

No Quitting!
2 Corinthians 4:10-12
Part 6

We are presently in the midst of a fairly lengthy defense by Paul of his apostleship, most likely precipitated by charges against him that when he confronted the Corinthians with their moral failures in the so-called “severe letter,” a letter we have talked about. He did so in a way that some within Corinth deemed improper. In other words, they felt he was too bold, that he was too harsh.

Paul in response to this charge has been defending his boldness. He began his defense in **2 Corinthians 2:12** and continued his defense all the way up to **2 Corinthians 3:18**.

In this section of Scripture Paul laid down a foundation of biblical and theological truth that he hoped would explain to his readers why he had been so bold in proclaiming and defending the message of the new covenant and the truths related to it.

Paul then, after laying down this foundation of biblical and theological truth, continued his defense of his boldness in **2 Corinthians 4:1-18** by highlighting for his readers why quitting, in respect to the bold prosecution of his ministry, was not an option for him no matter what might be thrown at him, no matter what he might have to endure.

So, what is the question that we in our examination of these verses have been seeking to answer? What things, according to 2 Corinthians 4:1-18, did Paul endure while boldly proclaiming and defending the message of the new covenant that manifested his no-quit attitude? This is the question that we have been seeking to answer. So, what was the first thing that Paul told us that he had to endure?

The first thing that Paul endured that manifested his no-quit attitude was rejection (2 Corinthians 4:1-6). And where did we see this in the passage that we have been studying? We saw this in **2 Corinthians 4:1-6**.

And what was the second thing that manifested his no-quit attitude? The second thing that Paul endured that manifested his no-quit attitude was a

variety of different sufferings (2 Corinthians 4:7-18). Yes, Paul's message and ministry was indeed commonly rejected based on **2 Corinthians 4:1-6**, but rejection was just the tip of the iceberg. Paul and his companions had to endure many other sufferings as well. And these sufferings are detailed for us in **2 Corinthians 4:7-18**. And these are the verses we are presently examining.

So how far have we gotten in our study? We have gotten through **verse 9**. So let us now go back and quickly review these verses for you. And we will begin with **verse 7**. **“But we have this treasure [or in other words the treasure of the gospel, which Paul in verse 6 had just referred to as “the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Christ”] in earthen vessels”** [or in other words in weak, frail, and expendable “human vessels”].

And why would God do such a thing? Why would He entrust the gospel of Christ, a treasure of infinite value, to weak, frail, and expendable earthen vessels, or in other words to human vessels, such as Paul and his associates? Paul went on to explain this to us in the rest of the verse. **“So that the surpassing greatness of the power will be of God and not from ourselves.”** So there we have it, a clear statement by Paul why God has entrusted to us, frail and weak as we are, with the gospel of Christ. He did this in order that there would be no question about where the power for our ongoing and fruitful ministry came from.

Paul then, in 2 Corinthians 4:8-9, used four different **paradoxes** from his own life to illustrate how his weakness as an earthen vessel left no doubt about where the power for accomplishing the work of the gospel came from.

Let me now read these two verses for you and what do they say? **We [or in other words the earthen vessels in which the gospel has been entrusted] are afflicted in every way, but not crushed; perplexed, but not despairing; (9) persecuted, but not forsaken; struck down, but not destroyed.”**

There we have it, four different paradoxes from Paul's life that he used to illustrate his earlier point in **verse 7**. The fact that Paul and his associates in their gospel ministry were continually afflicted but not crushed, perplexed but not despairing, persecuted but not forsaken, struck down but not destroyed clearly highlighted for his readers the fact that the surpassing

greatness of the power of Paul's ministry and the ministry of his associates, that was resulting in people being saved and lives being transformed, had nothing to do with them but rather had everything to do with God for otherwise they, in light of all that they were suffering, would either have been totally unable to find a way to proceed forward in their bold proclamation of the gospel of Christ or would have chosen to quit rather than continuing to boldly proclaim the gospel of Christ in light of all they were continuously suffering.

In 2 Corinthians 4:10-11, Paul declared to the Corinthians that his experience of power in the midst of his weakness, as we saw in 2 Corinthians 4:8-9, was analogous to the death and resurrection of Christ.

So now let me read me these verses for you and see if what I have just shared with you is not so. **We [the weak and frail earthen vessels that have been entrusted with the gospel of Christ according to verse 7] are afflicted in every way, but not crushed; perplexed, but not despairing; (9) persecuted, but not forsaken; struck down, but not destroyed.**" So there we have it, Paul's experience of power in the midst of his weakness, or in other words in the midst of his sufferings. But now let us continue on and see what Paul said next. **(10) Always carrying about in the body the dying of Jesus, so that the life of Jesus also may be manifested in our body. (11) For we who live are constantly being delivered over to death for Jesus' sake, so that the life of Jesus also may be manifested in our mortal flesh.**" So, what is Paul doing in verses 10-11? Paul, in verses 10-11, was in effect saying to the Corinthians, as I have shared with you, that his experience of power in the midst of his weakness, or in other words in the midst of his various sufferings, as spelled out in verses 8-9, was analogous to the death and resurrection of Christ.

