

The Difference Jesus Christ Can Make

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[0 : 00] Amen. Let's go. Let's jump right in. Find in your Bible 2 Corinthians chapter 4. 2 Corinthians chapter number 4. I really, really, really love the book of 2 Corinthians.

This book is loaded, absolutely loaded, and this chapter in particular has some good stuff, good truth.

And I'd love to read the whole thing, but I just feel like I'll get straight to the spot we want to be. Verse number 8, 2 Corinthians chapter 4, verse 8. The Bible says, We are troubled on every side, yet not distressed.

We are perplexed, but not in despair. Persecuted, but not forsaken. Cast down, but not destroyed. In verse number 10, always bearing about in the body the dying of the Lord Jesus, that the life also of Jesus might be made manifest in our body.

[1 : 22] Let's pray together. Our Father, please, Lord, I ask you that this moment now in these next few minutes, that you would help us and that you would minister this truth to us.

That you would free us from all distraction and from all thoughts of vanity and things of this life. And just draw us to extract the truth and the help and the comfort and the strength that we need from your word.

Please teach us and minister this to us and to each heart this morning. We pray this in Jesus' name. And amen. So there's some ugly things that we just read.

Some intimidating thoughts, but realistic thoughts about what the ministry was for the Apostle Paul. Paul calls himself an apostle. He calls himself a minister. He calls himself a preacher and a teacher. And he also, maybe more commonly, refers to himself as a servant of Jesus Christ.

[2 : 28] But he's not just giving his biography in this passage. He says we, in verse 8, not merely the testimony of the Apostle Paul, but we are troubled on every side.

We being Paul's company and Paul's companion and those that Paul might have referred to as his fellow soldiers in the fight of faith. They've all experienced this side of the ministry.

The words, the ugly words and thoughts are troubled, perplexed. In verse 9, persecuted, cast down. Those are horrible words for that to be your life story.

What a horrible thing this to be your biography of pain, sorrow, suffering, persecutions, trouble. And yet, those are the words he uses to reference the ministry.

And to think that this is the will of God. That this is what God allows. That this is what God calls his ministers to. And asks them or demands that they experience. We studied it last week.

[3 : 34] Take up thy cross and follow me. Bear the cross. And this is what he leads into? Trouble? How is that fair? And how is that right?

I realize that the thoughts that Paul writes, they're not exclusive to the ministry at all. They're probably rather all too familiar to just what we would call the experience of life.

To living life. To living in this fallen, wicked world. To living in this flesh. We get ourselves into trouble. Or we experience trouble and trials by the hands of others.

Or just trying to stay afloat. It can be tough. And it can be ugly. I think we've all experienced trouble in some form. Probably needed help at some time.

I think these thoughts that Paul throws out are relatable. And if you haven't tasted serious trouble yet, just stick around. All you have to do is just keep breathing.

[4 : 36] You'll find it or it'll find you. That's what it's going to be. And I see though in each of these intimidating and troublesome thoughts, I see that Paul, he has a relief.

He has some help. He has a repose. In each of those statements in verses 8 and 9, there's something else that helps. And it's the Lord Jesus Christ.

And I want to preach to you this morning the difference Jesus Christ can make. The difference Jesus Christ can make. Because I've experienced it. Paul's experienced it.

And I trust several of you have. And if not, you need to believe this and know this, that the Lord Jesus Christ is capable and can make all the difference necessary when it's bad and when it's troublesome and when it's tough.

The first thing Paul says in verse 8 is, we are troubled on every side. Oh, Paul, you're just exaggerating. Paul, you're just trying to make it sound worse than it really is.

[5 : 42] Do you think so? When we read about the ministry of the Apostle Paul, and he gives us little pieces here and there of the years that he gave his life to serve Christ, we find that he experienced trouble on multiple fronts.

I'm not going to take you through it, but here's what I'd recommend if you ever wanted to study this out. You could just read through the book of Acts, mostly the last half of the book of Acts. And in almost every chapter, you could highlight something that was horrible, that was troublesome for the Apostle Paul as he sought to serve Christ.

