

2 Corinthians 1:8-11

“The Gift Of God’s Deliverance”

Seasons *of* suffering and reasons *for* suffering is the context that we’re coming back into as we enter in to Ch 1 of the book of 2nd Cor beginning here in Vs 8. *Seasons* of suffering is something that we’re all going to experience as believers. But the *reasons for* suffering are not always going to be something that we understand. The bible is clear, “*In the world you will have tribulation;*” John 16:33 and Again, “*Yes, and all who desire to live godly in Christ Jesus will suffer persecution.*” 2 Tim 3:12 So trials, troubles, tough times and difficult days are simply going to be a reality for the believer at various times throughout our journey in life. The frustration comes in when we don’t always know why God is allowing us to be subjected *to it*, or what it is that He’s working out *through it*.

Now as our time was coming to a close last week perhaps you recall that I mentioned that sometimes the reason we suffer in reality has nothing to do with God’s purpose in our lives but quite frankly we subject ourselves to some sort of suffering do to the ramifications of sin in our lives. **Of course that doesn’t mean that God can’t use it and take it and turn so that He does a work in your life through it as you repent from it and turn back to Him. But He didn’t subject me to that; I subjected myself to it because of my own sin and willful rebellion.**

and There are other things that the bible teaches us about suffering. Sometimes we suffer due to sin, other times it’s brought on due to our sanctification. “What do you mean?” Consider Job, it wasn’t because he was in the wrong that he suffered, it’s because he was a righteous man. **We don’t wrestle flesh and blood, but powers, principalities, rulers of darkness, spiritual hosts of wickedness in heavenly places. and Satan wants to destroy your life, there is spiritual warfare all around you, and as you lead your life set apart to Jesus Christ Satan and his cohorts will come against you.** So sometimes we suffer due to sin in our lives, sometimes we suffer because we’re leading sanctified lives, sometimes we suffer to keep sin *out* of our lives. God will allow suffering to enter into the equation of our lives so that we don’t enter into sin, or take the direction that would disqualify us from the ministry. **Paul will tell us later in this book that a messenger of Satan was allowed to buffet him lest he be exalted above measure (or be all prideful and full of himself.) So God will allow suffering to keep us grounded, to know who He is and who we’re not.**

and As I said we can’t always know the reasons, though we’re all familiar with the seasons. But there are several things that God does accomplish through our suffering. What we were talking about last week is the fact that God can use suffering to develop *our* character and help us to share in *His* character. **As we enter in to the sufferings of Christ we also share in the consolation, the comfort that comes through Christ which in turn enables us to engage others who are hurting effectively, compassionately, in a Christ-like manner that they might look to Him and trust in Him, receiving help/strength from Him in their time of need.** People need to see Jesus in our lives, and so there are times that my affliction has nothing to do with me. But it’s for the benefit of others; God will at times use suffering *not* as *punishment* for something we’ve done, but as *preparation* for something that we’re yet going to do.

God always prepares us for what He's preparing for us. and We could give biblical illustration after illustration of the way God took men low that He might exalt them exceedingly. Joseph, Moses, David, so many of the prophets, look at how God used Paul's life. Yet what was the testimony Jesus gave of him? "...he is a chosen vessel of Mine to bear My name before Gentiles, kings, and the children of Israel. For I will show him how many things he must suffer for My name's sake." Acts 9:15-16 "I'm going to use his life greatly, yet he will suffer tremendously."

God always takes us low before He takes us high. and It's always relevant, to the degree He exalts you, He'll 1st humble you. So you see a man whom God is using tremendously, don't be deceived by the limelight he's got some war wounds underneath the surface that run pretty deep and that are significant. Notice what Paul says,

Vs8

One minor detail that I'd just quickly make known to you is that when you read of "Asia" in the bible it's not speaking of modern day Asia (as in China, Japan, N.S. Korea and various other eastern countries) this is a reference to modern day Turkey and Paul specifically means the western side.

