

Let Us Take Heart Together

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[0 : 0 0] All right. Let's start. I like to sometimes start with a little bit of a brief survey, a brief show of hands. So let's do this.

Who here likes to be seen as weak? If you like to be seen as weak, if you enjoy that, you can raise your hand right now. All right. Huh.

Okay. All right. We got one in the back. Okay. All right. Let's ask another one. Maybe I'll get more responsive to this. Who here likes to be seen as pathetic? Who here likes to be seen as pathetic?

Okay. Nobody. All right. So, wow. That's even worse. So nobody, it turns out nobody likes that. Okay. It's humiliating. One, you know, one of the chief longings of our hearts is to, is that we want to possess glory or we want to be connected with glory.

You know, a couple months ago, I preached a sermon on that idea, the glory ladder, right? This idea that we want to be seen as glorious. We want to live a glorious life. The last thing that we want is the shame that comes from looking weak.

[1 : 1 0] In fact, if I'm weak, you know, maybe you're, maybe you're thinking not only the shame, maybe you're thinking that your weakness, man, that's going to just be a hindrance.

That's going to be a hindrance, not just to me, but to the people around me. If I'm weak, not only are people going to look down on me, I'm just going to be a drag to them, right?

When someone who is weak and a friend offers, you know, let me help you. Let me help you. Let me, you know, let me buy something for you.

Let me give you a ride in my car. Let me do such and such. How many times have you heard someone reply with a phrase like this? Oh, I don't want to be a bother. Oh, I don't want to inconvenience anyone.

Oh, I don't want anyone to go out of their way for me. You know, we talk about weakness. We talk about needing help. We talk about suffering as though they are shameful.

[2 : 0 8] We talk about them as though they're going to actually harm God's family, that my weakness is actually going to be harmful to other people. I've even heard pastors talk like this.

And so I want to confess to you that this sometimes gets modeled right at the top levels of the church. I've heard pastors and read pastors say that you should, you know, you should make sure to appear strong in front of your church.

You need to show that you are just unflappable. You're solid in difficult times. You know, never, never act like you're struggling or weak or you don't know what to do.

Hide that. Look confident. After all, because, and here's why they think that way. First of all, someone might use that as an opportunity to tear you down.

Someone might see your weakness and say, hey, this guy's pathetic. Let's get him out of here. Sometimes, you know, but the explanation I've also heard is that, you know, oh, if you show weakness, if you show a lack, if you show you're struggling, people might lose confidence in God, if even their pastor is struggling with confidence in the Lord, well, maybe I can't be confident in the Lord either.

[3 : 22] So whatever you do, don't show weakness to your church. Don't need help from your church. Don't let your suffering be visible to your church. There's this idea that that's wisdom.

I just want to throw to you there, man, if you ever catch me being like that, call me out on it. All right? If you ever catch BK like that, call him out on that.

If you ever catch Carl or Chris being like that, call them out on it. Because we, we are weak. We don't know what to do a lot of the times.

Like, you know, Carl is just talking about our kind of this budget situation where, you know, cash flow is getting really critical. I'm not going to come up here and say, man, no, don't worry. We've got this covered.

We're good. Like, we don't really know what to do all the time with situations like that. We need help. We need you to be crying out to God on our behalf.

[4 : 22] We don't always have it together. I don't always have it together in my life, in my ministry. We're not always sure what to do. I've got two goals this morning as we turn to God's word in 2 Corinthians.

Two goals this morning. First goal, by the time we're finished looking at God's word, I want each and every one of us to be convinced. Each and every one of us to be convinced that this mindset, show no weakness, that it is a poison to the family of God.

It's a poison to the family of God. Second, second goal. By the time we're finished looking at God's word, I want each and every one of us to be convinced. To be convinced that weakness and suffering are, in fact, the pathway to a life-giving oneness in the family of God.

They are the pathway to a life-giving oneness in the family of God. Our text is 2 Corinthians 1, verses 3 to 11. If you've got one of the blue Bibles, our usher's handout, that's on page 964.

Page 964, that's 2 Corinthians 1, verses 3 to 11. And as we're preparing to hear these words, these words written by the Apostle Paul, words that the Holy Spirit inspired him to write.

[5 : 42] Let me give you some of the background. So Paul is beginning a letter to the first century church that is located in this bustling city of Corinth.

This sort of cosmopolitan economic port city in modern day Greece. And Paul's relationship with this church is, you know, to put it mildly, it's rocky.

