



## BELIEVERS CHAPEL

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The Sermons of Dan Duncan

2 Corinthians 7:5-16

Summer 2025

"Killing Giant Despair"

TRANSCRIPT

Thank you Chris, and good morning. We are continuing our studies in 2 Corinthians, and we're in chapter 7 and we're going to look at the rest of the chapter, from verse 5 through verse 16. [Actually, this picks up where Paul left off in chapter 2, verse 13—so, for the past number of weeks we have been in a large parenthesis in this book, where Paul has digressed from speaking to them about his situation and the letter he had written, (called, 'the sorrowful letter'). And now he comes back to all of that—and we'll say more about that in the lesson itself.]

Now beginning with verse 5,

<sup>5</sup> For even when we came into Macedonia our flesh had no rest, but we were afflicted on every side: conflicts without, fears within. <sup>6</sup> But God, who comforts the depressed, comforted us by the coming of Titus; <sup>7</sup> and not only by his coming, but also by the comfort with which he was comforted in you, as he reported to us your longing, your mourning, your zeal for me; so that I rejoiced even more. <sup>8</sup> For though I caused you sorrow by my letter, I do not regret it; though I did regret it—for I see that that letter caused you sorrow, though only for a while— <sup>9</sup> I now rejoice, not that you were made sorrowful, but that you were made sorrowful to *the point of repentance*; for you were made sorrowful according to *the will of God*, so that you might not suffer loss in anything through us. <sup>10</sup> For the

sorrow that is according to *the will of* God produces a repentance without regret, *leading* to salvation, but the sorrow of the world produces death. <sup>11</sup> For behold what earnestness this very thing, this godly sorrow, has produced in you: what vindication of yourselves, what indignation, what fear, what longing, what zeal, what avenging of wrong! In everything you demonstrated yourselves to be innocent in the matter. <sup>12</sup> So although I wrote to you, *it was* not for the sake of the offender nor for the sake of the one offended, but that your earnestness on our behalf might be made known to you in the sight of God. <sup>13</sup> For this reason we have been comforted.

And besides our comfort, we rejoiced even much more for the joy of Titus, because his spirit has been refreshed by you all. <sup>14</sup> For if in anything I have boasted to him about you, I was not put to shame; but as we spoke all things to you in truth, so also our boasting before Titus proved to be *the* truth. <sup>15</sup> His affection abounds all the more toward you, as he remembers the obedience of you all, how you received him with fear and trembling. <sup>16</sup> I rejoice that in everything I have confidence in you.

2 Corinthians 7: 5-16

May the Lord bless this reading of His Word, and bless our time of study in it together; may He guide us in our thinking and instruct us from this text of Scripture. Let's bow together in prayer.

LORD, we do look to You to bless us. We can read a text, and we can ponder it, but if we don't have The Teacher, we cannot understand it. I don't mean the human teacher, I mean the Divine Teacher, the third Person of the Trinity, the Holy Spirit; and we pray for His ministry this morning—that He would enlighten us, that He would illuminate the text that we've read and that we would understand it. And that we would understand the great lesson that is presented here and that is the *comfort* that You give

to those who face discouragement in life for various reasons; and we have every reason to rejoice.

So teach us that, LORD, and in so doing draw us close to You—and then may we live our lives in that way...in complete dependence upon You for Your goodness and Your mercy. We go through trials in life, but they are not without purpose, and You always bring us through them. You promise to do that.

Father, we have some of the saints on our minds here in our bulletin. Some of our members are traveling today, and we pray that You'd give them safety—and for those that are taking vacations we pray that you give them rest and blessing.

LORD, we look to You now to bless us in this hour, that You would teach us and build us up in the faith, and cause us to rejoice in the One who gives comfort.

We pray these things in Christ's name. Amen.

*(Message)* One of my favorite hymn writers is William Cowper. In his hymn, *God Moves In A Mysterious Way*, he wrote,

"You fearful saints, fresh courage take  
The clouds you so much dread  
Are big with mercy and shall break  
In blessings on your head."

