

# Suffering As You Serve

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[ 0 : 00 ] This message was recorded at Vision Baptist Church in Alpharetta, Georgia. This is the next message in our series in the book of 2 Corinthians.

Take your Bible if you would and open to 2 Corinthians chapter 1. Just this morning in our Sunday school class alone, we mentioned four people that had died, four families that were affected by death, an 18-year-old died, a 29-year-old brother of a missionary died, a 65-year-old man, it was in the ministry of our guys that go to the nursing homes, and then one of our missionaries, a dad, died at 66 and was buried this Friday.

People hurt all the time, everywhere, there's a lot of hurt. So I want you to take 2 Corinthians, and I want you to get some wonderful truths that you can take on word of God for you today.

First thing I want you to look at is that he comforts us in all of our tribulations. Somewhere along the way, somebody gave you a very false view of who our God is.

It's easy for people to convince us that God is like an angry father with a long beard and white hair and lightning bolts in his hand, and he's up in heaven watching us to see when we do wrong.

[ 1 : 23 ] We're all afraid of him. We're afraid we're going to go to hell when we die. We're taught a whole lot of things. Look what the Bible says about him in 2 Corinthians chapter 1 and verse 3 with me.

If you would, verses 3 and 4. Look at the Bible. Father, please open the eyes of the people today that listen.

Open the eyes of your children. Open the eyes of those that aren't yet born again. Help them to learn about who you are and your great and wonderful character. Help them to learn about what you do in our lives.

God, I pray you'd save people. I pray you'd encourage people. I pray you'd comfort people today. And I'll give you great honor and glory for all you do in Jesus' name. Amen. If you have 2 Corinthians chapter 1 and verse 3 open, you should underline right now, Father of mercies.

Father of mercies and God of all comfort. Father of mercies and God of all comfort. Did you know that in the Bible that's not a new concept?

[ 2 : 39 ] I'll bet some of you were even told the God of the Old Testament was a kind of a mean God. And he was kind of rough and a lot of rules and a lot of law and a lot of killing. And the God in the New Testament is a different God.

Well, the Bible says that he is the Father of mercies and the God of all comfort. And though you won't be able to keep up with me, would you write down verses and you check me out when you get home if you would.

Look at 2 Samuel chapter 24 verse 14. That's Old Testament. 2 Samuel chapter 24 verse 14. That's Old Testament after the law was given. The Bible says, But thou, O Lord, art a God full of compassion and gracious.

Full of compassion and gracious. Long-suffering. That means super patient. And plenteous. That means full of with a lot of plenty and mercy and truth. That's what the Bible said in the book of Samuel.

He's a God of all mercies. He's a God of long-suffering and plenteous and mercy and truth. Psalm chapter 86 verse 15. King David writes and says, But thou, O Lord, art a God full of compassion and gracious.

[ 3 : 47 ] Long-suffering and plenteous in mercy and truth. Psalm 103 verse 8. The Bible says, The Lord is merciful and gracious and slow to anger and plenteous in mercy.

Verse 13. It says, Like a father pities his children, so the father pities or has mercy on them that fear him. In Micah, the Bible says, Who is a God like unto thee, that pardoneth, forgiveth sin, pardoneth iniquity, passes by the transgression of the remnant of his heritage.

He retaineth not his anger forever, because he delights in mercy. Verse 19. He will turn again. He will have compassion on us. He will subdue our iniquities and cast our sins, all their sins, into the depths of the sea.

I want to go on and tell you this. I just want you to know his character. Somehow you were led to believe that he was a rough God, a mean God, and always out to get you. But that is totally, completely foreign to the Bible.

Who said that? The Reader's Digest version might have said that. Who said that? Some preacher who didn't like the Old Testament might have said that. Who said that? Some ignorant Baptist preacher might have said it. But the Bible's clear.

[ 4 : 58 ] He's the Father of mercies and the God of all comfort. Can you say amen right there? Let me just tell you, before I go to read you a couple of verses in the New Testament. In the book of Jonah, Jonah is sent to Nineveh to carry a message to Nineveh.

The message he's to carry to Nineveh is an extremely thrilling message for Jonah. Jonah hates the Ninevites. There's a huge racism issue between them and Jonah.

The message is yet 40 days and Nineveh shall perish. Yet 40 days and I'm going to destroy Nineveh. And Jonah doesn't want to go. And everybody knows the story. They all know about how Jonah got taken off in a belly of a whale.

He goes on a whale belly ride and he gets vomited up and he finally goes. And it's like, Jonah, go take the message. But most of us don't know that in Jonah chapter 4 about verse 2, Jonah tells God why he didn't want to go.

