

The Book of 2 Corinthians

2 Corinthians 5:1-4

Session 40: The Remedy of Abundant Grace

We left off last session looking at verse 17.

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 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.

The death that was working in our Apostle was working life in the body of Christ, in us, even today. We have this promise, that even if we die, God will raise us from the dead. Every believer without exception has that promise. And when we all get to the heavenly places, there will be a unified shout of praise for God's abundant grace which shall redound across the heavens to the glory of God. We will play a part in that, and that event should become so real to us, that it motivates us just as it did Paul; "for this cause, we faint not!"

For that to become a reality, we will need to read that passage, think on it, pray about it, and then pray it, respond to God about it, and read it some more. Put it into our thinking. See it as a giant homecoming for the entire BoC, with the natural thing for us to do when we get together up there, without a single one of us lost or missing, standing in the presence of our Savior in glorified bodies, ready to spread across the heavenly places to return righteousness to the Creature, is to break out in praise to God's abundant grace that made it all possible, and make the whole heavens reverberate with the glory of God.

Now we come to chapter 5. In the first eight verses of chapter 5, we have the remedy for 2 Corinthians 4:11, for them who are "alway delivered unto death for Jesus' sake."

Let's start by reading the whole passage.

2 Corinthians 5:1 For we know that if our earthly house of *this* tabernacle were dissolved, we have a building of God, an house not made with hands, eternal in the heavens. ² For in this we groan, earnestly desiring to be clothed upon with our house which is from heaven: ³ If so be that being clothed we shall not be found naked. ⁴ For we that are in *this* tabernacle do groan, being burdened: not for that we would be unclothed, but clothed upon, that mortality might be swallowed up of life. ⁵ Now he that hath wrought us for the selfsame thing *is* God, who also hath given unto us the earnest of the Spirit. ⁶ Therefore *we are* always confident, knowing that, whilst we are at home in the body, we are absent from the Lord: ⁷ (For we

walk by faith, not by sight:)⁸ We are confident, *I say*, and willing rather to be absent from the body, and to be present with the Lord.

The effectual working of these verses is the doctrinal remedy of abundant grace, which answers verse 11.

In this passage, Paul begins to unveil some of the mysteries of death, so that we know what lies ahead, so we are not so fearful. Even if we face death in our service to Christ, we have the sure hope of being with the Lord.

The prospect of being with Christ is something to look forward to with anticipation and joy.

2 Corinthians 5:1 For we know that if our earthly house of *this* tabernacle were dissolved, we have a building of God, an house not made with hands, eternal in the heavens.

Notice that Paul starts out with “For we know.” Again, he is not guessing, he is certain. Certain about what?

2 Corinthians 5:1 For we know that **if our earthly house of *this* tabernacle were dissolved**, we have a building of God, an house not made with hands, eternal in the heavens.

What does it mean for our earthly house of this tabernacle to be dissolved? It means, if our physical body dies.

In verse 1, our body is called “our earthly house.” Our body is a “tabernacle” where our soul and spirit live. If you recall, the nation of Israel journeyed in the wilderness and carried with them the tabernacle, which was a tent, a temporary place before the temple was built. In a similar way, our body is a temporary place for our soul and spirit to live. God does not mean for these bodies of flesh to be the permanent “house” for members of the body of Christ. Thank God we will not go through eternity in these bodies of flesh, for they are ill-suited for the place we will live, and the work we will do.

So, what happens when this earthly house dissolves; what happens when our body dies?

2 Corinthians 5:1 For we know that if our earthly house of *this* tabernacle were dissolved, **we have a building of God, an house not made with hands, eternal in the heavens.**

If you recall, chapter 4 took us into the future, past the JSoC and into the heavenly places where the whole body of Christ will be. That means that the time element is beyond the blessed hope where every member of the BoC will receive their glorified body. This is the “building” Paul has in mind.

In verse 1, Paul is talking about this new body that we will get when the Lord Jesus returns at the Blessed Hope (BH). If our physical body dies, don’t worry, we will get a new body, a glorious body that has been prepared by God Himself. This is a “house” God will construct, and it will be an eternal body, which will enable us to inhabit the heavens.

The real “you” is your soul and spirit. Our physical bodies are a temporary dwelling place for our time on the Earth, but we look forward to the hope of a glorified body.

2 Corinthians 5:2 For in this we groan, earnestly desiring to be clothed upon with our house which is from heaven:

We are subjected to so many trials and afflictions in this present body. The body is subjected to so many pains and so much suffering, that we earnestly desire to have that body which is free from sorrow, pain and suffering. In other words, we want to live in our new “house” or glorified body, which we will receive at the Blessed Hope.