Every line of the hymn is good, but that one, *(verse)*, states the problem...and solution.

We are all "fearful saints". We worry for various reasons; we get discouraged, down, and depressed. This is one reason God's people have always found comfort in the Psalms, because they reveal the trials and emotions that are typical of human experience. In Psalm 42, *(vs5)*, David asked himself the question, "Why are you in

despair, O my soul?" The circumstances of his life were hard, and David was depressed. (It happens to all of us)

But there's a solution; Cowper referred to it in his hymn. David would find the solution in the statement, "Hope in God...", (*Psa 42, 5b*), and Paul refers to it in our text, almost in passing, when he writes that, 'God ,who comforts the depressed, comforted us...' (vs6).

Paul tells us about the encouragement God gave him in our text, (in 2 Corinthians chapter 7, verses 5 through 16), and how he got it. He had been in an anxious state of mind before he had written this letter. In the early chapters of the book he describes his travels and emotions in order to explain to the Corinthians the reason he had not come to Corinth as he had planned and promised to do. There was trouble in the church, the Corinthian believers were divided against him over an issue of discipline—and he felt that his presence would only have made matters worse.

So he didn't go. Instead he sent a letter instructing the church to put a certain individual under discipline—a man in the church who had personally attacked Paul. The letter he wrote, (sometimes referred to as, 'the sorrowful letter'), is lost to us; but from all that Paul wrote about it in chapter 2, and here in chapter 7, it was 'a severe letter'; and he worried that it was not well received.

So he sent Titus to Corinth to deal with the matter, and he, (*Paul*), later left Ephesus, traveled north to Troas, on the northwestern coast of Asia Minor. There he anxiously waited for Titus and news of events in Corinth...but Titus never came. So Paul left, crossed the Aegean Sea and went to Macedonia where he hoped Titus would find him. That is where Paul's story, 'his travelogue', ended and he began a long digression from chapter 2, verse 14, all the way to chapter 7, verse 4.

It was a good digression, full of rich theological treasure. In fact, Philip Hughes, in his commentary wrote that, "If these four chapters were missing from our Bibles, we would be missing some of the 'mountain peaks of spiritual doctrine.'" (So we're glad that under the supernatural guidance of the Holy Spirit, Paul digressed.)

But now he comes back to his personal story, to his travels and emotions, and explains how, when he arrived in Macedonia, (probably Philippi), he was in great distress over the Corinthians; "For even when we came into Macedonia our flesh had no rest, but we were afflicted on every side: conflicts without, fears within. "(vs5). He doesn't explain what the 'outward conflicts' were, but "fears within" were no doubt concerns over the church and the well-being of the saints in Corinth. Paul says that he, "had no rest", and that he was, "afflicted on every side". (ibid.). So even the great apostle, who believed in and taught the absolute sovereignty of God, would sometimes worry—become anxious.

Now he didn't worry about himself...I think we should say that. He worried about them; he worried about their spiritual progress and the progress of the Gospel, (he mentioned that in chapter 2, verse 12). Still, he was concerned; he was worried; he was anxious. Belief in the sovereignty of God doesn't empty a person of his or her emotions. Calvinist aren't stoics; we feel deeply. We should...it's human. Christ did—He wept over Jerusalem, over His people's implacable sin and refusal to come to Him; He wept at Lazarus' tomb over the effects of sin and the tragedy of death.

Paul, too, had a real and active emotional life. He was concerned for the Corinthians...and until Titus arrived with news on conditions in Corinth, Paul, 'had no rest' for his spirit.

But rest finally came. He wrote in verse 6, "But God, who comforts the depressed, comforted us by the coming of Titus." Titus came to Macedonia with good news. He actually brought both good and bad news. The good news was that the disciplinary matter had been resolved satisfactorily.

Titus would also inform Paul of the bad news—that of the activity in Corinth of the false teachers and the increasing influence they had on many there in the church. [And Paul would deal with that problem in the last chapters of the book.] But here he rejoiced greatly at the good news that the people had responded well to him...and he was grateful to God for that: He describes Him as, "God, who comforts the depressed."