I'll give you kind of a quick view of it. He had trouble from the lost. That is, the Jews and Gentiles that are lost.

They were against him. Right away in Acts chapter 14 at Lystra, he was stoned. Meaning they picked up stones and threw it at him.

Now this is the passage that Brother Greg referenced in 2 Corinthians, because it's where he talked about that they stoned him, then they drew him out of the city. Like dragged his carcass out of the city.

[6 : 51] It really seems like he died in that moment. I can't prove it, but it seems like that was a death for Paul, because he says in 2 Corinthians that he was in the body or out of the body, I cannot tell, and he was caught up to the third heaven, and he heard words that were unspeakable.

He couldn't come back and say them. But after they drug his carcass out of the city, supposing that he had him to be dead, it said, the disciples showed up and he got up and came back in.

It sounds like a resurrection. If you read it, that's what it really looks like. To say that they stoned him and he was unconscious and they drug him all the way outside the city and then walked away, and then he just popped back up on his feet.

That's a little rough, a little bit of a stretch. But at any rate, that was the Acts chapter 14. It's going to get more and it's going to add on to that. He was stoned in Acts 14.

In Acts 16, he's at Philippi, where they take him and they beat him and they imprisoned him. That's at Philippi. In Acts chapter 17, he goes to Thessalonica and there's an uproar in the city over Paul's preaching and over the Jews and all the stirring and so that he had to escape by night.

[8 : 02] And at nighttime, under the cover of darkness, he escaped the city for fear of those Jews that were against him and he ran to Berea. And they found out that he was at Berea. And so they followed him there.

And he had to escape that city by boat to get away from them that sought his life again. You might think that Paul's missionary journeys were just preaching and evangelizing and winning souls.

No, some of it the gospel was spreading because there was people against him seeking to kill him and he was escaping with his life. But every new city he showed up, he started proclaiming the news that they needed to hear at that city.

And it stirred him up and the devil worked against it mightily. In Acts chapter 18, the very next chapter, he ends up at Corinth. And it says in that chapter, they opposed and they blasphemed. This was not a revival. Some got saved. A church was started, a work began. But there was a strong opposition to the apostle Paul.

[9 : 03] There was trouble on every side. The next chapter, he's at Ephesus in Acts 19. There's such a big uproar that this preaching and the ministers got going there.

They're opposing it so strongly. They're in this arena in what they call the theater. And Paul wants to go in and debate with them and preach to them and declare to them the gospel.

And the disciples refused to let him go in there because they knew he would never make it out of there. And they moved him on. And from Ephesus, while they're crying out, great is the goddess Diana.

And while they're screaming out and worshiping their devils, Paul sought refuge and departed. And in Acts chapter 20, it says he's about to sail to Syria, but the Jews laid wait for him.

So thankfully, there was no charge to change his itinerary and he was able to switch and go over to Macedonia instead. And in Acts chapter 21, he goes to Jerusalem.

[10:01] And it says there that they went about to kill him. And so soldiers had to intervene because of the uproar at Jerusalem. Trouble on every side.

Every city he goes to, the lost is there. They're there to throw it in his face. They're there to take him. They're there to beat him. They're there to kill him. He faced trouble on every side.

It wasn't just from the lost. He faced trouble from the brethren. When he first got saved and he first turned and converted from being a persecutor of the church of God to being part of the body of Christ, now he finds out that the brethren don't believe him.

They don't believe that he's really converted. They think this is a trick. They don't receive him initially. They won't let him get near him. Later on, he's debating with some of the apostles and with others about the doctrine that he received of the Lord Jesus, but they weren't so quick to receive it and to understand it and to believe it.

Along the way, he had contention with a brother named John Mark. The contention was so sharp, they had to separate ways and they parted ways in the ministry. He ended up rebuking the apostle Peter for he was to be blamed in Galatians chapter 2.

[11:13] And I don't care what you think about it or what you read about it. There's not much to say except you understand when you rebuke another man that's kind of been there and done that and has a position and some power, you'd like to think everybody's humble and everybody hugs it out, but tell the truth.