Here's what Jonah said. God, I'll tell you why I didn't want to go to Nineveh. Because I know what kind of God you are. I know your character. I know who you are. You said you'd destroy Nineveh.

[ 5 : 58 ] But I knew you wouldn't. I already knew that. I knew you as a God full of mercy. I knew you as a God of long suffering. And I knew what kind of God you was. And look at it. They have repented and you've forgiven them.

And that's exactly why I didn't want to go over there and preach the gospel to them. Because I know what kind of God you are. You might be messed up on what you think about God. But he's a father of mercies and the God of all comfort.

From the very beginning of the Bible all the way to the very end of the Bible, It is always a beautiful, sweet, wonderful God Who comes to wicked sinners Who mess up and he does what it takes to save us.

He came down to Adam and Eve. They hid in the garden. After they'd sinned, they made them clothes out of the fig leaves. And they hid themselves and he comes down. It's not Adam that comes and says, Alright God, I messed up and I'd like to fix things.

It's not Eve that says, I'd like to fix things. It's not God who comes down to say, I'll kill you. It's God who's been coming down every day to walk with him in the cool evening. And he said, Adam, Adam, where are you?

[ 6 : 57 ]     Where are you, Adam? And Adam says, well, I'm naked and I hid myself. And God says, well, Adam, how'd you know you was naked? He knew all the answers.

And Adam said, well, we messed up. And God said, well, come here. Take off those clothes you made and I'll kill a lamb.

I'll kill an animal and I'll shed his blood. And I'll clothe you and cover your nakedness. It was God. He is a God of all comfort. He's the Father of mercies.

Not in the New Testament only, but in the Old Testament. Not in parts of the Old Testament, but from the very first time. You see, he's a great and wonderful God. He's a God that comforts us in all of our trouble.

In Ephesians chapter 2 and verse 4, your Bible says, New Testament, but God who is rich in mercy for his great love wherewith he loved us. In 1 Peter chapter 1 and verse 3, Peter says, Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, which according to his abundant mercy has begotten unto us again a lively hope by the resurrection of Jesus Christ.

[ 8 : 05 ]     According to his abundant mercy. In 2 Thessalonians chapter 2 verse 16, he said, Hath given us everlasting consolation.

Verse 17, comfort your hearts, establish you in every good word and work. I want you to get something clear. Look at me just a second. If you believe this book, how many of you believe this book say amen?

If you believe you have the word of God in your hand, say amen. Are you listening to what I'm going to tell you? The Bible says very clearly that he is the God of all comfort. If you believe that, say amen. Amen.

The Bible says he's the Father of mercies. Can you say amen right there? Now, so everybody's been telling you something else, been a liar. Everybody's been telling you something else, they've been a liar. Because the word of God says he's the Father of mercies.

The word of God said he's the God of all comfort. And the Bible's clear that we serve a wonderful God. Paul writes to the Corinthians. He says, hey guys, I want to talk to you about things that are going on in your lives.

[ 9 : 02 ]     I want to talk to you about things that are going on in my life. But let me just start up by telling you what a good God I serve. God of all comfort, Father of mercies. Now then, second thing I want you to look at under that.

He comforts us in our tribulation. How many of you are going through mess? Let me give you Bible promises. You do know the devil's a good liar.

You do know the devil knows how to fool you, deceive you, trick you, make you believe things that aren't correct. So what's the Bible say? Right now, you're in trouble.

You have some financial issues. You have some family issues. You have some health issues. I don't know what you're going through. But you're going through stuff. And in the middle of your stuff, you're wondering, does God really care?

I want to show you what the Word of God says. Not my Word, but the Word of God. By the way, if you ever notice, I mean, I read a whole lot of Bible. If you ever notice, I quote a whole lot of Scripture. Because you need to know, I didn't say it.

[ 9 : 58 ]     He said it. The Bible said He's the Father of mercies. Father of mercies. God of all comfort. Could you repeat that with me? He's the Father of, and He's the God of. Say it all together.

He's the Father of mercy. Say it again. Father of mercy. Say it. And God of all comfort. Now watch this. What does He promise? Number one, He promises to never leave you.

You're in the middle of a mess right now. He will not leave you. Hebrews chapter 13 and verse 5. Hebrews 13 and 5 verse 5. He says, I will never leave thee, nor forsake thee.

The last part of that verse. Look at it. I will never leave thee, nor forsake thee. Look at Romans chapter 8, verses 31 to 39. You need to write that down. Because I don't have time to go through all of it. But look at Romans chapter 8, verses 31 through 39.

