

Your Affliction Breaks Your Reliance on Self

by James Jennings

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The sermon emphasizes that affliction serves to break our reliance on self and draws us closer to God, allowing us to comfort others in their trials.

Duration: 52:52

Scripture: 2 Corinthians 1:3

Topics: "Suffering And Hope", "Godly Dependence"

Description

This sermon emphasizes the purpose of afflictions in breaking self-reliance and pride, leading individuals to rely fully on God's strength and comfort. Through the example of the Apostle Paul's trials and reliance on God, the sermon encourages listeners to set their hope on the God who raises the dead, finding comfort and strength in times of affliction. It highlights the importance of consulting the Lord, praying for deliverance, and being a means of comfort to others in their afflictions.

Transcript

Here, a question is to start us off this morning. Have you been through, or are presently in a trial, in which the affliction and suffering of that trial makes you say something like, makes you describe that affliction like this, I'm utterly burdened beyond my strength. You ever felt like that? I'm utterly burdened beyond my strength.

Maybe you've said something like this, I despair of life itself. Pyramidous affliction. Someone says, what's the trial like that you're going through? And you say, I despair of life itself.

Despair. Meaning I have no hope of living. Maybe this.

You've described the trial like this, I feel like I've just received a death sentence. It's like I went to court and they hit the verdict and it's death penalty for me. That's what this trial feels like.

I'm going to die. There's no hope of getting out of it. Now those are very severe ways to describe an affliction, a trial you're going through.

Does anyone know who said something along those lines? Say again? Paul. That's right. The Apostle Paul said those sayings.

Turn to 2 Corinthians 1. 2 Corinthians 1. Someone could hear that and say, well, boy, that must have been a real weak Christian who said that. Must have been a real weak guy. New in the faith.

Look at that. He's just struggling in his affliction. He needs to pick himself up and move on.

No, this is Paul. This is a mature Christian. This is not early on in his ministry.

This is his second letter to those at Corinth. Let's read, starting in 2 Corinthians 1. Paul, he says, Blessed be the God and Father of the Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of mercies and the 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. 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. 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.

Now, here Paul gives a personal experience. And this is where we're going to hear these sayings. For we do not want you to be unaware, brothers, of the affliction we experience.

So this is Paul and others. Whatever this affliction was, Paul was not alone. He was actually with others.

And he still felt this way. We experienced in Asia, wherever it happened, it was in Asia. Verse 8, halfway through.

For we were so utterly burdened beyond our strength that we despaired of life itself. You hear that? That's Paul. Verse 9, 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. He will deliver us. 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 mourning. Prayers of many, not of mourning. Maybe they were mourning while they prayed.

The prayers of many. My next thought was going to be this morning's title. One title I have for this is this, Your Affliction Breaks Your Reliance on Self.

We're going to find that's one of the purposes of affliction. It breaks you of your reliance on yourself. Paul says that right there.

That was to make us rely not on ourselves in verse 9. We're going to look at another purpose of affliction. It's to be comforted by God that you might then be able to comfort others in another affliction. So, first, let's think for a moment about those statements of Paul in verse 8. He's describing his affliction that he went through with others.

He's not alone. And yet, he still felt this way. We despaired of life itself.

We were utterly burdened beyond our strength. He doesn't say there I was burdened. He says I was utterly burdened beyond my strength that I despaired of life itself.

Indeed, we felt, we, not just Paul, that we had received the sentence of death. But, there's a purpose there. All of our suffering and trials and afflictions has a purpose.

It's not random. Now what could this be that he's referring to? I don't know for sure, but it says it happened in Asia. We know in the previous letter to those at Corinth, Paul said this in 1 Corinthians 15.

He says what do I gain if, humanly speaking, meaning I don't believe this actually happened, but he's saying what if this actually did happen? So maybe there was a possibility that it would happen. What am I talking about? What do I gain if, humanly speaking, I fought with beasts at Ephesus? Ephesus was an Asia Minor. Maybe Paul and some others were in a situation where they were going to be thrust into a Colosseum and have to fight with beasts.

Maybe that's what he's referring to. Didn't happen, but it looked like it was going to happen. This is a sentence of death.

We get stuck in there with the lions and the wild boars. We're dead. This causes me to be utterly burdened.

I have no hope of being delivered from this trial. This is a death sentence. Maybe that's that.

I don't know for certain. We know in 2 Corinthians, Paul describes many of his other trials. Now a lot of these, they didn't happen in Asia, so they couldn't be the ones.