When you have confrontations with people, the next time you see them, you kind of want to avoid them. Even if they're a brother, sometimes you come to church and just don't want to sit with them. Don't really want to, hi, little fake smile.

The brethren. He had trouble with the brethren. In 2 Timothy chapter 4, all the way to the end of his life, he says, no man stood with me, but all men forsook me.

Who, Paul? The brethren. The brethren forsook him near the end of his life. And there he was left to stand alone. Yeah, he had trouble on every side.

That's not all. He had trouble with his health. While you're here, just look over at chapter 11. Just slip right over to chapter 11 and look at verse 29. I won't read the whole passage about the beatings and the perils of seas and the weariness, but in verse 29, Paul says this statement, who is weak and I am not weak?

[12:32] He means that. Who says they have trouble in this life and I don't have trouble when it comes to physical problems and ailments? In the next chapter, he describes that thing we were talking about already, but he goes to verse number 7, lest I shall be exalted above measure through the abundance of revelations.

There was given to me a thorn in the flesh, the messenger of Satan to buffet me. And he's begging the Lord to take it away and he won't take it away. And so Paul had trouble with his health.

He had a thorn in his flesh. He was weak. Who's weak? And I'm not weak. He's got to deal with things every single day. And he gets up and goes on.

God offered him grace, said, my grace will be sufficient. You can continue on. But there is trouble in his flesh every day. There is trouble in his spirit. Look at chapter 7, 2 Corinthians 7, and verse number 5.

For when we were come into Macedonia, our flesh had no rest, but we were troubled on every side. There's that phrase. Without were fightings.

[13:44] Notice this. Within were fears. Paul had trouble in his own spirit. He was a man. He was subject to fear.

He was subject to sin, Romans chapter 7, and his flesh. And he felt these things just the same as you and I do. In chapter 11, verse 28, he said, Beside those things that are without, that which cometh upon me daily, the care of all the churches.

Yeah, Paul had some stress. Paul had some trouble that he had to deal with. I don't believe that when he says in chapter 4, verse 8, we are troubled on every side.

That is not an overstatement. It is not an exaggeration. But look what he finishes or follows up that statement with chapter 4, verse 8.

We are troubled on every side, yet not distressed. Yet not distressed. Stress is a popular word today. I'm stressed out.

[14:50] I can't handle the stress. I need to see the doctor. I need something for the stress. I need to relieve the stress. It just won't go away. It's popular to describe somebody's anxiety, to describe pressure that people feel.

And they go to pills and they go to booze and they go to other things to relieve and to distract themselves from the pressure. The idea of pressure or being distressed is like when you overwork something, like when there's a beam and it's holding too much weight and it begins to sag and it begins to crack.

It cannot handle it. It is getting stressed. It is straining and eventually breaks. Now with all this heat, people's AC units all over the place are getting overworked.

They can't keep up with the heat inside the house so it just stays running and running and it's not supposed to run that long. It's supposed to just go on a cycle. And so the components get stressed. Strain is put on them and they break down.

It's getting pushed beyond its limitations. Stress is because of extreme circumstances that push, they put too much stress. And so being distressed is feeling anguish and sorrow from circumstances that many times are out of our control and are too much to deal with.

[16:10] But Paul says, I'm not distressed. Trouble's on every side. Severely troubled. The load is very heavy but I'm not at the point of breaking down.

How, Paul? Why can Paul say, I am not distressed? The hatred, the opposition, the fear, the backstabbing, the physical afflictions every single day of his life.

He wakes up every morning, he's going to face stress. He wakes up, he's going to face the load.

How is it that his stress level can be so extreme and Paul can say, hey, I'm okay.

How is that? That he's not popping pills. Why is he not a drunk? Why did he not get out of the ministry? I can go on, he said.

I'm not distressed. Oh, it hurts. Yeah, yeah. It hurts. And it's heavy. But I'm not distressed. That trouble that Paul faced is enough to break any man.

