

3. Be not afraid! - Our fragile church has a faithful God: Recognise God's pattern

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[0 : 00] I'll turn, if you would, to Exodus chapter 2 and to the passage that we read together. Do you find being a Christian, that is, being a servant of our Lord Jesus Christ, do you find it hard?

Have you struggled this week to follow Jesus? Do you find yourself, perhaps, at times during this past year, very perplexed about what God seems to be doing in your life, or perhaps what God seems not to be doing in your life?

Prayers that he seems not to have answered, things that haven't come to pass, that you wish had, things that have happened that you wish hadn't. Well, if you are finding being a servant of Jesus hard, then I'm glad.

Not because I'm perverse and I want to see people in pain or in difficulty, but I am glad because it reassures me of two things. First of all, that you are a real Christian, a real servant of Jesus Christ.

And secondly, that you are indeed still serving him and being used by him for the ultimate glory of his kingdom. See, there are cynics, there are many unbelievers who will say things like this.

[1 : 19] Oh, you see, the Christian faith is just a crutch. It's something to prop up feeble people, to help them with some kind of fantasy, to make a better life for themselves. But, you know, anybody who thinks like that hasn't got the faintest idea, have they?

The faintest conception of what it really does mean to be a Christian, to be a servant of Jesus. Because to follow Jesus isn't a call to take up crutches. It's a call to take up your cross, isn't it?

And in fact, that means losing virtually every crutch that the world can offer us. Causes us to be exposed to far, far greater struggles and hardships than would ever have been the case if you didn't follow Jesus.

So, by the way, if you're here tonight and you're not a Christian, don't think that to become a Christian would be easy. Don't even think about it if that's your idea of becoming a Christian.

Because you haven't begun to understand what following Jesus is really about. If your mind says Jesus, in this world you will have tribulation.

[2 : 24] Through many tribulations we must enter the kingdom of God. That was what Paul said to the churches of Asia Minor in Acts 14 when he went back to encourage them.

And that's the truth about Christianity. That's the truth about real servants of God in Christ. So don't make any mistake about it. Think hard, if you're not a Christian, before you decide to throw in your lot with Jesus Christ.

Because being a servant of the true God is very hard. And if you are finding it hard, friends, tonight, then be encouraged.

Because it means that you are living the life of real faith. You're not living in some kind of religion of fantasy. But serving God is hard, not because our master is wicked.

No, it's the reverse. It's because he's wonderful. It's because he's more wonderful than we creatures can ever really grasp or understand. And his purpose is far more wonderful than any of us can yet really understand or see.

[3 : 32] And that's why so often we do struggle. Why so often we are perplexed at what goes on in our lives. Last week we sang the hymn that said, God moves in a mysterious way his wonders to perform.

And that's so true, isn't it? Any real Christian recognizes that. But that's why the hymn goes on to remind us, Judge not the Lord by feeble sense, but trust him for his grace.

Behind that frowning providence that so often seems to be there. Always. Always. It hides a smiling face. And we've seen that, haven't we, in these first two chapters of the book of Exodus.

And they help us to see through those dark clouds to that smiling face of God, to see what God is like, and to see what God really is doing in his plan and purpose for his people.

Well now in this second half of Exodus chapter 2, we have a very personal message to encourage every true servant of God. People like you and me, who are seeking to follow the Lord Jesus, seeking to follow God's calling on our lives, but may find ourselves very often incredibly perplexed.

[4 : 46] Very downcast sometimes. Maybe very discouraged by the events that are going on around us. We can't explain by sometimes the people of God that are around us.

We disappoint us. Sometimes we find ourselves wondering, don't we, what God is really doing. And whether in fact he's lost control altogether. Or whether, well perhaps, he's just not interested in me and my life anymore.

Well, the message of this passage is very clear. It says to us, recognize his pattern. God's pattern in dealing with his servants is unmistakable.

And it is utterly wonderful. Even if at first it can be very perplexing and even deeply disappointing. God turns his servants' present weaknesses and rejection into ultimate glorious victory and blessing for all of his people.

