristics of this letter, just to bear in mind as we look at this as an overview.

And again, I just shared that, number one, when we look at 2 Corinthians, and again, compared to the other letters that Paul wrote, we see that as we read through it and as we read his writings and the tone and the emotion of his writings, we find out that 2 Corinthians is personally insightful into Paul's life and into his character and into his emotions.

Right. We see raw emotions in his writing in 2 Corinthians. We see him acknowledge his weakness. We see him acknowledge his inadequacy.

We see his character. We see his humility. Now, we see this in other of his writings as well, but perhaps not as pronounced as we do in 2 Corinthians. We are, yeah, and we see how he handles affliction and suffering.

[4 : 43] We talked about that last week, and we're going to talk about that again this week. But we see how Paul is an example for us of how he handles the tough times of life and afflictions and sufferings.

We also see that he has a passionate concern, right, for his flock in terms of both spiritual growth as well as spiritual security. We looked at some brief references about how, as a shepherd of the flock in Corinth, that he was very aware of false teachers who infiltrated in as he moved on at the end of his second missionary journey.

And we see some very strongly worded admonitions to the church in Corinth. So we see personally insightful things about Paul and his character.

Now, that's perhaps sort of unique to 2 Corinthians. The other two sort of characteristics that we see in 2 Corinthians is perhaps more common with all of his other epistles, right?

That we do see rich theological truth, and we also see practical aspects of Christian living, right? So 2 Corinthians, it's 13 chapters. I think it's like the third from a chapter count.

[6 : 00] I think it's the third largest of his epistles as well. So it's not a small epistle, but perhaps not studied as much as it should be.

So with those introductory remarks on the whole letter of 2 Corinthians, then last week we sort of narrowed our focus into chapter 1, and we saw that the main subject of those verses was, as I mentioned, affliction and comfort.

And then we further focused our attentions into verses 3, 4, and 5, and 6, and 7, I believe. And you all know we ran a time after we got to verse 3, but we'll make up for that this morning.

Verse 3 says, Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of mercies and the God of all comfort. Right? So out of the gate, again, as a reminder from last week's teaching, we saw that right out of the gate, Paul is celebrating the Lord.

He's a heartfelt celebration because of God's mercy and His comfort right here at the outset. Well, why? Why is he starting out this epistle just praising the Lord and saying, Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, right?

[7 : 14] Father of mercies and God of all comfort. And we look down, if you'd like your eyes sort of scroll down to verses 8, 9, and 10, what we read, right, in verses 8, 9, and 10, Paul says, For we do not want you to be unaware, brothers, of the affliction that we experienced in Asia.

For we were so utterly burdened beyond our strength that we despaired of life itself. We pause there. We sort of took account of that, right?

Paul. Paul. Super Apostle Paul. Right? Who had been through so much. We see that not too long before he wrote this letter, right, he says that in Asia, in Asia Minor, and that's where Ephesus is, that they were so, he was so utterly burdened beyond his strength that he despaired of life itself. He thought his life was over. Verse 9, Indeed, we felt that we had received the sentence of death, but that was to make us not rely on ourselves, but on God, who raises the dead.

And then Paul goes into more. He delivered us from such a deadly peril, and he will deliver us. On him we have set our hope that he will deliver us again. So that gives a little bit of insight into why Paul starts out his letter with such celebration, with such heartfelt celebration.

[8 : 38] And then, I think it's worth spending just a minute or so, then we turn over to chapter 7.

And if you would, turn over to chapter 7, and again, this will be familiar for you if you were here last week.

And this was another reason why Paul had heartfelt celebration right out of the gate with this epistle. If you look at chapter 7, verses 5, 6, and 7, Paul writes, For even when we came into Macedonia, our bodies had no rest, but we were afflicted at every turn, fighting without, that means outside, fighting without, and fear within.

So he's fighting with those who did not like the message he was proclaiming, and then fear within, within the church, within the church itself. Verse 6, And so do you remember the context of what he's referring to there?

And I think that I still have... Okay, so yeah, so I shared this map with you last week, right? So what Paul is saying here is that Paul was in Ephesus, and he had heard just that these false apostles had infiltrated the church in Corinth, and so he wrote a very strongly worded letter.

We don't have that in Scripture. It's not recorded. It's not canonized. It's not recorded. It doesn't exist anymore. But there's references to this letter that he wrote to Corinth. And he sent Titus with that letter to Corinth while Paul remained in Ephesus.

[10:27] So put yourself in Paul's shoes, right? You're eager to know, Wow, did I just offend and turn everyone in Corinth off? Or, Lord willing, did they respond to the writing that I gave them, admonishing them and warning them of these false apostles that came in?

And so Paul leaves Ephesus, still waiting to hear back from Titus. He travels up to Troas. He's hoping to meet Titus and Troas, and that doesn't happen.

And so eventually he goes up to Macedonia, probably to around where Philippi or where Thessalonica is. He goes up to Macedonia hoping and waiting, and I don't know what the time frame is, but hoping and waiting for him to receive Titus and to receive how the church received his letter.

And that's what he's referring to here. Again, you know, verse 6. But God who comforts the downcast, He comforted us by the coming of Titus.