You read 1 Corinthians and 2 Corinthians, those are some of the spiciest letters that Paul writes. One of the many problems in the church is that these people, they are really impressed by these other visiting teachers who've come in and they've got alternative gospels, alternative teaching.

And these other teachers, they really seem to have it all together. They're powerful speakers. They've got successful ministries. They've got charismatic personalities. Everything seems to be going well for them.

And then as for Paul, the Corinthians are really a lot less keen on that guy. Paul admits he is not a powerful speaker. He admits he is not an impressive personality.

[6 : 53] Paul seems to be very weak. Paul seems to suffer sickness and terrible hardships wherever he goes. And so to the Corinthians, they look at Paul like, sure, he founded our church, but he doesn't seem to have a lot to offer us.

He doesn't have a lot of glory. If anything, Paul is kind of a drag on the church. Paul is not leading the, you know, their idea of what the victorious and prosperous life is.

He doesn't have this amazing ministry that these other false teachers are leading. Paul is weak. Paul is humiliated. And Paul is honestly kind of embarrassing. And yet we're going to see that Paul, far from, you know, trying to puff out his chest and say, no, no, guys, I really do have it all together.

Paul does not cover up his weakness. Paul does not cover up his suffering. Paul underlines it. He emphasizes it. He leans into it. So take a look at his words.

These words that are inspired by God in 1 Corinthians 1, verses 3 to 11. 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.

[8 : 23] 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. For we do not want you to be ignorant, brothers, of the affliction we experienced in Asia.

For we were so utterly burdened beyond our strength that we despaired of life itself. Indeed, we felt that we had received the sentence of death.

But that was to make us rely not on ourselves, but on God who raises the dead. He delivered us from such a deadly peril, and he will deliver us.

[9 : 32] On him we have set our hope that he will deliver us again. You also must help us by prayer, so that many will give thanks on our behalf for the blessing granted us through the prayers of many.

This is the word of the Lord. Now, a few weeks ago, I mentioned as I was preaching that many of us in this church family, we're going through suffering. We're going through hard times.

We're facing sickness. We're facing death. We're facing loss. Uncertain futures. Grief that we're carrying. Our lives are being upended. That just really seems to be a theme going on in our church family right now, right?

Our lives are being upended. And a lot of us, we're just weary. We're just worn out. And in that state, we, you know, many of us are kind of like looking for a reason.

Like, why is this happening to me? Why is this happening? And we can sometimes look at a text like this, and I think there's a danger when we look at this, is that we might come to a bit of a hasty conclusion.

[10 : 40] A hasty conclusion that misses a point. Here's what you and I might initially think the point of these verses is. We might come away thinking this. Oh, finally, this gives me a reason for my suffering.

I'm suffering so that I can comfort other people who are also suffering. That gives me a reason. That gives me a purpose. Like, I'm suffering so that I can comfort other people who are also suffering. There is truth contained in that statement.

But I'm concerned for us that there may also be a dangerous mindset, something really subtle that's underlying that. On the one hand, there may be this subtle, sneaky mindset of foolish self-confidence.

Foolish self-confidence. Here's what I mean. I might think, oh, wow, I have gone through suffering. Now, these verses say, since I've gone through suffering, now I am uniquely positioned, I am uniquely skilled, because of my experience, to help others who are suffering in a similar way.

I suffered, therefore, now I am qualified to help other people who suffer. And I'm going to be really good at it. That's not always true. That's not always true.

[11 : 54] First of all, haven't we all met people who have gone through really tough times and they seem to have learned entirely the wrong lessons from it? Haven't you met somebody?

You're like, man, they went through a tough time. And boy, they came out of that even more foolish than when they started. When they came out of that, oh, man, that did not work out. They're just making even worse mistakes than they were before.

You know, when I talked about pastors who sort of turtle. They try to protect themselves from their church. I've seen pastors go through church conflict and the big lesson that they learned from the experience is you shouldn't be friends with anyone in your church.

They came out of that more foolish than when they started. The mere fact of weakness and suffering doesn't make you a good and wise counselor. Right? And so that's something we're going to look at.

What is it in suffering that can make you a good and wise counselor? Second, we have a tendency to project our own experiences and our own struggles onto other people.

[12 : 59] Right? I've experienced this and when I was going through it, this is what I really struggled with. And then, you know, I think my experiences are, you know, that I already know what your difficulties are.

I already know what you're facing. I already know. And we do that without even listening. Without even listening carefully and learning that what they have to say, learning what they are struggling with.

