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Haven City Church
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2 CORINTHIANS 1:12-14

Church planting is a little bit messy. You guys know. This is still somewhat of a church plant. It's small and it takes a lot of work, a lot of hands on deck to get things set up and to share the word with your friends and invite your friends. So for me it's such a privilege to be in such a large gathering. It gives me just the sense of, Lord, can we have a gathering that's a hundred people in the next couple of years in Baltimore. Wouldn't that be awesome. So I appreciate the opportunity to be with you guys and share with you.

Back in November I moved from southern California with my wife and three kids. Hayden is with me today. Hanale is our youngest. She's in Sunday school this morning. We drove across country at the end of November and landed in the inner harbor of southeast Baltimore. What they say is you plant your family before you plant the church. So we were focused on that through the winter and really kind of got our pattern of life set up. Now we're beginning to see some really neat momentum in the city, making great connections. So I just really appreciate your prayers.

The church website if you want to look at it (which doesn't have a whole lot on it right now) is baltimorechurch.com. So look at it, pray for us, and if you want to stay in the loop there's actually the ability to sign up to get our emails, which I send out maybe one or two a month, but try to include what's going on. Most of the people that get those emails are not from Baltimore. So there are more prayer requests and about what's going on.

So turn your Bible with me to 2 Corinthians 1. That's where we're going to be this morning. We'll read it together. I realized yesterday as I was preparing this that I did most of my studying in my New King James Bible, but then I remembered you guys are usually teaching out of the NIV. So you're going to hopefully not get too confused. I'll be bouncing back and forth and try to make note of which words are the New King James word here or NIV. So I'm trying to stick in the NIV as much as possible. But let's read this together starting in 2 Corinthians 1:12-14. I'll read it; you follow along.

It says – 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. For we do not write you anything you cannot read or understand. And I hope that, as you have understood us in part, you will come to understand fully that you can boast of us just as we will boast of you in the day of the Lord Jesus.

[PRAYER] Lord, we pray that you would open up your word to us. Speak to us. We've been living life as missionaries in our neighborhoods this week, in our workplace, in our extended

family, and here we are as a Christian community gathered together to hear from you, to read your word corporately, to sing and celebrate the liberty and the way that you've liberated us corporately. We pray, Lord, that you would be in our midst, that we would hear from you today, and that we would hear your Spirit speaking to us in our own lives. Lord, we yield ourselves and place ourselves under the authority of scripture. We are a people that want to be submitted to you and your word. Thank you for saving us and for washing away our sins. We pray again for just the refreshing work of your Holy Spirit in our midst. We pray this in Jesus' name, amen.

Now this message is probably like part 4 in a five-part series if you were just going through chapter 1 of 2 Corinthians. So as I was praying a couple weeks ago about where we'd be at, this was the text. As I was studying it, I was like, man, there's a whole series here. But I just felt like this was the text for us this morning.

Imagine with me to start off with a season in your life where you've gone through enough of an affliction, enough of a difficult circumstance where it's really provoked you to ask a lot of questions about life. I think that trials do that for us. Trials are difficult enough that they can really shake us and shake us to the point where we begin to question our own actions, our motivations, our identity, and sometimes our relationship with God.

A common question in the midst of difficulty and suffering is: Does God still love me? Is God real? The thing that God promised to me back then, was that really God speaking to me? Does God's word really apply to my life? Those are all the types of questions that you're tempted to ask yourself when you're in a middle of a trial.

So we jump in the middle of 2 Corinthians 1 and we're jumping right into the middle of Paul's life. Paul is a missionary. He's an apostle, meaning he's an entrepreneur for the kingdom of heaven. He goes out and he plants new churches all around starting in Asia and moving into Europe. So this is what you could call maybe his third, maybe his fourth missionary journey.

This is a significant time in the city of Corinth. I don't have the ability to draw this out for you, but if you imagine the Mediterranean Sea, on the northern coast there's this body of land that comes down and there's what looks like a cow's udder at the bottom of one of those landmasses that comes down. That's the region of Achaia. There's a bunch of house churches in that region associated with Corinth. So Paul has done a lot of ministry there. It was a shipping harbor. And what would go on is ships would come in, there was a lot of trade that would go on here in Corinth. Paul has been laboring to help this church mature.

We get really a window into Paul's ministry with Corinth and his own effort with this church. It's just fascinating if you tie in the narrative with the book of Acts with his first letter that he writes to Corinth and then his second letter to Corinth. You see this pastor who from afar loves this church and is trying to help them grow and mature and get past some immaturity.