So that's what that means, right? Ah, Titus finally came, and we connected in Macedonia. Not only by His coming, but also by the comfort with which He was comforted by you.

[11:40] So we see this transfer of comfort, right? We see where in the second missionary journey, when Paul established the church in Corinth, Paul is investing into them, encouraging them, comforting them, right?

Here on now the third missionary journey, when he's in Ephesus, he sends Titus with a strongly worded letter. He finally connects back with Titus. And lo and behold, what has God done? He's done a mighty work. The church responded positively to Paul's letter. And so Titus is bringing that good news. So think about how God, in His, again, sovereign way, in His beautiful way, how the sort of flow of comfort went, right?

Paul comforts Corinth initially in bringing the good news to them. Then later they sort of get distracted. They get persuaded by his false apostles. Paul writes this letter.

They respond positively. So now they comfort Titus, because Titus is going with a strongly worded letter. And so they send Titus off back to Paul. And then Titus is comforted. I mean, then Titus comforts Paul.

[12:48] So it sort of goes round robin, doesn't it? From Paul to Corinth to Titus, and then back to Paul. We're going to see that pattern again as we read 2 Corinthians.

And so again, this is what Paul is doing as he opens up his letter in 2 Corinthians. He has a heartfelt celebration. He's praising the Lord, because indeed, God is the Father of mercy.

and the God of all comfort. So we're going to pick up from that point on now. And so if you would, turn back to chapter 1. And let me read verses 1 through 7.

Verses 1 through 7. Verse 3.

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 may be able to comfort those who are in any affliction with the comfort with which we ourselves are comforted by God.

[14:11] For as we share abundantly in Christ's sufferings, so through Christ we share abundantly in comfort too. If we are afflicted, it is for your comfort and salvation.

And if we are comforted, it is for your comfort, which you experience when you patiently endure the same sufferings that we suffer. Our hope for you is unshaken, for we know that as you share in our sufferings, you will also share in our comfort.

So before I move on to verse 4, we covered verse 3 last week, but I do want to just highlight and define the term comfort. All right? So it's like, Greg, that's pretty basic, right?

Do we really have to cover the definition of comfort? Yes, we do, because I think it means something a little bit more accentuated than perhaps we know. Okay? So the word comfort that Paul uses, so if we look at the Greek, it's parakaleo, right?

Parakaleo. All right? But, you know, the Greek's the Greek, right? Here's the important part. If you look at how the Greek is constructed there, kaleo means to call, and then para, the preposition before it, means alongside of.

[15:28] So literally, when we read that God is the God of all comfort, who comforts us in all of our affliction, it literally, what Paul is writing, is that God, He's called and to summon to one's aid.

All right? So when we say someone is comforting someone, it's to call or to summon to one's aid.

All right? So for example, Matthew 5, 4, a familiar verse for you, right?

Blessed are those who mourn, for they shall be comforted, for they shall be parakaleo, right? The idea here is about being consoled, right? And I think that's what we usually think about when we

think of being comforted, right?

I think of, you know, if one of my kids is upset or crying, or if my wife is upset or crying, right? I want to console her, right? I want to wrap my arms around her, console her, comfort her, right?

And that's generally what I think of when I think of being comforted. However, that's not exactly what's intended in 2 Corinthians, right? And this is why I'm bringing this up.

[16:34] In 2 Corinthians, the idea of being comforted is more about being strengthened to much, to strengthen much or to encourage. Now, it doesn't exclude the translation of someone being consoled in their afflictions and their sufferings, but it means more than that, right?

So when we think about a brother in Christ, a sister in Christ, when we think about God being the God of all comfort, it's more than just consoling. It's God coming alongside, your brother or sister in Christ, coming alongside to give you strength.

And to encourage you. See how much more powerful that is when we think about what that means about comforting someone? Again, you know, we talk about the ministry of presence, of being there for someone, absolutely.

Of just being there in a time of grief, in a time of affliction, in a time of suffering. You want to be there to console, perhaps, but you're also there to strengthen, to encourage.

Don't you do that when you have friends or perhaps in the hospital? Don't you do that when perhaps you hear of the passing of a loved one? Right? You're there to console, but you're also there to somehow share your strength, your stability with someone who needs it.

[18:00] And so let's keep that in mind as we read. We're going to say the word comfort. I mean, Paul says the word comfort ten times in these five verses. We're going to talk a lot about comfort. And so before we go any further, just want to make sure that we sort of level set.

In the context of 2 Corinthians, it means to console, but it means so much more. All right? To strengthen, to encourage, to come alongside, to call, to summon to one's aid.

All right? All right. Let's move on to verse 4 then. So verse 4, Paul continues in his worship and celebration that this Father of mercies and God of all comfort is the one who, and it says in verse 4, who comforts us in all our affliction so that we may be able to comfort those who are in any affliction with the comfort with which ourselves are comforted by God.

So remember at the very end last week, we ran out of time, but I just had to share with you what the word all means. Right? So I said, guess what? I looked up the Greek for all, and guess what it means?

All. Right? And not just all, right? But it indicates all. Any, every, the whole, always, anyone, everyone, every way, whatsoever, whosoever. Find comfort in the fact that God is the God of all comforts.