2 Corinthians 5:3 If so be that being clothed we shall not be found naked.

When Paul uses the phrase “found naked,” he does not mean immodesty in any physical sense; he seems to be expressing the fact that if we die before the Blessed Hope/Rapture, our spirit and soul will spend the interim “unclothed,” that is, having no body. While this seems to be the sense of this verse, especially when we combine it with verse 4, I cannot help but think that God will provide some kind of covering for our immaterial being. But I guess that is a study for another time.

2 Corinthians 5:4 For we that are in *this* tabernacle do groan, being burdened: not for that we would be unclothed, but clothed upon, that mortality might be swallowed up of life.

Verse 4 seems to indicate that Paul is expressing a desire to go directly from our earthly body to our heavenly body. Some think that this is Paul's way of saying he wants to go to his heavenly body without facing death. But, looking at the full body of evidence which Paul gives us concerning his thoughts about death, I do not think that is what Paul is driving at.

But, I think there is something more to be understood in verse 4. Paul is admitting that in this present body, we groan, which takes us back to Romans 8.

Romans 8:22 For we know that the whole creation groaneth and travaileth in pain together until now.²³ And not only *they*, but ourselves also, which have the firstfruits of the Spirit, even **we ourselves groan within ourselves, waiting for the adoption, to wit, the redemption of our body.**

Why the groaning, what is that about? It is about living in a world with not only the toil and pains that come from living in a fallen world, but Paul is also enduring the sufferings of Christ on top of the sufferings of this present time (SoPT).

2 Corinthians 5:4 For we that are in *this* tabernacle do groan, being burdened: not for that we would be unclothed, but clothed upon, that mortality might be swallowed up of life.

Paul is saying that in this body, we groan, being burdened. This, I think, is a reference back to 2 Corinthians 4:8-9, where Paul talked about being troubled on every side, perplexed, persecuted and cast down. It was taking a toll on his body; that is what he means by "being burdened."

2 Corinthians 5:4 For we that are in *this* tabernacle do groan, being burdened: **not for that we would be unclothed**, but clothed upon, that mortality might be swallowed up of life.

Putting it together, Paul is saying that we are not impatient or unwilling to bear the burdens. He does not merely wish to set aside his mortal body. He is not

saying he wants to die so he can escape the suffering. No, he is willing to bear the trials, and he is not impatient in the sufferings. The fact that Paul has been suffering so much, for so long, is not the reason he wants to “depart to be with Christ.” I think Paul has a higher motive than that.

2 Corinthians 5:4 For we that are in *this* tabernacle do groan, being burdened: not for that we would be unclothed, **but clothed upon, that mortality might be swallowed up of life.**

Instead, Paul wants his spiritual body from Heaven. He desires to be clothed upon with immortality, with eternal life. He desires that body which is immortal and ever glorious. Paul is looking forward to the glory of the world to come where he will be “present with the Lord.”

Paul wants “mortality” to be “swallowed up of life.” Get it? He wants to pass from mortality to immortality. He is looking for eternal life in the heavens where there is no more death.

1 Corinthians 15:53 For this corruptible must put on incorruption, and this mortal *must* put on immortality.⁵⁴ So when this corruptible shall have put on incorruption, and this mortal shall have put on immortality, then shall be brought to pass the saying that is written, **Death is swallowed up in victory.**

I do not think Paul wanted to die until whatever tribulation he was called upon to endure was accomplished. But then, he wants his mortality to be swallowed up of life, that eternal life in that immortal body.

I don't want us to lose sight that this is a description of the effectual working of God's abundant grace to produce an endurance of the suffering of “always being delivered unto death for Jesus' sake.”

Can you imagine the mental burden and stress of what Paul and company were going through? Can you imagine the toll it was taking on Paul's physical body? I'm going to give a list, not a complete list, but a list of the things which Paul endured, most of which we have already discussed. As we do, just think about each one of them for a moment, and think about the toll these things would normally exact on a person.

Here is the list: Troubled on every side, persecuted, cast down, always bearing about in the body the dying of the Lord Jesus, sometimes being without the necessities of life, being under constant accusation for things which were not true, the constant care of the churches, the imprisonments, the stripes, the shipwrecks, spending a night and a day in the deep, the perils of robbers, the list just keeps going on and on, but here is the point, if all of those things and more are happening to Paul and he does not quit. Knowing that this ministry of his is going to be the death of him, the question has to be asked, "How does he do it?" And he has told us, he endures these things gladly by the power of God's grace.

Paul counts it a privilege to suffer for Christ's sake. The working of God's word in him has produced a grace that is sufficient to sustain him in the midst of every circumstance. Paul is not looking at this world or how he can be at ease in this world, but he longs for the life to come, where in a new, eternal, glorified body, he will live in the presence of the Lord.

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