He's dealing with a lot of things. So when we get to 2 Corinthians, this letter is written probably in segments. It starts when Paul is in Ephesus and ten months earlier he had written the letter of 1 Corinthians to Corinth. So if you're looking at a map this way, he's in Ephesus and he's written a

letter kind of across. There's an ocean there. You can look at the back of your Bible for the map, but there's this body of water there and Corinth is on the other side.

He wrote a letter in 1 Corinthians dealing with some immaturity. That didn't fix it. So he sent Timothy over there. That doesn't seem to have fixed the problem. He alludes to that in 2 Corinthians. Then he takes a trip to Corinth. It seems like it might have been just a quick trip from Ephesus over to Corinth himself. It was a very painful journey. He alludes to that in the first verse of 2 Corinthians 2.

We don't know anything about this trip, but it was a very painful trip for Paul. It was a trip that he made to correct the church for problems that they had. There was fighting, there was division, there was gossip, there was sin. And Paul still wasn't happy with the outcome from that trip.

Then he sends Titus over, which is just another of his ministry companions from Ephesus over to Corinth. While he's waiting to hear a report back from Titus about how Corinth is doing, Paul gets kicked out of Ephesus. There's this big riot that takes place and he has to basically flee up through what is now modern day northern Turkey.

So again, you're looking at the map this way. He crosses into Europe and he's down in the Adriatic coast into Thessalonica and Philippi. As he's going on this trip, first into Troas and then down the coast, he's hoping to run into Titus and get a report back from Titus on how things are going in Corinth. He tells the church that he's not getting the report and he's upset. He even had a chance to share the gospel in Troas, but he had so much anxiety, he was so upset in his heart that he just kept moving on closer and closer to Corinth.

So that's the setting in which we find this letter written. In chapter 1 Paul's probably writing this having maybe just fled Ephesus or some difficult things going on in Ephesus. As the letter continues he's in different locations and Titus does catch up with him. By the time we get to chapter 7 we find out about this report that Titus gives to Paul.

Now the theme in chapter 1 is the theme of comfort. So if there was this five-part series, maybe if I preach again here (if my dad ever lets me come back), I'll teach again on another aspect of God's comfort in the midst of trials. But Paul is being very vulnerable. Let's look at this really quickly.

In verses 3-7 he's going to share just the principle of God's comfort. 2 Corinthians 1:3-7 – *Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of mercies and God of all comfort, 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. For as the sufferings of Christ abound in us, so our consolation also abounds through Christ. Now if we are afflicted, it is for your consolation and salvation, which is effective for enduring the same sufferings which we also suffer. Or if we are comforted, it is for your consolation and salvation. And our hope for you is steadfast, because we know that as you are partakers of the sufferings, so also you will partake of the consolation.*

Do you hear that repeated word? Comfort. Consolation. So Paul here is giving a principle. We would call this a didactic language. It's a teaching on comfort. God is the God who comforts us in our trials. He explains a little bit why God comforts us. He comforts us so that we can comfort others.

But Paul, being a good teacher, doesn't just give the principle, but he goes on in the text here and illustrates it based off of his own life. So in verses 8-11 Paul gives his most recent experience of this principle. So look at verses 8-11.

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.

That's the New King James reading of it. That's not the NIV version of it. But you see the same concept there. So Paul literally says to this Corinthians church, "Here's what's gone on in my life. We've gone through this experience in our life where we were despairing." Do you see that there? *We had the sentence of death in ourselves, that we should not trust in ourselves but in God who raises the dead.* Literally the experience that Paul had gone through in Asia Minor was an experience of just great suffering where they despaired of life. There was this question that they had in their life of will we survive this? Will we make it out of Asia alive? And yet he talks about how God is the one who will deliver us.

You see, as Paul is writing this, there is still a question mark hanging over his life. He's talking about how the God that we trust is the God of all comfort, the one who has delivered us in a such a great grand way ultimately from eternal death. We're trusting and anticipating the deliverance of God in this situation.

Now I know we're taking kind of the long route to get to verse 12. We're going to get there. But what happens in verse 12 is really the capstone of this whole message. So give me a second here to unpack this.

What Paul is explaining in this whole idea of comfort is part of a ministry lifecycle that Paul and Jesus talk about many times. They either talk about it as a principle or they share about it as something that really was taking place in their life. This chapter is no exception.