[19:26] Verse 4, who comforts us in all our affliction. Right? A couple of times that Paul uses the word all there. Affliction. Fancy Greek word here.

Philipsis. Mark, did I say that right? Philipsis, I think. Sounds like ellipsis, but philipsis. Again, what's important is what the definition of that word means. Right?

It means pressure. That makes sense. Right? When you're under affliction, when you're under suffering, that's pressure. Right? You feel the burden.

You feel the weight of the condition. Right? So that makes sense. You don't need to be a Greek scholar to understand that one. Right? It's when someone's under affliction, just think literally of pressure.

Other words that are used for this, perhaps in your translation, anguish, burden, persecution, tribulation, trouble, and trial.

[20:27] All right? So as Paul writes this, he's not speaking here only as a formal theologian when he says, who comforts us in all our affliction.

Right? This is not book knowledge for the Apostle Paul. Right? Throughout all of the pressure and the stress and the persecution and the trials of his life. And you know.

You know about that. If you've read the New Testament, you know. Paul experienced over and over and over God's comforting presence and encouragement.

Right? So Paul is writing not just from a view of knowing the Lord, but from actually living this and experiencing this. Well, we get some raw insights into this later in this same epistle.

So let's turn over to chapter 11. Well, let's get a sense of some of these persecutions that Paul experienced.

[21 : 32] Now, you know, we turned to chapter 7. Now we're turning to chapter 11. One thing I haven't done is really, and this would be helpful.

As you look again at the whole letter of 2 Corinthians, you can sort of categorize it into three parts. Right? So this is sort of, I'm hitting the pause button in the sermon, just as an aside, just to let you know, because when we're jumping over to chapter 11, the tone is a little bit different.

So if you were to look at the epistle as a whole, the first seven chapters, primarily Paul is focused on those in Corinth who have responded to his letter and who have repented of whatever followings that they had, the false apostles, any insulting or denigrating that they had of Paul.

Paul is focusing mainly in the first seven chapters, primarily on those in Corinth who are true believers. All right? So in general, in general terms. So as we see the tone in chapters 1 through 7, it's mostly loving, celebratory, right?

Just again, just assuring the church of how good God is. Again, not exclusively, but mostly. So that's one tone. Now chapters 8 and 9, there's two chapters about the collection that they were doing for the church in Jerusalem.

[23 : 05] Then chapter 9, remember we talked about, there's some very practical counsel about giving, financial giving, right? Chapter 9 is when we see the verse, God loves a cheerful giver.

So the first seven chapters, primarily to the believers in Corinth, chapters 8 and 9, just very practical instruction on giving and the collection for the church in Jerusalem.

But then the tone changes. In the final chapters, 10 through 10, 11, 12, 13, those final four chapters, Paul now directs some of his passion, let's say, some of his firmness, right, to the false apostles that may still be at Corinth and or those in the church in Corinth that are still believing and are still under the influence of those false apostles.

So we see, and we're going to see in just a minute when we read chapter 11, we're going to see that Paul's tone is different. And it's important for you to know because we're going to read some things, like Paul said, here in just a minute, Paul is going to want to boast.

Well, wait a minute, Greg, you just, you told me that we see Paul's character, his unworthiness, his humility. And so on the surface, if you don't read chapter 11 in context, you're going to think, wait a minute, Paul is sort of two-mouthed, right?

[24 : 25] What's this about humility and character? But yet in his letter, he's boasting about all these afflictions, right? Well, this is in response, and we'll see in just a moment, to the false apostles, all right?

So just remember, when you read chapters 10 through 13, remember the context, right? It's about defending his apostleship, about protecting the flock in Corinth. So you're going to see a little bit more firmness.

That's why we can't read and study anything out of context, all right? So let me read, so we're going to be in chapter 11 just for a moment, but over in chapter 10, let me read the last couple of verses. So chapter 10, verse 17. You can follow along with me. Chapter 10, verse 17, Paul writes, Let the one who boasts, boast in the Lord.

All right, that's good, right? For it is not the one who commends himself, who is approved, but the one whom the Lord commends. All right, that's good.

[25 : 30] Now, chapter 11, verse 1, Paul continues, I wish you would bear with me in a little foolishness. Do bear with me. All right?

So what Paul is basically saying here is, for those of you who remain foolishly persuaded by the boasting or the self-commendation of the false prophets, then you know what?

Bear with me as I speak in foolishness, but as I speak in a way that it appears you can only understand. All right? So you see some biting sarcasm there, right?

For those of you who are listening and understanding and believing is foolishness of the false apostles, let me speak foolishness then. Maybe that's one way for me to get through to you.

Right? This is the insightful part about Paul, right? I don't know that we see this in some of his other letters, right? And so that's basically what he's saying. Now, let me read starting at verse 16 as we learn about Paul's sufferings.

[26 : 34] All right? So I hit the pause button a minute ago because I had to give you that context. But remember, we're talking about the sufferings that Paul experienced, right? So this, now let's get back to what Paul says about the sufferings that he experienced.

So chapter 11, verse 16. I repeat, Let no one think me foolish, but even if you do, accept me as a fool so that, too, I may boast a little.

Again, just very biting sarcasm, right? Told you the tone changed. Verse 17. What I am saying with this boastful confidence, I say not as the Lord would, but as a fool.