(vs6a). It is a description similar to the title that he gave the LORD in chapter 1, verse 3, the "God of all comfort." God is a living God, our heavenly Father, who knows us intimately and cares deeply for us...We should never forget that.

Christians sometimes feel deserted in a personal crisis—when they lose a job or a marriage fails, (and these things do happen). They're life shaking events—they're trials. And a person may feel abandoned, (or think like that). But God never abandons us; His 'everlasting arms are always underneath us', as Moses put it in Deuteronomy 33, verse 27. And at the right time, He gives comfort to the depressed. In fact, Calvin believed that, 'The more we are afflicted, the greater is the comfort that God has prepared for us.'

"*Comfort*" is one of the main lessons of this book. We have seen that, and we will yet see it again. It's a great theme of this book; "...God...comforts the depressed...". (vs6).

So, Look to Him!

Know His Word,

Know His promises,

Trust in Him,

And He will give you *comfort* at the right time,

...in His time, according to His all wise planning.

For Paul, that *comfort* came in the person of Titus. Paul was glad to see his faithful friend and comrade, (he says in verse 7), but the greatest joy from his visit was the news that Titus brought to him: 'All was well in Corinth...The church had repented!'

They had resisted Paul at first, but 'this letter' came...It was a harsh letter, a 'sorrowful letter' he said, (vs8c); and he didn't know what their response would be. And the good news is, the harsh letter had not turned them against him—but it had brought them, in reconciliation, to him.

Their love for Paul was great. Titus reported to him about their "longing" for him, their "mourning" over him and what had taken place between them, and their "zeal" for

him. (*all from vs7*). What makes that important, really, is not so much that they were zealous for Paul, and they were reconciled to Paul—but it is ‘Paul the apostle’, and the authority that he had...which is the authority of God. [And you see that against the background of these false teachers that were attacking Paul and seeking to undermine his authority.]

But through all of this, through this letter that he wrote, (that concerned him so much about how it would affect them), the result was, ‘their zeal for him’. (vs7). So he rejoiced in that.

That was a complete change. The congregation had been turned against him by someone in the church evidently, (as I mentioned earlier, a ‘significant person’ who had attacked Paul. Many had sided with this man, the apostle's opponent, and they had refused to discipline him.) But remember, in attacking the apostle Paul, they're attacking the Lord's representative, the one sent by the Lord...and so they're really attacking the Lord; they're really undermining His work.

But through the letter that Paul sent, (and probably also Titus' ministry to them), they had responded. In fact Paul wrote, back in chapter 2, (*verses 5 through 10*), that the man who had caused the trouble, who was to be disciplined, had himself repented. So their discipline, (that they finally followed through on in obedience to Paul), worked; so Paul could say, "I now rejoice." (vs9).

In verses 8 and 9, he speaks about ‘the letter’ that he had written, and the feelings he had about it...the concern that it had caused him; "For though I caused you sorrow by my letter, I do not regret it; though I did regret it—for I see that that letter caused you sorrow, though only for a while." (vs8).

A good parent doesn't like disciplining his or her child, but it's necessary; and the letter that Paul sent was ‘a hard letter’, but a necessary letter. He didn't enjoy it, and it caused him great concern. So it was necessary—he didn't regret it, and he knew that it was only for a while, this ‘disappointment’ that it might have caused in them.

And now, he said in verse 9, 'He could rejoice, not that he had made them sorrowful, but that because of their sorrow, they were led to their repentance.' They responded well to it—and for the rest of the passage, Paul talks about their godly response. It proved the kind of people they were; that's what encouraged Paul, what relieved him of his concern. They repented; that's the way the new creation in Christ responds.

The response of the natural man is just the opposite. It's defensive, self-justifying; they put up an argument with counter charges. They defend themselves, rather than recognize, 'I failed here', 'I'm wrong here', and repent.

