

"Always The Deliverer"

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[0 : 00] Peter. Pew Bible. After a number of sporadic weeks, I'm scheduled for the coming months to be preaching regularly to you, and it is a privilege and a pleasure, so thank you for having me here.

And we'll be continuing sequentially chapter 1, 2 Corinthians chapter 1. We'll be continuing sequentially through this book, so please read ahead if you can to familiarize yourself with the passage before we read it.

As I was considering this text in preparation, I was reminded of a situation that can happen when exercising with barbells. Oh yes, I have quite a few.

There's a particular exercise move called a squat where you take the barbell with weights on either end on your back, you pull it off of the rack, and then you squat down and lift it back up and set it back on the rack.

Many people who do this often like to gauge their strength by seeing what their personal best is, and so they will work themselves up, adding more and more weight until they max out.

[1 : 23] But sometimes, if you are not gauging your own strength properly enough, you may put more weight on the bar than is possible for you to handle. And so as you lift the barbell off of the rack and you squat down, you find you are unable to get the weight back up.

You are under this heavy load, and your strength has been taxed to its limit. It's very dangerous to try to get out from under that bar by yourself with all of the weight on it, and the best thing to do is for someone to come over and lift that weight off of you.

And this is a good illustration, a good analogy of what Paul talks about in this text, where he discusses how he was burdened beyond his strength.

Just as a squatter might be burdened beyond his strength to lift back up, so too Paul recounts for the Corinthians a circumstance in his life where he found his strength was insufficient for the burden he was under.

Perhaps you've come here this morning, and there is suffering and burdens in your life. Or maybe you know other people who are going through suffering and difficulties, and you would like to know how to encourage them in that.

[2 : 50] This text is here to teach you what God's plan for our suffering is. And even if this morning you sit here and you feel pretty content with your life, troubles may be just around the corner.

And you need this text that you might be prepared to face them. Beyond that, there is one burden that will befall every one of us.

One trouble that will come to all of us one day, and that is death. And this passage holds up the only solution to that burden, the knowledge that death will come to us.

The only hope for mankind who is destined to perish. Please read with me in 2 Corinthians chapter 1, verses 8 through 10. For we do not want you to be ignorant, brethren, of the trouble which came to us in Asia, that we were burdened beyond measure and above strength, so that we despaired even of life.

Yes, we have the sentence of death in ourselves, that we should not trust in ourselves, but in God who raises the dead, who delivered us from so great a death, and does deliver us, in whom we trust that he will still deliver us.

[4 : 25] This is the word of God. The outline for today's sermon matches directly Paul's discussion in this text. Point one is the affliction, and point two is the instruction.

In this text, Paul recounts the affliction that he is going through, and then recounts the instruction that he received through that suffering.

So point one, the affliction. Paul shares his sufferings with the Corinthians. He says, I do not want you to be ignorant, brethren, of our trouble which came to us in Asia.

He is reaching out to the Corinthian church to share the difficulties that he is going through with them. But notice he doesn't bother to complain about all the details, but simply to share with them the degree to which he was burdened.

He says that he was burdened beyond measure and above strength. This, once again, is the man under the bar, powerless to lift the burden off his back.

[5 : 38] There are difficulties in life that are so demanding that we are powerless or feel powerless in the face of them.

And we ought not to be confused. Even godly, mature believers can go through great difficulties and feel great despair.

This here is the Apostle Paul. It's a struggle to find a Christian who is greater than this man. He penned a significant portion of the New Testament.

He was an apostle sent by Christ. He is a believer without comparison. And yet he accounts in his life that he found himself overburdened beyond all of his strength.

Unless you would consider yourself an even stronger person than the Apostle Paul, you need this truth and the comfort that he had.

[6 : 47] As I'm thinking about the suffering that believers encounter, I'm reminded of a number of psalms of lament that cry out to God over difficulties in our lives.

Psalms 88 verse 4 says, I am counted among those who go down to the pit. I am a man who has no strength. Or Psalm 38 10, My heart throbs, my strength fails me, and the light of my eyes, it also has gone from me.

Sometimes believers go through deep difficulties where even their strength is dried up. And if there are difficulties in our life that go beyond our strength, where can we go?

And what can we do? The burden is beyond the strength of the Apostle to handle, and it also leads him to despair.

He says that we despaired even of life. What a deep trouble this must have been. Some difficulties are so deep, so dark, so all-encompassing, that the idea of struggling onward to continue living would lead to despair and sadness.

[8 : 16] What will help us if even the idea of life causes us to despair? What hope is there? Not only did he despair of life itself, he also had the sentence of death Paul was always under constant threat and difficulty.