Right? It might be something completely different than what I expected. Sometimes when I ask someone, well, how, you know, you're going through this tough time. How can I pray for you? And what comes out of their mouth is something like, wow, I never would have thought to pray for that.

I'm really glad they said that because I wouldn't have prayed for that. But that's what they're going through. And it's so different than what I would have struggled with. So don't draw from this passage a false self-confidence about your ability to comfort and counsel others in suffering.

There's more than just raw suffering that makes you a good comforter. And that's what we're going to look at today. Another dangerous mindset that we might have is a foolish self-centeredness.

[14 : 04] A foolish self-centeredness. Now I can have a tendency to make the story of my suffering a story about me. I can make it a story about me.

Here's what I mean. Remember when I said this. Finally, you know, our mindset might be, finally, this gives me a reason for my suffering. I am suffering so that I can comfort other people.

You know, I can make it all about, this is all about my journey. It's about my journey, overcoming my struggles, discovering my strength, my new capability to help other people. It's about my newfound purpose in life.

And this becomes just another glory ladder. If that's your mindset, watch out that you are not seeking glory through your own achievements, a glory apart from the Lord.

Don't make the story of your suffering a story about you. If I make the story of my suffering a story about me, it's really not going to be much help to anybody else. Nobody is going to be, you know, I can't comfort anyone with a Dave-centered story that's all about Dave.

[15 : 10] Who wants to, you know, how's that going to help you? What? The people that I'm comforting need. They need a Christ-centered story that's all about Jesus Christ.

And that is why, again and again, Paul absolutely refused to make himself the center of the story of his suffering. He'll tell, talk about his suffering, but he is not the center of his story.

Here's who Paul says the story is about, who it's centered on. Verse 3. Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of mercies and God of all comfort.

That's the one who's blessed. That's the one who this is all about. That's the one who receives the glory. It's not Paul. It's God the Father. It's God the Father, God the Son.

That's who the story of Paul's suffering is about. The self-centered stories about how much I have to offer God. How much I have to offer God's world thanks to the strength of my experiences.

[16 : 17] But God is determined to pop that self-centered balloon. And he does that in passages like Psalm 50. And in Psalm 50, God is speaking to a people who really think they've got a lot to offer him, right?

I mean, in this case, they're thinking, I've got animal sacrifices. I've got good things I can give to God. Man, he'll, you know, I can give him just so many amazing things. And here's what God tells them.

If I were hungry, I would not tell you. For the world and its fullness are mine. Do I eat the flesh of bulls or drink the blood of goats?

Offer to God a sacrifice of thanksgiving. And perform your vows to the Most High. And call upon me in the day of trouble. I will deliver you and you shall glorify me.

So what God is essentially saying to his people who think they've got so much to offer him. Is he saying, guess what? I don't need you. God is the only one who can say that.

[17 : 24] God is the only one who is truly self-reliant. God doesn't need you. God doesn't need your wisdom. God doesn't need your experiences. God doesn't need your story. God doesn't need them to comfort other people.

The world and its fullness are his. What God is telling us in Psalm 50 is that he doesn't want you in your strength. He doesn't need Dave to be this great guy who's got a really great story.

Who's got really great experiences. And that's how I can just do so much good for God. And for his people. God wants you in your weakness. God wants you to express what, here's what he says he wants.

Thanksgiving. That means you're celebrating how you've received help that you didn't deserve. God is asking you, call upon me in the day of trouble.

He says, I will deliver you. And that means that you aren't the one saving yourself. You are not the hero of your story. God says, you shall glorify me.

[18 : 32] And that means that when you tell the story of your own weakness, of your own suffering, it cannot be a story about you. You cannot be the central character.

You cannot be the hero who overcame the odds. This is a story about the most high God who has helped you and is comforting you. Now here's the point I'm getting at in all this.

My observation is that most of us here, we are more, as a general rule, we are more eager to give help than we are to receive help. We're more eager to give help and less eager to receive help.

I think that for every one person here that is a little bit too eager to receive help, and yeah, there are people like that. There are people who are just a little bit too eager to receive help. There are 20 people who are not eager enough to receive help.

I think that's the much bigger problem in our church family. Think about it. Are you more comfortable? Which makes you more comfortable? Offering a compliment to someone or being complimented yourself?

[19 : 41] Receiving a compliment. Does that make you just feel awkward when someone compliments you? Like, ooh, ooh. You know, I don't know how to respond to that. Are you more comfortable when you get to go buy dinner for someone or when someone else picks up the check for you, which makes you feel more comfortable?