He is the God of all comfort. He is the Father of mercies. He comforts you in the middle of your treasure. Know who He is, and know what He's doing for you. Now look what He said. He said, He is for us, no matter who's against us.

[ 10 : 57 ] He is for us, no matter who's against us. I'm going to show you that in the Bible. Would you look this way a second? God is for you, no matter who's against you. If you're a born-again Christian, He is for you. If you're lost, He is for you.

Because you today can be born again too. But look if you would in chapter 8, verse 31. Underline this in your Bible. Look at it. It says, if God be for us. Would you read the last part of that with me?

It's right there behind me, I'm sure. If God be for us, what? If God be for us, who can be against us? He comforts us in our tribulation. He never leaves us, and He is for us.

Verse 33. And I don't have time to go through all that passage, but let me tell you what ends up happening. Here's what the Apostle Paul says. This is a passage I read to my granddaddy as he died, oh, 20 years ago, 25 years ago.

My granddaddy was dying, and he wanted a passage read to him. You know what that passage of Scripture says? It says, if God gave Jesus, do you think He'd hold anything else back from you? If God is for you, who does it matter is against you?

[ 11 : 58 ] And by the way, if God's for you, and God is the judge, and the judge is for you, and the lawyer is Jesus, who is your defense attorney, and He's for you, and He paid your sin debt, who could come and say something against you?

The devil walks into the court and says, let me tell you about their sins. And Jesus simply says, shut up, Satan. I paid that bill. Father, you know I paid that bill. The Father says, I'm for you, but shut up, devil. Amen. I'm born again.

Father of mercy. You didn't say it. Father of mercy. God of mercy. That's who you're serving. Number one, He never leaves me. Number two, if He's for me, who can be against me? Number three, He gives me what I need to make it through.

He promises to give me what I need to make it through. 1 Corinthians 10, verse 13. 1 Corinthians 10, verse 13. There has no temptation taken you, but such as is common to man.

What's happening to you is not different than anybody else. You're not the only one going through this. You know what's interesting? You know what? Several of you know I had a little bout with kidney cancer. And you know, when you have a bout with kidney cancer, guess what you find out?

[ 13 : 06 ] 10 million people have had the same problem. I mean, everybody starts calling you. Hello, preacher. Don't worry about thing. Been through that myself. Hello, preacher. Don't worry about thing. Been through that myself. And then everybody else calls you up, and here's what they say.

They call up and say, hey, I was born with one kidney. You didn't need that extra one anyway. It's amazing. It's common to man. Man's man.

Say amen. I was getting calls from Peru, South America, where the doctors aren't near as advanced as they are here. And they were saying the same thing. Common. Common to man. Says you're common to man.

Then it goes on. Who will not suffer you? Who will not allow you? Who will not allow you to be tempted above that you're able? Did you know there's a God in heaven said, Satan, you go so far, but you ain't going a step further.

I know what he can take. I know how good I made him. I know he can make it through this trial, and I won't let you take another step. I will not allow you to go further than what they're able to bear.

[ 14 : 01 ] And then he says that whenever they need a way out, whenever they're ready and they need a way out, I will make a way of escape. Now, let me just explain to you before I go on that that way of escape is not always pleasant to us.

There was a guy named Joseph. If you recall, he was a very good-looking young man, and he was a slave in the house of a guy named Potiphar. And Potiphar's wife, every day, wanted to have sex with him. I mean, that's just what the Bible says.

She tried to lay with him. And she kept telling him, let's lay down here together. And he said, no, ma'am, I will not do that. And she said, please do that. He said, I will not do that. She said, no, come on and do that. And one day, she grabbed his clothes and tried to pull him into the bed.

And he let his robe fly over the top of his head. And he ran out in his drawers and ran home and went to prison for it. But he didn't fall in sin. God made a way of escape.

So what are you going through right now? He's a God of all comfort. He's the Father of. He's the Father of. He's the God of. And he has made a way for you to be able to make it through.

[ 14 : 58 ] By the way, did you know the comforter lives inside of you? You will not walk out of the church in just a minute. And when you walk out of the church, say, I walked out of the church. It's not a church. If you really want to call a church, this doesn't even look like it.

It's a warehouse. In case you hadn't figured out, it's a warehouse. So you're the church, not the building. Say amen. It ain't like you're going to walk out the door and go, oh my goodness, I just left that holy place. You're probably going to walk out the door and say, hey, I just left the warehouse.

Say amen. So it's not that. That's not where. Hey, he lives in you. When you go home today, if you're a born again Christian, the comforter lives in you. The word of God speaks to you. God hears and answers your prayers.

