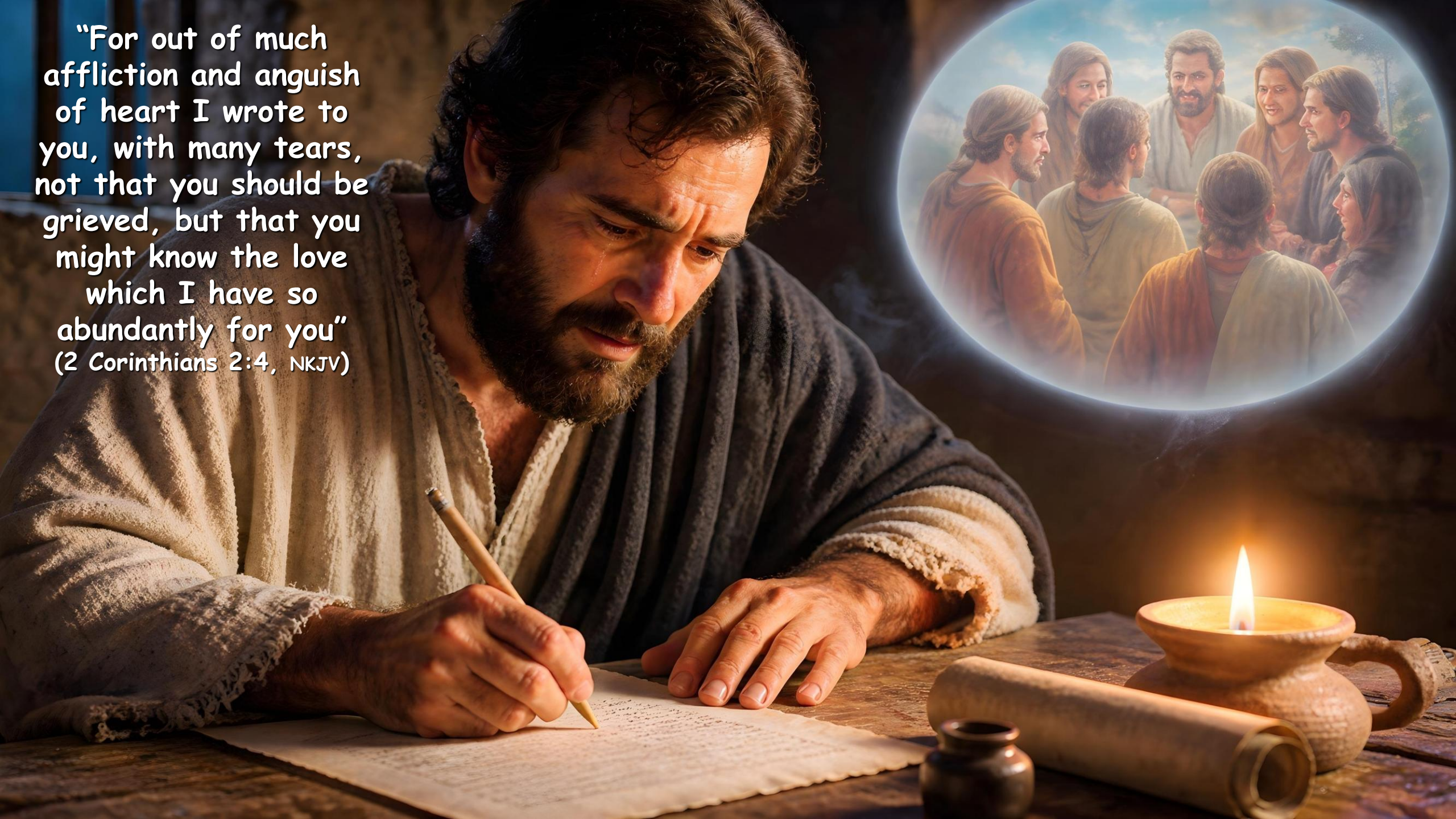


LOVE-DRIVEN MINISTRY



Lesson 9 for August 29, 2026

"For out of much
affliction and anguish
of heart I wrote to
you, with many tears,
not that you should be
grieved, but that you
might know the love
which I have so
abundantly for you"
(2 Corinthians 2:4, NKJV)





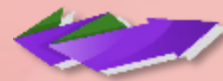
As we delve into the study of Paul's second epistle to the Corinthians, we observe that the apostle is very interested in the well-being of the church.

Although it has never been easy to follow God's ways in this sin-filled world, in the first century declaring oneself a Christian could involve serious difficulties.

Paul prepares the church to face these difficulties, both internal and external, and teaches them to form a body united in selfless love. From this advice we can learn today to be “the aroma of life leading to life” (2 Cor. 2:16).



God's comfort in suffering



Holiness and sincerity in ministry



To behave wisely



Forgiveness and restoration



The fragrance of Christ

GOD'S COMFORT IN SUFFERING

"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." (2 Corinthians 1:4)

Second Corinthians is the epistle in which Paul speaks most extensively about comfort. The church was going through a difficult time, and Paul's previous letter had plunged them into a state of sadness.

But that sorrow was "godly," leading to repentance (2 Cor. 7:10). So Paul does not want that sorrow to overwhelm them, but rather that they be comforted.

The comfort of God

It frees us from fear

It reminds us of the times He helped us

It helps us to endure affliction

It leads us to spiritual maturity

It encourages us to intercede for others

We comfort each other as we were comforted by God

He himself had gone through times when his own life had been at risk and he had become discouraged (2 Cor. 1:8-10). But God comforted him, and now he transmits that comfort to the church (2 Cor. 1:6).