Are you more comfortable asking someone how you can pray for them? Or are you more comfortable just going up to someone and telling them, I need prayer. Please pray for this. In general, I think the pattern, and I would include myself in this, is we seem a lot more eager to give help than we are to receive help.

We're a lot more eager to help others in their vulnerability than to be vulnerable ourselves and make ourselves look weak. By the way, men, this is especially true for you.

Right? There's something about, you know, men, we're really allergic to showing weakness. You know, we think that glory comes from being strong all the time and never showing weakness. You know, so just men, if this, you know, keep that in mind especially for yourself.

Ladies, if you want to complain about this, you can talk with me afterward. All right? The point is that if we want to give help, if we want to give comfort without being willing to receive it first, without being willing to receive comfort, we are actually going to be pretty awful at giving comfort.

[21 : 11] Like, if you're not willing to receive comfort, you're not going to be good at giving it. So before we can learn how to give comfort to other people, we need to first talk about this.

How can we learn to receive comfort from God? How can we learn to receive comfort from his people? Your suffering is an opportunity to learn how to be comforted.

Your suffering is an opportunity to learn how to be comforted. That's a big deal, and that's a big idea in this passage. Now, let's talk about what exactly this means, because I've been throwing that word comfort around, but I haven't defined it yet.

I haven't talked about what it is, and maybe, you know, as I said, like, guys don't really, we're not all about being comforted, right? And maybe that's because if you're a man, you know, when I say comfort, what you've envisioned is, oh, man, that means curling up on a soft couch and sobbing in each other's arms about your feelings, right?

And a lot of men are like, no, no, thanks. No, that's not me. I know. I know some of you guys, that's your dream, right? You know, but... Okay. That can certainly be one way.

[22 : 20] I mean, that is a way of comforting people. But the word comfort that is used over and over in these verses, used a lot in 2 Corinthians, it's not always translated comfort, because it's a word that can mean a lot of different things.

It's got a very broad range of usage in the New Testament. The root idea behind the word that's translated here as comfort is that you are passionately convincing someone about something.

You're passionately convincing someone about something. You're making a deep, heartfelt appeal to them. Now, sometimes you'll read old-timey theologians, and they've got, you know, they see this, the Greek word that's translated comforter.

And so they just take that. Because it can be so broad, they transfer it directly into English, and so instead of saying you're a comforter, they might say you're a paraclete.

A paraclete. Now, perhaps you're thinking, that must be sort of a feathery, squawking sort of comforter, right? You know? So, and yeah, if you're thinking, I want comforters in my life. I want paracletes.

[23 : 26] You know, go talk with Brent and Lynn. They've got a pet food store. You can attract some parakeets with some bird food and bring them into your life. But the idea of being this parakeet, that simply means that you are passionately convincing a friend.

You are making a heartfelt appeal to them to think or to act or to speak in a certain way. Now, sometimes this word is used in reference to comforting.

A lot of times it is. And when it is, the idea is this. You are calling someone else to take heart. You're passionately encouraging them, challenging them, pleading, convincing.

There is a reason for hope, you're telling them. There is goodness behind all the weakness and suffering you're experiencing.

And you and I, on the receiving end of this parakeeting, this comforting, we have to learn how to receive it. We have to learn how to receive it.

[24 : 36] Sometimes when you're suffering, you can be so convinced that all is lost, so locked into despair. And Paul talks about that. In verse eight, so I don't, you know, that we despaired of life itself.

And if that's you, if you're just so locked into despair, you're not even listening. First, humble yourself. Are you humble enough to listen to the comfort and convincing of other people?

Are you willing to admit, hey, maybe my mindset right now is just really warped. My perspective is skewed. I'm not thinking straight. And I need to listen.

Are you willing to be won over to hope? Are you willing to be won over to hope? Your suffering is an opportunity to learn how to be comforted.

In verse three, God is not only spoken of as the God of all comfort. He's also referred to as the Father of mercies.

[25 : 40] The Father of mercies. If you believe in Jesus Christ, if you are united to Jesus by faith in him, that he is the Son of God, he is the sinless, perfect Son of God, that he died for your sins, that you would be forgiven, that he took the punishment you deserved, that he was raised to new resurrection life, he is ascended to the Father, he's seated at the right hand of God, he will return again to judge the living and the dead, to receive the kingdom for himself, to receive the whole world as his own.

If you're united with this Jesus Christ by faith, then you have a Father. And your Father's mindset towards you is mercy.

