

The Book of 2 Corinthians

2 Corinthians 4:12-14

Session 37: Looking at Suffering Differently

We have been looking at the fifth category of the sufferings of Christ (SoC). Paul has talked about bearing about in his body the dying of the Lord Jesus and that they are always delivered unto death, all of which was to manifest the life of the Lord Jesus.

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.

Recall what Paul said in verses 8-9, how he was troubled on every side, yet not distressed, etc. Paul was showing them that these sufferings were happening, but they were not having the impact on him which Satan wanted them to have.

This is the great privilege of our edification, to have the life of Christ being lived in us every day, in every situation. This ought to be the goal of our lives, to have the life of Jesus being lived in us. Following up on verses 10-11, Paul says...

2 Corinthians 4:12 So then death worketh in us, but life in you.

Paul is saying that even though he is under constant threat, and suffering many types of attacks which will eventually lead to his death; he does this so the Corinthians can see how the life of Christ can be lived in them when they are under the sufferings of Christ.

This is why Paul had to be pushed to the limit, beyond what anyone else would endure, to demonstrate that the doctrine works, even in the most severe cases.

In verses 13-15, we have Paul's example to us of how to endure these sufferings. Let's read the passage and then we will break it down.

2 Corinthians 4:13 We having the same spirit of faith, according as it is written, I believed, and therefore have I spoken; we also believe, and

therefore speak; ¹⁴ Knowing that he which raised up the Lord Jesus shall raise up us also by Jesus, and shall present *us* with you. ¹⁵ For all things *are* for your sakes, that the abundant grace might through the thanksgiving of many redound to the glory of God.

In verse 13, Paul says, “it is written.” That means he is about to quote something that has already been recorded in the scripture. In this case, he is quoting Psalm 116:10.

Let me introduce the book of the Psalms. There are five poetical Books in your Bible: Job, Psalms, Proverbs, Ecclesiastes, and Song of Solomon.

These five Books, along with things written in the prophets, will be of great interest to the members of the Believing Remnant of Israel (BROI). When coupled with some things taught by the Lord Jesus in the gospels and some things in the Hebrew epistles (especially James), the Believing Remnant will have an education/edification that will get them through Daniel’s 70th Week.

Job is dealing especially with **Satan and his PoE** (plan of evil) on this earth.

Psalms focuses on **Israel’s hope of salvation** and their deliverance through the fulfillment of the Davidic covenant.

Proverbs sets forth primarily the **remnant’s wisdom** so they can walk worthy of their calling especially in view of Israel’s vain religious system.

Ecclesiastes contrasts the true wisdom in the book of Proverbs by setting forth the foolishness of pursuing **the wisdom of this world** (which is of the Adversary) and human wisdom.

The **Song of Solomon** displays in a “love story” type manner, the joy and the chastity of **the remnant** in recognition of their **espousal to the LORD**, and their anticipation for His return, with an emphasis on her joy and her chastity as she waits without caving in to the temptations and seductions.

Enough of that, let’s look at the Psalms, and focus on Psalm 116, which Paul quotes in 2 Corinthians 4.

I think it is helpful to read the entire Psalm, which for the most part, I will leave with you to do this week as you go over this lesson. But, for our purposes, let us at least back up a little bit before the actual quote of verse 10.

The psalm starts with an expression of love and gratitude.

Psalm 116:1 I love the LORD, because he hath heard my voice *and* my supplications.

The author describes his sufferings.

Psalm 116:3 The sorrows of death compassed me, and the pains of hell gat hold upon me: I found trouble and sorrow.

The author describes the mercy and goodness of God in answering his prayer and delivering him.

Psalm 116:8 For thou hast delivered my soul from death, mine eyes from tears, *and* my feet from falling. ⁹ I will walk before the LORD in the land of the living.

This psalm is written by someone who has narrowly escaped death. Some scholars believe this was King Hezekiah after he was reprieved from death, but I don't know that for sure. (See 2 Kings 20:1-11, where God heard his prayer and added 15 years to his life. This event is also recorded in Isaiah 38:1-8 and mentioned in 2 Chronicles 32:24-33, confirming God's intervention and the miraculous sign of the sun's shadow moving backward).

Before we read verse 10, which is the actual verse Paul is quoting, let me give you some background on the psalm. We do not know for sure the author or date of the psalm, and it seems to be of a private character rather than a public one. So why is it printed in with the psalms for public use? Because people in the public assembly would find their own experiences represented by the language of the psalm.

It appears that it was written in response to a deadly sickness or some deep affliction which threatened life which, the author praises God for delivering them from that impending death, and lengthening their days upon the earth.

When verse 3 says, “the pains of hell gat hold upon me,” it is not saying that this person is lost and expects to suffer in hell as a lost person, when they die. This expression was often used to describe: 1) the mental pains and anguish of descending to the nether world, 2) the sorrows of going to the grave, or 3) suffering the pains of death.