Always. That's his pattern. And that's the message of these verses that we're looking at tonight about Moses, God's servant, and all these strange events that unfold in his life as soon as he makes a public identification himself with God's people.

[6 : 05] It's very significant, isn't it? So I want to think first of all, and mainly tonight, about what these verses reveal about the pattern of one great servant of God.

And that's my first heading, the pattern of one great servant of God, Moses. Now, if you look at this story, you'll see it divides into three acts. So we're going to look at them one by one.

The first act is in verses 11 and 12. And I'm going to call it The Deliverer Revealed. Let's read it again. One day when Moses had grown up, he went out to his people, his people, and looked on their burdens.

And he saw an Egyptian beating a Hebrew, one of his people, actually his brothers. Do you see the footnote there? His brothers. He looked this way and that, and seeing no one, he struck down the Egyptian and hid him in the sand.

Now, all of a sudden, we've jumped 40 years ahead of what we read last week. If you read Acts chapter 7, you'll see Stephen tells us that Moses was 40 years old when this took place. And we don't get a biopic of Moses' life story to this point.

[7 : 11] We get nothing about the story of him growing up or being educated in the king's court. Nothing except his birth. And then suddenly, his appearance on a public stage, showing himself as the deliverer of God's people.

Rings a few bells, doesn't it, that kind of pattern? Just a birth and very unexpected circumstances, and then nothing. And then a sudden appearance on the public stage in a very dramatic way.

So here's Moses, verse 11 says, among his brothers. Notice that footnote. It's correct. You see, the text here is emphasizing that Moses is clearly identifying himself with his true brothers, his true blood and kin.

And he goes out to them, and we're told he has compassion on them. He sees the burdens. And it's not a distant kind of compassion.

It's nothing vague. It's not disinterested, is it? It's a compassion that acts. He stands with his oppressed brothers. He gets involved to bring deliverance.

[8 : 18] He steps in to defend this oppressed man. Now, when we read this story, we've got to be very careful not to read into this passage our kind of preconceived ideas about Moses' actions in killing this Egyptian.

It's very common for commentators and preachers, even very fine ones, to be tempted to moralize about Moses here. To assume that somehow Moses is in the wrong, that says he acts rashly, he acts wrongly, he acts foolishly to kill this Egyptian and do what he did.

And then they go on to make lots of points about well, you know, enthusiasm isn't enough in the Lord's work. You've got to learn experience and patience and restraint and all that kind of thing. God sent Moses away to Midian for all these years to be prepared for that sort of thing.

Now, there is, of course, an element of that in Moses' years in Midian. Undoubtedly, there were years of great preparation. But we must be very careful not to jump in straight away to a moralistic lesson for us about this.

It might be very tempting to do so, but we have to say to ourselves, what is this text actually saying to us? Now, if we remember the context here in Exodus, I think we'll look at this rather differently.

[9 : 33] Remember who the Egyptians are. They're the great enemies of God and his people. They're the ones who want to destroy, to decimate, to kill off God's chosen people of promise.

and they and their Pharaoh and their gods, they are the ones who are set up in defiance against the God of Israel and his people right the way through the book of Exodus.

And you see what this moment is all about for Moses. It's the critical moment for his life. Whose side is Moses going to choose to be on?

Is he going to choose to stay with the privilege and the pleasures and the power that he is known in the court of Egypt among God's sworn enemies? Or is he going to choose rather the mistreatment and the reproach of siding with God's people, his brothers, and therefore setting himself against the Egyptians, seeing them for who they are, the enemies of God, the enemies of his purpose and salvation?

Well that's clearly how Hebrews 11 summarizes it for us. This is the moment when he publicly revealed himself as God's deliverer.

[10 : 52] We are told considering the reproaches of Christ greater wealth than the treasures of Egypt. He chooses his true brothers over and against the Egyptians.

And when he sees a brother as it says struck down by the enemy, the word there in verse 11 is just the same as the one in verse 12 and in verse 13 for strike down.