He was flogged, whipped, beaten, and stoned, shipwrecked, abandoned, hungry, and sick. He was persecuted, imprisoned, tried, and multiple times sentenced to death.

Paul is not exaggerating here when he recounts that he had the sentence of death in his body, in himself. Paul knows what it's like to suffer under the greatest difficulties and the greatest threats possible.

He faced all of these things, and he recounts, continuing on, what the answer is to these difficulties. Many people may be able to assist you with life's difficulties, comforting you on a difficult day, helping you financially, or to take care of a task.

But when you are faced against life's greatest enemy, death itself, what will be your answer?

[9 : 50] What will save you? What will keep you from being crushed by it? So we've considered the affliction that Paul was under, and that we all face as members of mankind, and questions that that clearly raises of where we are to go, and what we will do.

Now let us consider the answer that Paul gives in this passage, the instruction, point number two, the instruction. Notice what is written in verse nine.

We had the sentence of death in ourselves, that, that, we should trust not in ourselves. Paul is revealing here that God has a purpose in all of our suffering.

Just as Paul suffered, he says, that was not in vain, but for a purpose. In order that something might be achieved. God is in charge of everything, and he is working everything together for our good.

As Romans 8, 28 teaches us, we know that for those who love God, all things work together for good, for those who are called according to his purpose.

[11 : 16] It is a promise. It is a promise that everything that happens, even our suffering, is orchestrated by God to bring us good. Like Paul, never let your suffering be wasted.

Know that God is teaching you. Your suffering should make you ask questions that ultimately lead you back to God.

God. So when you go into suffering, think about what's going on, and think about what God is trying to teach you, and turn to find the same answer that Paul did.

Let's look at Paul's answer. Answer number one, do not trust in yourselves. We had the sentence of death in ourselves that, that we would not trust in ourselves.

The first thing to learn from your suffering is that you should not trust in yourself to save yourself. You are not good enough, you are not strong enough, you are not smart enough, you will never work hard enough, you will never be enough to make your life heaven.

[12 : 40] The same thing goes for myself. As long as you are counting on yourself, you are either setting yourself up for disappointment, or you are settling for a life far short of the glories of God.

If you trust in yourself, give it time and you will find just how weak and limited you are. I don't say this to discourage you, but that you might realize the purpose of God in your suffering, that you should not trust in yourself and in the things of this world.

You are not the answer to the problems in your life, and the things of this world are worthless in comparison with God.

Someone counting on the things of this world to satisfy them is like a man eating a picture of a steak and thinking he knows what a good meal is.

every time suffering comes your way, it is a reminder from God to teach you that this world does not satisfy.

[13 : 59] If you learn this lesson through your suffering, you will find that it was worth it. That if suffering pulls you from this world and points you to God, that it was well worth it to suffer what you suffered.

That's been the experience of my walk. Lesson number two, God raises the dead. We have the sentence of death in ourselves that we would not trust in ourselves, but in God who raises the dead. Now we get the sweet answer to life's greatest difficulties. we hear the one we should turn to when faced with the chief terror.

The parallel here is that even if you feel the greatest burden possible in life, the threat of death, like Paul did, there is a God who is greater than that burden, able even to overturn death.

death. If death is the last enemy, if death is the thing that we can never conquer, if it is the clearest example of how we cannot save ourselves, then we need a God who has proven that he can raise the dead.

[15 : 33] God. We need a God who can overturn this undefeatable enemy. If you can climb Mount Everest, you can climb any other mountain.

if God can raise the dead, he can raise you from any trial. The end is never the end with God.

He always has the final word, and that final word is wonderful. do not trust in yourselves in the midst of suffering, but trust in God who is able to raise the dead.

He has shown his power. He is mighty to save. But you will never be able to trust in God like this, as long as your focus is on the circumstances you're in.

Life is a fickle thing, and it has its highs and lows and bounces back and forth. And as long as your focus is on your circumstances, your joy will fluctuate with them.

[16 : 51] Do not focus on your job, your health, your wealth, your friends, your comfort, but focus on him who is able to make good out of even the worst circumstances.

And you will see that even when it seems like every last opportunity for your salvation has been lost, that God can even raise the dead.

And he has raised the dead. He has raised Christ, and he has raised us with Christ, if we believe in him, to walk in newness of life.

I love how Romans 6, verses 5 through 11 show that we are united with Christ in his death and in his resurrection. For if we have been united with him in a death like his, we shall certainly be united with him in a resurrection like his.

We know that our old self was crucified with him in order that the body of sin might be brought to nothing, so that we would no longer be enslaved to sin.

