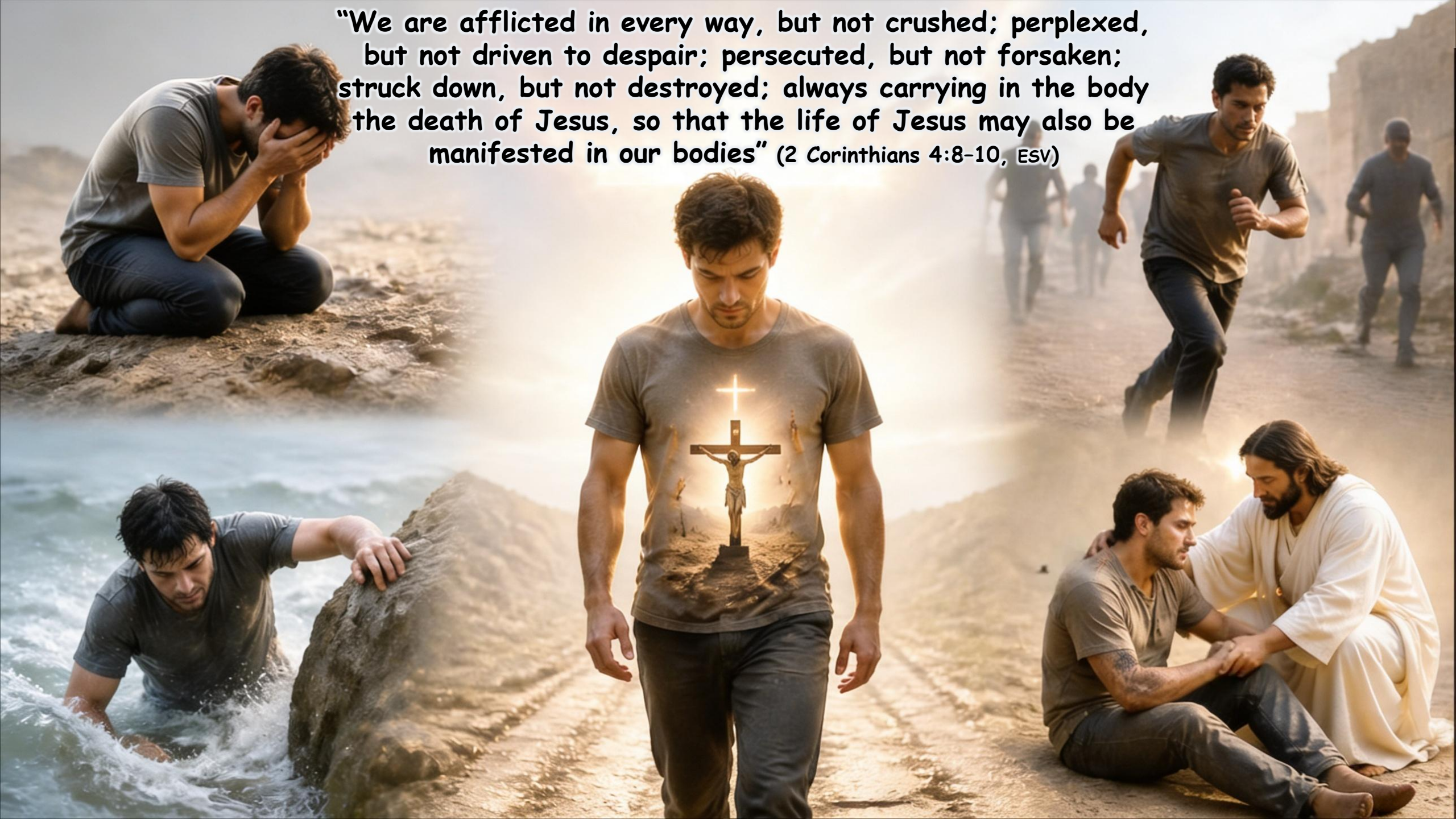




Lesson 10
for
September
5, 2026

AUTHENTIC CHRISTIAN MINISTRY

"We are afflicted in every way, but not crushed; perplexed, but not driven to despair; persecuted, but not forsaken; struck down, but not destroyed; always carrying in the body the death of Jesus, so that the life of Jesus may also be manifested in our bodies" (2 Corinthians 4:8-10, ESV)



Who said a pastor's life is comfortable? Ministers of the gospel bear a great responsibility, and their efforts are not without danger.