God uses others to bring comforts you need. If you've served Lord long enough, you know he'll meet your needs. How many of you would say that's Bible and that's true, but I'd like to be a witness to say that's true.

I'd like to give my word and say, I've experienced it and I know God will get you through. I can say a big amen. How many of you can say, I know God will comfort us in our trouble. Would you say amen? How many of you would say, I have experienced his comfort.

[ 15 : 56 ] Say amen. First thing. The first thing the Bible said in this passage of scripture. The first thing is God comforts us in all of our tribulation. Now I want you to go with me to the second part.

Go down to verse four. Why does he comfort us? That we may comfort others. Sorry, no prosperity gospel here. No extra blessings for you. You're serving.

You suffer to serve. You are serving. The Bible says in verse four, who comforted us in all our tribulation that we may be able to comfort them, which are in any trouble by the comfort where we ourselves are comforted of God.

Now, look, if you would, in verse four and underline, he comforts us in all of our tribulations. He comforts us in all of our tribulations. Whatever you're going through. I had a daughter run away from home.

I know what it's like to have a daughter run away from home and to be so embarrassed and to be so scared and to not know where she was. But can I tell you, God came and comforted me.

[ 16 : 55 ] I now know what it's like to face cancer. And at least for 24 hours, boy, don't read the Internet. You figure out maybe you're probably already dead. Don't read the Internet. Amen. And so I know God comforted me.

I know what it's like to be beat up and thrown off of land that I own in South America. I know God comforts me. I know what it's like not to have the money I need to pay my bills. But God comforts me. But look at verse 4 and put a big circle around the word that.

He comforts us in all our tribulations. Why? That we may be able to comfort them which are in any trouble. He said, you know me. I got you through.

I comforted you in everything you've been through. And I have a reason to do that. I want you to serve me by helping others that are hurting. The world's full of hurting people. Everywhere we turn, the world's full of hurting people.

And our God wants us to go out and help hurting people. How are we going to help them? You say, I can't help hurting people. I'm hurting too much. Well, if you get close to God, God will help you. Then you go help others. That's what's going on in the passage.

[ 17 : 55 ] You get close to Him. As we get comfort from God, we're able to help others. Some of you are still in the doldrums. Some of you are still in the bunker. Some of you are still whipped and defeated.

Some of you are still dragging your tail. Got it between your legs. You got your head hung down and you're sliding your feet. You're already giving up and you're whipped. But if you'll get close to God, He'll help you through this. If you'll get close to God, He'll help you through this.

If you'll get in prayer and in the Bible, He'll help you. And whenever He gets through helping you, you can go help others. He builds us up to help others. Suffering, you need to write this down.

Suffering is one of God's equipping tools. Suffering is one of God's equipping tools. In other words, suffering is one of the things God uses to help you be ready to do ministry.

Did you hear that? God lets you hurt so you can help others. God lets you go through mess so you can help others as they go through mess.

[ 18 : 53 ] We're able to speak words of grace and salt. We're able to speak words of grace and salt. That's a couple of Bible-type references.

In other words, you know, when you've been hurt yourself, when you've been through the ringer yourself, when you've had big issues yourself, and you've been hurt, and you've been crushed, and you've been on the bottom, and your life was falling apart, and God came through and helped you, the next person that comes up to you, you don't look out and say, well, man up!

I didn't know what you do. You look out and say, man, I know exactly where you are. I've hurt like you hurt. I know what it's like to be totally scared to death. I know what it's like to have your family mess up.

I know what it's like to have your health mess up. I know what it's like, but I know God came through for me, and let me give you some merciful words. Let me give you some gracious words. Let me give you some sweet words.

Let me give you some preserving words. Let me help you because God helped me. We're able to pray better for others because they're going through the same thing. We've been there. We know as you grow mature, God will prepare you better on how to help others.

[ 19 : 57 ] Realize He is not trying to hurt you, but to help you help others. He is not trying to hurt you, but to help you help others.

Life's not about you. It's about Him. And it's not Him first and then you. It's Him first and then others. It is God's using me to bless Him, to bless others, and I'll get the extra blessings left over.

It's not about us. By the way, you ready for this? The next verses to me are just like so super powerful because what He says in verse 5, as we go down through verse 5, is the more I run you through it, the more I can use you.

How many of you think, man, I've noticed other people, they suffer a little, but I suffer a whole lot more than them. Anybody ever thought like that before? I have. Man, I've looked around and said, hey, you've got to go a lot better than me. You've got a lot better than me.

You've got a lot better than me. And things don't go wrong for him. And things seem to work out. But here's what Paul said. And just, if you believe the book, read the book, read the book. 2 Corinthians chapter 1 verse 5, if you would. The Bible says, For as the sufferings of Christ abound in us, so consolation also abounds by Christ.

