

A Heart to Sacrifice

Loving and Living for What Matters Most

How Has God Equipped You to Serve?

2 Corinthians 1:3-10, 3:2-6

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I. Your Trials and Suffering Can Add Mercy to the Way You See and Serve Others Around You

Two things happen in the midst of severe trials and suffering:

- You are comforted by God on a level that's way beyond head knowledge
- You're pushed to the point of despair so that you've got nowhere to turn but God

2 Cor. 1:3-4 "Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of mercies and God of all comfort, who comforts us in all our tribulation, that we may be able to comfort those who are in any trouble, with the comfort with which we ourselves are comforted by God"

Your severe suffering of any kind puts you in a position to comfort people who are in 'any trouble.'

Severe suffering and trials can bring you to the end of yourself and push you to the point of despair, so that you've got nowhere else to turn but to God!

2 Cor. 1:8-10 "For we do not want you to be ignorant, brethren, of our trouble which came to us in Asia: that we were burdened beyond measure, above strength, so that we despaired even of life. 'Yes, we had the sentence of death in ourselves, that we should not trust in ourselves but in God who raises the dead, 'who delivered us from so great a death, and does deliver us; in whom we trust that He will still deliver us

1 Cor. 10:13 doesn't say that God will never allow us to face anything that overwhelms us or that seems unbearable. This verse promises there won't be anything we face for where there isn't a way of escape by crying out to God to help us bear the things we could never bear on our own.

II. Your Lack of Credentials Can Make Room for the Spirit to Work Through You Instead of Having to Compete with You

The only life-changing work that is happening in any man or woman anywhere in the world is only happening by the living Christ and the Spirit of God working in them on a heart level.

2 Cor. 3:3 "You are manifestly an epistle of Christ, ministered by us, written not with ink but by the Spirit of the living God, not on tablets of stone but on tablets of flesh, that is, of the heart."

A. God's ultimate goal is to make people like Christ

B. We have the joy and privilege of being used by God

C. The Spirit of God does what we can't do – work on a heart level

For some who are serving, it's all about what they're doing FOR God, but they don't really need or depend on Him. They hardly pray, wait on God, or cry out to Him in desperation asking Him to work THROUGH them, for His glory.

2 Cor. 3:5-6 "Not that we are sufficient of ourselves to think of anything as being from ourselves, but our sufficiency is from God, who also made us sufficient as ministers of the new covenant, not of the letter but of the Spirit; for the letter kills, but the Spirit gives life."

D. Two Categories of Christians Sitting Here Today

1. Self-Sufficient Christians

James 4:6 "... God resists the proud but gives grace to the humble"

God can't use you right now, because first He has to break you.

For those of you who are not eaten up with sinful pride and self-sufficiency, but are extremely gifted and able, the pattern of Scripture is that God will bring something into your life that feels like an incredible hindrance. It will feel like a limitation or limp, but from God's perspective you're overqualified. Until He gets you limping, He can't use you greatly. That's Paul's testimony in **2 Corinthians 12:7-10**.

2. Shattered and Ashamed Christians

You are the kind of person God chooses to use!

If we look at the lives of the women listed in Jesus' genealogy in **Matthew 1:1-6**, we see that God chooses to work through and uses the very people our world rejects and pushes aside.

No matter what you've done, where you've been, who you are or what's been done to you, you're not beyond the reach of God's grace. God's grace is greater and it supersedes anything else, so that no one is so far gone that God can't still save you and use for His own glory.

God specializes in accomplishing EXTRAordinary things through incredibly ORDINARY and broken people.

- How do these verses change the way you live for God and serve others?

2 Cor. 3:4 "And we have such trust through Christ toward God."

It means that you have confidence in someone because you've been persuaded and won over by their ability. You have assurance and security that you can put your trust and hope in them, because you have turned away from self-reliance altogether!

Colossians 1:12 "Giving thanks to the Father who has qualified us (made us sufficient) to be partakers of the inheritance of the saints in light."

Whenever God uses His power to save you and qualify you to become His son or daughter, He also equips you and qualifies you to serve Him.