[17:21] There's only one reason Paul could say, I'm not distressed, and that's Jesus Christ. That's it. The difference Jesus Christ can make. The people say, we all have our breaking point.

We all have our breaking point. And maybe some of you have felt it. And you've been in some situations that you just, you couldn't keep it up any longer. You might say, yeah, I've met it.

Well, let me tell you this morning, Jesus Christ can be a difference maker. He can make the difference. I need two readers this morning, two people with big voices, a.k.a. loud mouth.

Oh, no. I'll have John, please go to Matthew 11 and verse 28. And Carla, oh, no, I'm kidding. All right, Russ in the back there, then 1 Peter 5, 7, please.

These are two verses. You might turn to them if you want to, but these are two verses I want somebody to read. They're very familiar to me, probably very familiar to so many of you, but if they're not familiar to you, you need to learn this stuff.

[18:28] You need to understand how Jesus Christ can make a difference. Matthew chapter 11, John, please read verse 28. Come unto me, all ye that labor, and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest.

That's a promise. He promises. Read the next verse too, please. One more.

There it is. It's easy. Whatever you're bearing, whatever stress you're under, he can make it lighter. He promises he'll make it lighter.

He's a difference maker. How about 1 Peter 5, 7 in the back? 1 Peter 5, 7 in the back? It says, casting all your cares upon him, he cares for you.

Does he care for you? Amen. Then he tells you, you're commanded, casting all your cares upon him. You want to bear the stress alone? You're going to break.

[19:33] You want to be, you'll feel troubled, and it may start coming at you, and coming at you, and coming at you, and coming at you on every side. But you can say, with Jesus Christ, not distressed.

I'm not breaking, because he can hold you up. He can make it lighter. He can take your cares. You can have a flat tire, and you can have a headache, and you can have bills that are past due, and you can have trouble from your neighbors, and you can hear bad news from your doctor, and you can have issues in your family, you can have fights with your spouse, and trouble with your children, and you can have things just pile up on top of each other to the sky.

You could lay down and cry and say, I'm troubled on every side. But with Jesus Christ, this is not just talking, this is not just fluff.

With Jesus Christ, you can say, but I'm not distressed. I can go on. I can face this. I can handle this. I can fight this. I can keep putting one foot in front of the other.

I'm okay. If you're heavy laden, Jesus Christ can make the difference. He can make the difference. Look back at chapter number four, and verse eight.

[20 : 54] We're troubled on every side, yet not distressed. Then he says, we are perplexed, but not in despair.

We are perplexed. What does it mean to be perplexed? What's Paul saying that they're perplexed about? Perplexed is being confused, to be baffled, to not have understanding, to not have light, to just, to not know how this is going to go.

Not know what to do. Not know what to say. Not know how to go forward or proceed. We're perplexed. We don't have answers. And Paul says, we're perplexed, but we're not in despair.

We're perplexed. Paul obeyed God's command. Paul jumped into the ministry with both feet. He went all out. He didn't hold back at all. He trusted God.

He followed the leading of God in his life, only to find that now I'm in prison, only to find that I'm full of blood, and it's my own. I've got stripes. I'm going to carry these the rest of my life.

[22 : 02] People hated him. People wanted him dead. If you imagine that Paul just woke up every morning and had a vision of Christ telling him it's going to be, he didn't have that. Those were, he had revelations, but they were rare.

They were a few moments in a lifetime of ministry when he needed it most, and when God saw fit. But most days, Paul got up not knowing how this was going to work out, and not knowing how this would turn.

Many times, he had no idea what was going on. You know what you have when you're chained up in prison? You know what you have? You have time. Plenty of time.

Time to sit and wonder. Time to think it through. Time to run it over in your head. Should I have done that? What if I didn't do that?

What if I didn't go there? What if I just did this? God, is this really the way it's supposed to be? Did you want me to be here and now? Is this your will? I should be out there.

[23 : 10] Time to sit. Time to fear. Why is this happening? In chapter 11 and verse 25, when he was describing his troubles, he said that, Thrice I suffered shipwreck.