[ 21 : 13 ] Could I get you to take your ink pen and do me a favor in your Bible? Do this in your Bible. Circle as the sufferings. As the sufferings, so are consolation. Look at that.

Look at your Bible. Look at your Bible. As our suffering, so are consolation. Hey, would you repeat that with me? As our suffering, so are consolation. Can I get you to say it with me? Are you ready?

As our, so are. There's no need in God giving you an extra dose of consolation if you haven't had an extra dose of suffering. There's no need in God dumping a whole big bucket load of grace on you if you ain't in the middle of a mess.

You need help because you're in trouble. You need blessing because you're suffering. And Paul said, Hey guys, he's the father of all mercy. He's the God of all. He's father of mercy. He's God of all comfort. And he comforts us in everything we go through, but he comforts us so we can comfort others.

And by the way, if you want to know how much usefulness you're going to have, how much suffering have you had? How much crushing have you had? How much breaking have you had? Look back.

[ 22 : 14 ] What turns you bitter was meant to make you sweeter. What turns you bitter was meant to make you sweeter. What gave you a bad attitude was supposed to help you help others that have bad attitudes.

And Paul said, I sent you through mess. Paul says, Jesus is saying, let you go through suffering so you can help. Look at verse seven. If you would, it goes along with it. Verse seven, second Corinthians one seven.

And our hope of you is steadfast knowing that as ye are partakers of suffering, so shall you be also the consolation. Interesting. Would you circle as you are, as you are, look at this, as you are partakers of the suffering, as you're partakers of the suffering, so shall you be also the consolation.

Do you get the correlation? As you suffer, you'll partake consolation. As you suffer, you'll get some consolation. As you suffer, you get some consolation. Would you read that part with me? It's on my, it's on the wall behind me.

Start, if you would, at verse 7 at the word as ye. Are you ready? Read that out loud with me. Everybody in a strong, united voice. Read that to me. Ready? As ye are partakers of the suffering, so shall ye be also of the consolation.

[ 23 : 24 ] I don't know if you get that, but here's what he's saying. As you go through the mess, you're going to get the consolation. But if you want to do the inverse of that, if you don't go through the mess, you're not going to get the consolation.

I want God to use me. I want my life to count. I want to make a difference. I would like you to go to the workplace and be the person they need beside them.

Not the judgmental, critical, hyper, critical, pharisaical guy who stands there like, Hey, hey, hey, I'm better than you. I ain't never done that. And the reason you got that happened to you is because you've been bad. That's not at all what goes on.

Paul said, Bad stuff didn't happen to you because I did bad. Bad stuff happened to you because you did bad. Bad stuff's happened to you so you can help people. Can you imagine what a wounded warrior looks like when he walks in the workplace?

But a wounded warrior that's been worked on by the grace of God. That guy comes walking in. There's a tenderness about him. There's a sweetness about him. There's a gentleness and a kindness about him.

[ 24 : 22 ] And the people standing in the workplace that are hurting. They don't know anywhere to turn. They don't know who to talk to. But as they look at him, he says, I know where you are. I've been there. Can I tell you what God did in my life?

And they make a difference. Sufferings are part of the Christian life. It's not a surprising, shocking part. It's part of our life.

In 1 Peter chapter 4 verses 12 through 16. The Bible says, beloved, think it not strange. Don't think it's something odd, something unusual, something weird.

Concerning the fiery trial which is to try you as though it was some strange thing happened to you. Don't look at problems and go, wow, I never expected problems.

I always expected God to make me healthy, wealthy, and wise. The only guys preaching that gospel are liars. What? You didn't like that part. They may build big TV ministries, but it's not true.

[ 25 : 20 ] If it is true, why don't you call Job up and tell him that? Miserable comforter that you are. Why don't you call up? Hey, you say, God's people don't die. Why don't you call James up who got ran through by a sword?

If you think God's people never go through this, why don't you call the guys up that spent the night in jail after they got beaten? If you think God's people don't go through this, why don't you call Paul up and say, you know that whole list of suffering you went through?

You must have been a really wicked guy. No, that's not what was happening. Peter said, guys, don't think it's anything strange. Fact is, you remember Peter came out after getting beaten. As Peter walked out, he said, man, we counted joy.

Glory to God. He thought we was worthy to suffer. We'd walk out saying, where were you, God? You should have got me out of that. Totally different attitude. Verse 13, rejoice in 1 Peter 4, 13.