But it gives you a flavor of this man's life. 2 Corinthians 11, he says, three times I was shipwrecked. A night and a day I was adrift at sea.

I mean, imagine being adrift at sea. You know, a piece of wood or something. That's a severe affliction.

It can make you feel utterly burdened beyond your strength. Paul said he was in toil, hardship, through many a sleepless night, in hunger and thirst, often without food, in cold and exposure. Look, many of you mothers have had sleepless nights for the ministry.

The ministry of serving your kids. Paul had sleepless nights. We all have afflictions for the sake of living for the Lord.

So the first thing I want to consider this morning is this. Christians can suffer very severely. The mighty Apostle Paul, who's just a man like us, he suffered to the point of saying he despaired of life.

To the point of saying I feel utterly burdened beyond my own strength. That's very honest and open for Paul to record that in this letter. That comforts me.

Because there's times I've felt that way. Utterly burdened. Did Paul stay utterly burdened as we go through this? No.

He's actually giving this experience to encourage those at Corinth that they don't have to stay there. So for Christians, suffering can be severe. I mean, I thought of someone who's going through a severe trial right now that we just read about in the email.

Someone the Montgomerys know. One of the pastors at the church in Louisville. His wife, 36 years of age.

In the middle of the night, from what it sounds, she just suddenly died. Left their six children. And the husband, in the middle of the night, your wife dies.

Don't know why? The husband, he said this, she died on October 7th. She unexpectedly entered to glory during her sleep. That brother, Jay Shreve, is going through a severe affliction right now.

In the midst of that severe affliction, is there comfort for him? Is there a purpose behind it? You better believe it. We're going to find this morning that there is the God of comfort who is going to comfort that brother and the children. And we're going to find this morning that God has purposes behind that severe affliction.

I heard yesterday one of that brother's sermons. In 2015, it was entitled, Afflicted and Blessed. In it, Jay shared this.

He said, there is a sense that I don't know how afflicted I am. But there may be some in this room or in the hearing of my voice who are dearly afflicted. You've felt the plow upon your back.

You know people. You've known loved ones who've lost life or limb. That brother, he shared that a year ago.

And look, that's in a way how I can feel this morning. I can say like Jay, there's a sense I don't know how afflicted I am. I'm not here utterly burdened beyond my strength this morning.

I'm not. But some of you, maybe you are. Like Jay, in the midst of a fiery trial that you're not to be surprised at.

You feel the plow upon your back. And it's in moments like that where truths that I hope you can hear today will be intimate friends for you to run to for refuge. You know, when other Christians suffer, it makes me tremble sometimes.

Because I know that could be my own personal trial. That doesn't make me fear God. Fear God in a sense of God's out to get me.

He's not. He loves us. But it just makes me realize, Lord, You're in control.

You can do whatever You want with my lot. The Christian's suffering can be severe. But as we'll see, they're not without purpose.

One thing that happens as we suffer is we're identifying with the very Lord, the Lord Jesus Christ. V. 5, 2 Corinthians 1, for as we share abundantly in Christ's sufferings. Look, all that's happening when we suffer is one thing that's happening is we're just identifying with Christ.

He suffered and gave us an example. We're going to follow in that. We're going to suffer as Christians.

Through much tribulation, we must enter the Kingdom of Heaven. Now, in the midst of afflictions, we need comfort. If you say you don't need comfort, that's just not true.

When you get put with the plows on your back, you're going to be sitting there saying, Lord, I need comfort. You're not going to say, I don't need comfort. This is easy.

No, you're saying the opposite. Lord, I need comfort. I need some consolation.

I need some encouragement. This affliction has massively discouraged me. And look at what Paul... Paul starts out this section in v. 3 by blessing God.

And Paul puts before us this morning something that is so true of God that we've got to remember. V. 3, Blessed be the God and the Father of the Lord Jesus Christ. And what does Paul focus in on? The Father of mercies.

He's merciful, and then look what he says, and the God of all comfort. He doesn't say the God of comfort. He says the God of all comfort.

All comfort. That's our God. Any true comfort one has has its source in God's provision.

He's the source. I mean, ask yourself, has there ever been a time I've been comforted and God didn't have something to do with it? Truly comforted. You're in an affliction.

True comfort comes. If you look at all those trials and actually say, you know what, there's true comfort there. You'll never find a time when that true comfort was not because of God allowing it to be there.

