

## The Book of 2 Corinthians

### 2 Corinthians 4:13-18

#### Session 38: The Cause Worth Living and Dying For

In our previous session, we were looking at verse 14. Because verse 14 is the end of a sentence that started in verse 13, we will read the whole sentence for the context.

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; <sup>14</sup> Knowing that he which raised up the Lord Jesus **shall raise up us also by Jesus**, and shall present *us* with you.

I want to pause here to make an application. Unless the Blessed Hope takes place, we will all eventually die. In Paul's mind, it does not matter if it is by the sufferings of Christ (SoC), the sufferings of this present time (SoPT) or old age; he is fully persuaded that God, who raised up the Lord Jesus from the dead, will raise him up too.

In other words, we have a certain future. This life is not the end, it is a door that leads to eternity. Death only changes the venue of our service to God from the Earth to the heavenly places. Let that sink in and comfort you, as it did Paul.

In verses 13-14, we see how Paul and company were finding strength and comfort by the truth of the resurrection, and the life to come. Even if they lose their lives, God is going to raise them up, but when we think of the resurrection, we should also think of that which is to come afterward, that we shall be presented to the Father.

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.**

Notice that last phrase, "and shall present us with you."

The tendency is to read over that as though it is superfluous to the main thought of the verse, but not to Paul! I'm going to give this to you in a nutshell-type form, but every part of what I am about to say is important. So, I want us to think about

this, search the scriptures about this, pray about this, talk about this (in a real conversation in our homes), meditate on this and get the truth of it down deep in our souls.

There is purpose behind our being raised up that goes beyond merely raising our body from the dead to give us an eternal house for our soul and spirit to live in. But we will be raised so we can be presented before the throne of glory in a condition of completed blameless perfection with great rejoicing on our part, and indeed throughout all of the Third Heaven at the revealing of our heavenly Father's glory in: 1) completing His work of redeeming our body but also, 2) by His work of making us faultless, and with great honor on our part to put His glory on display by being the objects of His goodness and grace.

When do we get "presented" and what is that about? After we have appeared before the judgment seat of Christ, and received for "the things done in the body," Christ will present us to the Father, blameless! Paul will give us more details about this event in the next chapter.

This is what motivates Paul to endure these sufferings. In the next verse, Paul tells us why he is patiently enduring the sufferings.

2 Corinthians 4:15 For all things *are for your sakes*, that the abundant grace might through **the thanksgiving of many redound to the glory of God**.

When the grace of God works in you to the enduring of any of the sufferings, are you letting your thanksgiving redound to the glory of God? How can we do that? First of all, by talking about the effectual working of the word to strengthen us, to transform us from our old way of thinking, and by prayer to thank God for the abundant grace that enables us to endure.

There are two ways to look at verse 15, and I think both of them are true. The first way to look at the verse is to say that the "thanksgiving" for God's abundant grace is taking place on this Earth. When Paul saw many of the saints giving thanks and glorifying God, he was encouraged to see the reality of the doctrine working in them. To Paul, it was worth it all to see the saints equipped to endure

the sufferings with a godly attitude. While I know this would be a true statement, I do not think this is primarily what Paul has in mind.

The other way to look at the verse is to think about it in terms of this happening when we get to Heaven. In other words, Paul is saying, what we are doing is for your sakes, so that the abundant grace that God has shown us will redound with greater force to God's glory by everyone's thanksgiving when we are in Heaven.

This is the one I think Paul has in mind, because of the context of being "presented" to the Father.

So, what does it mean for our thanksgiving to "redound" to the glory of God?

Oxford English Dictionary: redound **4.f. ?1567–1647**

† *transitive*. To send *out* (praise); to exalt or celebrate (a thing) with an echoing sound.

What I am advocating is that these kinds of things begin to show up in our everyday conversation. That means we will need to think about how to articulate these truths in such a way that those who are unfamiliar with them can gain some level of understanding, and be provoked to jealousy over a part of the "normal Christian life" which is not the norm any more.

Let these kinds of conversations be in our homes, as we travel in our cars, even in our work. Let them be in our conversations with our friends and may our prayers be full of this kind of talk. If we do this, it will accelerate the working of God's word in us.

This is an opportunity to present the doctrine in a way people don't think about it. So, think about it, write it down, practice saying it, and then look for the opportunity to use it.

This will not come to us naturally; the words will not just flow out of us without some previous thought and practice, at least not to most of us. So, take the time to prepare for this very important aspect of ministry. Did you realize this was ministry? Did you realize this is a way you can labor with your Father while you make some things "known" as we are told to do in Ephesians?

Okay, let's recap:

Verse 14 points to the resurrection of our body, and after the judgment seat of Christ (JSoC) where we are presented to God, while verse 15 has the body of Christ up in the heavenly places glorifying God. Therefore, the context puts us up there after the judgment seat of Christ.

2 Corinthians 4:15 For all things *are* **for your sakes**, that the abundant grace might through **the thanksgiving of many redound to the glory of God**.

Verse 15 is saying that Paul and those with him are going through these sufferings for the sake of the Corinthians, so that the abundant grace, which equips us to endure the sufferings in a way that reveals God's glory, might result in a loud, echoing, sound of praise to God, exalting the Lord Jesus and celebrating the grace of God throughout the heavens. That can take place right here on the Earth for sure, but when it does, just think about the rejoicing that will go on in the heavens as a result.

Now we are getting to the doctrine that was working in Paul as a remedy to verse 10, where Paul was undergoing immense sufferings and physical pain.