The Corinthians did not do what the natural man does. The Corinthians did the right thing...the hard thing. They were the response that's not a natural response, they were "sorrowful". (vs9). They recognized the truth of what Paul had written and they turned from their error and their disobedience. They repented, and so did "not suffer loss" in anything, Paul wrote. (vs9c).

That was Paul's concern for them, and the real purpose of being so candid and severe with them. He was afraid that through their disobedience, (their refusal to discipline this man, their refusal to stop siding with this man), he was afraid they would suffer loss. That's his main concern—not himself but them. And the question then would be, 'What is the "loss" that he's speaking of here?' He doesn't define it for us, but I think we can rule some things out.

We can rule salvation out...it's not that they would 'lose their salvation'. That's impossible for a child of God. We could spend the rest of the hour on that; but John chapter 10, verses 28 and 29, states that very clearly. Romans 8, verses 7 through 39, "Nothing can separate us from the love of God that's in Christ Jesus." So that's all very clear.

Probably, from his earlier statements in this book, and his warning in 1 Corinthians chapter 3, verses 10 through 15, the concern here had to do with a *loss* of rewards and a *loss* of spiritual growth. And there, in 1 Corinthians 3, verse 10f,



he talks about the 'laid the foundation of Christ'. But some people, 'aren't building well, on that foundation'...and that was, I think, his concern here. There would be, 'a loss of reward', but (*also*) there'd be, 'a loss of growth...spiritual growth.'

So he wasn't just content, 'to have laid a good foundation in Corinth', he wanted to see them build on that foundation...and build 'well.' And he wanted them, 'to grow in Christ', and 'advance in the faith'.

The Christian life and the work of the church is more than, 'Giving the Gospel', (now, that's essential, that's important. That's not just important, it's necessary! We must give the Gospel, give it clearly, but that's just the beginning).

The life of the church and the function of the church has to do with instruction in 'the whole purpose and plan of God' to make people more mature; to advance them in the faith and make them increasingly useful. So Paul was a diligent pastor and apostle. He was like a father to the Corinthians. (And he certainly was that, their spiritual father.) He gave them good counsel. Sometimes he gave them hard advice. (He did that in this letter.) He gave them what they needed, even when it meant hurting their feelings and risking their friendship.

But that's what we're taught in Scripture, is it not? Proverbs 27, verse 6, "Faithful are the wounds of a friend, deceitful are the kisses of an enemy." We have, "the wounds of a friend", here in that letter; and they understood that. They came to understand that by the grace of God—and they responded well. Paul describes it in verse 10, 'the sorrow that', the correction caused, 'produced repentance.'

The world may respond to sorrow for its sin with *regret*, (we see that). The believer, however, responds to its sorrow for sin with *repentance*. Regret is not repentance. Regret may be self-pity without turning to God. Repentance is, 'a change of mind.' That's what the Greek word, '*repent*', literally means, "a change of mind". It is, 'a change of heart that turns from sin and turns to God for mercy'. Sorrow may lead to that, but sorrow itself is not repentance. Sorrow is good, and it is proper in regard to sin, an offense that's committed. It should be there, but just because a person is sorry, and

weeps, doesn't mean that he or she is repentant. Judas was sorry, Esau wept...but neither was repentant.

So there is no remedial value in weeping over sin. Repentance is not, 'being sorry'. Repentance is, 'turning from sin to God'. It results in a change of conduct. The Corinthians did that, and their repentance showed that their profession of faith was real. They were not pretenders, they were genuine; and that thrilled the apostle. He gave his response in verse 11a, where he wrote, "For behold what earnestness this very thing, this godly sorrow, has produced in you..."

So the Corinthians were an illustration of the very thing he wrote about, 'the right response to sorrow'. He lists the fruit of it in the six different ways they showed their repentance. "...what *vindication* of yourselves, what *indignation*, what *fear*, what *longing*, what *zeal*, what *avenging* of wrong!" (vs11b). They had a complete turn about themselves and about the problems there in Corinth—and indignant towards themselves for their indifference toward the sin in their midst. They were zealous for Paul and his apostolic authority.