Since many boast according to the flesh, I, too, will boast. For you gladly bear with fools, being wise yourselves.

Are you catching on to the sarcasm? The biting sarcasm? All right. Verse 20. For you bear it if someone makes slaves of you or devours you or takes advantage of you or puts on airs or strikes you in the face.

[27 : 46] To my shame, I must say, we were too weak for that. All right? Sarcasm, right? Paul is just laying it on heavy to them. But whatever anyone else dares to boast of, I'm speaking as a fool, I also dare to boast of that.

So here we go. Verse 22. Are they Hebrews? Referring to the false apostles. So am I. Are they Israelites? So am I.

Are they offspring of Abraham? So am I. Are they servants of Christ? Well, I am a better one. I am talking like a madman.

Remember, he keeps interjecting himself. Hey, I'm talking as a fool, not as the Lord would talk, but I'm talking as a fool, as a madman. I'm a better one with far greater labors, far more imprisonments, with countless beatings, and often near death.

All right, now listen to this. You may have read these verses before, but now just listen to all the suffering and angst that Paul has gone through in his ministry so far. Five times I received at the hands of the Jews the forty lashes, less one.

[29 : 06] All right, what's five times forty? Two hundred minus five, right? So nearly two hundred lashings at the hands of the Jews.

Three times I was beaten with rods. That would be from the Gentiles. Once I was stoned. Three times I was shipwrecked.

In a night and a day, I was adrift at sea. You understand? Adrift at sea. He's probably hanging on, you know, shipwrecked, ship crashed, fell apart, and he's probably hanging on to something as he's adrift at sea.

On frequent journeys in danger from rivers, danger from robbers, danger from my own people, danger from Gentiles, danger in the city, danger in the wilderness, danger at sea, danger from false brothers, danger from false brothers, and toil and hardship through many a sleepless night, and hunger and thirst, often without food, in cold and exposure.

And, apart from other things, and if that wasn't enough, right, all those physical dangers and afflictions, there is the daily pressure, pressure, affliction, the daily pressure on me of my anxiety for all the churches.

[30 : 56] Real quick, just let me say, if you deal with anxiety, guess what? You're not alone. You're in the same club as the Apostle Paul. Alright? Right here, we read it.

There is a daily pressure on me of my anxiety for all the churches. Who is weak? He's asking, who is weak and I am not weak?

This is what the false apostles were saying about Paul. He's weak. God's not with him. Look at all the afflictions that he has to deal with. Who is weak and I'm not weak?

Who is made to fall? And I am not indignant. Verse 30, If I must boast, I will boast of the things that show my weakness.

what about his weakness? Jump down to chapter 12, verses 9 and 10. What's Paul say about his weakness?

[31 : 54] Now the context here is the thorn in the flesh. Verse 8 of chapter 12, three times I pleaded with the Lord about this, about this thorn in the flesh, that it should leave me.

But he said to me, the Lord said to me, this was the Lord's response to Paul, my grace is sufficient for you, for my power is made perfect in weakness.

Therefore, I will boast all the more gladly of my weaknesses, so that the power of Christ may rest upon me. For the sake of Christ, right, for the sake of Christ, underline that, for the sake of Christ, then, I am content with weaknesses, I am content with insults, I am content with hardships, I am content with persecutions, I am content with calamities.

And then a familiar verse, for when I am weak, then I am strong. See, Paul, this is not book knowledge for Paul.

Book knowledge for me, as I am studying this and reading this, I don't think I have gone through any of this. But Paul is writing this. When Paul writes that God is the Father of mercies and the God of all comfort, this is not just sort of ivory tower, sort of theory, you know, book knowledge stuff.

[33 : 22] He is writing this from his afflictions. Question, how can Paul be content in the face of weaknesses, insults, hardships, persecutions, and calamities?

How can he be content in the face of afflictions? Well, verse 10, we just read that. For the sake of Christ. Paul's response to what God has done for him, for the sake of Christ.

for those of you who are going through our study on Wednesday night, what is our sanctification? What is our growth in faith? What have we talked about?

It's our response to Christ. That's what Paul is saying here. For the sake of Christ, I am content with my afflictions. For the sake of Christ, out of response to what Christ has done for me.

And remember, in the book that we're going through, what does the author talk about? The bookends? The one bookend is about that we have Christ's righteousness. There is nothing that we can do.

[34 : 32] We don't forbear persecutions and hardships. We're not content with those to earn Christ's righteousness. It's because of Christ's righteousness given to us as a free gift through the blood of Jesus Christ.

Then, that's how we respond. One way that we respond is being content. in life situations and hardships. We'll turn back to chapter 1.

We learn a lot about Paul, right? In chapter 11 there. So back to chapter 1 in verse 3. Who is the comforter? The God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ.

What is the one reason that God comforts? Or what is one, I'm sorry, what is one reason that God comforts? It's in the middle of verse 4. So that we, and this is Paul writing, so the apostolic we, right?

So that we, so that Paul may be able to comfort those who are in any affliction. How does Paul comfort others? The last part of verse 4. With the comfort with which we, again Paul, ourselves, are comforted by God.