So let me now ask you this question. Why would it have been important for Paul to make sure that the Corinthians understood this? Why would it have been important for the Corinthians to understand that Paul's experience of power in the midst of his weakness was analogous to the death and resurrection of Christ?

It was important because Paul's opponents would have wanted the Corinthians to believe that Paul was suffering, in the various ways that he was suffering, because God was chastening him for his secret life of sin. But

in reality the ongoing sufferings of Paul and the power he experienced in the midst of those sufferings had nothing to do with any sin on his part but rather had everything to do with his personal and intimate relationship with Christ and was in fact, in a very real sense, an extension of the death and resurrection of Christ.

So let us now go back to **verses 10-11** and see if this is not so. Let us first of all take a look at **verse 10** and the very first phrase. And what is that very first phrase? **“Always carrying about in the body the dying of Jesus.”**

In order to understand this phrase we first of all need to consider the reference to the death of Christ or perhaps better said, **“the dying of Christ.”**

The word rendered “dying” (NEKROSIS) pictures putrefying flesh that is stiff, swollen, and eaten away and can refer to either the process of dying or the final condition of death. In this context this very stark word is used to refer to the process of dying.

So how did Paul get from detailing for his readers all that he had suffered in the cause of Christ in **verses 8-9** to speaking about the process of dying in **verse 10**? The answer is pretty simple.

Paul saw all that he had suffered and would continue to suffer as an apostle in the cause of Christ as analogous to the process of dying. And this thought is very consistent with what Paul said to the Corinthians in **1 Corinthians 15:31** when he told them, **“I die daily.”** Dying daily to oneself in order to follow Christ is consistent with the words of Christ to His disciples in **Luke 9:23** when He told them, **“If anyone wishes to come after Me, he must deny himself, and take up his cross daily and follow Me.”**

When we accept Jesus Christ as our Lord and Savior and become a servant of the new covenant we have in essence willingly entered into a process of dying, dying to ourselves daily, which will inevitably cause us over time to experience various kinds of sufferings in the same kind of way that Paul himself experienced various kinds of sufferings, such as he detailed for us in **verses 8-9** and which he now in **verse 10** sees as being analogous to the process of dying.

But it is not his sufferings, or in other words the process of his dying, that he refers to specifically in **verse 10**. So whose sufferings and whose dying did he refer to? Paul in verse 10, rather than talking about his sufferings, or in other words his dying, specifically chose to speak about the dying of Christ.

So let us go back to the verse and see if this is not so. **“Always carrying about in the body [not Paul’s dying but rather] the dying of Jesus.”** So how could Paul do this? How could Paul make this transition from speaking about what was true of him in **verses 8-9** and then go on to speak about those very same things as being true of Christ in **verse 10**?

Paul could make the transition from speaking about what was true of him in verses 8-9 and then go on to speak about those very same things as being true of Christ in verse 10 because he saw himself as an extension of Christ’s life (Galatians 2:20). Let me read for you **Galatians 2:20**. **“I have been crucified with Christ; and it is no longer I who live, but Christ lives in me; and the life which I now live in the flesh I live by faith in the Son of God, who loved me and gave Himself up for me.”** Therefore in light of this, when Paul saw himself as suffering and therefore in the process of dying in **2 Corinthians 4:8-9**, he saw his suffering and his dying in terms of Christ and that is why he was able to say what he said at the beginning of **verse 10**.

Or more specifically, when Paul was **“afflicted”** in **verse 8**, he not only saw his dying but the dying of Christ. When he was **“perplexed”** in **verse 8**, he not only saw his dying but the dying of Christ. When he was **“persecuted”** in **verse 9**, he not only saw his dying but the dying of Christ. When he was **“struck down”** in **verse 9**, he not only saw his dying but the dying of Christ.

So did Paul in essence declare to the Corinthians in **2 Corinthians 4:10-11** that his sufferings that he had detailed for them in **2 Corinthians 4:8-9** were in fact analogous to the death or the dying of Christ in **verse 10**? I believe he did.

So let me ask you this question. If Paul saw his sufferings as analogous to the death or dying of Christ, do you believe that he would consider his sufferings in the cause of Christ as being an honor or not an honor? Clearly I

believe we would have to conclude that he would see it as an honor to carry about in his body the dying of Jesus.

Let me read for you **Colossians 1:24** and see if this is not so. **“Now I rejoice in my sufferings for your sake, and in my flesh I do my share on behalf of His body, which is the church, in filling up what is lacking in Christ’s afflictions.”** Why was Paul able to rejoice in all that he was suffering for the sake of Christ on behalf of the Colossian church in **Colossians 1:24**? Paul was able to rejoice because it was an honor for him not only to suffer for Christ, but it was also an honor for him to suffer with Christ, knowing that in all that he was suffering on behalf of the church he was in fact contributing to the filling up of what was lacking in Christ’s afflictions on behalf of His church.

But this is not all that Paul, based on **2 Corinthians 4:8-9**, said to the Corinthians in **2 Corinthians 4:10-11**. Paul also wanted to show the Corinthians that what he had experienced and detailed for them in **2 Corinthians 4:8-9** was not only analogous to the death or dying of Jesus but also to the resurrection or life of Jesus.

