

BOOK OF 2 CORINTHIANS
LOOKING BEYOND CHRISTIAN SUFFERING
2 CORINTHIANS 4:8-18

Introduction

We have received and believed **the glorious Gospel of Christ** that has changed the lives of those of us that are saved!

And because we have **received and believed the glorious Gospel of Christ**, we now have the ministry of sharing the same with our lives and lips!

Nevertheless, *“this treasure”* of **the glorious Gospel of Christ** that we have, we still at present have in earthen vessels! (Vs 7)

And because we are in these earthen vessels, our circumstances may get difficult! (vs. 8-12)

If things were not difficult, there would be no threat of fainting!

I. WE NEED TO MAINTAIN A RIGHT ATTITUDE IN THE FACE OF NEGATIVE CIRCUMSTANCES! (Vs. 8-12)

A. We are going to experience some trouble as a result of being fallen men in a fallen and cursed world!

The frailty of mankind makes trouble certain. *“Man that is born of a woman is of few days, and full of trouble”*(Job 14:1)

- 1. Being part of fallen mankind subjects us to sickness, growing old, and eventually physical death.**
- 2. Both being part of fallen mankind and living in a sin-cursed world subjects us to people warring and fighting for their sinful lusts and their self-interests. (James 4:1ff)**
- 3. That old Adamic nature—the flesh—causes us to have discontent with what we have and wish for what the other man has—his physique, his job, his wife, his talent, his property, his etc. (The Bible calls it covetousness!)**

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The Adamic nature was in control when we were in our natural state as a lost man! But it can also be in control as a Believer if we choose to live after the flesh rather than walk in the Spirit!

Galatians 5:16 This I say then, Walk in the Spirit, and ye shall not fulfil the lust of the flesh.

So, it doesn't matter if we are young or old, wicked or moral, saved or lost, **we all live in a troubled world—And trouble is the heritage of fallen mankind!**

B. We are going to experience some trouble as a result of and to the extent of our activity in sin!—i.e. Troubles come as a result of sin!

Galatians 6:7-8 7 Be not deceived; God is not mocked: for whatsoever a man soweth, that shall he also reap. 8 For he that soweth to his flesh shall of the flesh reap corruption; but he that soweth to the Spirit shall of the Spirit reap life everlasting.

The laws of God were not given to because God is a prude! They were given to not only reveal the holy nature of God, but they were given to keep us back from the things that have consequences and bring us trouble!

The drunkard has woes which the sober one does not have. Dope, gambling, adultery, hate, covetousness, you name it—All sin brings its own troubles.

And for the child of God, since *“whom the Lord loveth he chasteneth, and scourgeth every son whom he receiveth,”* then we know God can and does allow trouble to come our way to chasten us! (**Hebrews 12:5-11**)

Now understand that chastening may be by means of **sickness**

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or **unhappy circumstances** or a **guilty conscience**, or ever **how the LORD chooses** because of the Christian's sin or failure!

But God's purpose in His children's life is to bring them back into obedience—back into HIS WAY!

C. Troubles come to those who choose to live Godly!

a. Troubles may come our way as a result of persecution!

2 Timothy 3:12—"Yea, and all that will live godly in Christ Jesus shall suffer persecution"

Paul was imprisoned, beaten, whipped, and stoned for his faith!

We must remember what Jesus said in *John*

15:18-21: "If the world hate you, ye know that it hated me before it hated you. If ye were of the world, the world would love his own: but because ye are not of the world, but I have chosen you out of the world, therefore the world hateth you. Remember the word that I said unto you, The servant is not greater than his lord. If they have persecuted me, they will also persecute you; if they have kept my saying, they will keep your's also. But all these things will they do unto you for my name's sake, because they know not him that sent me."

b. Troubles may come as God in His lovingkindness allows it to come to one of His own in order to make us our best!

Suffering teaches us to look to God!

Psalm 119:67 Before I was afflicted I went astray: but now have I kept thy word.

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Psalm 119:71 It is good for me that I have been afflicted; that I might learn thy statutes.

Psalm 119:75 I know, O LORD, that thy judgments are right, and that thou in faithfulness hast afflicted me.

Suffering teaches us to lean on God!

2 Corinthians 12:8-10 8 For this thing I besought the Lord thrice, that it might depart from me. 9 And he said unto me, My grace is sufficient for thee: for my strength is made perfect in weakness. Most gladly therefore will I rather glory in my infirmities, that the power of Christ may rest upon me. 10 Therefore I take pleasure in infirmities, in reproaches, in necessities, in persecutions, in distresses for Christ's sake: for when I am weak, then am I strong.

c. A good Christian may suffer also by sharing the heartbreak of God over sin and the compassionate tears of God for the world's sorrows.