[35 : 49] Well, what did that look like exactly? Have you thought about that? So as Paul writes this, with the comfort with which we ourselves are comforted, what's that look like?

In what ways do you think Paul administered comfort? comforts? Well, I, you know, one way that comes to my mind quickly is just by his example.

I mean, we're reading about his example, but think if you're a person in Corinth and you're seeing Paul, listening to his teaching, receiving letters from Paul, right?

One way that Paul administers comfort is just his example, how he handles hardships. We read of Paul's prayers. prayers. That's another way that he administered comfort.

And perhaps even his gentle words of comfort to those who are perishing, right? Graced with authenticity and power and encouragement. So we don't have a lot of insights and specifics about how Paul administered comfort, but we can read through his epistles and find examples of that.

[36 : 59] Interesting. What's that look like to administer comfort? Here at the end of the sermon, there's going to be a time of application, right? And so one of those applications is how do we administer comfort, right?

So we can look to the example of Paul. Let's move on to verse 5. Verse 5, Paul writes, for as we share abundantly in Christ's sufferings, so through Christ we share abundantly in comfort too.

So this is a time where we all can just say amen, amen. Alright? Alright? As we share abundantly in Christ's sufferings, so through Christ we share abundantly in comfort too.

So question for you. I think I have a question here. Yeah, what does Paul mean by his references to Christ's sufferings? Well, it refers to those afflictions and trials that come to those involved in the service of Christ.

Okay? So it comes to those trials and afflictions that come to those involved in the service of Christ. And to be clear, perhaps it's better if I explain what this is not.

[38 : 13] Alright? So when we talk about Christ's sufferings, we are not talking about the atoning sacrifices and sufferings of Christ. Right? The sufferings that Christ took on Himself on the cross.

Right? Where He bore the wrath of God to pay for our sins. Right? To pay for the penalty and consequences of our sins. That's not the sufferings that Paul's referring to.

Right? What did Christ say before He died on the cross? Three words. It is finished. Right? There's no adding on to. There's no additional suffering that we're doing, again, for our atonement.

Right? Christ, that's a finished work. So then it has to mean when Paul says, you know, for as we share abundantly in Christ's sufferings, well it has to mean now, well those afflictions and those trials that come to us as we live for Christ.

Right? Turn over to chapter 4. I know we're in chapter 1 but we're spending a lot of time in the rest of the, this is one way to get through 2 Corinthians faster. Right?

[39 : 20] I'll jump to other chapters. So, but turn over to chapter 4 and let's see how Paul describes these sufferings, these sufferings for Christ.

Right? So chapter 4, let's read, I'll start at verse 8. I'm going to read 8 through 12. So Paul writes, We are afflicted in every way but we're not crushed. We're perplexed but we're not driven to despair.

We're persecuted but not forsaken. Struck down but not destroyed. Okay, verse 10. Always carrying in the body the death of Jesus so that the life of Jesus may also be manifested in our bodies.

Verse 11. For we who live are always being given over to death for Jesus' sake so that the life of Jesus also may be manifested in our mortal flesh.

So death is at work in us but life in you. So verse 10. The death of Jesus. Right? These are the sufferings of Christ.

[40 : 27] Right? These are the attacks on Jesus taken by those who hate Jesus upon those who love Jesus and represent Him. Let me repeat that.

When we talk about the sufferings of Christ Right? These are the attacks on Jesus taken by those who hate Jesus upon those who love Jesus and represent Him.

Remember what Jesus said? They hate me. They don't hate you. They hate me. But they will persecute you because you love me. And that's what this is. This is what we talk... This is what Paul means when he talks about Christ's sufferings.

See, these are Christ's sufferings because they come from following Him. And get this. These sufferings add to the fulfillment of the suffering that's destined for the body of Christ.

Right? The church. Alright? Don't turn here. But Colossians 1.24. So Paul writes this in his letter to the Colossians. Paul writes, Now I rejoice in my sufferings for your sake.

[41 : 40] And in my flesh I am filling up what is lacking in Christ's afflictions for the sake of His body. Who's His body? The church.

Right? So, when Paul uses the term Christ's sufferings, well, we're suffering. We're receiving the persecution, the afflictions, but Christ is in us.

So that's why Paul says it's Christ's sufferings. And frankly, it's a fulfillment of the church. We are to suffer for our Lord and Savior. Does that make sense?

Verse 4, Who comforts us in all our affliction 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.

Verse 5, this is where we are right now. For as we share abundantly in Christ's sufferings. So these aren't sufferings to earn our salvation.

[42 : 47] These aren't a completion of the atoning sufferings that Christ experienced on the cross.

Right? These are sufferings because we live for Christ. We are identified with Christ.

We are Christians. Well, how do we share in Christ's sufferings? I think that's my second question. I'm just putting the questions up here, not the answers.

Right? Hopefully you'll write down the answers. Right? So how do we share in Christ's sufferings? Well, the simple answer is this. We share in Christ's sufferings by loving Jesus Christ, by identifying with Him, and by living for Him.

By loving Him, identifying with Him, and living for Him. And when we do that, we are guaranteed afflictions and sufferings, we are guaranteed.

But, what are we also guaranteed? Comfort. Right? Comfort. Hold your place in 2 Corinthians and turn over to 1 Peter.

