

## Parson to Person

### 2 Corinthians 1 – Part 3

*“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, you also helping together in prayer for us, that thanks may be given by many persons on our behalf for the gift granted to us through many”* (2 Corinthians 1:8–11 NKJV).

Once Paul began ministry in Jesus, he was constantly *“hard-pressed on every side.”* It seems that nearly everywhere Paul went was problematic. Community disturbances, vocal debate, rejection, and the need to relocate were the norms. Therefore, his *“complaint”* (here in the above text) fits well with his experience.

Paul’s call was a call to suffer—while proclaiming the Gospel. He had been a persecutor of Jesus and His Church, but was then *“privileged”* to be called by the Lord and then endure as the persecuted.

In Acts we read Jesus’ words concerning Paul. Luke recorded, *“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).

Of himself, Paul writes, *“we have this treasure in earthen vessels, that the excellence of the power may be of God and not of us. We are hard-pressed on every side, yet not crushed; we are perplexed, but not in despair; persecuted, but not forsaken; struck down, but not destroyed—always carrying about in the body the dying of the Lord Jesus, that the life of Jesus also may be manifested*

*in our body. For we who live are always delivered to death for Jesus' sake, that the life of Jesus also may be manifested in our mortal flesh. So then death is working in us, but life in you. And since we have the same spirit of faith, according to what is written, 'I believed and therefore I spoke,' we also believe and therefore speak, knowing that He who raised up the Lord Jesus will also raise us up with Jesus, and will present us with you. For all things are for your sakes, that grace, having spread through the many, may cause thanksgiving to abound to the glory of God" (2 Corinthians 4:7–15).*

Therefore, his declaration (above) in 2 Corinthians 4 relates directly to our text: *"we were burdened beyond measure, above strength, so that we despaired even of life. Yes, we had the sentence of death in ourselves" (vss. 8–9a).*

Some read this as a despair to the point of suicidal tendencies. Others correctly read it to suggest that Paul believed he would be martyred for the Lord. Clearly the latter is correct! Paul was martyred but nonetheless knew that he would be raised up—for he declared, *"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" (vss. 9b–10).*

Acts 19 gives the account Paul may have had on his mind when he wrote this letter to the Corinthians. Luke recorded, *"And about that time there arose a great commotion about the Way. For a certain man named Demetrius, a silversmith, who made silver shrines of Diana, brought no small profit to the craftsmen. He called them together with the workers of similar occupation, and said: 'Men, you know that we have our prosperity by this trade. Moreover, you see and hear that not only at Ephesus, but throughout almost all Asia, this Paul has persuaded and turned away many people, saying that they are not gods which are made with hands. So not only is this trade of ours in danger of falling into disrepute, but also the temple of the*

*great goddess Diana may be despised and her magnificence destroyed, whom all Asia and the world worship.’ Now when they heard this, they were full of wrath and cried out, saying, ‘Great is Diana of the Ephesians!’ So the whole city was filled with confusion, and rushed into the theater with one accord, having seized Gaius and Aristarchus, Macedonians, Paul’s travel companions. And when Paul wanted to go in to the people, the disciples would not allow him. Then some of the officials of Asia, who were his friends, sent to him pleading that he would not venture into the theater. Some therefore cried one thing and some another, for the assembly was confused, and most of them did not know why they had come together. And they drew Alexander out of the multitude, the Jews putting him forward. And Alexander motioned with his hand, and wanted to make his defense to the people. But when they found out that he was a Jew, all with one voice cried out for about two hours, ‘Great is Diana of the Ephesians!’” (Acts 19:23–34).*

It is no wonder Paul was thinking (disparagingly) about his future ministry life. However, as he so clearly stated, *“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”* (vss. 9–10).

However, he reflected on the fact that God had delivered him, was then delivering him, and would deliver him in the future—at least until the time of his “departure from the body in order to be present with the Lord” (see 2 Corinthians 5:6–8).

- 1) Paul despaired. At times we do too.
- 2) Paul was not condemned by the Lord when suffering despair.
- 3) Paul was comforted by:
  - a. Physical support he received through the body of Christ.

- b. Mental encouragement he received by knowing that prayers were being offered on his behalf.
  - c. Supernatural sustaining grace provided by the Lord.
  - d. An eternal perspective—he believed in the resurrection from the dead.
- 4) Our days are known in and by the Lord. We are invincible until the Lord has finished using us in the present ministry and thus calls us home.

I love you all,  
Pastor Paul