You could basically look at this ministry lifecycle in four parts. The first part is the idea of being a believer, being a disciple of Christ, doing ministry, and living for Jesus. So you're going out, you're on the path. Paul is doing ministry. That's the first part.

The second part of this ministry lifecycle is that you're delivered over to death. Oftentimes we'll say micro deaths. Either they're internal deaths, they're experiences that we have, but they're deaths. You're going, "Wait a second. I didn't sign up for that when I became a Christian." Well

hear me out. That's the second part. Paul says *we were delivered to death*. We were delivered over the death.

The third part is that you experience the comfort of God. In that place of death, when you're buried by the circumstance, God wants to comfort you. He wants to be the God of all comfort. That's the third part is that God comforts you.

The fourth part is that God delivers us. Do you know that we have the promised deliverance of God? There is nothing that is going to come against you in your life that God cannot deliver you by. What Paul has said to us in this first chapter is that we have already been greatly delivered. When we're born again, when we give our lives to God, we trust in Him in our salvation, we experience the deliverance of God from sin. We have the hope of heaven. But then this ministry lifecycle plays out. The way that works through our life is literally by we're living for Him, but then He loves to take us and put us in these circumstances where we get buried.

I think it's Peter who says – *Don't think it's strange, brothers, when you face fiery trials*. Peter is saying you should learn to anticipate this. You should understand that this is the lifecycle of a Christian. God intentionally takes us and sticks us in circumstances where it is impossible. You're in the grave with Jesus and you need the deliverance of God. The beautiful thing that we have is that while we're in the grave, we experience God's comfort and we get to see God deliver us through those things.

Let me give you this in a couple of other texts just so that you don't think I'm blowing smoke here. Jesus was speaking to His disciples and He told them in Mark 8 – *“Whoever wants to be my disciple must deny themselves and take up their cross and follow me. Whoever wants to save their life will lose it, but whoever loses their life for me and for the gospel will save it.”*

You see, Jesus tells His disciples, “Okay, you want to follow me. We're heading in this direction. Well take up your cross.” In other words, have a mindset and be prepared to die. Now I think the first thing that comes to our mind with that is there is James, the martyr. Stephen was really the first martyr in the church. That's a death. But really what Jesus is alluding to is this lifecycle of you're going to live out the deaths. Right? You're going to bear on your body the dying of the Lord Jesus so that the life of Christ might be seen in you.

Let me just give this to you from Paul in 2 Corinthians 4:1-17. I love this. To me this is exciting. This is not morbid. When we're talking about death, it is not morbid because we are a people that celebrate every Sunday the resurrection. So if you can understand that the way that God works in your life is through this lifecycle of death and then deliverance, of death and then resurrection, even on a small scale. Even in this last week there was some micro death and it was like, “God, you've got to deliver me, you got to make more resurrection power evident in me.” That's exciting. It's fun knowing this is the reality because when you go into the death you're like oh here's that ministry lifecycle playing itself out. We're anticipating how God wants to raise us from the dead in this situation.

2 Corinthians 4:1-17. I'll summarize this for the sake of time. Verses 4-6 Paul is talking about his ministry. He says – *Therefore, since through God's mercy we have this ministry, we do not*

lose heart. Verses 4-6 Paul describes the ministry of sharing the gospel with nonbelievers. He talks about the gospel message being a light that they are carrying in themselves. They are carriers of this light, sharing this gospel in all these different cities. He uses some beautiful language there. That's the first phase, phase one of the ministry cycle.

But then you go to verse 7 of chapter 4. He says – *But we have this treasure in jars of clay to show that this all-surpassing power is from God and not from us.* So ministry cycle phase one, here we are carrying the gospel message, but the container carrying the gospel message is like a clay pot.

Look how he describes his experience. Verse 8 – *We are hard pressed on every side, but not crushed; perplexed, but not in despair; persecuted, but not abandoned; struck down, but not destroyed.*

Look at verse 10. *We always carry around in our body the death of Jesus, so that the life of Jesus may also be revealed in us.* That's a causative statement. He doesn't say this is by accident. He's not saying that phase two of the ministry lifecycle is just a wrong turn, God forgot about you. No, he says on purpose we are a part of God's plan is that we carry in our body the dying of the Lord Jesus.