Repentance leads to salvation in the unbeliever. And 'the saved' are a repenting people, continually turning from sin as the Corinthians did. (That's all part of sanctification). By their right response they had 'vindicated themselves', and showed themselves to be innocent in the matter. In other words, 'That they had put things right!'

And Paul states in verse 12, that this was the reason he had written 'the harsh letter'; "...not...", he says, "...for the sake of the offender..."; that is, 'not primarily to correct him', (*the offender*), but that their 'earnestness toward Paul would be made known'. (12b). And it was...and for that reason he wrote in verse 13, "...we have been comforted."

Titus was encouraged. He had probably gone to Corinth expecting the worst. I'm sure it was a visit that he wasn't looking forward to as he went there—and was expecting not to get a good response. The Corinthians were in rebellion against Paul,

so he must have anticipated a hostile reception. But to his surprise, they received the apostle's letter with conviction—and they responded obediently to Titus' ministry so that Paul says, 'Titus was refreshed in his spirit by them.' (vs13b). And that confirmed a boast that Paul had made to Titus that, 'he had great confidence in the Corinthians.' (2Cor 8:22). And Paul said, in verse 14, "I was not put to shame." That encouraged him.

He adds to that encouragement in verse 15 where he tells them that 'their obedience, and their reception of Titus had deeply impressed Titus, and won them a place in his heart'; "His affection abounds all the more toward you, as he remembers the obedience of you all, how you received him with fear and trembling." (vs15).

So Paul concludes with verse 16, "I rejoice that in everything I have confidence in you."

Now Paul's point in this passage is to explain the reason that he wrote this 'harsh letter', this 'severe letter', this 'sorrowful letter'. It was to elicit a right response from the Corinthians. They were in error; they were in rebellion, and they needed that instruction in order to galvanize repentance...to produce repentance.

And it worked! They repented of their negligence; they disciplined the offender in the church, and they renewed their devotion to Paul and his apostolic authority. That confirmed Paul's confidence in them.

But it also shows the power of God's Word. In verse 14, Paul said, "...we spoke all things to you in truth..." His whole ministry to them had been one of communicating God's truth. His 'severe letter' had been one of truth, and Titus' ministry there was a ministry of truth to them. When he came, he spoke the truth—and that's all Paul had.

Later, bishops and popes would have political authority. Paul had none of that... None of that! The only thing Paul had was the truth of God's Word. 'The Word of God', that's what the Scriptures are—the very Word of God, inerrant and powerful. The author of Hebrews writes of that in Hebrews chapter 4.

That's all Paul had, (this man without money, without political influence), he had the Word of God, and he had the authority of God...and that's enough. The Scriptures

are sufficient to produce the right changes in a person's life, because the Holy Spirit works through the Scriptures...and that makes them, "...*alive and powerful and sharper* than any two-edged sword." (Heb 4:12). He, (*the Holy Spirit*), works through them; and they are accompanied by His ministry of power.

So, we should never underestimate the power of God's Word on those who hear it and those who read it. That's what changed the Corinthians and caused them to repent. And the challenge to us is to know the Word of God...and to believe it. It is, as I said, "The revelation of God", the revelation of the mind of God. It is wisdom, and it is power, and it is full of promises that we need to know and that we need to rest upon.

And it is there, (in those great promises and in the knowledge of the God who made them), that's what gives the promises, *force* in our life. They come from the God who is almighty, all powerful, all knowing...faithful to His Word, and to His people; so that combination of the promises and the knowledge of God, the knowledge of His character, that is where we will find *comfort*.

That, too, is very much what this passage is about; 'comfort', 'encouragement', 'rest for the soul'. Paul had been worried over the condition of the Corinthians, when finally he got "comfort". (vs13). This episode in Paul's life illustrates how God deals with us in grace to comfort the depressed, the down and discouraged. That, too, is one of the main points of this passage. In verse 6, Paul introduced the solution to depression with two of the greatest words in all of the Bible, (it's not just my opinion), those words are, "But God."