It's mercy. He has taken pity on you. He has had compassion on you. And you know that you never deserve this. God only owed you justice without mercy.

God only owed you punishment and death for your sin. And what he gave you instead is forgiveness and life. Let that sink in. Let that humble you.

Give thanks for the mercies of your Father. He did not owe you compassion, and yet he gave it. And give thanks for the mercies of his children, for your brothers and sisters, when they too show you mercy, pity, and compassion.

[27 : 19] Recognize that that compassion you receive from them, that's a gift that you have not deserved. Are you humble enough to recognize that you are not owed compassion? You know, I know of many, many people, and it just seems like each year, I encounter someone new who is just filled with bitterness, with anger, because they demanded compassion.

compassion. They felt they were owed compassion by others. And they failed to receive the level of compassion that they felt they deserved. Oh, that's your mindset.

It is only a matter of time before you become a bitter, angry person. Are you humble enough to recognize that you are not owed compassion, not by God or by anyone else?

And then, flip side, are you humble enough to welcome others' compassion when they give it to you? Maybe you don't like to receive mercy. Mercy makes you look weak, makes you feel weak.

Maybe you resent it when others show pity towards you. It makes you feel pathetic. If you're unwilling to welcome the compassion, the mercy, the pity of your brothers and sisters in Christ, perhaps you need to consider, do you know God?

[28 : 47] Do you know the Father of compassion, pity, and mercy? Do you really know him? This is the character of God.

If you don't want compassion, pity, and mercy in your life, do you want God in your life? He is the Father of mercies and the God of all comfort. That is what the Father is like.

That is what the Son is like. That is what the Holy Spirit is like. In fact, that's what, here's what Jesus says about the Holy Spirit in John chapter 15. He says, when the helper comes, whom I will send to you from the Father, the Spirit of truth who proceeds from the Father, he will bear witness about me.

Now that word helper, that we've gotten bold up here, that's the same root as the word translated comfort in 2 Corinthians. That's, you know, that new vocabulary word we've learned, paraclete.

That's actually most often used with a capital P to describe the Holy Spirit. The Holy Spirit is the chief paraclete.

[29 : 57] The point that Jesus is making is that what makes the Holy Spirit a comforter is that he is the Spirit of truth. That's what Jesus calls him, the Spirit of truth who proceeds from the Father, who bears witness about Jesus.

The Holy Spirit directs, he's going to direct his apostles and he's going to direct your attention away from yourself. Away from yourself and onto Jesus Christ.

He's going to shift you from your self-talk, talking to yourself and, you know, just being absorbed in your own troubles to talking to God, your Father, through Jesus Christ about your troubles.

Instead of trying to solve your problems yourself, going to God first and talking with him, asking for help. Instead of trying to come up with your own wisdom in yourself, looking to his word and what he says for wisdom.

He shifts you. The Holy Spirit, if he's at work in you, he is shifting you from thinking about your weakness, your suffering, as being about you. Instead, he shifts it to being about Jesus.

[31 : 10] Are you humble enough to believe that your story of suffering is not about you, that it is a story about Jesus? Your suffering is an opportunity to learn how to be comforted.

And all of this is, it's not to make light of the hardships that you're going through, right? I'm not saying this as a, you know, just get it together, people. You know, you're going through some real stuff.

It's true. And we badly need to be comforted when we feel weak, when we are suffering, because we just don't have what it takes. We don't have the strength to get through it.

That's, Paul certainly did not. You know, in 2 Corinthians 4, Paul is going to refer to all of his hardships with this phrase. He calls them light momentary affliction.

Light momentary affliction, and sometimes we attempt to look at that and be like, okay, wow, all right. Suffering is just light momentary affliction. This is not bad. This is not bad. This is not bad. But it really is bad. You know, Paul is only referring to them as light momentary affliction because he is comparing them to what he calls an eternal weight of glory beyond all comparison.

[32 : 22] And he says that the affliction is preparing us for that, for that eternal weight of glory. It's just the hope on the other side of that affliction, the glory on the other side of that is so enormous that even your massive sufferings are just this tiny speck compared to the glory on the other side.

And Paul's suffering, when you're in it, it doesn't feel like that. That's precisely why Paul is saying calling a light momentary affliction. He's calling it that because it doesn't feel like that. He's calling it that to reorient our perspective.

In the moment, Paul's suffering did not feel so light. And if you have any doubts about that, look at verses 8 and 9 of chapter 1. Paul describes what his suffering felt like.

We do not want you to be unaware, brothers, of the affliction we experienced in Asia. For we were so utterly burdened beyond our strength.