Prior to the Cross, everyone went to Sheol, to await the resurrection in the heart of the earth. The “pains of hell” are another way of describing the sufferings of dying.

Now, let’s look at the verse Paul is quoting.

Psalm 116:10 I believed, therefore have I spoken: I was greatly afflicted:

Compare this to 2 Corinthians 4:13.

2 Corinthians 4:13 We having the same spirit of faith, according as it is written, **I believed, and therefore have I spoken;** we also believe, and therefore speak;

Paul quotes the first part of this verse verbatim. Let’s talk about the verse in the psalm and then make the application to 2 Corinthians.

Psalm 116:10 I believed, therefore have I spoken: I was greatly afflicted:

What is the psalmist referring to when he says, “therefore I have spoken?” He is referring to everything in verses 1-9, where he described his whole situation. Whomever is writing this psalm, they are saying that they were in the time of their affliction and expected to die; they “called upon the LORD to not let them die, to extend their life. The result was that God “delivered my soul from death” (verse 8) and now, instead of dying, they “will walk before the LORD in the land of the living.” No doubt, this is about physical death. As a result of God’s deliverance, this person is declaring the truth of what God did. That is what is meant by, “I believed, and therefore have I spoken.”

Paul picks up on this, he quotes it, and then he adds the application to himself and those who are ministering with him, but Paul is not talking about his physical life being extended.

2 Corinthians 4:13 We having the same spirit of faith, according as it is written, I believed, and therefore have I spoken; **we also believe, and therefore speak;**

Do you see what Paul is saying? Being under the constant threat of death, and also being under the very attacks which could kill him (his body), and expecting that one day he would die for the cause of Christ (and many of these are physical threats, although there are also emotional and mental tribulations too), the actual application is not about being fearful of dying, but of His desire to endure these sufferings faithfully.

Paul said back in verses 10-11 that these things can be endured so that the life of Jesus can be put on display (made manifest) in his physical body. But Paul knows what will enable him to endure the sufferings in his flesh will take place in his spirit.

Paul is not worried about what is happening to his body, but that he remains faithful to the message of grace: that he doesn't quit, that he does not allow the sufferings to stop his message or ministry, and that is the spiritual aspect of this. That is the point I want to make; that even though the attacks are outward, the deliverance Paul is looking for is in his inner man.

Just as the psalmist "believed" God's promises to be true, and now he can speak of what God did to deliver him from death; Paul also believes that God's grace can deliver him from the effects of the sufferings he endures and God having been faithful to do that, Paul can "therefore speak" of God's provision for us as members of the body of Christ (BoC).

Paul is going to give us the actual doctrine which is designed to produce that trust that we too can be delivered from the effects of the sufferings which are meant to make us quit, but before he gives us that first piece of doctrine beginning in verse 16, he has something else to say about his example to us.

2 Corinthians 4:14 **Knowing** that he which raised up the Lord Jesus shall raise up us also by Jesus, and shall present *us* with you.

"Knowing" means Paul is "fully confident." In what?

2 Corinthians 4:14 Knowing that he which raised up the Lord Jesus shall raise up us also by Jesus, and shall present *us* with you.

Paul assurance is in the hope of the resurrection; this hope sustained him and those with him in all their trials. The apostles believed their own preaching, don't you know. When they died, they had the promise of a resurrection and the redemption of their body.

As Jim Elliot said, "He is no fool who gives that which he cannot keep, to obtain that which he cannot lose."

Look, I know death is a scary thing to most people. And God has built into us this drive for self-preservation, and that is a good thing, else people would constantly do dangerous things and lose their lives. But, for the Christian, even though we don't go around looking for ways to die, death is not the fearful thing that it is for others who have no hope of eternal life.

The remedy is not to become so tired of life and so beat down that you don't care if you live or die. That is just another way of giving up.

I want to pause here for a moment and talk about this, to bring you some hope and comfort. I know I do not have much time left in this session, and this is a bit of a rabbit trail, but I think it is important so, I am just going to say some things that I have come to understand in my own studies without taking you around the scriptures to prove these things to you. We will do that at some point, just not today. And the reason for that is because these are not opening stated, which means we arrive at these understandings by a deeper and more involved study of God's word, and that would require at least a whole session if not several. So, for now, let me just say a few things.

Let me start by saying, if you only knew what was waiting for you, you would be more like Paul, who is looking forward to the day he goes to be with the Lord, while gladly, but reluctantly deciding to stay for the good of others. Death is not the end; there is a glorious and exhilarating life to come.

The moment you die, because you are no longer bound by the body of flesh with sin in its members, you will experience life and existence on a scale you have

never felt before. Yes, we have life in these bodies, but in a sense that life is muted or limited by the limitations of our earthly bodies.