It's always the case. He's the God of all comfort. He's the source of all comfort.

The word comfort sometimes is rendered encouragement. Think of it. In a trial, in an affliction, we're comforted, we're encouraged, or we're discouraged and depressed.

How do we respond to these afflictions? God is the God of all comfort. He says in v. 4, "...who comforts us in all our affliction." It's kind of like Paul is saying, there's not an affliction you'll have that God is not there willing to give you comfort in. You're never going to go through a trial and an affliction and suffering and all of a sudden it's like, well, God didn't comfort me.

No, He's always going to be there to comfort. Nothing is out of His sympathy range. You know, one of my griefs is sometimes I can't comfort someone because I feel like I can't sympathize with them.

That's not the case with the Lord. God is the God of all comfort. Nothing is out of His sympathy range.

You think of Jesus Christ. He can sympathize with us because He was made like us in every respect. So, suffering can be severe, but the God of all comfort is there.

Not the God of comfort. The God of all comfort is there. And we've got to remember something as we think about affliction this morning and the God of all comfort.

We've got to think about God being the God of providence. I appreciated this John Calvin quote. He's speaking to the comforting reality of divine providence.

This is something that they comfort in. It's not just that God is going to comfort. It's that God is in control.

John Calvin says this, Once the light of divine providence has illumined the believer's soul, he is relieved and set free, not only from the extreme fear and anxiety which formerly oppressed him, but from all care. For he justly shudders at the idea of chance. What's chance? So he can confidently commit himself to God.

This, I say, is His comfort, that His heavenly Father so embraces all things under His power. God so governs them all by His nod, so regulates them by His wisdom, that nothing takes place except what is according to His appointment. You hear that? So if God perfectly controls all things, then how can He not promise? How can you not believe His promise to be the God of all comfort? To comfort you in the midst of any affliction? No testing, no temptation has overtaken you.

That is not common to man. But God is faithful. God is going to be faithful.

So, in opening, my hope was to say, one, the Christian has suffering that is severe. So severe, the mighty Apostle Paul said he despaired of life itself. Secondly, the Christian in the suffering has a God of all comfort.

So what an encouragement! Thirdly, I want to consider there are purposes and reasons for our afflictions. I think Paul points on two here out of the many that we can tend to forget. When you think about why am I suffering? Why am I being afflicted? There's many reasons the Scripture gives.

There's at least two here out of multiple that I really want to focus on that I think we will find some help from. At least I have. It'll help us to endure in the midst of affliction.

And if we understand why we're suffering, it helps us get the most out of our affliction. As Christians, we don't just want to try to survive through the affliction. We want to get the most out of it.

Right? So, first, our suffering and comfort. So this one, it's not just why you suffer, it's why you're comforted. Our suffering and comfort happens for what reason? What does he say? Look at v. 4. God comforts us in all our affliction.

Why? So that, something happens, we may be able, so God gives ability through it, to do what? Comfort those who are in any affliction. So one of the first things to remember in your affliction, as the God of all comfort comforts you, is He's comforting you to now make you able to go and comfort others who before that, you maybe wouldn't have fully been able to do. So suffering and comfort, one of the first reasons it happens is to help others.

You see, the Lord isn't just comforting you for you. He doesn't just comfort you and just go keep that to yourself. No, He's comforting you and saying now that makes you able to go comfort that person over there in any affliction.

Meaning, others should reap the benefit off of our suffering. Have you ever thought about suffering like that and comfort? Too often we're too self-focused. But the Lord afflicts us and He comforts us and one of His motives is now to make you able to help others.

Paul clearly says that. It's kind of like this. You can say to the other person, brother, sister, the medicine works.

It's good. It worked. Look at that, I had that affliction and it worked.

What's one of the big reasons you read biographies? I mean, I've read multiple biographies and you know one of the greatest things there is? I see them go through this crazy affliction. Utterly burdened beyond their strength and you know what I see happen? The God of all comfort comforts them. They're delivered and I'm encouraged.

Their affliction, I get to reap benefit off of it, even Paul's hundreds and thousands of years later. Or biographies, hundreds of years later. That's one of the big things biographies does.

It testifies to us of God's comfort and His purposes. Again, I mentioned this weeks ago when I dealt with Psalms 84.11. George Mueller, his wife dies. What verse comforted him in his affliction? What truth? The truth that no good thing does God withhold from those who walk uprightly.

I read about that and you know what that says to me? That medicine worked. The medicine of Psalms 84, it worked. It encourages us.

