

No Quitting!
2 Corinthians 4:16-18
Part 8

Today is Easter Sunday. Typically, as I shared with you last week, I would normally digress from whatever book study we might be in to highlight some particular truth related to the resurrection of Christ. But this Easter I am not doing that. I am not doing that because I don't have to. The text that we are presently studying in the book of **2 Corinthians** will do that for us by linking what we are presently celebrating; the resurrection of Jesus Christ with the certainty of our own future resurrection and ultimate transformation.

So where are within this study? As I am sure you remember, Paul has been defending himself against the charge that he had been too bold in his proclamation of the gospel of Christ and various truths related to it by certain individuals in Corinth.

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 particular 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 gospel message and the truths related to it.

Paul, 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 his bold proclamation of the gospel, was not an option for him, no matter what might be thrown at him, no matter what he might have to endure.

And these are the verses that we have been examining for well over a month and it this section of verses that we will finally complete this morning.

So, what is the question that we have been seeking to answer in this section of verses? 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. And what was the first thing that Paul told his readers that he endured that manifested his no-quit attitude?

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). And where have we seen this variety of sufferings that Paul had to endure? We have seen them throughout our present ongoing study of **2 Corinthians 4:7-18.**

So why didn't Paul, in light of all that he had to endure, just quit proclaiming the gospel with boldness? Paul gives us an answer to this question in **2 Corinthians 4:13-18.** So, what was his answer?

He did what he did because of what he believed. This was made clear to the Corinthians in a very general sense in **2 Corinthians 4:13** when Paul, comparing himself to King David and to what King David had said in **Psalms 116:10**, told the Corinthians **“we also believe, therefore we also speak.”**

Then Paul made it even more specific than that as he continued to speak to the Corinthians. So based on these additional verses, or in other words based on **2 Corinthians 4:13-18**, what was Paul's even more specific answer to the question of why he had continued to speak the gospel so boldly, even when speaking the gospel boldly brought to him so much suffering, or in other words caused him to be continually delivered over to death?

Based on 2 Corinthians 4:13-18, Paul spoke boldly because of what he believed about the future, even though speaking the gospel boldly meant that he would be continually delivered over to death

And what was that greater something that Paul believed about the future that had such a great impact in compelling him to continue to preach the gospel boldly in spite of the all the suffering that he had to endure because of it? This is what he believed about the future. Paul believed in the future

resurrection of all true believers that would result in them being presented to Christ (2 Corinthians 4:14-15).

Paul made this clear to his readers in **2 Corinthians 4:14**. So now let me read this verse for you. **“Knowing that He who raised the Lord Jesus will raise us also with Jesus and will present us with you.”**

So, what moved Paul to speak the gospel so boldly even though he knew that in speaking the gospel boldly that he would suffer rejection as well as other variety of other things? It was because he believed with absolute confidence that he and others like him would in the future be raised from the dead and presented to Christ.

And why was he so certain that he would be raised? He was certain that he would be raised because he, having been joined to Christ through the baptizing work of the Holy Spirit, knew that God already viewed them as having been raised “with Christ.”

This truth, that God already sees us as having been raised “with Christ,” is clearly stated in **Ephesians 2:4-6** and alluded to here by Paul in **2 Corinthians 4:14**. For Paul, the certainty his future resurrection and the resurrection of all fellow believers is inseparably linked with the resurrection of Christ over 2000 years ago, the very resurrection that we on this Easter Sunday are today celebrating.

When the world looks at the future they see a big question mark in respect to what lies beyond the grave, but this certainly was not true for Paul and it certainly should not be true for us. If we have placed our faith and trust in Christ as our Lord and Savior, what should we see, based on **2 Corinthians 4:14**? We should see, with a sense of absolute confidence, our future resurrection and presentation to Christ.

Is the thought of this exciting for you? How could it not be? Our resurrection and presentation to Christ, that Paul speaks about here in **2 Corinthians 4:14**, is the culmination of God’s eternal redemptive program on our behalf when we, standing before Christ in glory, will be perfectly conformed to Him, not only in terms of righteousness but in terms of possessing and enjoying an immortal and imperishable body, fashioned after His own immortal imperishable body. This is the day that we as the children of God

need to be focusing on since it is on that day when we, as God's adopted sons, will be put on display for all in the realm of the heavenlies to see, to the glory of God.

So if we choose to focus on this glorious and certain future, will it impact us? Absolutely! How could it not impact us? And what might be one of the most obvious ways that it might impact us?

The answer should be obvious in light of what Paul has been talking about for over two chapters. It should impact us in the area of boldness, as we with grateful hearts seek to spread to as many people hope, this same future hope not only that they themselves might be served but also that their thanksgiving in participating in such a future glorious hope might abound to the glory of God.

Isn't that exactly what **2 Corinthians 4:15** tells us? So let me now read this verse for you and see if this is not so. **"For all things are for you sakes, so that the grace which is spreading to more and more people may cause the giving of thanks to abound to the glory of God."**

We are now ready to finish Paul's final comments about that future focus and how that future focus continues to motivate him to speak the gospel boldly in spite of what he has to continually suffer.