We find those words, for example, I think very significantly in Ephesians chapter 2; "You were dead in your trespasses and sins..." (vs1), followed in verse 4 by, "...But God, being rich in mercy...made us alive."

Conditions may be bleak; conditions may be beyond our remedy. They may be what we would think of as "impossible!" Impossible to us: "But God", who is the God of the impossible, who does what we cannot do, intervenes to change things.

That was Paul's situation. He was down, he was worried, he was "depressed", (that's what he says in verse 6). It's how he begins this text: 'In Macedonia we had no rest'; "we were afflicted on every side, conflicts without, fears within. **But God**, who comforts the depressed, comforted us." (vs5-6). In the darkest moments, God comes to our aid to give relief.

God doesn't always do it with instant relief. We shouldn't be surprised if we're put in situations where we struggle for a time—maybe a few weeks, maybe a few years. We struggle for a time; and we go through these kinds of emotional upheavals that Paul seems to have experienced.

Many of the great men of God have done that. Many have gone through great struggles. Martin Luther comes to mind; his dealings with spiritual depression is very well known. He spoke of it, and he had a special German word for it that means something like 'assault'. It came 'at him', (and a lot of it was Satanic, I'm sure), he spoke of it as 'an attack'. But he dealt with that throughout his life.

Charles Surgeon is another...he had long periods of depression. There's a chapter in his book, *Lectures To My Students*, entitled, "The Minister's Fainting Fits", that was his term for depression. [Now we need to distinguish between what we call depression and what the professionals mean by depression, (which is 'clinical depression').] What I'm referring to here, what I think Paul meant, is *melancholy, sadness, gloominess*, that can lead to a sense of *hopelessness*. That's not uncommon among Christians.

In fact, Dr. David Martin Lloyd Jones, who had a very promising career as a physician before he became a great preacher in London, wrote a book entitled *Spiritual Depression*. It's actually a compilation of sermons that he preached at various times, that he then collected into one book. It was all on the same kind of subject, though from different perspectives. But he wrote this book, and he wrote in it, "It's a very common condition, spiritual depression. It shouldn't be. In a sense", he said, "a depressed Christian is a contradiction in terms, and is a very poor recommendation for the Gospel."

I agree; that's true.

Still, that doesn't change the fact that this is the world we live in, and this is what happens. And it happens to all of us. Happened to David. Many of his Psalms give voice to his misery. Psalm 42: He wrote that in a time when he was down and defeated. But he knew he should not have been; he should not have been discouraged. In verse 5, he asked himself, "Why are you in despair, O my soul? And *why* have you become disturbed within me?..." Then he said, "...Hope in God...." That's the solution, "Hope in God."

Sometimes problems are not of our own making, as in Paul's case. But often we bring them on ourselves, when we get off, "the ancient paths", as Jeremiah said, (Jer 18:15)...when we get off, 'the good way', (that's what Christian and Faithful did).

You know the story. They took a shortcut to the Celestial City. They got off the path and cut through a meadow, (and they thought that would get them to their destination sooner), and what it did was, it got them into the clutches of Giant Despair, who caught them and made them prisoners in Doubting Castle.

All seemed hopeless as they languished in his dark dungeon. But then, Christian remembered that he had the key that unlocks the door of Doubting Castle. He had the key of escape from that place—and it was, 'the Key of Promise', so they were able to leave and get out of that dreary time of despair.

That's the solution for us when we are in discouraging times; it's 'the promises of God'. God has given us assurance and promises that give the despairing soul, hope. We need to call those great truths to mind, and be able to do that.

Lloyd Jones wrote, "You have to take yourself in hand, you have to address yourself, preach to yourself, question yourself. You must say to your soul, 'Why are you cast down?' "

We need to learn to preach to ourselves. And what do we preach?

Well, first of all, we preach doctrine...that is, we preach the truth of God—who He is, the kind of God He is; His grace, His mercy, His love, His power, His faithfulness...all of that. We need to know who the God is that we serve...and, who is *our Father*.