I thought about my mother-in-law. She suffered the loss of her husband. Or my wife suffered the loss of her father.

What's one of the reasons my wife and mother-in-law went through that affliction? What is it, Paul? So that Terry and Bethany now may be able to comfort those who are in any affliction. There's now an ableness there to comfort others that wasn't there before. That's one of the purposes of God comforting us and our affliction.

Even Paul here, v. 8, why did he even mention his personal experience? Look at v. 8. For we do not want you to be unaware, brothers, of the affliction. You notice that? Paul, he doesn't want people unaware of what he went through. He's wanting to be honest and open with the church and the body at large and to say, this is what I went through.

This is what I felt. For our own comfort. Because God delivered Paul.

And He will deliver us. So realize this, brethren. Your afflictions give you the ability to comfort others with the comfort God gave to you.

View afflictions like that. I want to get the most out of it. What is this affliction and what is this comfort God is giving me? How does this now grow me in my ability to console and comfort others better? When you're thinking like that, it's very hard to have self-pity about your trial.

It's all of a sudden able to say, wow, the Lord has a deeper purpose at least even years down the road where He's enabling me to now comfort someone because of this. You know, another thing that happens when God comforts, it helps encourage others to endure to final salvation. Look what Paul says in v. 6. If we're afflicted, it is for your comfort and not just your comfort, and he says here, and your salvation.

Your salvation? What do you mean, Paul? Salvation. Don't think he means salvation like justification. Some other places, salvation, the idea can be deliverance or endurance.

I think Paul's idea here is that some of us are the first to suffer in a specific way. They endure through a fiery trial. And Paul is saying, look, when that happens, all the other Christians can say that man, he got through that.

That's for my salvation, my perseverance, and that now I have confidence that God can get me to go through that trial as well. You can think of it like this. The first to be in a pioneer expedition.

Someone goes into unknown territory. That's going to happen in our church. There are trials that none of us have faced as a body to certain extremes.

And someone's going to have to be the pioneer to be the first to go into that unknown territory. Now, it's not unknown. Church history is lined with people who went through the same trials and endure.

But that can be for our ultimate endurance, salvation, deliverance. When someone goes through that and they see God faithful to the end. As Paul said here, verse 6, near the end, when you patiently endure the same sufferings that we suffer.

I mean, every trial I've been through and suffered, and I do not have an impressive list of fiery trials. I'm not calling that down on myself. I'm weak.

I feel, Lord, be careful with me. But every one of those, it's like Paul said, the same sufferings. What have we went through that someone else hasn't went through? I mean, name one.

Find one trial, and if you start to say no one else has went through that, it's ridiculous. Someone else has. If not in the church, someone else in church history.

And you're going to find that the God of all comfort was there comforting them. And you're going to find He delivered them and He'll deliver them again, and you'll find He'll deliver you. So, now another purpose.

So the first purpose we need to get of what is the reason behind our affliction and here our comfort, is that it makes you able to comfort others in their affliction. So get all you can get out of that suffering because that's one of God's purposes. Secondly, suffering is to make us, or you could say to break us, of self-reliance.

To make us rely not on ourselves, but on God. To make us not trust in ourselves. That's one of the purposes of suffering.

We see that right there in verse 9. Indeed, we felt we had received the sentence of death. What on earth could the purpose be of that, Paul? But, that was to make us rely, trust, be confident, not on ourselves, but on God who raises the dead. He's delivered us from such a deadly peril.

You know, when I was a new Christian, I had no idea that verse existed in the Bible. And when I read it, I loved it. I've loved this verse ever since then.

Because one of my problems in trials is I get in the trial and the affliction, and I start to struggle a little with despair or utterly burdened, and it's real easy to ask why is this going on? And it's like Paul just gives one simple answer. It's like, James, you're too proud, too self-confident, and I'm giving this trial with one purpose in mind out of the many is to break you of some of that pride. To crush you.

You're relying too much on yourself and I'm making you weak so you can give up. And just say, I can't do anything. Does the Bible say we can't do anything apart from Christ? It doesn't talk like that, does it? John 15 says exactly that.

Apart from Me, you can do nothing. So, afflictions are meant to make you more God-reliant. Isn't that amazing? The devil, what does he want afflictions to do? Make you less reliant on God.

Well, God is so cruel. Look at God. He put you through that.