And what is my hope for this message? That we in choosing to focus on the future hope of our resurrection and transformation might find whatever present sufferings that we might have to endure in this present age in our service to Christ as insignificant in comparison to our future glory. And in finding this to be so, that we might, like Paul, purpose ourselves to keep on keeping on in respect to our determination to keep sharing the gospel of Christ with ever increasing boldness no matter what may come to us in matter of personal suffering.

So now let us begin to look at our text for this morning. And we will begin by looking at the very first word of **2 Corinthians 4:16**. And what is that first word? The word is **"therefore."** Paul used the word **"therefore"** in **2 Corinthians 4:16** to point to what he and his associates had resolved in light of what they believed to be true concerning their future. And what had they had resolved? They had resolved not **"to quit."** Let me now read for you **2**

Corinthians 4:16 and see if this is not so. “**Therefore** [in light of what I have just shared you concerning my future resurrection and the future resurrection of my associates] **we do not lose heart.**” So there it is, Paul’s declaration of his resolution, along with his associates, not to quit.

And then what does Paul say next in **verse 16**? He again refocuses his attention and the attention of his readers on what he believes to be true concerning his future glory. But this time do it in a little different way.

So how will he do that? Let us continue to read **2 Corinthians 4:16** and find out. “**Therefore we do not lose heart, but though our outer man is decaying, yet our inner man is being renewed day by day.**” What exactly is Paul talking about here? Let us begin by seeking to understand what Paul meant by his reference to “**our outer man.**”

When Paul referred to “our outer man,” he was referring to what others saw when they looked at him. Or in other words, “our outer man” refers to our status in Adam as part of this present age.

And what is happening to our outer man according to Paul? Paul described it as “decaying,” or in other words as in the process deconstruction. Isn’t this decaying or deconstruction of our outer man pretty obvious? All we have to do is look into the mirror. We are breaking down! Some of us faster than others, but we are all breaking down. And this was certainly true of Paul in light of all the various things he found himself continually having to suffer in light of his bold proclamation of the gospel of Christ. His outer man was decaying particularly fast.

So if that is our outer man, what is our inner man? When Paul referred to “our inner man,” he was referring to that part of a true believer that, though unseen, is being gradually transformed in into conformity to Christ (2 Corinthians 3:18). Or in other words, “our inner man” refers to our status in the last Adam, or to our status in Christ, whose image we are presently being conformed into as the Spirit of God, working through the word of God, makes it possible for us to look into His face.

Paul described this process of transformation taking place in regards to our inner man in **2 Corinthians 3:18**. Let me now read this verse for you and see if this is not so. “**But we all, with unveiled face, beholding as in a**

mirror the glory of the Lord, are being transformed into the same image from glory to glory, just as from the Lord the Spirit.” This process of gradual transformation in regards to our inner man could be described as a process of reconstruction.

So why did Paul feel compelled to speak to his readers about these processes? Or in other words, why did Paul feel compelled to speak about the decaying process, or in other words the process of deconstruction, in respect to his outer man and the process of daily renewal or reconstruction in respect to his inner man?

Paul felt compelled to speak about these processes so that his readers might better understand how those who are suffering for the cause of Christ should view their afflictions. Yes, afflictions that come upon us in our service to Christ certainly can do a number on us in respect to our outer man. But those same afflictions will also produce something in us that is truly beautiful in terms of our inner man as we become as increasingly more conformed to Christ and confident about our future resurrection and ultimate transformation.

Paul will now drive this point home in **2 Corinthians 4:17**. So now let me read this verse for you. **“For momentary, light affliction** [in other words, all that we have been suffering in the cause of Christ that is causing the decaying or the deconstruction of our outer man] **is producing for us** [in our daily renewing or reconstruction of our inner man] **an eternal weight of glory for beyond all comparison** [in other words, the certain hope of our resurrection and transformation].”

So how should those who are suffering in the cause of Christ view their sufferings in light of all that Paul has said about the deconstruction of the outer man and the reconstruction of the inner man? We should view those sufferings as he viewed those sufferings. And how did Paul view those sufferings?

Paul, in 2 Corinthians 4:17, viewed his present suffering as brief in duration and trifling in comparison to what God has in store for himself and all believers. And why was able to do this? Why was he able to minimize what he was suffering in light of future glory?

He was able to do this because of what he chose to focus on. And what was that? Let us now read **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.”**

So, what is Paul saying in this verse? It is very simple. In light of this future reality of being resurrected with Christ and presented to Him, Paul had chosen to no longer focus on the visible and temporary things of the present but on the unseen things to come.

So, what did Paul specifically have in mind when he spoke of not looking at the things which are seen? When Paul spoke of not choosing to look at the things which are seen or temporary, he was referring specifically of his afflictions. For Paul, what he was presently suffering in the cause of Christ in boldly proclaiming the gospel of Christ was not even worth looking at when compared to the opportunity he had each and every day with the eyes of faith to look at the things we unseen and eternal.

And what again would that have been? When Paul spoke of the things which were not seen or eternal, he was speaking specifically of that future time at his resurrection when he would be ultimately transformed into God’s likeness as manifested in Christ.

May God give us the grace to continually focus on the glorious certainty of our future so that we might speak the gospel boldly and not lose heart when various sufferings come our way.