

## The Book of 2 Corinthians

### 2 Corinthians 4:7-12

#### Session 36: God's Goal for Allowing the Sufferings of Christ

We have been looking at the fifth category of the sufferings of Christ (SoC) where the objections against Paul and his preaching had **three main components**: 1) Paul's version of the **Christian life equals tribulations, grief and trials**, 2) **God wants His people to suffer**, and 3) **Paul's version is weak** and exhibits **no real power**.

I want to talk about these just for a moment. When people thought Paul was advocating a life of tribulations, trials and grief, they failed to realize that Paul was describing those who lived godly in Christ Jesus, who were experiencing an attack by the policy of evil (not God) designed to make them quit. This is not God's "ideal" life, but seeing that God will not insert Himself between these sufferings and the sufferer, He will do a work in the inward man so that he will be able to bear it to God's glory, and to his own spiritual growth.

As for number two, God doesn't want us to suffer, but He does allow us to suffer. You can't live in a fallen world and expect there to be no suffering. If men get to do whatever they want, and then ask God to forestall the consequences of their decisions and actions, they are living in a cartoon world that is not real. What God wants is to build our inner man so that we endure the attacks of the policy of evil.

As for number three, if God uses His power to intervene, to keep us from suffering, or to make it stop, then there will be no spiritual growth on our part. We will not be edified. God is not dealing with us as children, but adult adopted sons and daughters, which is who we are. If God is constantly bailing us out, we will never be more than conquerors.

People who make this third objection misidentify the power. The power of grace to strengthen our inner man so that we patiently, and with joy, deal with the SoC is a greater power than miraculously intervening to "keep us safe, etc." because it transforms us as the life of God's Son is made manifest in us. That is where the real power is.

Just to get our bearings, let's read the verses pertaining to this fifth category.

2 Corinthians 4:7 But we have this treasure in earthen vessels, that the excellency of the power may be of God, and not of us. <sup>8</sup> *We are* troubled on every side, yet not distressed; *we are* perplexed, but not in despair; <sup>9</sup> Persecuted, but not forsaken; cast down, but not destroyed; <sup>10</sup> Always bearing about in the body the dying of the Lord Jesus, that the life also of Jesus might be made manifest in our body.

Paul realized that by enduring the sufferings of Christ, the life of the Lord Jesus would be made manifest in him, for all to see.

Paul knew that by his response to these trials, he was revealing the life of Christ to others, as they witnessed it being lived in him. And that life was producing a patient endurance and comfort that allowed Paul to continue his ministry in the face of those sufferings, which was at that time, so unusual as to be objectionable by those who critiqued Paul's doctrine as not being very attractive, of being weak and not exhibiting the power of God in the way they thought it should be manifested.

Not only so, but Paul knew that he was putting on display the power of God in such a way that showed the true and living God to be the only wise God, and confirmed God to be the rightful possessor of heaven and earth, and that ought to be a big deal for all of us. God was putting His power on display in a way that not only was of the greatest benefit to Paul, but was also most exalting to the Lord Jesus.

And finally, Paul knew that by his response to these trials, he was giving the saints hope that they too can endure the sufferings, that they too can be joint-heirs, and that they too can have the comfort of God in the midst of the sufferings of Christ.

The saints just needed to see it work in Paul to know that there was a power at work in his inner man that was greater than his sufferings.

Listen, I want to lay out three things for us to have in our minds.

- I. THE TRIALS ENCOUNTERED IN THE CAUSE OF CHRIST ARE SOMETIMES VERY GREAT.
- II. HOWEVER GREAT THE TRIALS ENCOUNTERED, THEY ARE NOT BEYOND BEARING.
- III. THE PATIENT ENDURANCE OF THESE TRIALS REVEALS THE LIFE OF CHRIST TO OTHERS, AND THAT IS AN HONOR AND A PRIVILEGE.

We must allow the doctrine to change the way we think about suffering.

