

# Called to Suffer and Rejoice

## Part 4- That We Might Possess an Eternal Weight of Glory

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February 10, 2013

### 2Corinthians 4:7-18

**7** But we have this treasure in earthen vessels, so that the surpassing greatness of the power will be of God and not from ourselves;

**8** *we are* afflicted in every way, but not crushed; perplexed, but not despairing;

**9** persecuted, but not forsaken; struck down, but not destroyed;

**10** always carrying about in the body the dying of Jesus, so that the life of Jesus also may be manifested in our body.

**11** For we who live are constantly being delivered over to death for Jesus' sake, so that the life of Jesus also may be manifested in our mortal flesh.

**12** So death works in us, but life in you.

**13** But having the same spirit of faith, according to what is written, "I BELIEVED, THEREFORE I SPOKE," we also believe, therefore we also speak,

**14** knowing that He who raised the Lord Jesus will raise us also with Jesus and will present us with you.

**15** For all things *are* for your sakes, so that the grace which is spreading to more and more people may cause the giving of thanks to abound to the glory of God.

**16** Therefore we do not lose heart, but though our outer man is decaying, yet our inner man is being renewed day by day.

**17** For momentary, light affliction is producing for us an eternal weight of glory far beyond all comparison,

**18** while we look not at the things which are seen, but at the things which are not seen; for the things which are seen are temporal, but the things which are not seen are eternal.

To the Glory of God

I love being happy. I love joy and laughter. I believe with all my

heart that part of being saved is not simply to fear God and to serve God and to obey God- but also to enjoy God and that part of being forgiven and part of being redeemed has to do with coming into what true joy and true happiness really is. Therefore I do not believe that lost and unsaved people can experience the fullest range of joy and the fullest range of delight precisely because of their separation from God.

I also believe that God is the happiest Being in the Universe. I think the Bible teaches that because God always gets what He wants and is never frustrated in achieving His desired goals- and because what God wants and does is always Right and Good- that God is happier and more joyful than anyone else.

God enjoys Himself more than anyone else does and it is that delight that God has in Himself that fuels His desire to save us so that we too may rejoice in Him and delight ourselves in the Lord.

Therefore- my pursuit of happiness and joy and God's pursuit of being known and glorified and feared and obeyed and enjoyed is the very same goal. So what fuels my pursuit of joy is the same thing that fuels God's Desire to be glorified- and that is- God Himself.

Therefore I believe that I am at my best and I am in my most pleasant state of delight and fulfillment and satisfaction when I am doing what I was created to do- and that is abandoning myself and abstaining from fleshly lusts and ceasing to fill my carnal cravings to serve and love and admire and delight myself in God.

Because part of being saved is to have our eyes opened to the fact that God is the best and the loveliest and the most precious and the most important and the most beautiful and the most valuable Commodity in the entire Universe. God is better than money and power and children and wife and food and pleasure and sex and even life itself. Everything that has been created is also decaying and is vanishing away and only God and our soul and the inhabitants of Heaven and hell are eternal- everything else will melt away and be gone and all that will be left God and those who glorify God's Righteous Justice in hell and those who glorify God's Amazing Grace in Heaven.

And so whatever God can do to help me to know that; whatever God can give to me or take from me to grant me the blessing of knowing Him more fully and of loving Him more completely and of obeying Him more easily and consistently and of enjoying Him more entirely is therefore- Good. And that is what this series on Suffering is about. So if

all you are hearing is the part about pain and misery- then you haven't really heard what I am saying and you haven't fully learned the Scriptures and you really do not know God well enough.

And I also think that this is God's Will for me too. And since it is God's Will for me to know God and to love God and to enjoy Him forever- God is very busy to bring certain things into my life and to keep other things away from my life to facilitate that goal. God is very busy both in giving what he sees that I need that will bring me into that fullness of joy and He is very busy in taking away from me those things that will hinder that joy. And the giving is what we call, "Blessings" and the taking is what we call, "Suffering". And I believe that both are completely necessary for my growth in Jesus Christ.