2 Corinthians 11:28-30 28 Beside those things that are without, that which cometh upon me daily, the care of all the churches. 29 Who is weak, and I am not weak? who is offended, and I burn not? 30 If I must needs glory, I will glory of the things which concern mine infirmities.

No doubt Paul suffered much over the Corinthian Christians whom he had to rebuke! He longed to help them get back to where they needed to be!

He suffered over the Galatian Christians who were led astray by Judaizers; forsaking Paul's teachings.

He suffered in his burden that Israel might be saved and

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said, *"My heart's desire and prayer to God for Israel is, that they might be saved" (Rom. 10:1)*, and even the turmoil of his heart on this subject he expressed thus: *"I could wish that myself were accursed from Christ for my brethren, my kinsmen according to the flesh" (Rom. 9:3)*.

He suffered being forsaken by co-workers!

John Mark! (Acts 13:13)
Demas! (2 Timothy 4:10)

He suffered evil at the hands of Alexander the coppersmith! (2 Timothy 4:14)

Jesus set the pattern. *1 Peter 2:21, 22* tells us, *"For even hereunto were ye called: because Christ also suffered for us, leaving us an example, that ye should follow his steps: Who did no sin, neither was guile found in his mouth."*

And we see that pattern in the Apostles and early believers in the book of Acts.

The story of blessed saints of God in the past shows clearly that a good Christian must suffer persecution.

John the Baptist was imprisoned and beheaded.

James, the brother of John, died by the sword of Herod (Acts 12:2).

Peter and John were imprisoned again and again. They were beaten (Acts 5:40,41).

Spirit-filled Stephen was stoned to death for his witness. I fear that we have been so accustomed to a decadent

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and lukewarm Christianity that we do not see the glory there is in being able and willing to suffer for Christ. But good, godly Christians should.

Paul was troubled on every side. Yet in the midst of all the troubles of the world, what joys He had!

Oh, we must heed the sweet words of Jesus, *"In the world ye shall have tribulation: but be of good cheer; I have overcome the world" (John 16:33)*.

Troubled = pressured, pressed closely

Distressed = cramped

Perplexed = to have no way out, to be at a loss (mentally)

Despair = to be utterly at a loss, to be despondent, altogether without help, or means

Persecuted = pursued

Forsaken = deserted

Cast down = thrown down.

Destroyed = to destroy fully. (Paul's stoning)

WE NEED TO MAINTAIN A RIGHT ATTITUDE IN THE FACE OF NEGATIVE CIRCUMSTANCES! (Vs. 8-12)

Last week, we looked at how:

WE NEED TO MAINTAIN A RIGHT ATTITUDE IN THE FACE OF NEGATIVE CIRCUMSTANCES! We were looking at how

Troubles Come To Those Who Choose To Live Godly!

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The Book of Acts and Paul's epistles show that he experienced plenty of problems in his life and suffered many things for the cause of Christ, but he was **confident in God through it all!** He didn't have any "*quit*" in him!

We can take comfort from Paul's life in that what the LORD did for Paul, He can do for us!

Even when our lives are invaded by some terrible events or troublesome times, we can still trust God to see us through it!

Our problems may not be as dramatic as Paul's problems, but our problems should not be a surprise either. Jesus said this to His disciples in *John 16:33* *These things I have spoken unto you, that in me ye might have peace. In the world ye shall have tribulation: but be of good cheer; I have overcome the world.*

D. As We Die To Self And Its Desires, The Life Of Jesus Shines Through!

(Vs 10-11)—As Paul **died to himself** and **his desires**, the life of Christ was made more manifest or we could say that **the life of Christ became more revealed in his life!**

We must die to **self and its desires;**

We must die to **hurt;**

We must die to **personal ambition;**

We must die to **criticism;**

We must die to **pride;**

We must die to **whatever might try to hinder our walk and work for the LORD**, so we that we can live for Christ or rather that Christ may live through us!

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Paul shared in the sufferings of Jesus, but he knew he would share in the resurrection of Jesus too and his suffering for Christ would make his resurrection more glorious!

The question for us is, are we willing to suffer for Jesus? How about giving up our "rights" and the things we enjoy for the cause of Christ?