[43 : 55] Let's look at what Peter says about this suffering for Christ. 1 Peter 4, 1 Peter 4, verses 12-16.

1 Peter 4, 1 Peter 4, verses 12-16. 1 Peter 4, 1 Peter 5, 3, and 2 Peter 5, We just talked about that. What's Christ's sufferings? Loving Christ, identifying with Him, serving Him, living for Him. But rejoice. Peter is instructing the church, rejoice in as far as you share Christ's sufferings, that you may also rejoice and be glad when His glory is revealed.

If you are insulted for the name of Christ, you are blessed, because the Spirit of glory and of God rest upon you. But let none of you suffer as a murderer, as a thief, or as an evildoer, or as a meddler.

Yet, if anyone suffers as a Christian, let him not be ashamed, but let him glorify God in that name. That's hard. I've got to admit, isn't that hard?

[45 : 30] In the midst of affliction and suffering? Peter, what? You want me to rejoice? Yeah. So again, it's us being called to live for Christ.

And isn't that so antithetical to the world? So opposite. This is such opposite thinking to the world and the culture we live in. And when we do this, again, we are guaranteed afflictions and sufferings, but we're also guaranteed even more comfort.

Again, what's that look like? What's it look like to live for Christ? Again, let's go back to, for those of you who come on Wednesday nights, think of progressive sanctification, right? The putting off and putting on.

That's one way that we identify with Christ. Put off the sin, put on the righteousness. Making disciples. Go and make disciples. Of going, of speaking, of acting, pursuing holiness.

Just to name a few. Speaking of Wednesday night, it wasn't this past Wednesday, but the Wednesday before, we looked at Titus.

[46 : 49] Turn to Titus. Real quick. We'll be real quick at this. Titus, chapter 2. Titus, chapter 2, verses 11 and 12.

We read this. This was actually one of the main focus of when the author of the chapter we were in. He sort of unpacked Titus 2, verses 11 and 12.

But for those of you who aren't there, let me read this. Titus 2, verse 11 and 12. For the grace of God has appeared, bringing salvation for all people, training us to renounce ungodliness in worldly passions and to live self-controlled, upright, and godly lives in the present age.

That's living for Christ. That's antithetical to the world. Right? For the grace of God has appeared, bringing salvation for all people.

Right? So the grace, clearly grace brings salvation. Right? It's a monergistic. Right? It's an action that's only done by the Lord Himself.

[48 : 03] Right? The salvation. But then this progressive sanctification is one that we team up with the Holy Spirit to live godly lives. Right? And then in this verse here, right, what does it look like?

It's training us to renounce ungodliness, to renounce worldly passions, and to live self-controlled, upright, and godly lives in this present age.

This is the one thing I wanted to point out here. And this comes out of page, what, 38, in Growing in Faith. That's the book that we're going over on Wednesday nights. All right, this is what Jerry Bridges writes.

This training, and another word for training is teaching or discipline. And again, this makes sense if you're here on Wednesday, right? This training, and this is with a quote, it includes all instruction, all reproof and correction, and then get this, all providentially directed circumstances in our life.

Afflictions, suffering, right, that are aimed at cultivating spiritual growth and godly character. Now what's Titus say?

[49 : 17] For the grace of God has appeared. It brings salvation, but it also brings this training. The grace of God trains us, teaches us, disciplines us.

And one of the ways that the grace of God does that is through providentially directed circumstances in our lives, according to Jerry Bridges. Paul refers to it as sufferings and afflictions in living for Christ.

When we live for Christ, we will share in His sufferings, but be encouraged, we will also share in His comfort. Living for Christ, loving Christ, identifying with Him, living for Him, living boldly, but humbly, and bringing glory to Him.

That's sharing in Christ's sufferings. All right. Verse 6. Let's turn back to 2 Corinthians.

We'll do verse 6 and verse 7, then we'll wrap up. So Paul continues to write, If we are afflicted, it is for your comfort in salvation. And if we are comforted, it is for your comfort.

[50 : 29] So the win-win situation for the folks at Corinth, right, for the Corinthians. If we, if Paul, if Paul and his cohorts, his colleagues, right, if we are afflicted, it is for your comfort in salvation.

And if we are comforted, well, it's for your comfort, which you experience when you patiently endure the same sufferings that we suffer. All right. Greg, you may be thinking, that sounds like verse 5. Now we're back to patiently enduring and being content with sufferings. Yeah, yeah, Paul's just saying the same thing in a different way, right?

For verse 6, the note I made here is, so Paul views both his experience of afflictions and his experience of comfort, right, as living, no, as contributing to the Corinthians' comforts.

Well, how does that work? How is it that when Paul is afflicted, when he's persecuted, how can that possibly mean comfort for the Corinthians?

[51 : 40] Well, we see that because the God is the God of all comfort, right, again, with that affliction and with that suffering comes the comfort.

And Paul is representing Christ, and he's praying for and serving and ministering to the church in Corinth. And we talked earlier about how that comfort just overflows, right?

And as God comforts Paul, Paul writes in Scripture that he will comfort those with the comfort that he receives from God, right? So it's just sort of an unending circle of comfort.