And so even though suffering is probably one of the single most neglected issues in the modern Church- suffering is as common in the Bible as singing; it is as relative to believers as prayer; and it is as much a part of Christian life as Bible Study. So that is why I am bringing you this series of messages on suffering- for two reasons:

1. I believe we should prepare to suffer for Christ because the Bible says that we should
2. I believe that our modern situation says we should.

I honestly do *not* believe that our situation here in this country can continue on its present course without there being huge implications concerning how the Church is viewed by the majority of Americans- which will bring about great persecution and hardship on the average American Christian who in any way seeks to maintain Biblical purity.

But I am not bringing these messages at this time simply because it is my belief that the days we are in are very evil and because the path of Righteousness God has called us to is very costly- but also because the Promise of the Bible is that God's people will suffer.

For example, **The Acts 14:22** says that Paul told all his young churches, "**Through many tribulations we must enter the kingdom.**" And in **John 15:20**- our Lord Jesus Christ said, "**If they persecuted me, they will persecute you**". And the Apostle Peter said in **1Peter 4:12**:

**Do not be surprised at the fiery ordeal among you, which comes upon you for your testing, as though some strange thing were happening to you**

... in other words suffering is not to be considered strange or odd or uncommon- it is to be expected.

And the Apostle Paul said in **2Timothy 3:12**:

**Indeed, all who desire to live godly in Christ Jesus will be persecuted.**

So we should all take it to be a Biblical Truth that the more earnest we become about actually being the salt of the earth and the light of the world, and reaching the unreached peoples of the world, and exposing the works of darkness, and loosing the bonds of sin and Satan- the more we will suffer. And that is why we should prepare to suffer. And that's why I am beginning this new year preaching from texts that will help us prepare.

Now over the last several weeks- we have been exploring four Biblical purposes for Suffering:

1. **The Moral (Spiritual) Purpose**- because suffering refines our holiness and hope (**Romans 5:1-8**),
2. **The Intimacy Purpose**- because in suffering our relationship with Christ becomes deeper and sweeter (**Philippians 3:7-14**)
3. **The Missions Purpose**- because God calls us to complete Christ's Afflictions as we extend the Worth of His Suffering through the reality of our own (**Colossians 1:24**)
4. **The Glory Purpose**- because this slight, momentary affliction is working for us an eternal weight of glory (**2Corinthians 4:16-18**).

And today I want to look at the fourth and final one and that is:

**4. The Glory Purpose**- because this slight, momentary affliction is working for us an eternal weight of glory (**2Corinthians 4:16-18**).

Now verse 16 expresses something that *everybody* here this morning wants to experience. In that verse- Paul says,

**... we do not lose heart, but though our outer man is decaying, yet our inner man is being renewed day by day.**

...so in this verse is something here *nobody* wants and something *everybody* wants.

Nobody here this morning wants to lose heart. Nobody came in here saying, *"I sure hope we sing some songs and hear a sermon that helps me lose heart. I really want to be discouraged this morning by what Pastor Blair says."* Not a one of you thought that way. Nobody wants the heart for living and for persevering to be knocked out of you. Well, neither did Paul.

But yet while nobody wants that- *everybody* wants the inner renewal day-by-day that Paul talks about here.

Now we all know that the feelings of strength and newness and hope and vitality and courage and zest for life only lasts for a short little while and then they tend to drain away. So if we are going to be strong on the inside and have hope and joy and resources to love for the long term- we are going to have to be renewed day by day.

You see, life is *not* static or unfluctuating. It is up and down and up again and then down again. Life isn't stable or constant. It is more like we fill up with courage and strength and hope and then it is depleted and then we have to fill up again.

So our experience as humans is that we are renewed by God's Spirit and then we leak out and then we are renewed and then it depletes again. And yet every true believer seeks the power of renewal.

Nobody here today wants to be left in the valley of depletion and emptiness and discouragement. So if there is a secret to being made strong and hopeful and joyful and loving again and again and again day-by-day, we're interested.