God is leading us in a path into these micro deaths where we are pressed. There are some situations where we feel like we're being pressed on every side, but not crushed. There's other circumstances where we're perplexed, but yet we're not despairing, where we are persecuted, but not abandoned. Other times we feel as though we've been struck down, but not ultimately struck down. It is God's plan that *we would bear in our body (I love that language) the death of Jesus so that the life of Jesus may be revealed in our body.*

Verse 11 – *For we who are alive are always (you see that word) being given over to death for Jesus' sake.* We are always. So this is Paul teaching to Corinth the Christian lifecycle. He's discipling the Corinthians. He's helping them understand their own Christian experience, and he's saying these trials are a part of that always bearing in our body the dying of the Lord Jesus because God wants to take and put on display through your life and my life His resurrection power.

So there are things where literally we are being buried by the circumstance. In your mind you can have the picture of Jesus being taken and put in that tomb. We're there with Him. The only thing that is going to get us out of that place is the power of God. The God who raised Jesus from the dead, putting on display His resurrection power in your life. God does that intentionally. So you go through difficult things, but when you frame it up like this and you realize that God does this on purpose because He wants to demonstrate His power then it helps you to understand I'm going to hang in there because God is using me as a demonstration of His power. He wants to make known to my family, to my coworkers His great power.

One more place. Philippians 3 talks about this again. He says in verse 3 – *For it is we who are the circumcision.* So he's in the first phase on the ministry cycle. *We serve God by his Spirit, who boast in Christ Jesus, and who put no confidence in the flesh— though I myself have reasons*

for such confidence. He talks about his background and how he should have a confidence in the flesh, but nope, he's trusting in God.

Look at verse 7. *But whatever were gains to me I now consider loss for the sake of Christ. What is more, I consider everything a loss because of the surpassing worth of knowing Christ Jesus my Lord, for whose sake I have lost all things.* What died in Paul was his past. This was another death he experienced. When he followed Jesus, everything in the review mirror were things in the past that he couldn't place his confidence in. He allowed those things to basically be deaths.

Verse 9 – *To be found in him, not having my own righteousness, which is from the law, but that which is through faith in Christ, the righteousness which is from God on he basis of faith.*

And then look at verse 10. *I want to know Christ.* He wants to *know the power of his resurrection* and to participate in His sufferings to become like Him in his death. You go through this chapter, again you see in Philippians 3 this ministry lifecycle. Paul is praying saying I want to be with Christ in His sufferings so that I can experience the resurrection power and know Jesus better.

Final verse in 1 Corinthians 15 you see again Paul says to the Corinthians you ought to believe in the resurrection power. And then he's really laying out kind of like an apologetic, making the case for the resurrection. He says to them kind in passing, "Look, if there's no resurrection then we ought to just live a normal life. We ought to eat, sleep, go about life on a normal basis." But then Paul says that's not how we live. I don't live a normal life. I live a life with great risk. Taking great risks. The basis for the risks I take is that I believe I'm serving a God who raises people from the dead. His life was based upon the reality of the resurrection.

So you have this ministry cycle. Being a disciple, stage one. Doing the Christian life. The second stage is you're delivered over to these deaths that God allows us to experience. In the midst of those deaths He wants to comfort us and that's chapter 1 of 2 Corinthians that we're in this morning. The comfort of God, and then we experience God's deliverance. I don't know what it's going to look like. I don't know when it's going to happen. We wish it would happen sooner, but we experience the deliverance of God. It's through this lifecycle as we put ourselves in it that the fruit of God is born through our life. God's kingdom advances as we submit to this ministry lifecycle.

For example, this is like my church planting philosophy. God, we're going to go and put ourselves on the ground in Baltimore. We're going to be present. We're going to live as disciples of Jesus. We're going to try to incarnate the gospel to our neighbors. We're going to try to love our neighbors in Jesus' name and see what God does. But I'm anticipating there is going to be death. There has already been deaths, difficult things that play out in that setting. And then we experience the comfort of God waiting for His deliverance, all the while knowing that this is how the gospel advances in a city of taking my family, uprooting it from southern California where I had the perfect life. You know the white picket fence, that whole thing.

Our reason for leaving that setting is we're not in the ministry lifecycle. We couldn't figure out how where we were was playing out this pattern. So we felt like God was leading us to go and basically, like Paul said, put that stuff in the review mirror. We're going to put ourselves on the

ground and see how God wants to work through us. Now that's the ministry lifecycle that Paul is describing.