When he sees one of his brothers being struck down by the enemy, then he himself steps in to defend him and strikes down the enemy. That's the very same word when we get to Exodus 12 verse 12 that we read of the Lord when the Lord strikes down all the firstborn in Egypt.

And he says on all the gods of Egypt I will execute judgment. You see, I think the text here is telling us that Moses is acting here as God's deliverer.

He's acting like God himself. He's intervening to bring deliverance to his brothers, to his people. And that's what it means in verse 12 by the way where it says he looked this way and that and seeing no one he struck down the Egyptian.

[12 : 04] That's got nothing to do with Moses being furtive looking around to see if anybody's looking and then he kills him on the quiet. No. He's using the exact same idiom that is often used of God in the scriptures.

Isaiah 59 verse 16 for example or Isaiah 63 verse 5 says that God looked around and saw that there was no one and therefore his own arm intervened and brought salvation.

See, Moses here is acting like God and for God. He's revealing himself as the deliverer from God's enemies. One scholar put it like this. Moses' act should not be understood as an act of wrongful vengeance or rash zeal but as a proleptic that is a pointing forward execution of divine justice against Egypt.

I prefer Ralph Davis' version. He says this. It seems to me that if you find an Egyptian beating the tar out of an Israelite it's a no-brainer. I think that's pretty much right.

Absolutely. The question here you see for Moses is whose side are you going to be on? Are you going to be on God's side and his people or are you going to side with his enemies against God's people?

[13 : 20] So verses 11 and 12 show us Moses as a deliverer being revealed to his people. It's the first glimpse of what God is going to do in this book for his people to deliver them to defeat the enemies and to bring liberation.

And if you read Acts chapter 7 you'll see that's certainly the interpretation that Stephen puts on this. Listen. Acts 7 verse 24 Seeing one of his brothers being wronged he defended the oppressed man, avenged him and struck down the Egyptian.

You see Stephen's not in any doubt at all who's the enemy and who's the hero of this story and nor should we be. In fact Stephen goes on and says Moses supposed that his brothers would understand that God was giving them salvation by his hand but they did not understand.

They should have but they didn't. That brings us neatly to the second act verses 13 to 15 which is all about the deliverer being resented and rejected.

You see once again Moses comes to try and intervene to right a wrong. One of his brothers is being struck down. Same word again. This time in a way it's almost worse. It's a fellow Israelite doing it.

[14 : 34] Now again be very careful not to read this story and have some sympathy with this man's words of defiance against Moses. As if to say well Moses he's got a point.

Who are you to preach about not striking people when you're a murderer? But be careful. Because to speak like that puts you against God's servant. Puts you on the side of the one that the text tells us here is clearly in the wrong.

You see verse 13? The man who's in the wrong who says to Moses who are you to be a ruler and a judge of us? Now again listen to Stephen in Acts 7 verse 35.

This Moses whom they rejected saying who made you a ruler and judge? This man God sent as both a ruler and a redeemer. you see Stephen's whole point isn't it in Acts chapter 7 is that this is a pattern of God's deliverer always being rejected by his own people.

By the very ones he comes to redeem and to rule. And Stephen says that's a pattern that went through all the history of Israel right up until the coming of Jesus, the deliverer himself.

[15 : 48] You stiff-necked people he said, uncircumcised in heart and ears. You always reject the Holy Spirit. So you see this Israelite in verse 14 is in the wrong.

He's rejecting the Holy Spirit of God because he's rejecting God's deliverer, Moses. And it's a pattern that you'll see again and again as you read through the book of Exodus all the way again and again.

God reveals Moses as his servant, as his deliverer and again and again God's people reject the deliverer that God sends.

They resent him. And this is just the beginning of it. And so Moses has to flee because it becomes public. Well what has become public? Well very obviously the clear identification that he has made of himself with God's people and therefore as a public enemy of Pharaoh.

And what was Moses afraid of? Well not I think personal fear for his own life. Not personal fear for what Pharaoh might do to him as Moses.