Once you are out of this body, your senses will be heightened beyond anything you have ever known before. Although I cannot tell you how many, I am convinced that with your spirit no longer tied to the flesh, you will have much more than the five senses of taste, touch, smell, hear and see. It is so much more than that; for example, the way we will communicate with other members of the body of Christ; too much to talk about here.

I want to mention just two things in connection with this: 1) Our consciousness does not cease when our body dies, it becomes more aware and sharper than before, and 2) the transition from in the body to out of the body will be seamless; so much so that you are likely to be taken by surprise.

Death will be seamless: one moment we are in our physical body and the next moment we are not; and, it may take a moment for you to realize what has taken place once you have left your body. In a sense, it will be as though you never died, because the real you, the spiritual part of you, did not die.

There are a couple of things that I believe we will instantly recognize as true once we leave our body. No, I don't think that we will suddenly know everything, but there are a couple of things which are kind of "automatic." And when I say a couple of things, I mean one kind of knowledge we will instantly have will be a sort of **instinctive knowledge** of something we should have already known if we had thought about it: but there is another issue which concerns **the judgment seat of Christ (JSOC)**, which we will not cover today, but in the next session or so. That one is a "dilly," so I can hardly wait to tell you about it. It actually changed the way I understood some things about our free will in the Creature throughout eternity; you'll see.

But here is another truth you will instantly know, at least to some degree. Immediately upon our death, we will discover that the depth of **relationship** we cultivated with our heavenly Father, and the degree to which we are **conformed** to the image of God's Son while we were on earth, were vastly **more important than** we think. And I think that will be more or less true for all of us. Think about that.

What you will immediately notice is that even in that moment of physical death, you will be overwhelmed with an awareness of some things that previously were only available through the doctrine. For example, you will be aware that as you realize what has happened, there will be a “peace that passes understanding” that will prevail in your spirit, and I believe that will be an automatic. Previously, you will have needed the doctrine to accomplish that, but now you will have an experience where God is accomplishing something He promised every member of the body of Christ. It will be “hope” realized. You won’t be worried or anxious about what is happening. And if you understood any of the doctrine about this time, that doctrine will come into the forefront of your thinking and you will be comforted in that now you are experiencing the reality of what you previously believed by faith.

I’m just mentioning a few of the things I believe are real and true of us once we leave this body, but before I stop today’s lesson, I want to mention just a bit more.

And while I do believe that you will love those you left behind, there will not be anything you did or experienced in the world that will make you regret your death, or wish you were back on earth. I remember witnessing to a man who wanted to know if there was going to be “bass fishing” in heaven, because that is how he wanted to spend his eternity. But I’m telling you, if he gets saved, no matter what he thinks down here, when he gets up there, bass fishing (along with a lot of other stuff) is not even going to enter his mind. Why not? Because one of the things you will automatically have once you depart this life is an awareness and an assurance that the life to come is far better and is much more desirable, even though you may not be able to articulate what the particulars are. And that is because the nature of how you communicate, and how you are communicated to, will have changed drastically. I have a lot to say about that, but not now.

What I will say is that for the first time, in a very tangible way (and by that I mean is a way that is more than just a feeling), you will be aware of the love of God for you. It is actually much more than that, not only will you be certain of His love for you instantly upon your death, but you will also understand that the depth of his love is more than you ever imagined. But even then, I do not think that we will

understand the fulness of the scope or depth of his love for us, as I understand that to be something that we will constantly be learning throughout eternity. Again, I know this needs some explanation, but not now.

The last thing I will say is that much of what you thought was so important in your earthly life, things that either caused you great distress (and I am talking about all kinds of things, not just persecution for your faith, but anything you can name that has been a source of grief or stress in your life) or many of the things which brought you great pleasure, you will immediately understand that those things do not matter one bit, and you will immediately brush them aside for the chaff that they are.

In fact, I believe we will look back at those things and wonder why they ever seemed like such a big deal to us. Our minds are going to change about a lot of things when we get out of this body. There are reasons for this which are articulated in the scripture, and I say that so you know I'm not making things up or using my imagination or guessing about this stuff.

The life to come will be wondrous for every saint, and it will not matter if you get there by death, which is not like what most people think it is, or if you get there by being translated at the Blessed Hope. I hope this is some measure of comfort, as well as a topic for you to study out in God's word.

When Paul was stoned at Lystra and was caught up to the Third Heaven, and he saw things it wasn't lawful for a man to utter, he was never the same after that.

I feel like John Rice understood a bit of what Paul knew. Preaching a revival meeting back in the hills of Tennessee, he was run off the road after the meeting and threatened if he didn't stop his preaching, to which John replied, "You can't threaten me with heaven." So says Paul and so say we all. Did you know...?

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The Most Important Decision