He's really hitting on phrase three of chapter 1 of 2 Corinthians. He's saying that God wants to comfort us when we're in this experience of affliction. Isn't it striking to you that if you look at 2 Corinthians here's a chapter where this is one of the darkest descriptions that we have of Paul's life. We don't get language much more stark than 2 Corinthians 1. He says *we despaired of life*. Yet in this chapter we have the word *hope*, we have the word *comfort*, we have the word *consolation*, *salvation*, *confidence*. He had the word *confidence* in the same chapter as the word *despaired of life*. You have the word *boast*, which means I glory in exaltation in this chapter.

We have this victorious Christian who is frankly speaking and sharing transparently his ministry experience and saying at the same time we have experienced the comfort of God, how God comforted him. He talks about how the church was praying for him. That was participation in God's deliverance.

But here's what I want to key in now in closing in verse 12 here. In verse 12 he talks about a comfort that comes through a clean conscience. He says in verse 12 – *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.*

So one of the ways that Paul experiences the comfort of God. He's bought in, by the way, to the lifecycle. He's not kicking against it. He's like I'm all in. I'm taking risks on a daily basis. I'm ready to die with Jesus on a daily basis because I trust that He can raise me from the dead. In that place of affliction, of experiencing those deaths, he needs the comfort of God. We need the comfort of God if you're bought into this ministry lifecycle. If you're bought in, you need the comfort of God.

One of the ways that Paul experiences the comfort of God is being able to reflect on how God's grace manifested itself in his life when he did ministry. It says here in the text that *we did ministry with you with an integrity and a godly sincerity.*

The first word *integrity* in other versions is interpreted or translated *simplicity*. Literally the word means simple, singular wholeness.

The second word there which in the NIV is *godly sincerity* means without wax in the light of a sun. It's a compound word. It's a euphemism that came from the potter or the merchant who would sell pots in the market place. Sometimes those pots would get broken. If he was a dishonest merchant he would patch up the cracks in the pot with some wax. He would cover over that fix with some mud and you wouldn't be able to detect that it was an imperfect pot without holding that pot up to the sunlight. You would be able to see this pot does not have integrity.

So this second word that Paul uses here he uses to describe this ministry that you can hold my life up to the sun. There's no cracks in it. There's no wax filler in this pot. You can look at my life under the scrutiny of the sun and it was not broken into pieces.

The first word was a little difficult to understand. It's the whole wholeness, integrity, a simple life. It literally could mean a few different things. But I think Paul is saying the two sides of the same coin. He's stating his own conduct both in a positive way and a negative way. The first word refers to a wholeness, that every aspect of his life was pointed in the same direction. He was all in. In fact that word *integrity* or *simplicity* is the word that would be used in Greek to describe a hero, somebody who was all in, who had this noble spirit pointing their life in a single direction. So Paul states in the positive that my whole life was in. And if you held my life up, this second word, this word for *godly sincerity*, there was no cracks in it. You could examine my life under the light of the sun. There are no cracks in it.

Because that is the way he did ministry, he was able in the midst of being shaken by his experiences to look back at the ministry there in Corinth and say it was whole. There's no cracks in the way I did ministry and there's a testimony of my conscience. My inner moral compass testifies to the fact that I did the right thing. So he has this sense in his life of feeling God's comfort, being able to boast in a clean conscience.

The lesson for us is really clear. If you're brought in, if you're a disciple of Christ and you want to follow God, I understand the ministry lifecycle that sometimes by following Jesus I am going to go through these deaths, going to get buried on purpose by God and I'm going to need the comfort of God. One of the things that this text speaks to is the comfort of God through a clean conscience.

Now here's how this became real to me and kind of the origins of wanting to talk about this text personally. I was sitting at my desk a couple weeks ago praying about sharing and just thinking about my own life and thinking back to fifteen years ago when I was in Bible college and thinking about just that season of being a young Bible college student and the simplicity of life.

I was struck as I was sitting in my basement where my office is currently and I'm surrounded by everything we don't want in the normal part of the house. So there's boxes and all of our junk. I'm just looking at all this stuff and going wow, hopefully I've matured spiritually since I was in Bible college. But the danger now is that while I'm maturing I add complexity. I add all this unnecessary stuff to my life. As I'm looking at things where it's like I could sell that and that and that on eBay. And God was just ministering to me the value of continuing to live a life that is wholly pointed in the right direction.