[16 : 58] Hebrews 11 if you read it explicitly tells us Moses did not fear the anger of the king. No rather surely it must have been an awareness of his destiny as God's deliverer that made him flee.

However much sure it was still foggy in his mind and there may have been many things yet for him to learn as to exactly how God was going to use him but he did know that God had given him a special role to play.

And as Stephen says in Acts chapter 7 he supposed his brothers would see that but now he knew that they didn't. And he could see if you like that his hour had not yet come as it were.

And so Hebrews 11 tells us that it was by faith he left Egypt not being afraid of the anger of the king for he endured as seeing him who was invisible.

So he fled if I can put it like this full of the fear of faith not the fear of unbelief. The kind of fear that trusts God and believes God is doing something and does have a plan for us but at the moment can only see fog, perplexity.

[18 : 13] And therefore can be quite desolating, can leave us feeling full of disappointment, full of despair even. Does that sound familiar to you? You've taken a real stand for the one true God, you've shown that reality by risking everything, perhaps publicly aligning yourself with the cause of Christ and his people.

Maybe it's the first time you've taken a stand publicly at school or at college or at work as a Christian. Maybe you've taken a stand in some other public kind of way and you're looking to God to vindicate you and to help you and yet instead of that things just don't seem to go at all as you expected.

It seems that God somehow lost control of the plan. It seems that your life perhaps is going haywire. It seems that God doesn't care and you end up in a slough of despondency and despair.

Well, we're not told much about Moses' thoughts or his mood and it's hard not to believe that as well as being rejected, he also felt pretty dejected, wouldn't you think?

Well, let's look at Act 3 because Act 3 really is a turn up for the books, isn't it? Here's God's deliverer revealed to his own people but rejected by them and now he's a fugitive, he's a wanderer with nowhere to lay his head and he's in enemy territory.

[19 : 39] Do you notice that? Among the Midianites. Read Numbers chapter 25 later on to find out what Moses readers would have immediately understood when he mentioned those people.

Not very pretty. And yet, in this third act, we see the deliverer received and rejoiced in, not rejected. God is gracious to his servants, isn't he?

He will lead us through times of great perplexity. But he does give tokens along the way that he's still there, that he still cares. Even when the big plan for your life seems to be in total reverse, there are little reminders, aren't there, if we're willing to see them.

Little reminders that his silent hand still is in control, still is at work. And the last line of verse 15 is one of those, isn't it?

Moses, all of a sudden, and he sat down by a well. Aha! We know what that means, don't we? You can hear Moses' listeners just saying that out loud almost, can't you?

[20 : 45] Because they've read Genesis chapter 24. They've read Genesis chapter 29. They know what happens when somebody sits down by a well, don't they? Remember? It's where Isaac found his wife, wasn't it?

Well, Isaac's servant did for him, because God's wonderful hand of providence was at work. It's where Jacob found his wife too, wasn't it? So when we read that little line in verse 15, we're reminded that God is still in control, that God is still doing his work, that he still has good things for his servant.

And so it is. And here we read about Moses' third attempt to intervene and to reveal himself as a deliverer. And this time he's welcomed, isn't he, as a saviour and as a true deliverer.

He's rejoiced in and he's received gladly. Not by his brothers, not even by his sisters, but by a bunch of pagan Midianite girls.

Outsiders, traditional enemies even of God's people Israel. And obviously nobodies. Verse 17 says, they normally got abused and kicked out of the way by these shepherds.

[22 : 00] No doubt manhandled and all sorts of nasty things. But look at verse 17. The shepherds came and drove them away, but Moses stood up and saved them and watered their flocks.

He saved them and he served them. That's quite a stoop, isn't it, for one who was once a prince of a mighty kingdom. One who was once rich beyond all splendor.

Stooping to save and to serve a bunch of nobodies really. And they obviously recognized that. Look at verse 19. An Egyptian delivered us.

And he drew water for us. And he watered our flocks. And so there Moses was not rejected, but received as the deliverer he truly was.