Which means that there are two Spirit- inspired Words in this Biblical text that Brother Andy just read to us that should really get our attention:

- A. The word "**therefore**" at the beginning of verse 16
- B. The word "**for**" at the beginning of verse 17.

But what is so special about these words?

Well, it helps if we can imagine verse 16 at the top of a triangle with two sides supporting it. So there is our longing supported by these two lines:

- ✓ **We do not lose heart . . .**
- ✓ **...but our inner person is being renewed day by day**

That's what we all want this morning—to be able to say this and for this to really be true in our lives:

**We do not lose heart . . . but are renewed day by day**

Now as I have told you many times- the word "**therefore**" is a legal word that you will find in many legal documents- even in our day. And the logic of that word is:

Because this is true...

And because that is true...

And because this other thing is also true...

**THEREFORE...**the statement that I now make is my conclusion

So by putting the word, "**therefore**" at the front of verse 16- the Apostle means to say to us that what he has been saying previously has led him to now make this powerful statement. So in this case Paul is saying:

This is true and that is true and this other thing is true" (in verses 7–15) and now, "**THEREFORE... we do not lose heart**" and "**THEREFORE... we are being renewed day by day**".

So the first line of the triangle is the Truth that we find in verses 7–15 that leads up to this experience of not losing heart and of being renewed day by day and supports it. And that should get our attention and send us hunting in those verses for what that Truth is.

And then the word "**for**" at the beginning of the following verse (v. 17) means that Paul is about to say some things that are the reason behind his statement in verse 16. In other words- Paul says:

"We do not lose heart . . . and we are renewed day by day"  
... **FOR** (or **BECAUSE**) this is true and that is true and this other thing is true.

So the second line of the triangle coming down on the other side is the Truth of verses 17&18 that supports the experience that Paul just described.

So I hope you can see this now. The glorious experience of not losing heart and of being renewed day by day that we all long for is sitting there on the point of this triangle with two supporting sides.

Since verses 7–15 are true, "**THEREFORE we do not lose heart but we are renewed day by day.**" That's one side. And "**We do not lose heart, but are renewed day by day**" **FOR** or **BECAUSE** verses 17&18 are also true.

So the goal here should be for us to look closely at the two sides of this triangle and make the Divine Truth that sustained Paul 2,000 years ago in his suffering to also be the very *same* Divine Truth that sustains us in our suffering in the 21<sup>st</sup> Century.

But before we can do that- I need to make a brief observation that everyone needs to understand very clearly. Because you would normally think that for someone to not lose heart and for someone to be renewed day by day- he would be in the midst of great blessings and great peace and great safety and great comfort and that *those* are the things that would produce the kind of stability and strength and hope and courage that Paul talks about here.

But if you were to think that way- you would be wrong. Because the fact is that this Passage here in 2Corinthians 4 teaches that the spiritual place of not losing heart and of being renewed day by day are happening in Paul's life in the midst of some really serious suffering. And I would suggest to you that the Apostle Paul's stability and his hope and his courage and his ability to not lose heart and to be renewed day by day in the Power of Jesus Christ did *not* come to Paul *in spite of* his suffering- but precisely *because of* them.

Let me say this another way. Paul would have lost heart and Paul would *not* have been renewed day by day if he had been spared the terrible suffering that God purposefully allowed him to experience. Let me say this yet another way. It was precisely because Paul *did* suffer and that he suffered terribly and repeatedly that allowed him to not

lose heart and that allowed him to be renewed day by day. Look at verse 16 again with me:

**Therefore we do not lose heart, but though our outer man is decaying, yet our inner man is being renewed day by day.**

Paul knew that he was dying—and that everybody is dying. He experienced tremendous suffering, and in his suffering- he saw the decay and the wasting away of his earthly life. There were great weaknesses and sicknesses and injuries and hardships and pressures and frustrations and disappointments. And every one of them cost him a piece of his life. Another way he described this was in verse 12 when he says:

