

Message Summary

In 2 Corinthians 1:3-11, God addresses the brokenness and affliction with which our world is filled. Though it enters from the earliest life stages, self-reliance is inadequate to cope with the world's brokenness. We need the supernatural power of the resurrection.

The world's brokenness is manifested in a variety of ways. Disease and death afflict our physical bodies. Conflict and divisions sever relationships with family and friends. Even life's small afflictions, like stubbing a toe or hair changing color, remind us that not all is well. But God's original design of the world was perfect. God intended all, but especially humanity, to enjoy his creation as an expression of his goodness toward us. How can this original goodness be restored? We often turn to the delusion of self-effort as a futile attempt to restore the goodness of creation to its original good order. People, whether spouses, children, significant others, or close friends, are good gifts from God but cannot fill the hole in our souls yearning for God. Drugs are temporary masks. Religious efforts do nothing to restore our broken hearts.

But praise be to God, there is a better solution! The gospel is the good news that God addresses our affliction by entering into affliction himself. Jesus, the perfect God-Man, knew abandonment, brokenness, and can identify with his people as *"a very present help in time of need"* (Ps. 46:1). Jesus, the sinless One, paid the penalty for our sin on our behalf. Death itself was defeated because life died, so that we may share in Christ's death. The only way to escape the world's brokenness and affliction is to turn away from self-reliance to trust in Christ's supernatural power. We overcome death, sin, and suffering through him. Those who do are freed to do such crazy things as denying self and sin and being faithful to love those around us. Costly love will inevitably add greater affliction and difficulty to our lives. But it will also add comfort, from the One who was abandoned on our behalf so we would not have to be. It will without a doubt be worth it. Only one question remains: will we continue in the delusion of self-reliance, or embrace the supernatural power of the resurrection?

WHY IT MATTERS

Digging Deeper

Why is self-reliance such a temptation? With the gospel's free offer of salvation by Christ afflicted on our behalf, why do we still run to ourselves for rescue from the world's affliction?

Pastor Deric mentioned relationships, drugs, and religion as three examples of self-reliant efforts to escape the world's affliction. What others have you seen? How do they show themselves to be futile?

How does pursuing others with gospel love increase both our affliction and our comfort (see esp. vv. 5-7; 2 Cor. 4:7-18)?

What is the difference between "religion" as self-reliance and the true gospel? What does the resurrection accomplish that religion never could?

NOW WHAT DO WE DO?

Group Discussion & Application

Use the following questions to examine what the sermon and its text mean, to apply the Word to your life, and to guide how you pray. Please note that you don't have to use all of the questions. These are just options (along with the digging deeper section) to help you frame the family/small group discussion.

1. In what ways are you prone to be self-reliant rather than rely on the supernatural power of the resurrection? Are you relying on yourself or the gospel to free you from the world's affliction?
2. Are you depending on people or relationships (e.g., spouse, children, friends, or family) to rescue you from the world's affliction?
3. Are drugs or other worldly addictions temporary masks blinding you from your real spiritual needs?
4. Are you prone towards "religious activity" to artificially root out the world's brokenness and affliction?
5. What "crazy things" in denying sin and self and pursuing others in love is God calling you to this week? How will these increase both your affliction and comfort?
6. How are you using your time, abilities, and talents? Do they conform to the world's pattern of "eat, drink, and be merry," or do they only make sense in light of the resurrection?

Prayer

- Pray for Our Church:
 - Thank God for Christ's faithfulness to enter and endure the world's affliction on our behalf, and defeating death, our greatest enemy, on the cross.
 - Pray that the Lord would protect Christ Fellowship from self-reliance and ground us in the gospel hope of resurrection power
- Pray for Our Community:
 - Pray that people in the Gadsden area would see the futility of self-reliance and run to the supernatural power of the resurrection.
 - Pray that the Lord would give Christ Fellowship crazy, sacrificial, affliction-adding love towards those around us, and that it would lead those in the Gadsden community beyond ourselves towards the One afflicted for us.
- Pray for Our World:
 - Pray that God would give such faithful stewardship of our time, abilities, and talents this week to see the gospel extended among the nations. Pray especially that we would prioritize our resources to support gospel proclamation around the world.
 - Pray for the international dinner at the Holts this Friday (4/28, 6 P.M.), that many international students would see the futility of self-reliance and embrace the supernatural power of the resurrection. Pray that the Lord would bring many Christ-followers to share and build relationships that will last far beyond the dinner itself.