It's an unending circle of affliction and suffering, too, isn't it, as we live for Christ. So Paul, he views both his afflictions and his comfort as contributing to the Corinthians' comfort.

So again, I would ask, and very briefly ask, how do you view your afflictions and your comfort? Do you view it like Paul does?

[52 : 40] All right. Verse 6, If we are afflicted, it is for your comfort and salvation. Do you believe that?

That's what God's Word says. And if we are comforted, it is for your comfort. The hard things we undergo, as well as the comforts, they're all graces that together authenticate and empower ministry.

Let me repeat that. The hard things we undergo, as well as the comforts, they are all graces that together authenticate and empower ministry.

It did for Paul. It authenticated who Paul was as an apostle of Christ. It empowered his ministry. So that those who truly desire to minister, and that should be all of us, right?

We're all ministers. We're all ministers. We minister. We serve. We live for Jesus. We minister to others. We should all be ministers of the Word, whether it be through evangelism or through discipleship, right?

[53 : 51] So that those who truly desire to minister will patiently accept their lot from God and continue to work on. Just another way of saying, be content in your suffering and your affliction.

All right. The second half of that verse. Notice that Paul links the Corinthians' comfort to their patient endurance of sufferings.

Right? Again, we just read that. It is for your comfort which you experience when you patiently endure the same sufferings that we suffer.

All right. So I want to look at one more word. Because, actually, let me back up a little bit. So as I was studying through this, I know this is God's Word and this is truth.

And I believe it and I want to believe it. But I just can't do the math in my head. Right? Greg, how can afflictions and suffering, how does that work?

[55 : 04] Unless you've experienced it, how does that work? How does that work that I can be content in my sufferings and in my affliction? And so, in the way God does, as I was studying this, the second half of verse 6, when Paul writes, which you experience when you patiently endure the same sufferings that we suffer.

So get this, you all. I hope this is an encouragement. The word experience. Mark, help me pronounce that. Energeo? I don't know if the G is hard or say it.

Energeo. All right, so for the recording, Energeo, that's what Paul said. I mean, that's what Mark said. If Mark is wrong, see Mark. All right, so I think I've shared with you, Mark is taking a class in Greek right now at the seminary down the street in Virginia Beach.

So anytime it comes to Greek, I'm always looking to Mark. All right, it's just Greek one, right? First semester. So he's not conversing in Greek yet. So anyhow, so the word experience in verse 6.

So get this. It looks like the word energy, doesn't it? When you look at it, it looks like where we get the word energy. And so literally, it means it's more than just a passive experience, right?

[56 : 22] It's to be energized, to be activated, right? To be fervent, effectual, right? And so this is how it helped me understand the logic in this verse, right?

Let me read verse 6 again. If we are afflicted, it is for your comfort and salvation. And if we are comforted, it is for your comfort. Here it goes.

Which you experience when you patiently endure the same sufferings that we suffer. Let me use another word. Which you are energized by. Which you are activated by, right?

When you patiently endure the same sufferings that we suffer. You know what this is telling me?

This is telling me that patient endurance of the same sufferings that Paul suffered will energize and will activate the comfort of God.

It's like, alright. It's more than just a passive receiving of comfort, right? It will actually energize as you experience this. It's almost like saying that the proof's in the pudding, right?

[57 : 31] When you are comforted, and maybe some of you have testimonies of in the past where you've been comforted after a particularly hairy sort of affliction or suffering, right?

It's when you were comforted and coming out of that, you were perhaps energized. You experienced the love of God in that maybe because of a fellow sister in Christ.

Or someone came along. And so Paul writes here, right? You experience it when you patiently endure the same sufferings that we suffer.

If the math is still not working out in your mind, this is where you just have to trust that this is what God's Word says, okay? And just pray that God will reveal in your mind an understanding of how this math works out.

That when you suffer and when you're afflicted, and then when you're comforted and you experience that comforting, it activates you. It energizes you. In order to do what?

[58 : 32] Paul writes, to comfort others. One other thought about Paul here. I don't know if you noticed, we read nowhere. So we've read about all these afflictions and sufferings back in chapter 11.

Well, we read nowhere in Scripture of Paul running away, of Paul bolting, right? Of running scared, of running from his circumstances. We read nowhere of Paul cursing God and his afflictions.

What has he done as an example for us? He patiently endured his circumstances. And thus, he found God energizing himself in his comfort.

Great wisdom. You may not understand it, but it's great wisdom and what an example to live by. Let me, don't turn here. Let me read what Peter writes about this.

Maybe this will help you with the math. 1 Peter 2, if you're taking notes, this is 1 Peter 2, verses 20 and 21. I'll just read this. But if when you do good and suffer for it, you endure, this is a gracious thing in the sight of God.

[59 : 43] For to this you have been called, because Christ also suffered for you, leaving you an example, so that you might follow in his steps.

It's instructive. It's instructive. Right? I found that instructive. Are you suffering afflictions because of your commitment to Christ?

Don't run. Don't curse your circumstances. Right? Trust and rest in what God's Word is teaching us here. Patiently endure your circumstances.

And you are guaranteed, according to Scripture, that you will be comforted. And you will be encouraged by that comfort. Well, let me hasten to verse 7 and then we'll wrap up for sure.