Paul was given a lot more than he could ever handle. We were so utterly burdened beyond our strength that we despaired of life itself. Indeed, we felt that we had received the sentence of death.

[33 : 38] In chapter 11, Paul is going to list for the Corinthians all these afflictions which they consider to be a sign of weakness and shame. Paul does not hide them. Paul actually puts his weakness and his humiliation on parade.

relative to the appealing lives, relative to the impressive ministries of the false teachers, Paul says, here's what my experiences are.

Far greater labors, far more imprisonments, with countless beatings, and often near death. Five times I received at the hands of the Jews the forty lashes less one.

Three times I was beaten with rods. Once I was stoned. Three times I was shipwrecked. A night and a day I was 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, in toil and hardship, through many a sleepless night, in hunger and thirst, often without food, in cold and exposure.

And apart from other things, there is the daily pressure on me of my anxiety for all the churches who is weak and I am not weak, who is made to fall and I am not indignant. If I must boast, I will boast of the things that show my weakness.

[35 : 03] If I must boast, I will boast of the things that show my weakness. The circumstances in which your weakness is exposed, those very experiences that test your faith and hope in God and expose you as not having the strength, not having the resources, not having the wisdom to handle life, that is where your glory is going to be found.

That's what you talk about. Those are the things you boast in. Why? Why is this your boast? Why has God sent this into your life?

Why is your weakness exposed? Why are you suffering? In a nutshell, your suffering is an opportunity to learn how to be comforted.

Paul gives three reasons why your weakness and suffering is needed. Why it's needed to teach you how to be comforted. And the first reason is found in chapter 1, verse 5.

And that's where Paul writes, as we share abundantly in Christ's sufferings, so, through Christ, we share abundantly in comfort, too.

[36 : 22] Now, notice that Paul says that he is sharing two things, and he's not just sharing a little bit, he's sharing abundantly. Like, he is sharing loads of stuff with Christ.

His union with Christ has become a communion. union. It's not just a union, an identity, it is a deeply shared experience.

Paul is walking where Jesus walked before him. Where did Christ walk? Where did Christ walk when he said, when he said, you know, if anyone would come after me, let him deny his, deny himself, take up his cross, and follow me.

Well, Jesus says that as he is setting out towards Jerusalem. walking the road towards shame and suffering and death on the cross, you cannot have communion with Jesus Christ if weakness and suffering is locked out of your life.

If there is no weakness and no suffering in your life, you have no communion with Jesus. And you cannot share the abundant comfort and the abundant reassurance that comes from this deep relationship, this deep communion with Jesus.

[37 : 38] You can't have that unless you are willing to be weak. This is the first reason why your weakness and suffering is needed. You are weak and suffering to draw you closer to Jesus who suffered.

You are weak and suffering to draw you closer to Jesus who suffered, to give him your whole heart and to know his heart for you. the second reason Paul gives in verses 9 and 10.

As we've read, he explains the misery of his own weakness, the misery of his own suffering, and then Paul goes on to say, but that was to make us rely not on ourselves but on God who raises the dead.

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. When you are weak, when you are suffering, when you are really being honest about where you're at, then you know that you cannot save yourself.

You can't get yourself out of this. You can't manage your way out of this one. You know that just as Paul said, you're as good as dead. You've had it.

[39 : 00] Death becomes your companion. You can't pull yourself away from his grasp and that's when self reliance comes to an end. The self reliance that only God, whereas it's only appropriate for God to be that way.

If we're self-reliant, we're trying to put ourselves in God's shoes. We're trying to take his place. Self-reliance comes to an end and you throw yourself in the mercy of God who raises the dead.

God who raises the dead, which means that God is going to do a much better job of saving you than you ever could. God is going to do a much better job of helping you than you ever could.

God is going to do a much better job of comforting you than all the self-talk in the world. Paul has learned how to do this. Paul has trusted God to deliver him from deadly peril.

And God came through again and again. And so Paul is concluding, you know, he delivered us. He will deliver us. And then he says again, even more strongly, on him, we have set our hope that he will deliver us again.

[40 : 11] Why do you seem so weak and pathetic again and again? Why do you suffer again and again and again? So that you will learn that God can deliver you again and again and again.

And each deliverance is yet another monument to the saving, resurrecting, life-giving power of God. Is your life filled with monuments to the power of God?

Is the story of your life filled with monuments that on them are inscribed, he will deliver us again, thus far as the Lord helped us?