Love for perishing souls, and the tender care they must provide to maintain and build up those who have already accepted the gospel, is what distinguishes true ministers from ravenous wolves.

When the church collaborates with its ministers and makes decisive changes in its lifestyle, it becomes a reconciling element that imparts comfort and joy to all.



THE WORK OF THE PASTOR



Competent Ministers



The risks of ministry



THE DUTIES OF THE MEMBERS



Ambassadors of reconciliation



The call to holiness



THE RESULT OF JOINT EFFORT



Comfort and joy

THE WORK OF *THE PASTOR*

COMPETENT MINISTERS

"You yourselves are our letter, written on our hearts, known and read by everyone" (2 Corinthians 3:2)

Some things don't change much over time. Letters of recommendation still open doors today, just as they did in the first century. Did Paul need a letter of recommendation to be accepted by the church in Corinth? (2 Corinthians 3:1)

He possessed the best letter of recommendation available: the Corinthians themselves (2 Cor. 3:2). Their hearts had been transformed by the grace of God, through the preaching of the apostle and his collaborators (2 Cor. 3:3).

Paul and his assistants were "competent as ministers of a new covenant" (2 Cor. 3:6 NIV). A glorious covenant, written by the Spirit on the heart for eternal life. But some followed another covenant, that of salvation by the works of the Law written in stone, which prevented them from perceiving the glory of grace (2 Cor. 3:7-9).



THE RISKS OF MINISTRY

"All this is for your benefit, so that the grace that is reaching more and more people may cause thanksgiving to overflow to the glory of God." (2 Corinthians 4:15)

Paul understood and endured the risks of ministry. But he knew these risks were worthwhile, and he bore them out of love for the people to whom he gave the opportunity to attain salvation (2 Cor. 4:15). Moreover, he had the assurance of divine help (2 Cor. 4:7-9):

We are...

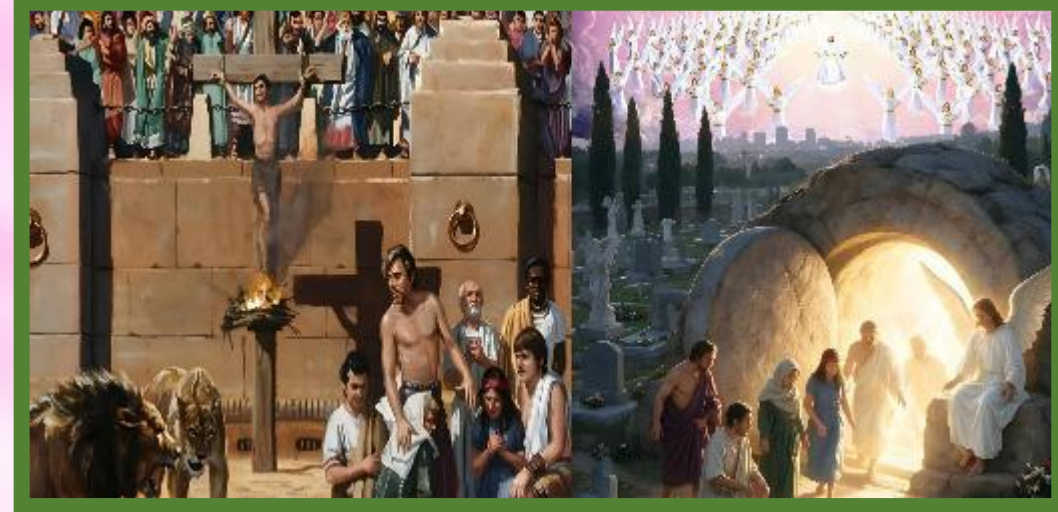
- ▶ hard-pressed
- ▶ perplexed
- ▶ persecuted
- ▶ struck down

But...

- ▶ not crushed
- ▶ not in despair
- ▶ not forsaken
- ▶ not destroyed

The gospel is preached through frail human beings so that the glory may be for God alone.

Sufferings are a "light affliction, which is but for a moment" compared with the "excellent and eternal weight of glory" that we will obtain on the day of resurrection (2 Cor. 4:14-18).