And though a sojourner in a foreign land, the Lord was with him and he blessed him. And we read here, he blessed him with a wife and also a son. What on earth did Moses make of all of this?

[23 : 06] Well, we don't know, do we? But surely the fact that he named his son Gershom, meaning a sojourner in a foreign land, surely it does speak somewhat of his perplexity, a sense of disappointment.

I'm sure Moses could have sung William Cooper's hymn, couldn't he? God moved in a mysterious way and said, Amen. But you know, God was performing wonders, wasn't he?

Because this pattern for Moses as God's servant wasn't just to no purpose, was it? Not if we read on in the book of Exodus. For one thing, he didn't know it then, but of course, he was going to spend 40 years, wasn't he, leading the people of Israel through that very desert wilderness where he was now tending to the flocks of sheep and learning about every nook and cranny and every contour of that place.

And that's God's pattern, isn't it? Nothing, nothing that he ever causes his servants to go through in their lives, however perplexing, none of it is ever wasted. Isn't that right?

And also, though his brothers reject him, and though they meant it for evil, just as with Joseph who went before, God meant it for good.

[24 : 27] He meant it for the saving of many lives. If you read on to Exodus chapter 18, you'll find that that's the climactic chapter of the whole of the first movement of the book of Exodus. It's the end of the great Exodus deliverance, before we come to Sinai and the giving of the law and everything that comes after it.

And what's Exodus chapter 18 all about? Well, it's all about Moses' father-in-law, Jethro, and his family. It's all about these pagan Midianite enemies being converted from their paganism to the worship of the one true God, the God of Israel.

It's about Moses blessing God for the redemption of his people, offering sacrifices to the true God, eating in fellowship with the Israelites, the people of God. And so the rejection of Moses as God's servant by his own people, results in God's salvation coming to these total pagans in the world outside.

To put it in Paul's words, through their trespasses, salvation came to the Gentiles. Israel's failure meant riches for the Gentiles.

Isn't that right? But perhaps above all, Moses' own experience of rejection and exile and alienation surely, surely gave him a fellow feeling with his own people's misery.

[25 : 51] Something that he could never ever have had if he had simply walked straight out of the palace of Egypt and straight into being a leader of his people. He could never have been, could he, a deliverer who really knew what it meant to be oppressed, to be alone.

And therefore we might put it this way, as another writer in the Bible put it. He had to be made like his brothers in every respect so that he might become merciful and faithful in the service of God.

We might say it was fitting that God should make the founder of his people's salvation perfect through suffering, so that he would not be ashamed to call them brothers.

brothers. See, there are some things, aren't there, that you can know, and yet you can't really know until you've experienced them.

Isn't that right? And that's why we see this pattern in Moses' life. And in his preparation by God as a deliverer for his people.

[26 : 56] The pattern of one great servant of God, Moses. Jesus. If you've been listening carefully to some of the words that I've used, some of the allusions I've made to other parts of Scripture, I'm sure you've picked up, haven't you, a deeper reason that explains why this pattern is as we see it in Moses' life.

The pattern of Moses as a great servant of God, because it's also, isn't it, the pattern of the great servant of God. The pattern, isn't it, of the life of the Lord Jesus Christ.

You just can't read this account without sensing that, can you? A deliverer revealed to his people as one who has come at last in answer to his people's prayers, in answer to God's covenant promise.

A deliverer come to redeem and to rule his people, and yet, well, his own people said, who made you a ruler and a judge over us? And they rejected him.

He came to his own, and his own received him not. And he was, as Isaiah later prophesied, he was despised and rejected of men, wasn't he?

[28 : 07] And as Stephen said, as his people always resisted the Holy Spirit, as they killed those who announced beforehand his coming, so also they betrayed and they murdered him, the servant of God, the Lord Jesus Christ.

And when that happened too, it looked as if everything was lost, didn't it? The disciples of Jesus were utterly depressed, utterly perplexed, utterly dejected.