A night and a day have I been in the deep. I assume he's either doggy paddling or floating on some piece of driftwood.

I don't believe that has anything to do with Acts 27 and that shipwreck because that seemed like they were right on shore and they swam to shore. This one, a night and a day, that's time to pray, time to question.

There's plenty to be perplexed about when it's dark and you're in the middle of the sea, in the deep. When we read earlier, within were fears.

Without were fighting, within were fears. Why, Paul? Weren't you trusting Christ? Weren't you walking in the Spirit? Within were fears. What are you afraid of, Paul?

[24 : 15] Well, sure, he was trusting God, but God didn't show him how it was going to work out. God didn't reveal what's ahead. We studied that Wednesday night. Paul feared.

Paul wondered. Paul was perplexed without understanding and without answers. All he could see was what was right in front of him and many, many times that was not pretty.

He wasn't the only one that got thrown in jail. Peter was thrown in jail. And for all he knew, his head was getting cut off the next morning. Jeremiah was thrown in jail.

He didn't know how that was going to go. He was in and out of jail many, many times for preaching. There's other prophets in the Old Testament tossed into jail. John the Baptist was thrown into jail just for serving God and preaching righteousness and truth.

Time, questions, fears, uncertainties, just perplexed. I said yes to God and here I am. The ministry or serving God can be a confusing, confusing thing.

[25 : 25] The Christian life can be perplexing because you expect and you're kind of inside, you really anticipate it to go well. You hope I'm going to do right, God will acknowledge that, and he'll take care of me and he'll bless me.

I'll give up this and he'll take care of me. So it's going to be okay and then it's not okay. And then there's troubles and there's troubles on every side.
And there's questions and there's no answers. You feel like you're sacrificing so God will take care of you but things start falling apart and you're left wondering why.
In your mind, in your heart, it's not supposed to be like this, is it? But Paul says in verse 8, we are perplexed but not in despair.
Despair is to feel and to believe that there is no answer. It's never going to come. There is no relief. There is no hope. Just to accept that this is the end.
[26 : 33] To accept that it can't get better. To accept that it's failed. It's over. That's despair. There was a tragic time. Look back at chapter 1.

There was a tragic time where the Apostle Paul experienced despair. He thought he was going to be dead. In verse 8, he despaired of life.
2 Corinthians 1, verses 8 through 10, For we would not, brethren, have you ignorant of our trouble, there it is, which came to us in Asia, that we were pressed out of measure, above strength, insomuch that we despaired even of life.
Thought it was over. But we had the sentence of death in ourselves, that we should not trust in ourselves, but in God, which raiseth the dead, who delivered us from so great a death and doth deliver, and whom we trust that he will yet deliver us.
He thought it was done. But now he writes, we're not in despair. We don't have answers. We're perplexed. We don't get it, but we are not in despair.
[27 : 46] I don't understand. I don't have answers. I don't even see a way for this to work out. But for some reason, there is hope that God can fix this.

There is hope that God can bring glory to himself in this. That God can work this together for good. He is able. There is a song that says, because Jesus lives, there is hope.
There is hope. And Christian, there is hope. With the Lord Jesus Christ, there is always hope. You can be perplexed. You don't get it.
You can't see what's coming. But there is hope. There is always hope. Turn to 1 Thessalonians, chapter number 4. You may not understand.
You may not see how. You may only see problems and see mountains. But don't despair.
[28 : 57] And don't resist the Lord. Invite him. Into the problem. Believe him and surrender to him. 1 Thessalonians, chapter 4. Here is a hope, a particular hope that can never, ever, ever be taken away from us.

We can never be in despair because of this hope. In verse 13, Paul writes, says, I would not have you to be ignorant, brethren, concerning them which are asleep, that ye sorrow not even as others which have no hope.
For if we believe that Jesus died and rose again, even so them also which sleep in Jesus will God bring with him. For this we say unto you by the word of the Lord, that we which are alive and remain unto the coming of the Lord shall not prevent them which are asleep.
For the Lord himself shall descend from heaven with a shout, with the voice of the archangel, and with the trump of God. And the dead in Christ shall rise first, then we which are alive and remain shall be caught up together with them in the clouds to meet the Lord in the air and so shall we ever be with the Lord.
Wherefore, comfort one another with these words. What we call the rapture. Paul calls, as he writes to Titus, he calls that blessed hope and the glorious appearing of the great God and our Savior, Jesus Christ.