Rejoice in as much as you are partakers of Christ's suffering. Be excited and happy that you suffer. In verse 13, last words, exceeding joy.

[ 26 : 19 ] Isn't it beautiful? Verse 16, last words. Let him glorify God on this behalf. The more Paul suffered, the more God gave him grace and comfort.

The more Paul suffered, the more God gave him grace and comfort. We'll get to the verse later in the book of 2 Corinthians. But here's what Paul said. Paul had this affliction. Some people think it was his eyes.



That he might have been a little bit blind. Because one place he said, see how large a letter I write to you is the idea that maybe he was writing the word Paul really big like a blind guy who couldn't see well. The Galatians acted like they might give their eyes for him.

And so there might be the hint that it was Paul was suffering for some kind of eye problem. And Paul went to God and three times he said, God, would you take this away from me? And the Lord said, nope.

God, would you help me? Would you get rid of this? No, I won't. God, come on. Would you get rid of this? No, I won't. And then God said this. God said, hey, I'm doing that for your good. I'm doing that for your good.

[ 27 : 17 ] When you're weak, then I'm strong. And so Paul said, here's my answer. So I will most gladly glory in my problems, in my infirmities. Because when I am weak, he is strong.

You came in today and you want to walk in cocky like, bless God, I'm God's gift to the human race. But the truth is you're probably not worth much if you haven't been run through the ringer as God worked on you.

Remember, as Christians, we were called to cross bearing, dying, suffering, serving, all the opposite of what popular preachers preach today.

If you were to walk up to Jesus today, if he were here, he would simply look at you and say this. Well, you want to follow me if you don't hate your mama and your brother and your mother and everybody else, you know, and hate your own life. Also, you can't be my disciple.

You want to follow me? Take up your cross. Hey, by the way, the birds have nests and the foxes, they have their nests and the holes in the ground. But I don't have a place to lay my head. You sure you want to follow me? His idea of following him wasn't prosperity and wealth.

[ 28 : 22 ] It was, let's go suffer. By the way, through his suffering, I am saved. Through his dying on the cross, I am saved. Through what he did on the cross, I am saved. Paul, let me just read you two little quotes here from a lady named Corrie Ten Boom.

And Corrie Ten Boom was a lady, a Jewish lady who tried to save other people and suffered in Germany. And she said, there is no pit so deep that God's love is not deep or still.

There is no pit so deep that God's love is not deep or still. You're hurting this morning. Corrie Ten Boom wrote that in the dying camps, in the camps where they kill the Jews.

She wrote that and said, there is no pit so deep that God's love is not deep or still. And then she said, you can never learn that Christ is all you need until Christ is all you have.

You can never learn that Christ is all you need until Christ is all you have. Fourth thing I'd like you to look at here. Go to verse 6 with me.

[ 29 : 29 ] 2 Corinthians chapter 1, verse 6. Paul's suffering was for others. This guy suffered like a wild man. He was beaten, stoned, shipwrecked, jailed, went hungry, went thirsty.

List after list of what all he went through. And this is what he says in verse 6. And whether we be afflicted, it's for your consolation. Would you circle the word your? And salvation, which is effectual in the enduring of the same sufferings which we also suffer.

Whether we be comforted, it's for your consolation and salvation. Paul said, I'm not living for me. I'm not hurting for me.

I'm not hurting because I did something wrong. I'm not getting a spanking from God. God's not disciplining me. I've been living a godly life doing what I ought to do. But when you do right, things happen that hurt.

Sometimes you get beat. Sometimes you get put in jail. Sometimes things fall apart. Sometimes when you're doing the greatest thing you could ever do for God, your life seems to fall completely apart. It's like, God, where are you?

[ 30 : 34 ] But God's saying, I've got to show them how powerful I am. And he'll do that through our lives. And Paul said, guys, if I get afflicted or comforted, it's for you.

Look at it in the verse. In the verse. In verse 6, it is for your consolation and salvation. It is for your consolation and salvation. He says it two times.

Seems like the Corinthians thought that Paul was suffering due to sin or some failure on his part. He tells him, no, I'm suffering for you.

I'm suffering for you. It is his call to do the work of God that has brought about his suffering. His suffering is because he tries to do right.

You know, if you want to live the life with the least problems, don't get married. Don't have children. Make all your money. Keep it all for yourself. Live in a little huddle and just be self-focused.

[ 31 : 31 ] But Paul is willing to pay any price to see them get the gospel and mature in Christ. One of my favorite verses for ministry people, and I hope all of you are ministry people, is 2 Corinthians 12, verse 15.

2 Corinthians 12, verse 15. The Bible says, and I will very gladly spend and be spent for you. Though the more abundantly I love you, the less I be loved.