Read Luke chapter 24, and read about the women at the tomb in the morning, or the two men on the road to Emmaus in the afternoon, or all the disciples in the upper room in the evening. We're told they were perplexed, they were dejected, they were frightened, they were sad, until the real Jesus appeared and said to them, don't you understand the scriptures?

Don't you recognize the pattern of God's servant? It was necessary for the Christ to suffer all these things, and then, and only then, to enter his glory.

And why? Why? Well, listen to Paul in Acts 26, explaining it to King Agrippa. I'm saying nothing but what the prophets and Moses said would come to pass, that the Christ would suffer, and that being the first to rise from the dead, he would proclaim light, both to our people and to the Gentiles.

[29 : 36] You see, a deliverer revealed and rejected, that he might be received and rejoiced in, not only by his own people Israel, but also by all the nations of the world, the Gentiles, the Jethro's, the Midianite girls, the Samaritan women who met Jesus at the well, the Syrophenician, Canaanite women who knew that she was just a Gentile dog.

Do you remember she said that? And yet she wanted to share the blessings of the deliverer of the Jews, the Lord Jesus, the Christ. You see, it wasn't all for nothing, was it? It wasn't a failure that God's great servant was rejected.

And God turned his servant's weakness and rejection into a glorious, ultimate victory and blessing for all of his people. Their rejection of Christ, says Paul, means the reconciliation of the world.

If it wasn't for that, none of us here tonight as Gentiles would be here. So that's God's pattern. And we'll never fully understand it all.

Of course, Paul himself says how unsearchable his judgment, how inscrutable his ways. But we do need to recognize it. Because the pattern of the servant, the deliverer, is reflected back and it explains the pattern we see here in Moses' life as a great servant of God in the Old Testament.

[31 : 05] And, this is what's so important for every one of us to see and understand. That pattern also is reflected forward into the lives of all of those who will stand with Christ and his people against God's enemies.

It's the same pattern that will be for all of those who have the privilege of calling Christ their brother. Because what we see reflected here of Christ in Moses' life is a reflection of the same pattern that will always be the pattern for all of God's servants.

And friends, that's why you find it a great struggle to be a Christian believer at times. Sometimes very often, perhaps. Even when you are aligned with God's purposes for your life.

Even when you are submitting your life in obedience to him, not running away from him. Even when you are standing with Christ and for Christ and for his people against those who would slander and mock and abuse.

Even when you are standing most resolutely against the enemy, the devil himself. And standing true for Christ. And yet, sometimes when you're doing that, it seems that instead of God vindicating your stand, he's abandoned you.

[32 : 26] He's allowing you to be rejected. He's leading you through many dark and perplexing paths. We find ourselves saying with Moses, I'm a sojourner.

I'm an alien, a foreigner, a stranger in a strange land. Maybe you've been to doubt sometimes that God is really still there at all. Maybe you doubt whether really you are a child of his.

Jesus. Well, you may feel that. And I'm sure Moses did feel that. And certainly the Lord Jesus did feel that.

In that darkest moment of dereliction on the cross where he cried, My God, my God, why have you forsaken me? Maybe. But God hadn't abandoned him forever, had he?

And yet it was through his rejection at the hands of his own that God's fullest purpose of blessing for all of his people was ultimately revealed.

[33 : 29] And it's his pattern. It was his pattern for Moses, God's great servant then. It was the pattern of the Lord Jesus, the great servant.

And friends, that is the pattern that your life will inevitably be shaped by as well if you're a true believer, if you're a true servant of the real Jesus.

Because that's the way he works his ultimate victory in us. The way he works his ultimate victory through us for everyone that he's called to be his own. Everyone that he's called to be a true brother, a true sister.

That's the privilege of us being able to call him brother. Paul says, It has been granted to us that for the sake of Christ you should not only believe in him but also suffer for his sake, engaged in the same conflict that you saw I have and now hear that I still have.

It's the pattern of genuine discipleship because it's the pattern of the genuine Christ, the servant of God, the deliverer. But through it, through it he is working the same victory of glory and blessing.