Because I know for me (and not everybody is like this) one of the biggest enemies that I have is myself. I love to beat myself up. So when I go through something difficult there's that question mark hanging over my life of like, "Man, is this just me reaping the whirlwind? Did I dig a pit and I'm just like falling into it like Proverbs says? Is this because there's something askew in my life?" It was reminding me as I was sitting there praying and thinking about this text and the way that Paul describes his own life, there's a value in living your life so that you can down the road in the middle of an affliction, of a difficult circumstance and go, "Nope, I've got a clean conscience."

So my exhortation to you that are believers this morning is that here is a great value. God wants to comfort you in your affliction down the road by today living with integrity, by today honoring God, obeying God. You're sowing toward the future comfort of God by living a life that is wholly directed towards Him.

In closing I want to say this. You may be coming in this morning not able to reflect upon your past or your life and say I have a clean conscience. You may this morning feel like your conscience is condemning you, that you can't have a relationship with God. The case with Paul and with all of us is that none of us have a clean conscience because of what we have done. Yes, Paul has said and can say that that season in his life, he did the right thing. So I don't think Paul is lying, but the foundation of us having a clean conscience is by being able to look at what Jesus did on the cross.

If this morning you're just honest with yourself and you feel like your conscience condemns you for things that you really remember that you've done, God's word to you this morning is not get your act together. God's word to you is that you need to receive that work that Jesus did on the cross on your behalf. Because you cannot have a conscience. That's the foundation of having a clean conscience is accepting Jesus' work on the cross on your behalf and my behalf.

That's what we call positional righteousness. When you go and you say to God, "God, I'm ready to give my life to you. I'm ready to receive Jesus Christ as my Lord and Savior. I'm ready to be your disciple," that's what we call conversion, where you're turning your life over to God. You're being converted into a Christian. At that point God looks at you and a lot of stuff happens. But one of the things that happens is He takes what Jesus did on the cross, that death on the cross and He says that was the payment for your sin, my sin. At that moment we become positionally righteous in Christ. Our sins are forgiven. We're made clean according to the judge of the whole earth, which is God. We're made positionally clean. And then as we continue to walk with God what is a positional reality becomes an operational reality, something that plays itself out more and more.

So we don't have time to look into it this morning, but one of the realities of the Christian life is that we enjoy a positional cleansed conscience, but we also want to be praying and asking God for a practical reality of a life that really doesn't have question marks hanging over it. Paul is an example to us. We see the value of what it meant for Paul. Imagine him in the difficult setting that he is in. Paul is in such a difficult setting with this church. Yet he can look back on the season of ministry that he did there in Corinth and he can say, "I have a clean conscience."

So let me encourage you both as a believer and maybe as one who is considering Christianity. This central theme is of the conscience and the cleansing of the conscience. Man, we live in a culture that really tells you that doesn't exist, it doesn't matter. The ends justify the means. Paul is saying no. This is an affront to utilitarianism. It's an affront to the ends justify the means. He's saying that inner sense of moral conviction matters deeply. It will matter deeply as you follow God. You need to live in the reality, you need to live in the midst of the comfort of God. Where God is comforting you by His truth and comforting you by a recollection of that work, that grace, how it manifested yourself in your life.

Let's pray together.

[PRAYER] Lord, we do pray, we ask, we're grateful for just that great deliverance that you've given to us. We are a people that need deliverance. We are a people that need to be delivered from ourselves. We need to be delivered from Satan's attacks. We need to be delivered from our sin and that impending judgment for our sin. We are grateful for the deliverance that we have in Jesus. As we submit our lives to you, as we live this week in light of these truths, as we obey you and let you put us to death through circumstances this week, we pray that your comfort would be upon us, that we would enjoy the comfort of God. That we would experience the comfort of God and that we would see you deliver us this week of these things that you have allowed us to be in. Make the name of Jesus known through us. We don't like it necessarily, we don't like the suffering necessarily. It hurts. But God, we want to see your name lifted up. We want to see the name of Jesus made known, made famous through our suffering. So Lord, we're going to hang in there with you. We're going to let you comfort us with the comfort of God and we're going to pray for one another. We're committed to one another. I know even in this church family we're praying for people that are sick, praying for people that have cancer. We're committed to one another and we are anticipating the deliverance of God. Thank you for that. Thank you, God. Work in our conscience. Cleanse our conscience. Thank you for the blood of Jesus that washes our conscience clean. We ask these things in Jesus' name, amen.