I am going to list a few more of the doctrinal things, which allowed Paul to endure the sufferings of Christ. But first, I think I need to emphasize that these are the sufferings of Christ (SoC) and not the sufferings of this present time.

These sufferings work differently than the sufferings of this present time, which do not ease up or go away if we quit our sonship life. Additionally, the sufferings of this present time (SoPT) are not the work of the Adversary against us, but the SoC are the work of Satan to get us to quit in some measure. If we were talking about the sufferings of this present time, we would be thinking somewhat differently about them. My point is that the doctrine that we are discussing, which allows us to endure the attacks of the Adversary, pertains particularly to the sufferings of Christ.

Okay, now let's look at a brief list of the doctrinal things which strengthen Paul's inner man to endure these the sufferings of Christ. Some of these we won't get the details of until later in the sessions, but I want to at least mention them now.

- 1) Our earthly suffering is related to **our heavenly glory** (verses 17-18). Just stop and think about what is being said here. If the salvation, which is in Christ is designed to produce an eternal glory in us...

2 Timothy 2:10 Therefore **I endure all things** for the elect's sakes, **that they may also obtain the salvation which is in Christ Jesus with eternal glory.**

...and it is; if that eternal glory is as important to us as it is to God, then we will start to look at the sufferings differently.

By the way, the “salvation” of verse 10 is not salvation from the debt and penalty of sin; since “the elect” are already saved; they are not waiting to obtain the salvation of their soul, but this is a salvation from the effects of the things being suffered. Satan doesn’t attack lost people with the sufferings of Christ.

But what we are after, by looking at this verse, is the fact that our ability to endure the sufferings will result in a glory which we will have for eternity.

This glory is a visible manifestation of the power of God’s grace, which worked in us when we were living on the Earth, which will be exhibited throughout eternity to the glory of God. Now, I hope I have said enough for us to see my first point. When we realize that our earthly suffering (in the SoC) is related to our glory in the heavenly places throughout eternity, it makes us look at the sufferings differently. Instead of thinking they are something to be avoided, we start thinking we should make the most of them. More suffering, more glory! The more suffering we endure, the more patience we have. The more we suffer, the more experience we gain in how to utilize the doctrine to handle our sufferings. And the more we suffer, the greater our hope.

- 2) The **hope of the resurrection of our body** (Romans 8:23 ; 2 Corinthians 4:14; 5:1-4). Paul is not afraid of the sufferings; the worst they can do is kill you. And if they do, they won’t actually kill “you,” they just kill your body. You, on the other hand, will go to be with the Lord! That’s not dreadful, that is glorious! And the promise of God is that when it comes to your body, He is going to resurrect it from the dead and change it into a glorious, eternal body like unto the resurrection body of Jesus. Folks, that is the worst-case scenario! That is what happens if the sufferings kill you. If we are guaranteed a resurrection, why fear the death of our body
- 3) We can rejoice in our sufferings because of **our relationship with Jesus Christ** (verses 10-11).
- 4) Because **all things work together for good:** (Romans 8:28). We have already talked about this a number of times, but we know that Romans 8:28 has to be in Paul’s mind. What is the “good” that sufferings work together to provide? To conform us to the image of God’s Son!

- 5) Through the patient endurance of these trials we will become **more than conquerors** (Romans 8:37). In other words, we come through the sufferings stronger and more capable than when we went in. Remember Romans 5:3-4.

Romans 5:3 And not only so, but we glory in tribulations also: knowing that tribulation worketh patience; <sup>4</sup> And patience, experience; and experience, hope:

By enduring tribulations we gain patience, by our patient enduring we gain experience on how to put the doctrine to work when we undergo sufferings. And that experience allows us to handle bigger and bigger sufferings. It gives us confidence that the doctrine works! But also, that experience gives us “hope” that by the power of God’s grace, we can endure all things to His glory.

- 6) Though physical death was working in Paul by the things which he suffered, that death was working out for **the good of the saints** who were under his ministry.