**2Corinthians 4:12**

**So death works in us, but life in you.**

Now the “**us**” in this verse are those who minister the Word of God. So Paul was saying here that *"death was very busy at work in him"*. And that is the proper context for why he says in verse 16:

**... we do not lose heart, but though our outer man is decaying, yet our inner man is being renewed day by day.**

So the question is *not* just,

*"How can I not lose heart in life?"*

and

*"How can I be renewed day-by-day?"*

but rather

*"How can I prepare to suffer without losing heart? How can I accept the suffering and the disappointments and the trials and the pain of this life and at the same time not lose heart, but find renewed inner strength to go on with joy to the end?"*



And I suggest that we can see God's answer to this question- first in verses 7-15 and then in verses 17&18. Now in verses 7-15 there are at least four reasons that lead Paul to say,

**"THEREFORE we do not lose heart."**

...and every one of these four reasons takes into account the decaying of his earthly life through the suffering that God Sovereignly brought into his life. And it is important for us to understand here that Paul never loses sight that he is a dying man and that his life is being spent. So what he is doing in these verses is to show what is true precisely because his outer nature is decaying and wasting away.

### **1. The Glorification of God's Power and God's Son**

#### **2Corinthians 4:7**

**But we have this treasure in earthen vessels, so that the surpassing greatness of the power will be of God and not from ourselves;**

So even though his outer nature is decaying, yet in and through this suffering- God's Power and the Life of God's Son are being manifested and glorified in and through Paul. So Paul says in verse 7:

**... we have this treasure in earthen vessels, so that the surpassing greatness of the power will be of God and not from ourselves;**

... which allows him to then say:

**THEREFORE we do not lose heart . . . because God's Power is exalted in our weakness."**

Now look at verse 10:

#### **2Corinthians 4:10**

**always carrying about in the body the dying of Jesus, so that the life of Jesus also may be manifested in our body.**

In other words Paul is saying here:

**THEREFORE we do not lose heart . . .** because the life of God's Son is exalted in our daily dying.

Now look at verse 11:

**2Corinthians 4:11**

**For we who live are constantly being delivered over to death for Jesus' sake, so that the life of Jesus also may be manifested in our mortal flesh.**

So here Paul is saying:

**THEREFORE we do not lose heart . . .** because the life of God's Son is manifested and glorified in our decaying bodies.

So the first reason Paul doesn't lose heart, as his outer nature suffers and decays is that in and by and through his personal weakness and through his daily dying for the sake of others- God's Power and the Life of God's Son are glorified and that's what Paul loves more than anything- even his own freedom and liberty and life.

## **2. The Strengthening of the Church**

**2Corinthians 4:12**

**So death works in us, but life in you.**

So in and by and through this suffering- Life is flowing from Paul to the Church. Christians all around are being strengthened by Paul's weakness and suffering and his steadfastness in his suffering. So here in verse 12- Paul is saying,

**THEREFORE we do not lose heart . . .** because not only is God being glorified, but you, my brothers and sisters in the Church are receiving life and strength and hope.

**2Corinthians 4:15**

**For all things *are* for your sakes, so that the grace which is spreading to more and more people may cause the giving of thanks to abound to the glory of God.**

So here Paul says:

**THEREFORE we do not lose heart . . .** because (and notice how verse 15 puts the first two reasons together) in my ministry of suffering- Grace is spreading to you and Glory is going to God.

So these are the two great loves of Paul's life:

- Bringing Grace to others
- Bringing Glory to God

... and this verse says both of these happen in the very same experience of and by and through his suffering.. . **THEREFORE** Paul does not lose heart.

### 3. God's Sustaining Presence

#### 2Corinthians 4:8&9

**8** *we are* afflicted in every way, but not crushed; perplexed, but not despairing;

**9** persecuted, but not forsaken; struck down, but not destroyed;

So even though his outer nature is decaying- yet in and through and by this suffering- God Sovereignly sustains Paul and does not let him be overcome.