But there's so much packed into even just this one Vs I find it difficult to figure out where even to begin. I guess we'll start at the beginning. Paul says, "I don't want you to be ignorant brethren of our trouble which came to us in Asia." Now the word "trouble" here is that same word we spoke of last week, it's the word "thlipsis" which really speaks of being hemmed in on every side. **I'm being pressed in on, squeezed, stressed, and crushed to the point of no way out. We made mention of the olive press and how the press would crush the olives to extract the oil, and that's the picture we have here, an overwhelming sense of being crushed. and Paul says, "I don't want you to be ignorant of this taking place in my life."** Now I don't know about you to me there's a sense in which this really comforts me. Because Paul was not "superhuman." He had his hurts; he didn't walk around all super spiritual with never a care in the world simply rebuking every trial or tribulation so as to lead life on ez street. **There are some ministers who would project just that, that life in Christ is a victorious life, therefore if you're ever suffering hardship or stress, or suffering of any kind you're simply faltering in your faith and need to trust God. Paul the apostle didn't lead a carefree life.** Now it's true that life in Christ is victorious, but not in the sense that difficult days will never visit your life and if they do you're simply failing in your faith. But in the sense that God has promised to see you through, to not let anything confront you but that He won't supply the grace for you to learn from it and grow through it. We read in Isa 43:2, "*When you pass through the waters, I will be with you; And through the rivers, they shall not overflow you. When you walk through the fire, you shall not be burned,*" See victory is there, God is with you, He won't allow you be consumed or even scorched, but you're not going *around* the fire you're going *through* it. I'm not passing *over* rough waters I'll be going through it, but not alone, God will be with me and He'll be with you, and He'll see you through. So Paul was real, didn't hide his hardships. He said, "I want you to know it," why? A. It would be an encouragement to them for when they went through the trials of life. B. It would serve as a testimony to the faithfulness of God to be there for you when we're in the refiner's fire. and C. It would provoke them to pray for him (which we'll see in a minute)

and I can't think of anyone who doesn't need prayer, and all the more when I'm struggling, or suffering. We're to bear one another's burdens and so fulfill the law of Christ. But if I'm all the time, "Hey, things are great!" When in reality I'm breaking down inside I'm going to limit the ministry of the power of prayer that people bring in to my life. But if I'm transparent and vulnerable before you and say, "You know what it's been a rough season for me lately." You're going to help me out by praying for me, Paul led a transparent life. Was he a spiritual giant? You bet he was, was he as human as you are and I am, subject to the same struggles, sicknesses and sufferings? Absolutely, you're not alone in your struggles even people whom God uses in great ways go through serious struggle in their human frailty. The enemy wants you to feel all alone in that, you're not.

Paul mentions 3 things about the trouble that he and his ministry team experienced. That it burdened them #1 Beyond measure, #2 Above strength, and #3 It caused them to despair even of life. Whatever it was it was no small stress. We don't know what it was, there's lots of conjecture. Most lean toward the riot in Ephesus whereby he wound up having to flee for his life. But the fact is he doesn't tell us, and I'm glad that there's some uncertainty and ambiguity there because since he wasn't specific it gives us room to make application to ourselves whenever we're up against the ropes getting pounded by the tough times of life. So that regardless of the particulars if I find myself in a desperate circumstance whereby deliverance seems impossible I'm able to lean *on* and draw strength *from* the Word of God here and seeing how Paul was in that same place yet God delivered him, and I can trust God will deliver me to. (We'll talk just a little more about that in Vs 10).

But to a degree I think that every Christian comes to a place like this (probably multiple times) throughout his/her life. Burdened excessively, beyond measure, above strength, it's just quite simply more than you can bear. and Different circumstances surround each of us that take us to that place but somewhere in our mind we may even come to that point where we think, "Man, death would be a welcome thing..." (Friend, "Is it ok to pray that the Lord would just take me home?") We despair even of life, we give up thinking there's no way out, its all over. and That's another thing that God does through our suffering; He loosens our grip on the things of this world. As sick and twisted as it may seem, for the most part we kinda like it here on this earth. We're not in any real hurry to leave it (and granted we were created of the earth and for the earth so to a degree it's only right that it be that way) but suffering, sorrow, pain and affliction has this way of bringing about disillusionment with the world. "This place isn't all it's cracked up to be and I'm ready to let go and head home." Pain and suffering has this way of increasing our appetite for things above and decreasing our desire for the things in this world. Paul says in Vs 9

Vs9

Now because Paul says, "We had the sentence of death *in* ourselves," as opposed to "placed upon" ourselves they some think that he may be referring to a physical malady that brought him to the point of thinking he was going to die. and That may be but it seems to me that he's quite simply saying that he was convinced that as far as he was concerned, as far as his ability to get himself out of a deadly situation it wasn't going to happen.

He was convinced there was nothing he could do to help himself. and That's the place that God is seeking to take everyone of us, that's one of the primary reasons for seasons of suffering. Yes, God uses suffering to perfect *our* character and to help us to share in *His*. Yes, God prepares at times through suffering for what He has prepared for us. Yes, God uses suffering to get us to loosen our grip on the things of this world and get us hungry for heaven. But God also utilizes affliction in our lives to bring us to the end of ourselves that we learn not to *trust* in ourselves but in God who raises the dead. It's a sad and tragic reality that generally speaking as long as we can figure out a way to accomplish *this*, or get out of *that*, we will. God desires us to look to Him, to trust *in* Him, to draw our strength and wisdom *from* Him. The Lord said in Jer 17, "*Cursed is the man who trusts in man And makes flesh his strength, Whose heart departs from the LORD. For he shall be like a shrub in the desert, And shall not see when good comes, But shall inhabit the parched places in the wilderness, In a salt land which is not inhabited. Blessed is the man who trusts in the LORD, And whose hope is the LORD. For he shall be like a tree planted by the waters, Which spreads out its roots by the river, And will not fear when heat comes; But its leaf will be green, And will not be anxious in the year of drought, Nor will cease from yielding fruit.*" Jer 17:5-8