[18 : 03] for one who has died has been set free from sin. Now if we have died with Christ, we believe also that we will live with him.

Being raised from the dead, we will never die again. Death no longer has dominion over him. For the death he died, he died to sin once for all, but the life he lives, he lives to God. So you also must consider yourselves dead to sin and alive to God in Christ Jesus. In Christ Jesus. Death and resurrection is God's preferred pattern to bring himself glory. That suffering comes first and then he shows his mighty salvation. Over and over, God shows that this is the pattern that he has ordained to bring himself glory. So when you feel like death in the midst of your difficulties, hope in God for he is able to raise even the dead.

[19 : 16] Lesson number three, God is always, always a great deliverer. He is the deliverer.

Look at Paul's confidence here. It's rooted in the proof of who God is and what God has done and it's rooted in the promises that he gives to us that we receive by faith.

God who raises the dead, who delivered us from so great a death, and does deliver us in whom we trust that he will still deliver us.

Paul looks at his life and he looks at the God whom he serves and he says he has delivered us from great troubles and difficulties, from even so great a death.

And so I can have every confidence that he will continue to deliver us all the way till the end. Our God is a mighty savior and a great deliverer.

[20 : 35] And if you are a believer, if you have trusted in Christ, you have already experienced the taste of his great deliverance as he rescued you from the slavery of sin that you were under.

If we've been delivered in such a way by such a God, we ought to trust him. We ought to have every confidence like a child whose father has been with them every step of the way and kept them from falling, knows that they can lean on their father in the deepest of difficulties and that he will catch them.

the great threats are overturned by our God, so we should be able to trust him even in the midst of overwhelming circumstances and unbearable difficulties.

Even when you are burdened beyond strength, God's deliverance is enough to save you. read the Bible.

See how over and over again God delights to save. I love how the psalmist puts it in Psalm 40 verses 2 and 3.

[21 : 57] He drew me up from the pit of destruction out of the miry bog and set my feet upon a rock making my steps secure. He put a new song in my mouth, a song of praise to our God.

Many will see and fear and put their trust in the Lord. The Lord is a deliverer who reaches down into muck and filth and plucks us from it and sets us in secure places, in the most secure place, Christ.

Ecclesiastes 7.2 instructs us that it is better to go to the house of mourning than the house of feasting, for death is the destiny of everyone, and the living should take this to heart.

Psalm 90 verse 12 tells us to teach us to number our days so that we may get a heart of wisdom. It is appointed unto man once to die, and then comes the judgment.

This is the end of every man. It's the penalty for sin. It is the chief affliction and burden of mankind that we have earned by our rebellion to God is death and hell.

[23 : 30] And so this passage talking about where suffering should point us, points us to the deliverer. and the threat of the suffering of hell should point us once again to the great deliverer, to Christ, who himself tasted death and hell in the place of sinners, so that anyone who trusts in him might not perish but have eternal life, and might not perish but enjoy the resurrection of Christ.

If he is not risen, we have no hope. But in his resurrection, he shows that death itself has been conquered.

Because he is risen, we have hope, even in face of the greatest suffering, the suffering of death and hell. people.

So every difficulty that God sends your way is a lesson from God to teach you not to rely on yourself, thinking that you could save yourself, but to trust him and to trust him in the greatest way for salvation from your sins and the punishment you have earned.

Let us trust and hope in Christ, the great deliverer, risen from the dead, able to save us, even from our own sin.

[25 : 06] And let us hear and receive these words from 1 Corinthians 15, verses 50 to 58. I declare to you, brothers and sisters, that flesh and blood cannot inherit the kingdom of God, nor does that which perish inherit that which is imperishable.

Listen, I tell you a mystery, we will not sleep, but we will all be changed in a flash, in the twinkling of an eye, at the last trumpet, for the trumpet will sound, the dead will be raised imperishable, and we will be changed.

For the perishable must clothe itself with the imperishable, and the mortal with immortality. immortality, then the saying will become true, which is written, death has been swallowed up in victory.

Where, O death, is your victory? Where, O grave, is your sting? sin, the sting of death is sin, the power of sin is the law, but thanks be to God, he gives us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ. He has delivered us from so great a death, and will deliver us. Let us hope in him. Please close with me in prayer.

[26 : 47] Lord, we are unable to save ourselves, and if we were to understand reality, we would feel that we are burdened beyond our strength and beyond measure.

Might you in Christ lift that burden from us, and so too, Lord, to point us to you, teach us through every suffering of your great salvation.

In Jesus' name we pray. Amen. Amen.