And in addition to that, what comes out of that, we need to know the promises of God...remind ourselves of what it means, for example, to be justified. Can you define justification? Well, we need to know and understand what it is—that we are once and for all, completely and forever acceptable to God. At the moment of faith, that's the believer's condition. He, she, is joined to Christ and His sacrifice, and we are forever acceptable to God. We don't need to strive to measure up and earn His favor...we have His favor, at that moment and forever.

Then, because of that, we do strive to be pleasing to the Lord, and to grow in grace and knowledge. It's not based on some obligation that, 'If we don't, we won't have something from the Lord'...rather, it's because we love Him and because of what He's done for us:

We're children of God.

We're reconciled to Him.

We're sealed with His Holy Spirit,  
the third Person of the Trinity.

We can never be lost.

We have eternal life,  
and a glorious future.

And God is presently helping us,  
involved intimately in our lives at every single moment.

He is the God who comforts the depressed. He gives help. He gave it to Paul when Titus came with the good news. He uses our friends to give us comfort in depression, and relieve us of that.

Earlier, I mentioned William Cowper, the hymn writer. He was saved as a young man while in an insane asylum; he had deep issues and problems. He was suicidal, and he was saved out of that. But even after that, he suffered through periods of deep depression all of his life.

But he had a friend, John Newton, (who wrote *Amazing Grace*). He became Cowper's pastor. In fact, Cowper lived next door to Newton and his wife; and so Newton would spend a lot of time with Cowper. Cowper was a very gifted man...a poet and a hymn writer; and they would go on long walks together, and they wrote hymns together.

Even after Newton moved to London to continue his ministry there, he kept in constant contact with Cowper. And Cowper said of him, "A sincerer, more affectionate friend no man ever had."

Well, that's what the church needs; John Newtons to minister to its William Cowpers with the Word of God, showing them that Christ and His atonement is all sufficient. Our security doesn't depend on our feelings, but on our Savior—and He will never lose one of His sheep. He cannot lose one of His sheep...He didn't lose William Cowper.

We need people to remind us of that, remind us that we trust in Christ, not 'Giant Despair'. Depression is a great enemy, and it's a great liar. The Lord is true, and He comforts the depressed; that's the assurance we have, and that's the promise that He will do that.

And so we need people to rebuke us, and lead us to repentance. We need people to encourage us, to encourage those who are down...unemployed, chronically ill, encourage parents...The list goes on of the conditions that need to be addressed.

So, I say to all of us, may God open our eyes to the needs around us...open my eyes to those needs and do so that we may give help to those who need it—and the desire to do that...to give encouragement, to listen, and to pray for those in need.

You don't have to have a seminary degree to do that. What you have to have is a mind that's interested in the Word of God, and devoted to studying it and learning it... and with that knowledge and that wisdom counsel people and be an encouragement to them at the right time. And may God build us up in the faith that we might be useful to that end.



That's what I was saying earlier: 'Some have to lay the foundation of the Gospel in an assembly.' Now, that's essential...but on that "foundation" must be the Word of God that builds the saints up in the faith and prepares them for life—and makes them useful to others. So that's what we need, and by God's grace we'll have it.

But if you're here without Christ, you're needs are different...and truly great. You are lost, and you need to be found, you need a Savior...and the only Savior is the Lord Jesus Christ.

And our prayer to you is that you will come to know Him. He's God's Son; He died for sinners; He bore the penalty of sin in their place so that everyone who believes in Him would be saved.

Repent then, "We beg you", as Paul said, by the mercies of God to be reconciled to Him. Believe in Him....may God help you to do that.

*(Closing prayer)* God, we are grateful for what You can do. There's nothing You can't do—You are the God of the impossible. And while we find ourselves mired in discouragement sometimes, circumstances that seem to overwhelm us—they don't overwhelm You. And You will, in Your time, answer Your people. You are faithful to us; We praise You and thank You for that.

Now,

The Lord bless you and keep you;

The Lord make His face shine on you,

And be gracious to you;

The Lord lift up His countenance on you,

And give you peace.

In Christ's name, Amen.

*(End of Audio)*