This is the second reason why your weakness and suffering is needed. You are weak and suffering to teach you humble reliance on God's saving power. You are weak and suffering to teach you humble reliance on God's saving power.

Then there's a third reason in verse 11. Paul has a request for the Corinthians. You also must help us by prayer so that many will give thanks on our behalf for the blessing granted us through the prayers of many.

[41 : 31] Paul has not only appealed to God for help. Paul is also appealing to, of all people, the Corinthians, this church that he's at odds with.

And he's appealing to them. He's not trying to cover up his weaknesses so that they'll finally accept him. Paul is just, here's all my weaknesses and will you pray for me? That's unbelievable.

He is asking the Corinthians to pray for him. That's no small thing. When is the last time, think of the last time you sensed your own weakness. Think of the last time you sensed your inadequacy.

Think of the last time you suffered, even in some little tiny way. You went through a hard time. Maybe it was just this morning that you felt weak, that you felt inadequate, that you felt like I'm just going through a rotten time.

Did you ask someone to pray for you? Did you ask someone to pray for you? Do you make it a habit to open up the real troubles of your heart to a brother or sister in Christ?

[42 : 38] Do you make it a habit for, hey, I'm begging you, pray for me. Pray for me in this way. Are you willing to share this weakness? Are you willing to share this suffering in order that your brothers and sisters might see God respond to their prayers and give thanks for his gift and blessing?

are you going to let his glory be put on display in your life? This is the third reason why your weakness and suffering is needed.

You are weak and suffering to teach you how to ask others to pray for you. You are weak and suffering to teach you how to ask others to pray for you.

So these are three reasons why your weakness, why your suffering is needed. You are weak and suffering to draw you closer to Jesus who suffered. You are weak and suffering to teach you humble reliance and God saving power.

And you are weak and suffering to teach you how to ask others to pray for you. There's probably a lot more besides but those are three that are in here in these verses. Taken together, these three reasons, they're all about learning how to seek help, learning how to accept help, learning how to receive help, learning how to give thanks for help.

[43 : 54] they're about learning to be comforted, learning how to take heart when God speaks to you, learning how to take heart when others speak to you.

Your suffering is an opportunity to learn how to be comforted. one another. Now, it's only now that we have laid all that groundwork that we can then shift to the second opportunity that weakness and suffering bring.

Your suffering is an opportunity for you to learn how to comfort one another. Your suffering is an opportunity for you to learn how to comfort one another.

Now, with this truth, there come three more reasons why your weakness and suffering is needed. Here's three more reasons why your weakness and suffering is needed, and these are all about learning to comfort one another.

The first reason, that's found in verses 4 and 5. Paul ends verse 4 by saying, we are comforted by God. And he ends verse 5 by adding, through Christ we share abundantly in comfort.

[45 : 04] And so, you and I, we are comforted by God through Christ. That's really important. By God through Christ. It's important because it tells me that first of all, there really is only one true comforter.

Who's the true comforter? The one behind all comfort. That's God himself. That's the Father working through the Son and through the Spirit. All comfort you receive comes from God, all true comfort comfort, and all true comfort you can give comes from God.

The Spirit working through me, he is the one who is bringing comfort to another person. I am not the real comforter. God is. And this means that true comfort, you know it's true comfort when the other person is reminded of who Jesus Christ is.

That's what real comfort is. The other person comes away from the conversation saying, yes, I remember Jesus now. I remember what he's like. I'd forgotten that. I needed to hear that.

Oh, how good he is. Oh, how I get to share my life with Jesus. Oh, what has Jesus, oh, think of all that Jesus has done for me.

[46 : 27] True comfort is drawing another person's gave us off of himself off of ourselves and our own problems we're consumed with and fixing our eyes on Jesus on his goodness, remembering that he is the one who saves us and helps us.

That's the first reason why weakness and suffering are needed. You are suffering to learn that true comfort is given by God through Christ. You are suffering to learn that true comfort is given by God through Christ.

The second of three reasons is found in verse six and that's where Paul writes, 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. So Paul is saying to them, hey, all that I'm going through, all that I'm experiencing, you know who it's for?

It's for you. It's for you. Paul is suffering on their behalf. His own weakness, his own suffering is going to enable him to comfort them.

[47 : 38] And so it is with you. You know, your weakness, your suffering, that's what is going to enable you as you lean into Christ and you look to Christ and cry out for help to God.