God is saying that's not the purpose. The purpose is actually to make you rely more on Me, not less on Me. So one thing suffering seeks to deal with, brethren, is one of the biggest problems for the Christian.

Self-confidence and pride. You know, it's when you're at gunpoint, you tend to give up. You just realize, I can't get out of this.

Thought about Acts 27. Paul was sailing. Remember, he's a prisoner on a ship.

Neither sun nor stars appeared for many days. No small tempest lay on us. They're going to die.

And look what people on the boat said. All hope of our being saved was at last abandoned. They saw no hope.

We can't be saved. No hope. But look at Paul.

The Lord told Paul that none would die. And Paul said this, So take heart, men, for I have faith in God. Notice that.

Is that Paul relying on himself? No, it's faith in God. Trust in God. That it will be exactly as I have been told.

And sure enough, no one died. They were at gunpoint. And even all these lost men, they realized they've got no other option but to look to the God of Paul.

That is a man who's not relying on himself, but on God. He had nowhere else where he could even begin to look. So afflictions are to eliminate any trust or confidence we have in ourselves that we might be fully dependent on God.

Turn over to chapter 12. In this same letter, we see Paul say the same thing. Chapter 12, verse 7, So to keep me from becoming conceited, that's pride, to keep me from becoming reliant on myself, trusting in myself, because of the surpassing greatness of the revelations.

You get these surpassing revelations, it's easy to start trusting in yourself. Paul says, because of that, look what the Lord did. A thorn was given me in the flesh, a messenger of Satan to harass me, to keep me from becoming conceited.

Same idea. Here I'm in an affliction. God gives it specifically to keep me from becoming proud, self-reliant, and not confident in God.

Paul says in verse 8, Three times I pleaded with the Lord about this, that it should leave me, but He said to me, Paul, my grace is sufficient for you. Why? Because my power is made perfect in weakness. Isn't that amazing? God's power is made perfect in our weakness.

And what is one of our greatest problems? We're not weak enough. We're too confident, too proud, too self-reliant. And the Lord says I've got a way to deal with that.

And one way I deal with that is by afflicting you, where you're utterly burdened beyond your own strength, because then it makes you say, oh, this happened so I would no longer rely on myself, but on God who raises the dead. Then Paul, he goes on here, Therefore, I will boast all the more gladly of my weakness. He boasts in his weakness.

So that the power of Christ may rest upon me. How many of you boast in your weakness? I've boasted at times in my weaknesses because my weakness has led to such a severe discipline from God and brokenness that it led me to a closer relationship with the Lord and I'm forever thankful for that. I look back

on those afflictions and thank God because it was something that led me to greater intimacy with Christ.

And Paul says in v. 10, For the sake of Christ, then, I am content with weakness, insults, hardship, persecutions, calamities, for when I am weak, then I am strong. Afflictions eliminate pride, self-sufficiency, self-confidence, with a purpose to make us more fully sufficient in Christ's power and not our own. It's so that the power of Christ might rest upon us.

Isn't that what you want? I want the power of Christ to rest upon me, not my own strength. And so there are times afflictions come and one of those specific purposes is to break me of my pride. And you ask, Lord, remove the thorn.

Well, actually, James, it's for your good you keep the thorn that you might get more humility and not become a proud, conceited, puffed-up person. And when the power of Christ rests upon you, you actually go and bear fruit. That's what happens in afflictions and sufferings.

You know what happens sometimes? It takes you getting trapped. And you're cornered in and you're trapped. And then you realize, I can't get out.

All I can do is patiently endure and rely on the Lord. Whether I ever get out or I have this until the end of my days, I'm patiently going to endure in it and rely on the Lord. God wants us more desperate, more desperate for Him.

And again, one of the purposes of trials, it will make you more desperate for Him, more reliant on Him. Matthew Henry said, God often brings His people into great straits that they may apprehend their own insufficiency to help themselves and may be induced, persuaded, to place their trust and hope in His all-sufficiency. If you're self-confident and proud, you're not too persuaded, do I really need God's help? And so God afflicts you and it just makes you induced.

It's like God persuades you, you can't do anything. Give up. Give up.

I utterly am burdened beyond strength. I feel like I despair of life, Paul says. Ah, that was so I would no longer rely on myself, but on God who raises the dead.

And He has delivered us and He will deliver us again. For on Him we have set our hope. Think about it.

Pride prevents faith from being active. You're not going to get anything done in the Christian life except you're doing it by faith trusting God. Pride gets in the way of that.