Check out that verse. Paul said, I'll spend. I won't keep my money for myself. I'll spend it. I won't keep my life for myself. I'll spend it. I will spend and be spent.

And when I do it, you won't even love me more. But I will. And I will do it gladly. You see, serving is not about getting. It's about giving. Serving is not about living.

It's about dying. Serving isn't about going up. It's about going down. Serving isn't about being whole. It's about being broken. Serving is the opposite of what everybody in the world wants to think about. But truth of the matter is, in all of our Bible, every time it uses the word servant, it's using a very politically incorrect word that you kind of overlook.

[ 32 : 43 ] The word servant here is the word slave. An owned person. If you intend to serve God by helping others, you must know that loving and serving comes with much suffering.

If you're going to love and serve, you must know that that comes with much suffering. Ask any mother.

They tend to know it more than most. Ask any mother. You know, they say that if men had to have the second baby, all families would have three babies.

Mom would have the first one. Daddy would have the second one. And then he would make her have one more just to punish her. And then he called it off right there. You know, we're not. I mean, I'm not built to suffer. My daughter-in-law is like three weeks away from having a baby.

And it's just funny. You know, it's funny to watch them walk, you know. And then they get closer to that day. And then I watch. I remember it was back in the old, old, old days before you got to go in there.

[ 33 : 51 ] You know, now the whole family goes in and you film the deal. And I mean, it's like the craziest thing I ever heard of. Back in the old days when I was having, when we were parents, they knocked out your wife and took her back in the back room and told you to sit out with the other dads.

And you watch ball games and listen to women scream. And, buddy, could they scream? How many of you remember those days? Is anybody else in here that went through it that way? You're sitting out back there. They wouldn't let you go back there?

I'm the only guy that ever did that. And I remember one night, I guess it was the Chris. Betty was going, Austin. And I jumped up and started running back there. And my buddy Steve grabbed me with my arm and said, sit down.

You know you're not allowed back there. I was going to go back there and whoop somebody. And childbirth is not the hardest part a mama goes through. That's probably one of the easiest parts. How many nights does she stay awake?

How many times does she suffer to take care of those kids? How many times does she wipe a fevered brow? She knows that if you serve, it hurts. You're a Christian.

[ 34 : 49 ] You're born again. And you're going to hurt. Let me give you one more thing. And we'll finish. Look at verse 8. By the way, when you're hurting so much, sometimes you're going to get discouraged.

Sometimes you're going to get discouraged. Verse 8, Paul said, we would not, brethren, have you ignorant of our trouble which came to us in Asia, that we were pressed out of measure above strength in so much that we despaired even of life.

Paul said, I had more trouble than I could take. I had more trouble than I could take. I mean, I was at the end of my rope. I was holding on to the last little strings of that thing, praying to God somehow I'd get out of this.

He said, I was, I was, don't be ignorant of my trouble. Don't y'all think I've had it easy. He said, I was pressed out of measure. That means, that means, you know, if it was a one cup measure, it was like God was putting two cups in a one cup measure.

He was like, this is more than I am able to handle. And he said, above strength, I just couldn't handle it. I'll just be honest with you. I'm strong, but I couldn't handle it.

[ 35 : 53 ] He said, now I despaired even of life. You may think that you're the only one that ever gets discouraged, but you're not alone. Pain and hurt brings suffering. Suffering brings discouragement oftentimes.

Paul got to the point he wondered if he would live. Having troubles comes on you, not necessarily as your fault, but how you deal with them is your decision. Suffering, by definition, hurts.

Suffering, when you're suffering, it's easy to get discouraged, but God has a purpose in your life. I'm going to skip down to verse 10, and you've got to come tonight to get the best part of all.

Look at what he says in verse 10, if you would. In verse 9, he says, I figured out I couldn't trust myself. And in verse 10, he says this, who delivered us from so great death and does deliver and whom we trust, he will yet deliver us again.

Look at this. Paul said, I got to look this way. I got to quit. So you come tonight. I'll fill in caps. Paul says, and I was to the point. I didn't know if I was going to live or not.

[ 37 : 02 ] I despaired of life. I was pressed above, out of measure and above my strength. It was on me. You feel like that? And then Paul said, but in the middle of that, I thought, he got me out of that before.

I've been in trouble before, and I've had problems before, and my life was falling apart before. I didn't know where to turn before, and I've been out of, I've been above my strength before, and God got me out of it. How many of you can say in the past, God did do something great in your life and got you through some big mess?

Can you say amen? Paul says, I remember when he did it. I remember when he did it. I remember when everything was hurting, and I remember when he did it. I remember when he got me out. And then Paul said, and I know a second thing about God.