2 Timothy 2:10 **Therefore I endure all things for the elect's sakes**, that they may also obtain the salvation which is in Christ Jesus with eternal glory.

We will talk about this when we get to verse 12.

- 7) That we might **rejoice in the day of judgment**, at the judgment seat of Christ (JSoC).

Philippians 2:16 Holding forth the word of life; **that I may rejoice in the day of Christ**, that I have not run in vain, neither laboured in vain.

We left off last time looking at 2 Corinthians 4:10.

2 Corinthians 4:10 Always bearing about in the body the dying of the Lord Jesus, that the life also of Jesus might be made manifest in our body. <sup>11</sup> For we which live are always delivered unto death for Jesus' sake, that the life also of Jesus might be made manifest in our mortal flesh. <sup>12</sup> So then death worketh in us, but life in you.

It is my understanding that in verses 10 and 11, there are two different issues that need to be dealt with, 1) “always bearing about in the body the dying of the Lord Jesus,” and 2) “we which live are always delivered unto death.”

The remedy for the issue of verse 10 is found in 2 Corinthians 4:16-18; and the remedy for the issue of verse 11 is found in 2 Corinthians 5:1-8.

While some would lump these together as though they are talking about the same thing, I think they are talking about two different things. These things are related, yes, but still distinct.

Reason #1: Verse 10 starts off with the word “always,” while verse 11 contains the word “alway.” What we need to know is that the word “always,” as it was used long ago in the English language, had two meanings. That is not a surprise since we know that many of our English words have more than one meaning. Let me show us the entry in the Oxford English Dictionary (OED).

ALWAY, adv.

[orgi. two words ALL and WAY, in the accusative of space *or* distance = *all the way*, *the whole way*, probably at first in reference to space traversed, but already in oldest Eng. transferred to an extent of time, *all along*, *all the time*, *continually*. Afterwards confused with the genitive form, ALWAYS, which superseded it in prose, always surviving only in poetry or as an archaism.]

What is problematic is that from the Third Edition of the OED, this reference in brackets has been dropped. Here is what we find today.

**1. 1. Old English = alway adv. 3.**

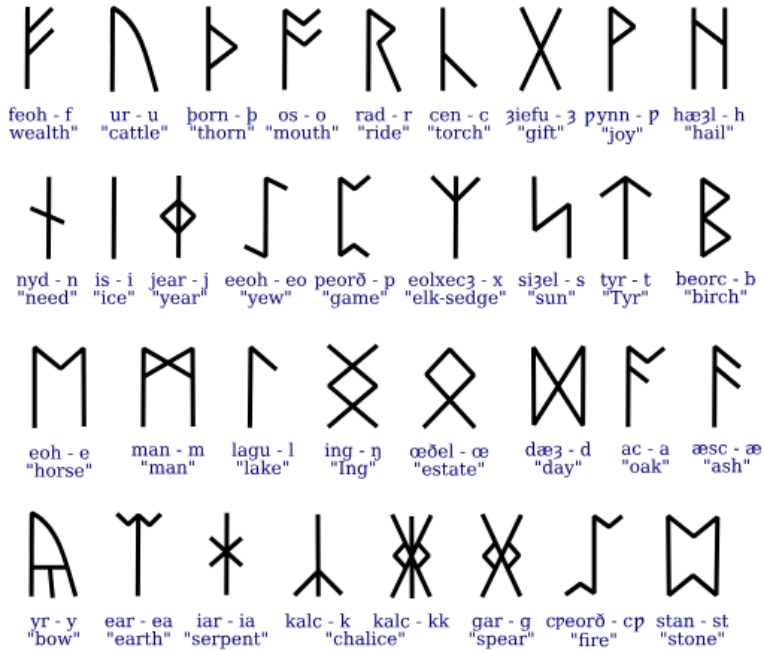
After the Middle English period, *alway* becomes increasingly less common in standard English, being supplanted in all senses by **always** *adv.* By the 19th cent. the word survives mainly in literary and regional uses.

The Middle English period refers to the form of English language spoken and written in England from about 1100 – 1500.