That learned experience, that's going to teach you how to then turn and comfort your brothers and sisters in Christ. And what that means is that all that weakness that's being exposed in your life right now, all the suffering that's happening in your life right now, what that means is that you are not only suffering for the sake of Christ, you are also weak and suffering for the sake of Squamish Baptist Church.

You're doing it for us. That's the second reason why weakness and suffering are needed. You are suffering on behalf of your church for their comfort.

You are suffering on behalf of your church for their comfort. Here's the third reason. It's found in verse seven.

And Paul writes here, our hope for you is unshaken. For we know that as you share in our sufferings, you will also share in our comfort.

[48 : 53] So here in verse seven, Paul still sees, he's again, he's saying this suffering is good for you. It's good for you in the church in Corinth. But now Paul shifts his language.

Now he is not talking about suffering for the sake of them. Now he's talking about, now he's using the language of sharing. He did that already in verse five.

He talked about sharing in Christ's sufferings. And now Paul's own experience of suffering, it's shared with the Corinthians. His own experience of comfort is shared with the Corinthians.

Corinthians. Weakness and suffering brings oneness and communion with Christ. It happens when our, you know, all, some people say, well, Paul was suffering.

Yeah, but he was suffering because he was preaching the gospel. That's not why I'm suffering. I'm suffering for another reason. Yeah, but in your suffering, are you being tempted to deny Christ? Are you being tempted to turn away from the Lord? If your suffering includes any component in which you are tempted to withdraw from God, and if you're suffering, that is definitely a component of it.

[50 : 03] You have the choice. Do I draw closer to him or do I pull away from him? And because every suffering has that component, that means that every suffering shares in the suffering of Christ.

Every suffering you face as a Christian because that's the way Jesus suffered. He was tempted. Do I pull away from God, my Father? Do I seek my own way or do I say to him, your will be done?

Do I cry out to him for help or do I just try to handle it myself? He faced that same temptation that he was wrestling and bleeding over.

And if you're suffering and you're a believer in Jesus Christ, you're facing that same temptation too. And so, as you lean into Christ, as you seek him, that brings oneness and communion with him.

And then that also brings oneness and communion with the rest of his family. Your weakness, your suffering, that is part of the work that God is doing to bring unity, oneness, wholeness to Squamish Baptist Church.

[51 : 12] This is part of God's plan for our church. It's part of God's plan for the church here in Squamish. It's part of God's plan for the church around the world. Your suffering is part of that plan. Remember, your story is just one tiny thread in a great tapestry that God is weaving, which is why it's not about you.

If you're suffering with humility, you are never suffering alone. If you are suffering with a mindset of humility, you're never suffering alone.

That's the third reason why weakness and suffering are needed. You are suffering to draw you closer in a shared life. You are suffering to draw you closer in a shared life with God and his family.

So those are three more reasons why your weakness and suffering is needed. You are suffering to learn that true comfort is given by God through Christ. You are suffering on behalf of your church for their comfort.

You are suffering to draw you closer in a shared life with them. And taken together, these three reasons, they're all about learning how you can give help. People who aren't weak and never suffer can't give help.

[52 : 33] You know why Jesus can give help? Because he suffered. He has shown compassion. These reasons are all about learning how to comfort, how to speak to others so that they will take heart.

So that they will take heart. Your suffering is an opportunity to learn how to comfort one another. And this is the reason why God brings us together, why he does it, brings us together again week after week after week.

This is why coming and just being a regular part of our church week in, week out, again and again and again and again. Why it's such a high priority to God. He does it so that we may take heart together.

That's why in Hebrews chapter 10 we're told, let us consider how to stir up one another to love and good works, not neglecting to meet together as is the habit of some, but encouraging one another and all the more as you see the day drawing near.

So why do we meet together? Why are we here each week? Why do we make sacrifices to be here? Why do we, you know, give up plans that other people want us to be a part of so that we can be here with one another?

[53 : 45] Why? To stir up one another to love and good works. We do this by encouraging one another. That word encouraging in bold. That's that same word. You're literally paracleteing.

You're comforting one another. We remind each other. We plead with each other. We pour our hearts out for each other. We beg of each other. Hey, hey, remember, remember the day of Christ's return is drawing near.

There is a day coming when Jesus will reign on earth forever and ever. When your weakness and your suffering starts to look like light momentary affliction because there is a great glory to be revealed.

And even now you get to see little glimpses of that peeking through in your life. There is a day coming when we will rise from the grave to new life.

There is a day coming when we will be freed from suffering and sin and shame and all that you and I will know is glory. And until that day, let's take heart together.

[54 : 46] Our God and Father, I'm just