He said, he's a God that does deliver. I mean, that's just who he is. That's his character. He's the God of all comfort, the Father of mercies. He got me out of it once, but I mean, that's what he does all the time. That's just who he is.

That's the kind of God he is. Did you read the verse? He said, God of all the time. He said, God of all the time. He did deliver. He did deliver. And that's the deliver. And he does deliver. He, present tense, he still does it.

[ 38 : 05 ] He didn't just get Daniel out of the lines then. He just didn't save the four Hebrew children in the fiery furnace. He didn't just save Moses in the river. He said, God is a God who did it.

He did it in my life, and he still does it. And then look at this wonderful, most beautiful part. And he says, and he will yet deliver us. He did it. He does it.

And he's going to do it again. He did it. He does it. And he's going to do it again. What are you going through this morning? Where are you living this morning? What problems are you facing? How are you hurting?

How many pains are you carrying? How much bitterness are you allowing to build up in your heart because you don't really trust God will get you through it? He did it in the past. He does it right now, and he's going to do it again. He will get you through this.

This morning, you ought to bring your burdens to the altar and say, casting all your care on him, for he cares for you. 1 Peter 5, I think it's verse 7. 1 Peter 5, verse 7.

[ 39 : 03 ] Casting all your care on him. Put all your worries and all your pressures on him because he cares for you. Come put them on him. He said, come unto me, all you that labor and are heavy laden, and I'll give you rest.

Some of you came in this morning, and you're not saved. You don't really have anywhere to turn. I mean, it's you and you alone. You don't even have God on your side because you're not saved. You're not born again. But today, you can be.

Because he loves you, and he died for you. The Bible said you have sinned against the holy God. The Bible said there's none righteous, nobody right, nobody perfect, nobody good. The Bible said everybody's sinned. Everybody's done wrong.

The Bible says the wages of sin is death. You deserve to die, and you deserve to go to hell. But the gift of God is eternal life through Jesus Christ. He would save you. So if you're not saved today, you can be saved.

And if you're a born-again Christian today, and you're hurting, and you need him, he gave this message. Not me. I didn't pick it. I just read it.

[ 39 : 58 ] I didn't pick it. That's just where we are in the Bible. You know that. We've been doing it for a long time. We just take the next verse. Today, you came in. You're hurting. He had this passage of Scripture for you. And to be honest with you, you have to admit, I hadn't said anything it didn't say.

You can look at it and say, that guy's not real smart. All he does is read it and say what it said. He ain't that good a preacher. He didn't come up with nothing I couldn't see. Well, that's really what I want to do. I want you to know it's just as clear as a nose on your face.

He's a good God. He's a Father of mercies. He's a God of all comfort. He is with you in the middle of the battle. He's with you in the middle of the hurt. Come, lay your burden on him.

Father in heaven, would you do a work in our lives that we might be able to serve better? Would you help Christians to trust you this morning? Would you help Christians to lay their burdens on the altar?

Would you do a work in our lives that would change us and make us what we ought to be? God, show your power, I pray. With every head bowed and every eye closed, some Christians ought to get out of their seat and find a place to pray right now.

[ 40 : 59 ] You are hurting and you need God. I won't embarrass you and no one else will. But you ought to come get on your face and say, Lord, here it is. I cast all my care on you because you care for me.

He stands with open arms. They come into me, all you that labor, and I'll give you rest. I ask you this morning to trust him. Why don't you bring your burdens and lay them on him? And there's some people in this room and you're not born again.

If you were to die, the truth is you're not sure you'd go to heaven. You don't know that you've trusted Christ as your Savior and you need somebody to help you. If you'd let us this morning, I would be thrilled to have the privilege to show you from the Bible.

I'd have somebody talk to you in private, answer your questions, not embarrass you, and show you how to put your trust in Christ. Would there be anybody like that in this room this morning? Would there be anybody like that? Raise your hand. I'll send somebody to you right now. No one will embarrass you.

We just love you and want to help you. Would there be anybody like that? Father God, would you do a work in the lives of your people? Would you help us to trust you? Would you help us to lay our burdens on you? Would you strengthen us and prepare us to work and serve others through what we've been through?

[ 42 : 02 ] With your heads bowed and your eyes closed, you keep praying in your seat or at the altar. Whenever you finish praying, you can stand and sing with Ed as he leads us in this song. You have been listening to Austin Gardner, pastor of Vision Baptist Church.

For contact information, location, service times, or more audio and video recordings, log on to [www.visionbaptist.com](http://www.visionbaptist.com).