[34 : 44] He's doing it that there may be blessing in his great cause. That conflict that Paul was speaking about us sharing in is God's gospel mission to the world.

It's that the Gentiles, the Jethro, the Midianites and all of these in this world can come to the one true God through Jesus Christ through our sharing in that ministry.

He's doing it that there might be blessing and victory also in our own character. For we know, says Paul, that God works all things together for good for those who are called according to his purpose.

For those he foreknew, he also predestined, why? To be conformed to the image of his Son. God lets these things happen, these perplexities, these hardships, these battles aplenty in our lives.

He lets them happen because he's using them to conform us to the image of his Son. He's making us like the Lord Jesus. And you can't be made like the Lord Jesus any other way.

[35 : 49] He disciplines us, says the Hebrew writer, for our good, that we might share his holiness. He allows us to walk in the pattern of his Son because he wants us.

And he will make us into the likeness of his Son. And finally, he allows this pattern in our lives that we also might minister more truly to our own brothers and sisters in their times of distress.

So that we can do that in ways full of real depth and real understanding. Our Saviour Jesus, we're told, had to be made like us in every respect, knowing every sorrow of the human heart to the full so that he might be a merciful and a faithful high priest for us.

And friends, that's the way that the Lord Jesus is fitting you and me so that we can be merciful and faithful as a kingdom of priests to minister to one another, to minister to the world.

That's what you want, isn't it, when you're in distress? That's what I want. A comforter who understands, who can stand with you, who can help you, who can share your burdens, who really knows, not somebody who's just lived a charmed life, who knows nothing about struggles and pain, who can't empathize with you in your distress.

[37 : 13] And that's what Jesus wants us to be, to one another and to the world. But there's no other way that he can make us like that than to walk his path.

And that's why some of the perplexities that you face in your life and I face in mine, that's why they come our way. And that means that we should, we should be thanking God for them, not cursing him, isn't that right?

That's what Paul does in his opening of 2 Corinthians. Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of mercies and the God of all comfort, who comforts us in all our affliction, so that we may be able to comfort those who are in affliction with a comfort with which we ourselves are comforted by God.

For as we share abundantly in Christ's sufferings, so through Christ we share abundantly in comfort also. So are you finding being a servant of the Lord Jesus Christ hard?

Are there great perplexities in the path of your life just at the moment? Do you feel perhaps like a sojourner, a stranger in a strange land, far from where you want to be?

[38 : 29] Maybe that isn't you just now, but friends, even if not, if you're a true servant of the Lord Jesus, I can tell you that will be in some of the times of your life.

But if it is you right now, then this chapter is a great, great comfort, a great message of encouragement for you. It says to you, fear not, be not afraid.

Our fragile church and our fragile faith has a faithful God and even in perplexity, even in the midst of it all, recognize his pattern.

It's unmistakable and it is ultimately wonderful even if it is at times perplexing and sometimes deeply painful. and remember, he will always, always turn his servant's present weakness and rejection into ultimate victory and glory and blessing for you and for all those of God's people that he will bless through you in the days of your darkness.

recognize his pattern and be not afraid. Let's pray. The pattern of every true servant of God.

[40 : 04] For your sake we are being killed all the day long. We are regarded as sheep to be slaughtered. But no, in all these things we are more than conquerors through him who loved us.

For I am sure that neither death nor life nor angels nor rulers nor things present nor things to come nor powers nor height nor depth nor anything else in all creation will be able to separate us from the love of God in Christ Jesus our Lord.

we thank you Father that you have granted that in Christ it is not for us only to believe but also to share in his sufferings so that through your marvelous working which no man can fathom you have promised from before the foundation of time to conform every one of us who loves you into the image of your precious and perfect son our Lord Jesus Christ.

So may that glorious goal thrill our hearts and comfort us even as we walk through each perplexing path of our life and allow the praises of our hearts still to sing forth in joy to you our rock and our redeemer.

For we ask it in Jesus name. Amen.