Now here in verses 8&9 (notice in each of these opposite statements what he is really saying is: Yes, our outer nature is decaying, but, No, we do not lose heart):

- Yes, we are afflicted in every way- but no, we are not crushed
- Yes, we are perplexed- but no, we do not despair
- Yes, we are persecuted- but no, we are never forsaken by God
- Yes, we are struck down- but no, we are not destroyed

And Paul says that because all of this is true-

**THEREFORE we do not lose heart . . .** because even though we are suffering terribly- we constantly see that God sustains us and does not let us be overcome.

## 4. Our Resurrection from the Dead

### 2Corinthians 4:14

**knowing that He who raised the Lord Jesus will raise us also with Jesus and will present us with you.**

So even though Paul's outer nature is decaying- yet he will be raised from the dead with the Church and be with Jesus forever. So what he is saying here is:

[We know] that He Who raised the Lord Jesus will raise us also with Jesus and will present us with you." **THEREFORE we do not lose heart . . .** because ultimately it's going to be all right.

So not even death can make the story have a bad ending. Paul says here, *"I'm going to live again; and I am going to live with you, the people I love; and I am going to live with Jesus and share His Glory forever and ever... THEREFORE . . . I will not and cannot lose heart and I am renewed day by day."*

So that's the first line of the triangle (verses 7–15) that supports the great experience of not losing heart but being renewed every day.

- ❖ I am being renewed because God's Power and the Life of God's Son are being manifested and glorified in my suffering.
- ❖ I am being renewed because Life is flowing from my suffering into the Church that I love so much.
- ❖ I am being renewed because God sustains me in my suffering and does not let me be overcome by it.
- ❖ I am being renewed because I know I will be raised from the dead with you and with Jesus to live together forever and ever.

And because all of that is true- **THEREFORE I do not lose heart!**

Now let's look at the other line of the triangle that supports Paul's wonderful experience in verse 16, namely, verses 17&18. In those verses- Paul says that he does not lose heart, and he is being renewed day by day- **"FOR"** or **"BECAUSE"** verses 17&18 are true. And once

again- I see at least four reasons why Paul is not losing heart in spite of his decaying outer man—his weaknesses and sicknesses and injuries and sufferings and hardships.

## 1. Momentary Affliction

### 2Corinthians 4:17a

#### For momentary...

So Paul says here that he does not lose heart **FOR** or **BECAUSE** he knows that all of his afflictions and all his sufferings and all his trials are only *momentary*.

Now this word does not mean that suffering only lasts 60 seconds or 60 minutes or even 60 days- even though that is how it is commonly taught. What it means is that our sufferings will only last a single human lifetime (which is “momentary” in the sense as it is compared with eternity) and then his sufferings will be over forever. You see the word “**momentary**” as used here in this verse comes from a Greek word that means: *present* or *pertaining to this life*.

So Paul is saying here that his sufferings and his afflictions and his disappointments and his tragedies and his unfair treatments will not outlive this present life! They will not follow him into eternity but they will all end when this life is over! So Paul is saying here:

**I do not lose heart . . . FOR...** my afflictions and sufferings are only temporary. They are not eternal. They will end. My sufferings will not have the last say in my life.

## 2. Light Affliction

### 2Corinthians 4:17b

#### For momentary, light affliction...

Now this is not the statement of a comfortable modern American. Paul had not forgotten what he said over in **2Corinthians 11:23–27**:

**23** Are they servants of Christ?—I speak as if insane—I more so; in far more labors, in far more imprisonments, beaten times without number, often in danger of death.

**24** Five times I received from the Jews thirty-nine *lashes*.

**25** Three times I was beaten with rods, once I was stoned, three times I was shipwrecked, a night and a day I have spent in the deep.

**26** *I have been* on frequent journeys, in dangers from rivers, dangers from robbers, dangers from *my* countrymen, dangers from the Gentiles, dangers in the city, dangers in the wilderness, dangers on the sea, dangers among false brethren;

**27** *I have been* in labor and hardship, through many sleepless nights, in hunger and thirst, often without food, in cold and exposure.