[30 : 21] That is the one hope, that is the one day that can never be taken away from us as believers. That Jesus Christ is going to come and rescue us from the trouble that's on every side, from the struggles and the questions and the fears, the perplexing, the persecutions.

He's taken us away. Away from it all. You can't take that hope from me. I could be in prison and I still have that hope.
I could lose my health. I could lose my family. I could lose all my sense, but I can't lose that hope. He said that to me by the word of the Lord. There's authority behind what that teaching is.
I'll always have that hope. So, life has its problems and the ministry has its troubles. And we're not going to go any further in chapter 4.

We're just going to stop at verse 8 and Lord willing, next week, tackle verse 9. The Christian experience is filled with fear and filled with pain.

[31 : 32] Filled with questions that don't get answered. Certainly not immediately. Not when you want them. And today, you're going to get up and you're going to leave and you're going to go back to your life.

And some of you, you're going to go right back to your troubles. Right back to your questions. Right back to your problems. I want you to leave here though believing in all of your heart.

You don't need help from the government. You need Jesus. You don't need somebody to come by and give you an answer. Or to give you a solution.

You don't need a plan. You need Jesus Christ. You don't need money. You don't need to fix it yourself. You need Jesus Christ to come in and make the difference.

When Jesus Christ is everything to you, you'll find out that he is all that you need. He's all you need.

[32 : 37] You need Jesus Christ. He can make the difference. He is everything. What a difference Jesus Christ makes. And he can make the difference for you.

Do you need help? Do you need help that get to Jesus? Do you need direction? Do you need answers?

Seek it from Jesus. Do you need a friend? You can find one in Jesus Christ. Do you need hope? Do you need forgiveness?

Come to Jesus. Paul said, Christ is all. He's all you need. Paul found himself in messes.

He found himself in places he couldn't get out of. He couldn't see how this was going to work out but he had Jesus Christ. He had Jesus Christ and he didn't, he wasn't distressed.

[33 : 37] It was heavy but he could go on. He didn't know how but he wasn't in despair. He still had hope. There's a song.

I have the words here. Printed them off. A little chorus or a little tune I learned as a kid. It's kind of a Sunday school song. And it's a song that's called Happiness is the Lord.

And the thought of this song, it's just a blessing. It's a little cute tune that it doesn't talk about health. It doesn't talk about wealth. It doesn't describe how things are all wonderful.

It just describes a relationship with Jesus Christ and how that's all you need. The song says, Happiness is to know the Savior live in a life within his favor having a change in my behavior.

Happiness is the Lord. happiness is a new creation Jesus and me in close relation having a part in his salvation happiness is the Lord.

[34 : 54] Real joy is mine no matter if the teardrops fall I've found the secret it's Jesus in my heart.

Happiness is to be forgiven living a life that's worth the living taking a trip that leads to heaven happiness is the Lord.

Happiness is the Lord. You need a friend you need to know the happiness the difference from the problems and the shadows and the darkness of this life it's the Lord Jesus Christ.

In chapter 4 in verse 5 Paul said for we preach not ourselves because ourselves we don't have the answers and we're not going to give you the help you need and we can't be there in the dark hours and in the nights when you can't sleep and when you can't eat and you can't think it through he said we preach not ourselves but Christ Jesus the Lord.

Christian I'm preaching Christ Jesus the Lord to you this morning. He can make the difference. Let's close our eyes and bow our heads this morning. are you in trouble and are you perplexed?

[36 : 31] Are you perplexed? faithful everyone to you this morning and go to us to feel sweet F Cleveland to you this morning and to talk to you as ■ crist peut così as well to you and and ■ to you to