Verse 7. Paul finishes out this section of Scripture and he writes, Hey, our hope for you is unshaken. For we know that as you share in our sufferings, here we go. All this more about sharing in sufferings, right?

[60 : 45] You will also share in our comfort. And so, again, just Paul assures the Corinthians. Again, Corinthians, you're going to share in our sufferings. But, hey, if it's not clear enough in this part of the letter, you will also share in our comfort.

We share, as believers, right? We share in the fellowship of Christ and therefore we share in affliction and in comfort. So, in closing, let me pose these questions for you.

All right. Or these summary items, right? Oh, this was verse 7. So, Paul assures the Corinthian church of his hope in them. All right, here we go. So, first thing. So, here's three sort of takeaways and action items, applications, that I came up with.

And perhaps you have some more that's in your mind. Jot them down so you don't forget. But as we look at verses 3 through 7, here's one thing that I see coming out of this. Can we just stop for a

minute?

Can we just exalt and praise God for His mercy, for His comfort? We hit that last week with verse 3, right? The God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who is what?

[61 : 53] The Father of mercies and God of all comfort. That right there, that should take lots of devotional time in your personal time with the Lord, right? Just memorize that.

Recount that. And let's just exalt and praise God for His mercy and comfort in all things. Secondly, this passage promises surpassing, overflowing comfort to those who are afflicted when suffering for Jesus.

Are you suffering for Jesus? Well, I don't know. Are you under any sort of affliction or suffering? You know, this is sort of a touchy thing to ask, right? It's like, Greg, I don't know. I've had a pretty good few years. I've had a pretty good decade. I really can't think of any sufferings or any afflictions. And so I would just respond one of two ways. You need to praise the Lord, right? That in His kindness and His mercy, He has kept you from any sorts of afflictions or sufferings.

[62 : 58] But on the other side of the coin is, I perhaps would ask, and as gentle and as loving as possible, are you living for Jesus? Because Scripture guarantees afflictions and sufferings.

So if you're affliction-free, if you're suffering-free, and not because of, like, sin in your life. I'm not talking about, that's a whole other conversation, right? Consequences of sin in your life. But I'm talking about, are you truly living for Jesus?

Are you sacrificing? Are you being bold? Are you sharing the good news to others who need it? Are you setting aside the wants and needs of self to serve others financially, your time, your resources? I don't know. Are you in any sort of affliction and suffering? I would just ask that that's probably a good time to look in the mirror. If you are living a pretty affliction-free, suffering-free life, either praise the Lord or take a really good look at are you truly living for Jesus?

All right. Lastly, one good reminder and I'll pray. All right. And this is not directly related to 2 Corinthians 1, but this is something I read and I thought, this is astounding.

[64 : 13] Our afflictions do not create a dependence on the Lord, right? If we're in an affliction or a suffering, you may say, oh, well, I went through that and I just felt more dependent on the Lord than before that.

And I would say, no, no, no, no. I would say that our afflictions, our sufferings, our trials, the things we go through, rather they are an important reminder that we always depend on the Lord, right? We are such a needy people, right? We always, 24-7, 365, we are always dependent on the Lord. But perhaps we forget that and in our own power, in our own strength, we're doing what we want to do and we're cruising along, we're living life, things are good, things are under control. Even in those times, we are 100% dependent on the Lord. And it could be that the Lord brings, now this is not so much suffering and affliction for His namesake, but it could be trials that the Lord would put in your life just to remind you ever so gently that, listen, don't depend on you, depend on me.

For I am the Father of mercies and the God of all comfort. Let's pray. So, Lord, we thank You so much for Your Word. We thank You so much for Your truth. Father, we thank You for the wisdom that we gain through reading and studying and toiling through Your Scripture.

[65 : 40] Father, thank You that parts of Scripture help interpret and help us understand other parts of Scripture. Your Word is perfect. Sanctify us in Your Word.

Your Word is truth. Thank You that You give that to us. Thank You for Paul's epistle to the 2 Corinthians. Thank You for the reminder that though we live in a world that's so upside down, that has totally, just totally marred creation as we had it and as we read in Genesis 1, that we just live in a world that's so evil, that's so immoral.

Father, You call us to live for You. And we know Your Scripture tells us, warns us, promises us that the enemy is prowling, that there are deceivers out in the world.

And Father, we are still to live a life that's worthy of the calling of being a Christian. And so that means living for You boldly, soberly. And we know that when we do that, Father, that we will experience afflictions and suffering.

And so we hold on to Your truth, Lord. We hold on to the fact that Your grace is more, that Your love and that Your comfort trumps any sort of affliction and suffering that we have, Father.

[67 : 03] Father, I pray right now, Father, just for our church family, Lord. I know there are families, there are individuals that are working through challenges and trials and afflictions in their life, Lord.

So I would pray Your grace and Your mercy. I would pray Your perseverance on each of those situations, Father. Father, would You make Yourself even more real, more known to them, Father. Would You put in their hearts and their minds a true trust and a true surrender in Your Word and Your truth, Lord. For You, You love us more than we love ourselves. You know us more than we know ourselves, Father. So thank You for Your Word that's true and comforting. In Christ's name, amen.