So when Paul says his afflictions are “**light**” he does not mean “easy” or “painless”. We must remember, dear friends, that enduring suffering is not about human courage or human bravery. Everybody gets sacred when they are persecuted and maligned. The Apostle Paul hurt real bad when they beat him and when they laid stripes on his back. He hurt when they chained him up in prison and the rats came out at night and ate his fingers and toes.

What he means is that compared to the unbelievable joy and peace and love and glory that is awaiting him in Heaven- what he is going through here on this earth and in this single lifetime is- as nothing in comparison. In other words- compared to the weight of glory that is sure and promised and guaranteed- all his suffering is like feathers in the scale. And that is why he could boldly say in **Romans 8:18**:

**For I consider that the sufferings of this present time are not worthy to be compared with the glory that is to be revealed to us.**

So what Paul is saying here is:

**I do not lose heart . . . FOR** my afflictions are light.

### **3. An Eternal Weight of Glory**

**2Corinthians 4:17**

**For momentary, light affliction is producing for us an eternal weight of glory far beyond all comparison,**

So Paul believes that what is ahead for him in Heaven is *not* momentary- but eternal. The joy and the happiness and the glory in Heaven that awaits us- is *not* light- it is weighty. It isn't silly and surface and frivolous and shallow- but it is deep and profound and lasting and eternal. So what awaits him is not affliction- but glory. And that glory is beyond all comprehension. And that is why this same man could write in **1Corinthians 2:9** and say:

**but just as it is written, "THINGS WHICH EYE HAS NOT SEEN AND EAR HAS NOT HEARD, AND *which* HAVE NOT ENTERED THE HEART OF MAN, ALL THAT GOD HAS PREPARED FOR THOSE WHO LOVE HIM.**

... or in the words of the old songwriter:

I've got a home in Glory-land that outshines the sun!

And the point that Paul is making here is that the afflictions and the sufferings do not simply *precede* the Glory but that they actually help to *produce* the Glory.

So there is a real *causal* connection between how we endure hardship now and how much we will be able to enjoy the Glory of God in the ages to come. And that means that our trials and our persecutions and our sufferings and our afflictions are not arbitrary; they are not random and accidental. Our sufferings all have meaning and purpose and therefore not a single moment of patient pain is wasted. So we must all get to a place where we can say with Paul,

**I do not lose heart . . . FOR** all my troubles are producing for me an eternal weight of glory beyond all comparison.

#### 4. The Unseen, Eternal Glory to Come

##### **2Corinthians 4:18**

**while we look not at the things which are seen, but at the things which are not seen; for the things which are seen are temporal, but the things which are not seen are eternal.**

In other words- God might offer you all the Glory in the universe to keep you from losing heart and to renew your soul day by day, but if

you never looked at it- nothing would come of it.

In fact I would suggest to you that that is what God is doing right now in this sermon. This text is one lavish invitation from God for you to look at all the many reasons why you don't have to lose heart and all the many reasons why you can be renewed day by day.

- ✓ Look! The power of God and the life of his Son are manifested in your weakness.
- ✓ Look! The life of Jesus is flowing through your suffering into the lives of other people.
- ✓ Look! God sustains you in your afflictions and will not let you be destroyed.
- ✓ Look! Your afflictions will not have the last word; you will rise from the dead with Jesus and with the church of God and live in joy forever and ever.
- ✓ Look! Your afflictions are momentary. They are only for now, not for the age to come.
- ✓ Look! Your afflictions are light. Compared to the pleasures of what is coming they are as nothing.
- ✓ Look! These afflictions are producing for you an eternal weight of glory beyond all comparison.

So let us LOOK! Let us Focus! Let us Meditate! And let us Think on these things! Let us Believe and trust what God has promised and we will not lose heart and our inner person will be renewed day by day!

Let's pray.