HOLINESS AND SINCERITY IN MINISTRY

"Now this is our boast: Our conscience testifies that we have conducted ourselves in the world, and especially in our relations with you, with integrity and godly sincerity. We have done so, relying not on worldly wisdom but on God's grace" (2 Corinthians 1:12 NIV)

Some people looked down on Paul, accusing him of being weak and indecisive (2 Cor. 10:10). For this reason, and so that his advice would be received and accepted, it was necessary for the apostle to defend himself against such accusations.

As a man, he considered himself insignificant (Eph. 3:8). But, by the grace of God, he could boast of having a clear conscience (2 Cor. 1:12).



For this reason, Paul's writings were free of hidden intentions. He hoped that these letters would be read and understood in that context of holiness and sincerity—that is, written out of love for them and seeking only their good (2 Cor. 1:13-14).



He and his associates could confidently say that his conduct was holy and sincere [pure], both in the church and outside of it.



TO BEHAVE WISELY

"I call God as my witness—and I stake my life on it—that it was in order to spare you that I did not return to Corinth" (2 Corinthians 1:23)

In his first letter, Paul informed the Corinthians of the route he planned to take (1 Cor. 16:5-11):

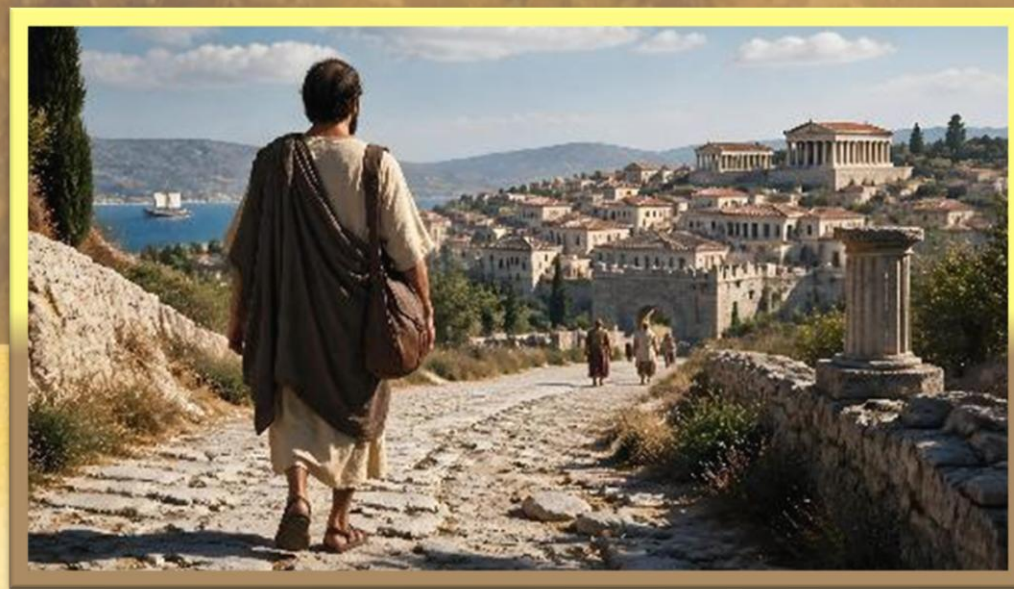
Ephesus → Macedonia → Corinth → Judea

In a later letter (lost, 2 Cor. 7:8) he informed them that he would visit them twice (2 Cor. 1:15-16):

Ephesus → Corinth → Macedonia → Corinth → Judea

However, he had changed his plans and decided not to make that first visit (2 Cor. 1:23). These changes led some to criticize him for being unstable and vacillating. Why had he changed his mind?

Paul's presence in Corinth seemed necessary because of the problems there. But the opposition he would encounter implied a confrontation that he wanted to avoid, because of the great love he had for them (2 Cor. 2:1-4).



FORGIVENESS AND RESTORATION

"Anyone you forgive, I also forgive. And what I have forgiven—if there was anything to forgive—I have forgiven in the sight of Christ for your sake" (2 Corinthians 2:10)

While Paul was on his way to Troas, Titus went to Corinth. From Troas, Paul went to Macedonia. But he was greatly distressed because Titus had not met him in Troas to give him news about the church in Corinth (2 Cor. 2:12-13).

Shortly afterwards, Titus finally met Paul in Macedonia. He told him how the church had reacted very favorably to the apostle's admonitions (2 Cor. 7:5-9, 13-16).



One of the issues they needed to resolve concerned church discipline. Obeying the apostle, the offending party had been rebuked, and they had accepted the rebuke. Now, Paul asks them to take the next step: forgiveness and restoration (2 Cor. 2:5-11).

THE FRAGRANCE OF CHRIST

*"For we are to God the fragrance of Christ among those who are being saved and among those who are perishing"
(2 Corinthians 2:15)*



Commenting on how God “opened a door” for the gospel to be successfully preached in Troas, Paul bursts into a shout of praise and victory: “But thanks be to God, who always leads us as captives in Christ’s triumphal procession and uses us to spread the aroma of the knowledge of him everywhere” (2 Cor. 2:14).

Like an all-pervading fragrance, the knowledge of Christ reaches every soul. To the Corinthians, as to us, this fragrance is of eternal life. However, to those who reject the call, it is a smell of death (2 Cor. 2:15-16).



Focusing on the responsibility this entails, Paul explains that the message must be given sincerely, without seeking any personal gain, but the salvation of the listeners (2 Cor. 2:17).



“This faithful messenger brought the cheering news that a wonderful change had taken place among the Corinthian believers. Many had accepted the instruction contained in Paul's letter and had repented of their sins. Their lives were no longer a reproach to Christianity, but exerted a powerful influence in favor of practical godliness. [...]

That repentance which is produced by the influence of divine grace upon the heart will lead to confession and forsaking of sin. Such were the fruits which the apostle declared had been seen in the lives of the Corinthian believers.