2 Corinthians 4:16 **For which cause we faint not**; but though our outward man perish, yet the inward *man* is renewed day by day.

For what cause? For the cause of the thanksgiving of many redounding to the glory of God. For that cause, Paul says he will not quit. Paul wants that tribute to God's abundant grace to take place so much that the thought of that keeps him from quitting.

Paul wants to be able to point to God's grace, and its ability to enable him to endure the sufferings, as working in him and in the other members of the body of Christ (BoC), where the grace of God has made us more than conquerors; so that the body of Christ, as a whole, can fill the heavens with the praise of God's grace; so that it redounds to the glory of God! In this case, the abundant grace in all that

it does in us will be the cause of an echoing, celebration throughout the creation that [reveals]<sup>1</sup> the glory of God.

Now, in verses 16-18, we have Paul's remedy for the sufferings of verse 10, where they were "always bearing about in the body the dying of the Lord Jesus.

2 Corinthians 4:16 For which cause we faint not; **but though our outward man perish, yet the inward *man* is renewed day by day.**

Our physical body is deteriorating/dying, but our inward man (soul and spirit) are being renewed daily by His transforming life-giving word being applied to our hearts and minds by the Spirit of God who lives in us. That is how we are renewed day by day.

We are not renewed apart from God's word. Yes, Paul is going through sufferings, but he does not give up, for he is being strengthened inwardly every day by the word of truth. And that is exactly how it works for us too. It is the spiritual work that takes place in our inward man that allows us to endure the sufferings without quitting.

Let's summarize what we have so far:

- Paul is undergoing the sufferings for the benefit of the members of the BoC
- Paul wants their thanksgiving to redound to the glory of God
- It is for this "cause" that Paul refuses to quit
- Paul is suffering greatly in his physical body for this ministry
- Paul's inward man is renewed each day by God's word

2 Corinthians 4:17 For our light affliction, which is but for a moment, worketh for us a far more exceeding *and* eternal weight of glory;

Paul is comparing the suffering and the glory.

Think of a scale with measures on each side. Take a whole lifetime of suffering and put it on one side of the scale. Place a far more exceeding and eternal weight

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<sup>1</sup> I have substituted the word "reveals" for "contributes to" because we cannot contribute one bit to God's glory, for it is already full to its fullest extent. What we can do is point toward or reveal His glory.

of glory on the other side of the scale, and there is no comparison. It is not even close.

This “glory” so dwarfed Paul’s sufferings that he called them “light,” in comparison. Sometimes we saints do endure real hardships, but God means for those afflictions to work in us to strengthen our faith in Him and in His word, and make us willing to suffer for Christ’s sake.

Paul is not finished talking about the power of God’s grace to work in us, equipping us to endure the sufferings of Christ. He still has much to say in the chapters that follow. But in this verse, Paul says that he was willing to suffer afflictions for the cause of Christ, for the Corinthians in particular, and for the body of Christ in general. He is able to do so because the word of God has produced an exceeding greater power of grace than the pain of the sufferings.

And what allowed him to do that? First, Paul has a cause worth living and dying for; not one of his own making but that which was given to him by God. That cause is that by the thanksgiving of the saints for the power to endure sufferings, the whole creation will redound to the glory of God.

But there is another answer; we find that answer in verse 18.

2 Corinthians 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.

This is the mechanics of the doctrine. There is nothing of this world that would make this suffering worth it, but Paul is not looking at the things he can see in this world, he is looking at things which are not seen, things which are in the spiritual realm, things which are eternal.

Let’s end this part with a summary.

- 1) God works best through our weakness
- 2) The suffering we face in life is an opportunity to put the life of Christ on display, so that people can see Christ in us in the midst of our circumstances.

- 3) The knowledge that God is going to raise the dead is enough doctrine to cause us to stand strong in the face of persecution.
- 4) It will be worth all of our suffering when we get to Heaven and see the body of Christ giving thanks and glorifying God for His abundant grace.
- 5) Every bit of suffering we endure in a lifetime will pale in comparison to the glory that will be ours in eternity.

As we prepare to move into chapter 5, I want to make some final comments about verse 18.

Believers have been called to endure every form of suffering, poverty, necessity, broken-heartedness, punishments, imprisonments, persecutions, and deaths. In all of these and those we have not listed, God's abundant grace is able to cause us to endure with patience those sufferings. Many have been tested and have shown the power of grace to sustain them through every trial. No matter the trouble, we can be made to triumph in Christ. Remember 2 Corinthians 2:14?

2 Corinthians 2:14 Now thanks *be* unto God, **which always causeth us to triumph in Christ**, and maketh manifest the savour of his knowledge by us in every place.

In spite of the tribulations, we have not been forsaken, we will not be destroyed, we are not distressed and we are not in despair. Why? Because the word of God renews our inner man day by day.

In this day, in this country, we may never see the kind of dangers and threat to our lives that Paul faced, but we still have this treasure in earthen vessels, the life of Christ being made manifest in our body. How marvelous!

We should be willing to endure anything in order to be conformed to the image of Christ. It is worth every effort, every self-denial, every suffering. It is the greatest of objects before us. We should think no suffering too severe, no sacrifice too great, that we might become like Him while we are yet on this Earth.

God is faithful through His Son and by His word and His Spirit to encourage us in our trials so that we might endure them with patience and hope, upholding us

when we are weak, and put on display the power of His grace. While our outward man perishes, our inward man is renewed and strengthened every day.

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