Yet for all that we like to lean on ourselves, and walk in our own strength until we just don't have any other choice, then we'll turn to the Lord, and look to the Lord for our help. But it's God's desire that we live in that place, that place of looking *to* Him and trusting *in* Him for our everything, not just the things we can't handle. and So He'll often times bring us back to that place through suffering, that we might learn and be reminded of our need to trust (not in ourselves) but in Him who raises the dead.

Because when things are going good we have a tendency to drift from that place. It's like the story of the sun and the wind arguing one day about who was the stronger of the 2. and Seeing a man walking down the road with an overcoat on they decided upon a contest, whoever could get the guy to take his coat off 1st would be the winner. and So the wind started blowing, the man grabbed on to his coat, it blew stronger and stronger, and rather than taking off his coat, the harder the wind blew the more he hung on to it and wrapped himself tightly in it. Finally when the wind was finished the sun started shining, the man began to relax, it shined brighter, he started unzipping in and loosening it up, finally after the sun started beating down on him he just took it off. and The point of it all is this. **When the winds of adversity are blowing in the believers life, he/she will wrap himself/herself tightly in the robe of God's righteousness, the garment of salvation, we're depending *on* it, clinging *to* it, can't go on with out it and we know it. But when the warm sun of success and prosperity begins to shine down upon us we find ourselves in a dangerous place, we begin to relax our standards, compromise our grip on godliness, and that robe of righteous behavior so often comes off.** God knows our frame, He remembers that we're but dust, and because of His love for you, His goodness toward you, and eternal concern *for* you He will allow the winds of adversity to blow upon you that you might draw near *to* Him, depend *upon* Him and trust *in* Him. Because that's the place we need to be, it's just tragic that we're so often so stubborn, won't just come *to* Him and stay *near* Him, we need to be often times prompted and provoked to return to that place.

As Paul looks back at what took place he can see how God was bringing him to that place of learning that lesson, not to trust in himself, but in God who raises the dead. Perhaps your marriage seems dead, your ministry seems dead, your joy, your peace, don't try to solve all your problems in your own energy, we serve a God who specializes in raising the dead, seek Him, get on your face before Him, pour out your heart to Him and trust in Him, He is able to deliver you, notice.

Vs10

Among the manifold things that Paul came to know of the character and nature of God throughout his life one thing he was radically aware of is that he served a God who delivers. A God who saves, who rescues us from the various perils and pitfalls of life. You can't read this Vs with out having your attention arrested by the fact of the past, present, and future tense of God's deliverance as noted here before us. #1 God *delivered* (past tense), #2 and does *deliver* (present tense), and #3 in whom we trust that He *will still* deliver (future tense). Paul is here magnifying the faithfulness of God whether he looks behind himself in retrospect, around himself in real time, or ahead of himself in regards to the future. God's past faithfulness is prophetic in a sense, He's never not been there for you and that should only serve to testify to the fact that there will never be a time when He won't be there for you.

But Paul discovered a great truth here that he passed on to you and me, God has perfect timing. He won't deliver us too soon, and He definitely won't be too late, His deliverance will come to you in just the right time so as to accomplish His perfect purpose in your life.

Because when we talk about deliverance we need to understand that it may mean different things depending on the context. For instance in the book of Acts when persecution started raining down on the church we find that when James was placed in prison he was given over to the sword (executed) when Peter was placed in prison an angel of the Lord assisted him in a divine jailbreak. Now, *both* were delivered, but in different ways. One delivered *from* the trial, the other delivered *in* the trial, they were both set free, but in different ways. and W/that we understand that God gives us the grace to endure our affliction as it's needed. So many of us think, "I don't know if I could really die for the sake of the gospel." Well, that's because right now God hasn't given you the grace to die for the gospel because He hasn't called you to die for the gospel. Should the time come that God calls you to lay down your life for the gospel His grace will be there for you enabling you to do that. We've said it like this before, "You don't get dying grace until you're dying." *God gives you the grace you need when you need it. We see someone suffering and think, "Man I don't think I could survive if I were in that place." You couldn't currently, but if God called you to that place His grace would be sufficient for you in during that time that He called you to it. God's grace is a real time resource. Given to you when you need it to accomplish the purpose it's needed for.* You can't store up God's grace and save it for a rainy day, "*And of His fullness we have all received, and grace for grace.*" John 1:16 What does that mean? "Grace for grace." It means God gives you the grace you need for today, tomorrow He'll swap that out for the grace you need tomorrow, it's grace for grace. I don't store it up, I receive it from the Lord daily as it's needed depending upon His desire, and His direction for my life.