Faith is trusting in the Lord entirely. Pride is trusting in your own power and gifts. Think about self-reliance.

Self-reliance is not just dangerous for the Christian. Who's self-reliance so condemning for? The lost. They trust in their works to be saved.

Paul said, for all who rely on works of the law are under a curse. Luke said some trusted in themselves. So, for the Christian, relying on your own power leads to no power.

But relying on the Lord, it leads to power. It leads to help. 1 Peter 4, he says, serve with the strength that God supplies, so that in everything, God may be glorified.

Do you hear that? The strength that God supplies. If we're not going to serve with the strength God supplies and we serve in our own strength, God can afflict us to make us rely not on ourselves, but on God. Now notice what Paul says here.

He says in v. 8, the second sentence, we are so utterly burdened beyond our strength. Let's think of this for a second. Beyond our strength.

Karen already mentioned this. Isn't this our problem? Answer this, what good work truly to glorify God is not beyond your own strength. I mean, are there any works you can do as a Christian that are within your own strength? Can you guys name any? Is there any really glorifying thing to God you can do in your own strength? There isn't.

There's nothing. John 15, apart from me, you can do nothing. So it's interesting Paul says beyond our own strength.

That's our problem. We don't feel that enough. We would be better off to acknowledge more quickly this is beyond my own strength.

I don't have the strength. I don't have the power. I can't do this.

And then to turn around and what do we acknowledge? Whose strength is this not beyond? Christ. The Lord. Paul said I can do all things through Christ who strengthens me.

You hear that? When Christ strengthens you, you can endure in all circumstances, all afflictions. Paul did it through prison, through shipwreck, through almost getting stuck with beast in a Colosseum. He endured.

So brethren, everything is beyond our strength. None of us may be arrogant enough to face a trial and say verbally, this is not beyond my strength. We may not say that, but we may subtly feel that inwardly.

And you know how we display it inwardly? No prayer. No acknowledging the Lord in all of our ways. We just go plow ahead without putting ourselves in consulting with the Lord.

That's us saying I can rely on my own strength. So, suffering. It strips you of pride so that God's power might rest upon you.

Now let's think of this. What is so powerful about relying on the Lord? Look what Paul compares the Lord's strength to. Verse 9, But that was to make us rely not on ourselves, but on God.

Now, think about this. When you want to describe someone's strength, you're going to mention something very powerful they can do. When you want to describe King David's strength, do you say on David who killed lions? You don't say that.

What do you say about David? Trust in David who did what? Slew Goliath. You think of David's achievement or his power, you think of it not in him protecting the sheep, but protecting Israel and killing a giant. And what does Paul think of when he thinks of the Lord and he wants us to get a grip, a hold of God's power? He says right here, we rely not on ourselves, but on God, and he says, who raises the dead.

I think Paul saying raises the dead is emphasizing it's like a statement of power. God is a God who raises the dead. Here you are, Paul, you feel like you've received a sentence of death that you're going to die.

But guess what? Even if you die, Paul, you're serving the God who raises the dead. Nothing is beyond God. Nothing is beyond His power.

So I think that's what that is. It's a statement of power. We need to recognize, brethren, we are trusting and relying on a God who raises the dead.

In how many situations and circumstances we've been in and it feels like the thing is dead and there's no hope, yet God raises the dead. His power in those circumstances, it might appear like a death sentence, yet God is able to change that. You may be on death row and in prison for 30 years and then get exonerated.

Who knows? So, I think Paul's point is meaning His power is such that even if we die, He could raise us from the dead. So how do I... You're saying to me, James, my affliction, one of the purposes is to make me rely more on the Lord. How do I rely on the Lord? And I kind of already hit on it.

One thing is through prayer. Just putting confidence in God. How do you put confidence in God? People say, how do you put confidence in the Lord? It's a matter of faith.

It's a matter of looking to Him and trusting Him. And one way you can do that is crying out to God. Look at Paul here.

He said in v. 10, He delivered us from such a deadly peril. He'll deliver us. And then he says this, On Him we have set our hope that He will deliver us again.

How do you rely on the Lord? You set your hope on God. You know what happens when you set your hope on God? So often, it means you sit there and you're just waiting. Here you are in this affliction and it's like, Lord, I can't go to the left.

I can't go to the right. All I can do is wait on You. Patiently endure in this suffering.

So how do I rely on God? I set my hope on Him. Meaning, I believe the best about the Lord. The Lord is going to work this for my good.