<b>450 -1066</b>	<b>1100-1500</b>	<b>post-1500</b>
<b>Old English (Anglo-Saxon)</b>	<b>Middle English</b>	<b>Early Modern English</b>

Middle (or Elizabethan) English bridged the gap between Old English (pre-1066) and Early Modern English (post-1500). The era of Middle English concluded with the introduction of the printing press (1476) and the start of the Great Vowel Shift, which revolutionized pronunciation. By the way, even though there are some Elizabethan English words in our King James Bible, the English of the King James Bible is not written in Elizabethan English, or any other English that formed the common English language spoken by the people of England.

The Bible is not written in Old English. Let me show you the 34-letter alphabet.



Okay, enough of the history of the English language. The point is, in verse 10 “always” is talking about “all the time,” while “alway” in verse 11 is talking about “all the way.”

2 Corinthians 4:10 **Always bearing about in the body** the dying of the Lord Jesus, that the life also of Jesus might be made manifest in our body. <sup>11</sup> For we which live are **alway delivered unto death** for Jesus' sake, that the life also of

Jesus might be made manifest in our mortal flesh.<sup>12</sup> So then death worketh in us, but life in you.

In verses 10-11, Paul is explaining how God uses our hardships and sufferings to reveal his Son to the world. Also, connect these two verses back to verse 7.

2 Corinthians 4:7 But **we have this treasure in earthen vessels**, that the excellency of the power may be of God, and not of us.

The “earthen vessels” are our mortal flesh, our bodies. The treasure is “the life of Jesus.”

2 Corinthians 4:7 But we have this treasure in earthen vessels, **that the excellency of the power may be of God, and not of us.**

The power to do what? To endure the sufferings of Christ. Paul calls it the “excellency of the power” because this power excels the power of the sufferings.

In verse 10, Paul refers to the “dying” of the Lord Jesus, which we bear about in our body. The “dying,” in this case refers to more than just the death itself, but everything our Lord endured on His way to the Cross, including his death on the Cross. While we likely will not suffer to the extent that Christ suffered, as believers we can suffer persecutions that result in physical, psychological, emotion and spiritual sufferings, and when we do, we display in a small way, the sufferings Christ faced at the Cross. This is what it means to “bear about in the body the dying of the Lord Jesus.

Paul, by going through the sufferings he endured, was suffering “unto death.” This is the sense of what it means to bear about in the body, the dying of the Lord Jesus.

Paul bore in his body the same marks that Jesus had, the stripes of scourging, marks of punishment, and the bruises of violent attacks.

Galatians 6:17 From henceforth let no man trouble me: **for I bear in my body the marks of the Lord Jesus.**

In verse 11, Paul refers to the continual threat of death that he was under.

2 Corinthians 4:11 For **we which live** are always delivered unto death for Jesus' sake, that the life also of Jesus might be made manifest in our mortal flesh.

Why does Paul say, “we which live?” This is another way of saying, “those of us who are still alive.” Some had been put to death for their faith (such as the apostle James, Acts 12:2), and Paul expects that is where things are headed for him and those with him.

As Paul endured this great burden of knowing that his life would likely be forfeit because of his faith, he was putting the life of Jesus on display in his “mortal flesh.” In what way was it made manifest? Firstly, Paul is not complaining, nor is he fearful. This is the first way Paul exhibits the life of Christ. Secondly, Paul is not discouraged and thinking about quitting. People may look at all Paul is going through and wonder how he can do it. The answer is not in Paul, but that Christ in Paul is able to produce a peace and endurance in the face of these sufferings. Thirdly, Paul is going to talk about the abundant grace by which he is able to endure all things. We will see that shortly.

Paul did not quit in the face of these threats, but endured them by the power of God’s sufficient grace. Paul endured these sufferings for the sake of the saints, as he was the ensample of how grace enables us to endure great sufferings and physical pain without being overcome by it.

This is a great mystery to Christians today, they just don’t think of it this way.

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