The hardships that Paul suffered

Some of the personal passages from Paul's writings make us wonder how he ever coped. If he had patience in his circumstances, then he is well qualified to be a mentor for us.

2Co 6:4-6 "... in everything we show ourselves to be servants of God—in great endurance, in afflictions, in hardships, in distresses. We endure beatings, imprisonments, and riots. We labor, without proper sleep or meals. We endure in pureness, in knowledge, in patience, in kindness, in the Holy Spirit, in sincere love..."

2Tm 2:9-12 "...I suffer hardship to the point of being chained as a criminal. But God's word isn't chained. Therefore I endure everything for the sake of the chosen. I wish that they too may obtain the salvation which is in Christ Jesus with eternal glory. This saying is faithful: For if we died with him, we will also live with him. If we endure, we will also reign with him."

Strong encouragement for the suffering

The scriptures are full of encouragement to help and strengthen the suffering, and to help them endure with patience.

Remember these exhortations are real letters written in real situations where real people were suffering. Here are some examples...

Heb 10:32-36 "But remember the early days after you were enlightened. At that time you endured a great struggle with sufferings. On one hand you were victims of reproaches and oppressions. On the other you became sharers with those who were so treated. You had compassion on me in my chains. You joyfully accepted the plundering of your possessions. You knew that you had gained for yourselves a better possession and an enduring one in the heavens."

"Therefore do not throw away your bold courage, which has a great reward. For you need endurance so that, having done the will of God, you may receive the promise. ‘In a very little while, he who comes will come, and will not wait. But the righteous will live by faith. If he shrinks back, my soul has no pleasure in him.’ But we don't belong with those who shrink back to destruction. Rather, we belong with those who have faith to the saving of the soul."

Heb 12:1-7 "Surrounded by so great a cloud of witnesses, let's lay aside anything that weighs us down. Let's remove the sin which so easily entangles us. Let's patiently run the race set before us. Let's look to Jesus, the leader and perfecter of faith. He saw the joy set before him. He endured the cross, despising its shame. He sat down at the right hand of God's throne."

"Think about this Jesus, who has endured great opposition of sinners against himself. Then you won't grow weary and your souls won't lose the will to keep trying. You wrestle with sin, but you haven't yet shed blood resisting it. You have forgotten God's encouraging words for his sons, 'My son, don't despise the discipline of the Lord. Don't give up when you are reproved by him. For whom the Lord loves, he disciplines. He whips every son he accepts.' Endure discipline. God deals with you as with sons. Any good father disciplines his son."

Jas 5:7-10 "Be patient therefore, brothers, until the coming of the Lord. Behold, the farmer waits for the precious fruit of the earth. He exercises patience until the soil receives the early and late rain. You be patient too. Establish your hearts, for the coming of the Lord is at hand. Don’t grumble against one another brothers, so that you will not be judged. Behold, the judge stands at the door. Brothers, take for an example of suffering and patience the prophets who spoke in the name of the Lord."

Being patient together

It is very hard to be patient alone. Sufferings need to be shared. We draw encouragement from each other and are strengthened by one another's example.

Rev 1:9 "I John, your brother and partner with you in oppression, and in the kingdom and patience of Christ Jesus, was on the island called Patmos. I was there because of God's Word and the testimony of Jesus Christ."

2Th 1:4 "...we ourselves talk proudly about you in the congregations of God. That's because of your patience and faith in all your persecutions and in the afflictions which you endure."