He's going to work it for my good. Cast all my confidence on Him. Think about Asa in the Old Testament.

2 Chronicles. Asa had about 580,000 men. And they were going against an army of a million.

A million men. What did Asa do? How did he rely on the Lord? He cried to the Lord his God. Oh, there is none like You to help between the mighty and the weak.

Help us, O Lord our God. For we rely on You, and in Your name we have come against this multitude. O Lord our God, let not man prevail against You.

And it says this, so the Lord defeated the Ethiopians. A million men defeated. Asa and the people who were with him pursued them as far as Gerar.

And the Ethiopians fell until none remained alive. All a million died. A million people wiped off the earth.

What was the secret to the success? Cried to the Lord. Relied upon God. Confidence in the Lord.

Shortly after that, Asa, he reversed himself. And he relied in the king of Syria. He didn't rely on the Lord, and it says the army of Syria escaped him.

He trusted in his own devices. He took matters into his own hands. Isaiah says this, Woe to those who go down to Egypt for help and rely on horses, whose trust in chariots because they are many, and in horsemen because they are very strong.

But do not look to the Holy One of Israel or consult the Lord. To rely on the Lord is to look to Him in faith, is to consult to Him and say, Lord, what must I do? What do You want me to do? Even if it looks like all the strength is over there, if You say go this way, I'll go in faith, because Your power is perfected in weakness. The psalmist said some trust in chariots and some in horses.

But we trust in the name of the Lord our God. Think about Abraham. He faced a pretty serious trial, right? His son actually did have a sentence of death.

It wasn't theoretical. He was going to go and slaughter his own son and God had commanded that. Did Abraham rely on God? You better believe it.

Hebrews 11, he considered that God was able even to raise his son from the dead, from which figuratively speaking, He did receive him back. That's what God wants. He wants us to consider in the midst of our affliction, Lord, what are You able to do? So on a more personal level, a lot of us are not about to face beast in a Colosseum.

We're not about to be shipwrecked. Is there something for me here? Yes. Your affliction and burden that is beyond your own strength is already mentioned.

It may be a mother who's not getting sleep because her rebellious child in the middle of the night. Look, even for you mothers, that is an affliction that's meant to make you not rely on yourself. You'd be surprised how much pride and self-confidence there still is and an affliction like that can bring that out and God can crush it.

To make you more confident in His providence, to make you not get impatient, but right away consult the Lord. Lord, You've given me this affliction. Would You comfort me? What do You want me to do? It could be the affliction could be a teenage child that is rebelling.

And you're thinking, what can I do? What can I do? And all of a sudden, you go read Charles Spurgeon's Morning and Evening, and Spurgeon says, take your child to the Lord. And you say, wow, I never thought of that! Rely on God? Really? And the Lord acts. It could be a child with a disability.

Remember, that disabled child, one, it's for you now to be able to comfort others in the same affliction. God designed that affliction to give you the ability to comfort others. And remember, it's going to make you lose more self-reliance on yourself.

It could be some sickness. Your seasonal flu. Whatever happens, you find in this trial, your physical strength's zapped, and you suddenly in the trial, you see a measure of pride and self-reliance you had that you didn't recognize otherwise.

You weren't picking up on it. And boom, God afflicts you. And all of a sudden, you just see pride that you didn't even see was there.

It could be you're suffering in affliction of a strained relationship with a brother or sister, and you find your own self, this lack of ability to get it all smoothed out, and all of a sudden, you're sitting there wondering, I don't know what I can do. And it's like the Lord is saying, stop relying on yourself. Trust Me.

Cry out to Me. Consult with Me. Look for Me for comfort, not on your circumstances.

So, just a couple of brief thoughts in closing. Are you learning this in your trials? Do you see pride being stripped away? Maybe you haven't thought of it like that. One purpose behind an affliction, Paul says it's to make you no longer rely on yourself.

To break you of self-confidence in pride. And if your Heavenly Father comes along to discipline you that you might share in His holiness, and when He's disciplining you, you leave that spanking session, the same proud, resistant person in those ways, the Lord's going to love you and bring you back and keep disciplining you. He does that in love.

If we're His sons, He's going to give us that loving discipline. But, take comfort. What did Paul say later in this letter? We shouldn't lose heart.

Though our outer self is wasting away, guess what? Our inner self is being renewed day by day. And that's one thing trials do. It renews the inner self.

The outer man kind of gets beat up. We get old. But inwardly, we're more like Christ.