Let us now go back to **verse 10** but this time I will read the entire verse. **“Always carrying about in the body the dying of Jesus, so that the life of Jesus also may be manifested in our body.”**

When Paul spoke about carrying about in his body the dying of Jesus, so that the life of Jesus might be manifested in his body in verse 10, he was obviously speaking of the life of Jesus in terms of His resurrection power.

So where in **verses 8-9** do we see the life of Jesus and His resurrection power manifested? The life of Jesus and His resurrection power was manifested in 2 Corinthians 4:8-9 when Paul in the midst of his sufferings was not overwhelmed.

In other words, when Paul was afflicted but not crushed, Paul saw the sustaining and powerful hand of his resurrected Lord. When Paul was perplexed but not despairing, Paul saw the sustaining and powerful hand of his resurrected Lord. When Paul was persecuted but not forsaken, he saw the sustaining and powerful hand of his resurrected Lord. When Paul was struck

down but not destroyed, he saw the sustaining and powerful hand of his resurrected Lord. This is what Paul saw in the midst of all his sufferings.

Can we see this same sustaining and powerful hand of our resurrected Lord when we find ourselves in the midst of suffering? Absolutely! All we have to do is exactly what Paul did. In other words, all we have to do, while recognizing Christ's right to rule over our lives, is to become before Him and His throne of grace and ask Him for help in the time of our need. Isn't that what **Hebrews 4:16** tells us? Let me read this verse for you and see if this is not so. **"Therefore** [or in other words, in light of the fact that we do not have a great high priest who cannot sympathize with our weaknesses, but one who has been tempted in all things as we are, yet without sin] **let us draw near with confidence to the throne of grace, so that we may receive mercy and find grace to help in time of need."**

And if we do this what will we see? We will see the sustaining and powerful hand of our resurrected Lord preserving us and sustaining us in the most difficult of trials just as Paul did, and not only will we see it but all those observing us will see it as well.

So let us praise the Lord for our sufferings not only because our sufferings, as an extension of the life of Christ, provides us the opportunity to fill up what is lacking in the afflictions of Christ on behalf of His church, but also for the opportunity it provides us to put the life of Christ and His resurrection power display.

In fact, this is how Paul viewed his sufferings that he detailed for us in **2 Corinthians 4:8-9**. He viewed them as an opportunity to put the life of Christ and His resurrection power of display. Isn't that exactly what he said at the end of **verse 10**? Let us go back and read the verse one more time and see if this is not so. **"Always carrying about in the in the body the dying of Jesus** [in all that we have suffered as I detailed it for you in verses 8-9], **so that the life of Jesus** [and therefore His resurrection power] **also may be manifested in our body."**

I am very dismayed by professing Christians who when suffering are only able to focus on the pain of that suffering thus leading them to discouragement, despondency and even despair. If we are a faithful servant of Christ and are in fact seeking to carry out the mission He has given us in

the strength that He provides, our sufferings should be a cause not for discouragement, despondency and even despair but rather for joy knowing that our sufferings provide us not only the opportunity to fulfill what is lacking in the sufferings of Christ on behalf of His church but also an opportunity to display the life of Christ and His resurrection power.

So, what did Paul in **2 Corinthians 4:10-11** declare to the Corinthians? He in essence declared that his experience of power in the midst of his weakness, as we saw in **2 Corinthians 4:8-9**, was analogous to the death and resurrection of Christ.

But he is not yet done. He has one more thought that he wants to share with the Corinthians. So now let us read **2 Corinthians 4:12**. And what did he say to the Corinthians? **“So death works in us, but life in you.”**

So, what is Paul’s point? In **2 Corinthians 4:7** Paul had stated that the purpose for his weakness was that the power for his ongoing and fruitful ministry as a minister of the new covenant might be of God and not from himself. Paul then in **2 Corinthians 4:8-11** illustrated for the Corinthians using his own life experience that he deemed analogous to the death and resurrection of Christ to illustrate his point.

Paul after explaining to the Corinthians how his own life experience was analogous to the death and resurrection of Christ went on to make his final point in **2 Corinthians 4:12**. And what was his point?

Paul, in 2 Corinthians 4:12, concluded 2 Corinthians 4:10-11 by pointing out to the Corinthians that death worked in him in all that he suffered, so that life, or in other words the resurrection power of God, might be at work in them.

And if there is any doubt about this let me read this verse for you. **“So death works in us** [the dying to self that invariably brings suffering to those who have chosen to follow Christ] **but life** [the resurrection power of God Himself in the person of Christ] **in you.”**

Paul by this statement is acknowledging that he has embraced the great principle of the cross. Christ died that we might live. Paul was doing the same thing for the Corinthians and all the other churches that he was serving

in his willingness to die to himself daily, or in other words to have death work in him in respect to all that he suffered, so that the resurrection power of God might be at work in their lives.

May God give us the grace to look at our suffering in the midst of our weakness as an opportunity to not only to fill up what is lacking in the afflictions of Christ but also as opportunity to display Christ and the power of His resurrection.