(Vs 12)—Paul's physical sufferings (*death works in us*) were the means by which the life of Jesus was magnified both in his life and the lives of his hearers!

Only Jesus can save people from their sins, but Paul was willing to endure whatever he had to in order to take the good news of Jesus to the people in Corinth.

What about us? Are we willing to let our loss be the means by which new life comes to the people around us?

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II. WE WILL HAVE TRIUMPH THROUGH JESUS!

(Vs 13-14) Paul quotes from *Psalms 116:10*. Let's look at the whole Psalm to get the context. **(READ PSALM 116)**

The Psalmist first speaks of his love for the LORD (*Vs 1*) and his understanding that the LORD heard his voice and prayers and even inclined his ear to him! (*Vs 2-3*)

Then He speaks of a particularly difficult time in his life. He describes it as a time of troubles and sorrows. (*Vs 3*)

During that difficult time, he prayed to the LORD! (*Vs 4*) Listen, if he did not believe that God cared and that God could do something about his problem, he would not bother to pray!

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Then, the Psalmist speaks of the character of the LORD! *(Vs 5-9)*
Gracious, righteous, merciful, a preserver, a helper, a deliverer!

Then comes the verse that the Apostle Paul quotes. *(Vs 10)*
What did the Psalmist believe? He believed in the LORD and the LORD's wonderful nature! And that is what caused Him to go to the LORD in prayer and to speak what he spoke about the LORD!

Then the Psalmist poses a really good question! *(Vs 12)*
And then he answers his own question with a series of **"I will!"**
(Vs 13-19)

Now back to our text in **2 Corinthians 4:13-14**.

Just as the Psalmist was confident that God would deliver him from death, Paul shared the same confidence. He had great conviction regarding the resurrection of both Christ and saints.

And just as the LORD was the Psalmist's refuge in troubles and sorrows, so the LORD is our refuge! So, what will we render unto the LORD for all his benefits towards us?

Listen, if we believe in God, we have confidence that *"He which raised up the Lord Jesus shall raise up us also by Jesus, and shall present us with you."* The ultimate triumph over all evil and suffering will be ours when we enter heaven one day!

Do we believe that God cares for us and that God can do what needs to be done in our troublesome situation?
If so we will talk to God about our problems and entrust them to Him?

(Vs 15-16a) Think about the wonderful things that happened as a result of Paul's willingness to endure what he endured! More and more people came to know Jesus as their own personal Savior! And these

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people were overflowing with gratitude to God! For Paul, that was a good trade! The phrase, *"we faint not"* suggests that he would not become discouraged enough to quit!

What about us? We all face discouragement from time to time, don't we? But we should know that we will ultimately triumph through Jesus one day!

So the question is, Are we willing to be *"delivered unto death for Jesus' sake"* and for the benefit of the people all around us who don't know Christ? Or will we lose heart and quit?

(Vs 16 b-18) Even in the midst of outward trouble, we can be experiencing inward growth and renewal. How? By paying attention to **eternal** things rather than to the **temporary**.

What are some **eternal things**? There are only three that I know of:
God, the Bible and human souls!

In other words, when we focus our attention on God, on the Bible, and on people, then we are investing in eternity. Then we are focusing our attention *"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."*

And it is then that we can enjoy **triumph** through Jesus!

Conclusion

We may not understand today or even any time soon, the things that God is allowing to happen in our world or even in our own personal life!

But remember what Jesus said in *John 16:33* *These things I have spoken unto you, that in me ye might have peace. In the world ye shall have tribulation: but be of good cheer; I have overcome the world.*

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Listen, we **CAN** trust God! And Jesus invites us to follow Him, and to serve Him faithfully even when life is filled with trouble!

And He promises us that ultimately, if we are in Christ, we will triumph! His triumph over the grave **IS** our triumph over the same!

And there's some rock-solid reasons for all of us to feel hope in the midst of our troubles!

1. Our Heavenly Father is alive and well and He does not change! **(Malachi 3:6)**

2. The Lord Jesus Christ is also still the same! **(Hebrews 13:8)**
And He's still at the right hand of the Father making intercession to the Father on the behalf of those who belong to Him! **(Hebrews 7:25)**

3. The indwelling Holy Spirit of God, who is the earnest (or down-payment) of our redemption and inheritance **(Ephesians 1:13-14)** is still living within us! And He's praying on our behalf when we don't know how to pray! **(Romans 8:26-27)**

Don't lose hope! Whatever comes in the days ahead, keep praying to the LORD for grace and strength through the trials and keep trusting Him!