Now certainly Paul is speaking practically here, how that he has come to know God's faithfulness in the past, His preserving power for the present, and that has served to impress upon him the assurance that he can have to trust God for the future. But this also has an application for us spiritually (as it pertains to our salvation personally) we're able to see God's saving grace at work in our lives in 3 separate tenses individually yet working together collectively to comprise so great a salvation for you and me singularly. If you've given your heart to Christ God *has* delivered you from so great a death, an eternal separation from God in outer darkness, weeping and wailing, gnashing of teeth, where the fire is never quenched and the worm never dies. God has delivered me from that, He's delivered you from that, it's a done deal, in the past. Yet there's a very real sense in which God is still delivering me now, His salvation doesn't stop in the past, it carries me in the present, I'm real time robed in the righteous covering of Jesus Christ **There is a present ongoing work of God's salvation in my life.** and I know that a day is coming when God *will* save me from the sin and snares of this life whereby when I see Him then I will be like Him for I'll see Him as He is. No more pain, no more suffering or affliction, no more sorrow, no more tears, the former things having passed away. God's work of salvation in you though singularly complete in the person of Jesus Christ **is worked out in you in a 3 fold way.** You might understand it like this. God *has saved* you from sins *penalty*, (past tense) you've passed from *death* to *life*. God *is saving* you from sins *power* (present tense) you're free from the bondage of sin and death, sin no longer has dominion over you for you are not under law, but under grace. **But the day is coming (future tense) when God *will save* you from sins *presence*, no more struggles with the flesh, holiness and righteousness will reign in your body. The corruptible having put on incorruption, this mortal putting on immortality, death being swallowed up in victory.**

Now, here's the amazing part, God gives us the opportunity to enter in to His work of deliverance in the lives of others. How so? The power of prayer.

Vs11

That is the gift of God's deliverance; somehow and in some way God has ordained power in prayer. You've heard the catch phrase, "Prayer changes things!" Perhaps you've seen it on a bumper sticker or whatever, it's true. God has chosen to move in many ways through the prayers of His people. I don't claim to understand it, if I were God I'm not sure that I would've designed it that way, but God is a lot smarter than me, His ways aren't my ways (praise Him for that!) **But over and over again throughout the scriptures you see the hand of God moving as the result of His people praying, sometimes it's a collective cry of many, other times it's the humble petition of a single person. Sometimes you find where God would've moved, wanted to move, but no one was praying so He didn't. How important prayer is, it's no wonder people have such difficulty in the discipline of it, the enemy hates it when you pray.** and I'm not going to take you to every mention of it but over and over again throughout his letters the apostle Paul was seeking to solicit the prayers of God's people for himself and his ministry. Think of all the radical things God did through Paul's life, and no doubt he was an amazing man of God. **But outside of the grace of God you know what Paul would attribute his effectiveness in ministry to? The "many persons" praying for him.**

Paul led a transparent life, what you seen was what you got. If he was struggling or going through a tough time, he let you know, because he realized the essential need to have people praying for him. I want people praying for me and my family, this ministry, and I pray for you, that we might be helping together in prayer for one another.

Seek the prayers of the people around you, place your trust in God alone, people will let you down, God never will. He has delivered you, He does deliver you and He will still deliver you, think about it. Try to remember what was plaguing you a yr or 2 or 5 ago, it seemed so huge, like you'd never escape it's grip or get beyond it's pain. and Where is it today? **The fact is that most of us don't even give much thought to the things we thought would do us in even a few months ago because God has delivered us, He's *been* faithful. and He *is* faithful, and He will *yet* be faithful to you still, turn *to* Him, and trust *in* Him.**

Prayer Points:

God help us to learn the lesson, that You are faithful. That we learn to trust not in ourselves but in You. It's so easy to rely on ourselves and we would ask You to forgive us when we slip into that particular pattern. We don't want to be those who have to learn the hard way, but rather we want to be those that regardless of what's going on, great or small, tough times or terrific times we're focused *on* You, looking *to* You, and trusting solely *in* you. **We thank You for the precious gift of Your deliverance both practically, and spiritually in granting us so great a salvation. and Lord help us to be patient as You're working in us, molding us and making of us what You'd have us to be conforming us into the image of Your Son moment by moment, hour by hour, day by day as we simply walk with You, may we abide in You.**

Of course the greatest gift of deliverance is the deliverance from the bondage of sin and death that God grants in the person of His Son Jesus Christ If you don't know Jesus Christ you know all too well what it's like to be chained by the bonds of sin. Jesus wants to set you free, to deliver you, to forgive you of your sin and give you the gift of eternal life. Why not receive it today? Why fight against it, why stand rejecting it, why not receive it? Give your heart to Jesus and the gift of God's deliverance will visit you today.