So, you're feeling? Maybe you're here this morning and you feel like you've received a sentence of death. Some affliction. It just feels like this is a death sentence.

There's no hope. Well, guess what? Rethink it. You're feeling like your sentence to death is actually being sentenced to have more pride stripped from you, that you might lose more self-confidence and dependence upon yourself.

It is you being sentenced to be comforted by God. Have you ever thought of that? When God gives you an affliction, He's actually sentencing you to a comforting session. Because He's afflicting you and He's going to comfort you at some point.

So when you get an affliction, it's not just, boy, the affliction's tough. Realize the God of all comfort is going to comfort us in all of our afflictions. There's going to come comfort in some way.

And it's going to make me able now to comfort others in a way I could not before. If we will see this purpose in our afflictions that they are meant to strip us of self-confidence and pride and lead us to rely on the Lord, then we should more quickly in the trial stop all self-reliance and cast ourselves on the Lord and find that perfect peace. You get what I'm saying? If you're here this morning and you despair of life itself, stop trusting in yourself.

Say, Lord, search my heart. Where is there some pride that I can resolve this in my own power? That I've got it all figured out. Lord, I have not consulted with You as I should.

The sooner you do that, the sooner you'll find comfort as you endure patiently. Think of this, the Apostle Paul despaired of life. He didn't remain in that state.

You won't either. If you're in a trial now, be comforted. Verse 10, He delivered us from such a deadly peril.

And He will deliver us. And Paul's not going to stop. On Him, we have set our hope that He will deliver us.

Verse 11, He humbly asked for prayer. You also must help us by prayer. Wait, Paul, you just went through that massive trial and despaired of life and now you're in another situation and you're asking for prayer? Since you went through the big trial, don't you need to not ask for prayer now? Paul's saying, no way.

I should have asked for prayer sooner. I should have said, help us. Pray for me.

So that many will give thanks on behalf of the blessings granted us through the prayers of many. So, I'm almost done. If you're in a trial right now, be comforted, He will deliver you again.

Think of David. David thought like this. 1 Samuel 17, he said, The Lord who delivered me from the paw of the lion and the paw of the bear will deliver me from the hand of the Philistine.

Notice that? David had encouragement to go against Goliath because of previous deliverances. You and I should have encouragement to go against these greater, more severe trials that we face because of our previous deliverances. It should stir up our faith.

God delivered me then. He'll deliver me there. We should remember the Word again.

He'll deliver me again. He'll deliver me again. That's what the Christian life is.

It's a biography of God delivering us again and again. And it's never going to stop until He brings us to glory and completes the good work on us that He started. Lastly, realize this, we ourselves are a means God uses to comfort one another.

We must not be unaware of each other's afflictions. Are we sharing about our afflictions and the comfort God has given? 2 Corinthians 7, But God who comforts the downcast comforted us by the coming of Titus. You hear that? Comforted by a person.

God will use people to comfort you. That's you relying on God. It's trusting God's put a member in this body to comfort me in a way that I can't console my own self.

2 Corinthians 13, Finally, brothers, rejoice, aim for restoration, comfort one another. So, Christian, we're going to be afflicted in every way. But Paul says in 2 Corinthians 4, we won't be crushed.

We'll be perplexed, but not driven to despair. Persecuted, but not forsaken. Struck down, but not destroyed.

Let's pray. Lord, I thank You this morning that even though every single affliction, every single work in the Christian life is beyond our strength, Lord, I thank You that nothing is beyond Your strength. Nothing is beyond Your scope and ability to comfort.

Nothing is beyond Your ability to show sympathy, Lord, to those even this morning who are afflicted. And Lord, we do pray for that dear brother Jay over there in Louisville. Lord, we pray that You, the God of all comfort, would comfort him in the midst of that affliction.

Lord, draw near to him. Lord, this morning. And Lord, we know in the long run, these two very purposes of breaking self-reliance and of giving him the ability to comfort others will work themselves out.

And we're sure there's many other purposes. And Lord, even us, whatever trials are going on here today, Lord, we just pray, would You help us to make the most out of them? Would You help us to consult You to set our hope on You who raised the dead? Lord, it may seem dead at times, but You are the God who raises the dead. We trust You.

I pray You'd even raise those who are spiritually dead here today, that You'd breathe life into them, that they'd see You as the God of all power and might, that they'd cast themselves on You. Lord, be with us as we continue the meeting today. In Jesus' precious name, Amen.

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