

"Suffering in the Will of God"

Part 4

2 Corinthians 4:8-18

Introduction: In our study of 2 Corinthians we have been looking at the Apostle Paul's heart concerning the suffering which he faced in his ministry. It was God's desire that in the midst of his suffering that the life of Jesus Christ would be seen. Paul talked about the Treasure which we have in earthen vessels and the Treasure is the LIGHT OF THE LIFE OF JESUS CHRIST. We looked at how the vessel must be broken in order for the light to shine forth and this happens in the storms, trials, and the difficulties of life. It is when we die to "self" that Christ is seen in us.

Last week in our study we looked at how Paul did not fear death. He understood that if he died serving the Lord the Lord would one day resurrect him.

Notice 2 Corinthians 4:14

So Paul did not fear death and so it was his desire to magnify Christ in all that he did.

Philippians 1:20-21

²⁰ *According to my earnest expectation and my hope, that in nothing I shall be ashamed, but that with all boldness, as always, so now also Christ shall be magnified in my body, whether it be by life, or by death.*

²¹ *For to me to live is Christ, and to die is gain.*

Paul went on to say that all he went through was for the sake of others. He was always esteeming others better than himself. Paul also explained that when he faced the sufferings of life it was the grace of God which allowed him to endure the pain.

Notice 2 Corinthians 4:15

God gave him the grace and as he faced the suffering others could see Christ in him and they would then praise God and the end result would be that God would be glorified. This was exactly what Paul wrote in the beginning of this section.

2 Corinthians 4:7

⁷ *But we have this treasure in earthen vessels, that the excellency of the power may be of God, and not of us.*

This now brings us to where we are tonight in our study.

"Broken Vessels"

Part 3

Notice 2 Corinthians 4:16

We need to look at this verse in sections.

First of all we see Paul's motivation here in this verse. The Words "FOR WHICH CAUSE" refer back to several thoughts. But before we look at the CAUSE let us consider the words "FAINT NOT". Here is how Blue Letter Bible defines the word FAINT.

"to be utterly spiritless, to be wearied out, exhausted"

Now it is interesting when we look at other verses where this word is used we can see that "to faint not" is something which the believer must determine in his or her mind they are not going to allow to happen. The bottom line is that it is a choice to press on or to become discourage and quit. It is a choice because God always give us the grace we need to face the path which we have been given to walk.

2 Corinthians 12:9a

⁹ *And he [The Lord] said unto me, My grace is sufficient for thee:*

Now let me show you some other verses where the same word is used.

Luke 18:1

And he spake a parable unto them to this end, that men ought always to pray, and not to faint:

Ephesians 3:13

¹³ *Wherefore I desire that ye faint not at my tribulations for you, which is your glory.*

2 Thessalonians 3:13

¹³ *But ye, brethren, be not weary in well doing.*

Galatians 6:9

⁹ *And let us not be weary in well doing: for in due season we shall reap, if we faint not.*

Let me get you back to Paul. He knew that God's Word would not return void and he knew that the RESULTS of his ministry did not depend upon him but on God but he also knew he had to be available. There were times when he would experience severe suffering but he knew there was a sufficient amount of grace. Paul would sow another would water and GOD WOULD GIVE THE INCREASE. But he had to keep sowing while he was able.

Application:

It is important to know that we must keep the proper attitude as we pass through this life and we serve the Lord. The Devil will try his best to wear us down in order to get us to throw the towel in and quit. IT IS MUCH EASIER TO BE A SPECTATOR THAN IT IS TO BE AN ACTIVE SOLDIER. Even some of the best of God's soldiers have desired to quit.

Notice Jeremiah 20:1-18

Jeremiah had reached the point where he became very discouraged and he desired to just give up but there was a burning in him that would not allow him to walk away. I point this out to help you to see that discouragement can happen but we must remember there is sufficient grace to carry us through.

2 Corinthians 4:16b

Our outward man is losing strength and is wearing out. This is by the way the flesh. But the INWARD man which is the soul is RENEWED every day.

The word "RENEWED" means;

"to cause to grow up, new, to make new, new strength and vigor is given to one."

There are several points to see in this definition.

1. **Our inward man grows in maturity through the trials and the storms of life.**

James 1:1-8

James, a servant of God and of the Lord Jesus Christ, to the twelve tribes which are scattered abroad, greeting.

² *My brethren, count it all joy when ye fall into divers temptations;*

³ *Knowing this, that the trying of your faith worketh patience.*

⁴ *But let patience have her perfect work, that ye may be perfect and entire, wanting nothing.*

⁵ *If any of you lack wisdom, let him ask of God, that giveth to all men liberally, and upbraideth not; and it shall be given him.*

⁶ *But let him ask in faith, nothing wavering. For he that wavereth is like a wave of the sea driven with the wind and tossed.*

⁷ *For let not that man think that he shall receive any thing of the Lord.*

⁸ *A double minded man is unstable in all his ways.*

2. **God provides the strength we need in the inward man day by day.**

Lamentations 3:22-23

²² *It is of the LORD's mercies that we are not consumed, because his compassions fail not.*

²³ *They are new every morning: great is thy faithfulness.*

Isaiah 40:28-31

²⁸ *Hast thou not known? hast thou not heard, that the everlasting God, the LORD, the Creator of the ends of the earth, fainteth not, neither is weary? there is no searching of his understanding.*

²⁹ *He giveth power to the faint; and to them that have no might he increaseth strength.*

³⁰ *Even the youths shall faint and be weary, and the young men shall utterly fall:*

³¹ **But they that wait upon the LORD shall renew their strength; they shall mount up with wings as eagles; they shall run, and not be weary; and they shall walk, and not faint.**

These thoughts of the INWARD MAN being RENEWED brings to mind several verses.

Romans 8:28-29

²⁸ *And we know that all things work together for good to them that love God, to them who are the called according to his purpose.*

²⁹ *For whom he did foreknow, he also did predestinate **to be conformed to the image of his Son**, that he might be the firstborn among many brethren.*

Philippians 1:6

⁶ *Being confident of this very thing, that he which hath begun a good work in you will perform it until the day of Jesus Christ:*

Every day we are being renewed in the inward man. It is God at work in us making us more like His Son.

Notice 2 Corinthians 4:17

This is an interesting verse because here Paul refers to his suffering as LIGHT AFFLICTION. He can do this because he is able to see his suffering in light of the glory which awaits him.

Romans 8:18

¹⁸ *For I reckon that the sufferings of this present time are not worthy to be compared with the glory which shall be revealed in us.*

Notice 2 Corinthians 4:17 again.

The sufferings of this life are "FOR A MOMENT" but the exceeding glory is ETERNAL. It is also important to notice that the sufferings here are connected with the glory in eternity.

Notice 2 Corinthians 4:18

Here was how Paul kept everything in perspective. His focus was on eternity and not on the things of this world. This too was the result of Christ in him.

Conclusion:

The writer of Hebrews gives us words that conclude this passage perfectly.

Hebrews 12:1-3

Wherefore seeing we also are compassed about with so great a cloud of witnesses, let us lay aside every weight, and the sin which doth so easily beset us, and let us run with patience the race that is set before us,

² *Looking unto Jesus the author and finisher of our faith; who for the joy that was set before him endured the cross, despising the shame, and is set down at the right hand of the throne of God.*

³ *For consider him that endured such contradiction of sinners against himself, lest ye be wearied and faint in your minds.*