THE DUTIES OF THE MEMBERS

AMBASSADORS OF RECONCILIATION

"All this is from God, who reconciled us to himself through Christ and gave us the ministry of reconciliation." (2 Corinthians 5:18)

The driving force that should govern the life of the church (and of each member) is this: "For Christ's love compels us" (2 Corinthians 5:14 NIV). What does this love consist of, and what compels us?

Christ gave his life out of love. This compels us to live for Him (2 Corinthians 5:14-15).

Christ has made us new creatures. This compels us to leave our old life behind (2 Cor. 5:17)

Christ has reconciled us to God. This compels us to be ambassadors of reconciliation (2 Cor. 5:18-20).

The love of Christ, therefore, leads us to a radical change of life. Living the love of Christ also leads us to share that love with others, urging them to accept the message of hope: "Be reconciled to God" (2 Cor. 5:20).



THE CALL TO HOLINESS



The call to holiness affects the daily lives of both ministers and members:

Endure difficulties (2 Cor. 6:4-5)

To bear the fruit of the Spirit (2 Cor. 6:6)

To be truthful and just (2 Cor. 6:7)

Standing firm in any circumstance
(2 Cor. 6:8-10)

Opening our hearts to others (2 Cor. 6:11-13 NIV)

To separate ourselves from the harmful influence of unbelievers (2 Cor. 6:14-15)

"Therefore, since we have these promises, dear friends, let us purify ourselves from everything that contaminates body and spirit, perfecting holiness out of reverence for God." (2 Corinthians 7:1)

Combining various passages from the Old Testament, Paul summarizes the call to holiness and its consequences (2 Cor. 6:16-18):

Called

- Get out of the places of sin
- Separate yourselves from sinners
- Do not touch what is unclean

Consequences

- I will dwell with you
- I will be your God
- You will be my people
- I will receive you
- I will be your Father

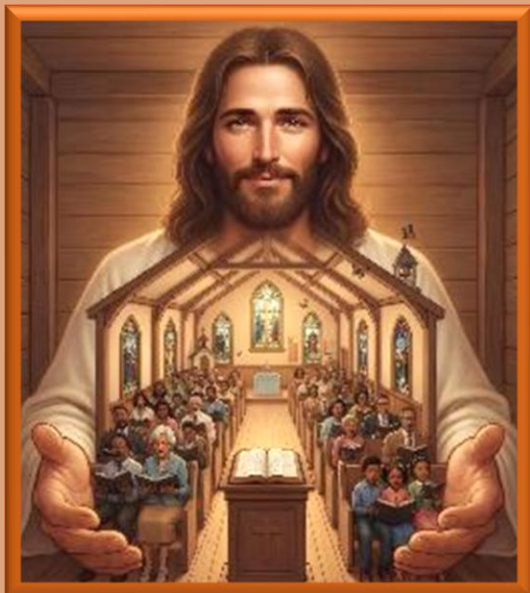
THE RESULT OF JOINT EFFORT

COMFORT AND JOY

"I have spoken to you with great frankness; I take great pride in you. I am greatly encouraged; in all our troubles my joy knows no bounds." (2 Corinthians 7:4)

Despite the problems he faced, Paul was overjoyed. (2 Cor. 7:4). What caused this joy?

Paul had written a harsh letter to the Corinthians, which had saddened them (2 Cor. 7:8). But that sadness led them to repentance (2 Cor. 7:9-10). This produced a complete change in their relationship with Paul, and with one another (2 Cor. 7:11-12).



Thus, there was comfort for all. Titus, Paul's companion, was comforted. (2 Cor. 7:7). Paul was comforted by Titus's arrival (2 Cor. 7:6). The Corinthians had been comforted, which also brought comfort to Paul (2 Cor. 7:13).

But Paul took no credit for it. If pastors and members can enjoy joy and comfort, it is because God "comforts the humble" (2 Cor. 7:6a).

“Ministry means service, and to this ministry we are all called. It is a dishonor to God for anyone to choose a life of self-pleasing. My brethren and sisters, do you realize that every year thousands and thousands of souls are perishing, dying in their sins because the light of truth has not been flashed upon their pathway?”

There is a great work to be done in our world. Men and women are to be converted, not by the gift of tongues nor by the working of miracles, but by the preaching of Christ crucified. Why delay the effort to make the world better?

EGW (Reflecting Christ, August 30)