

## 2 Corinthians 4:7-18

### Verse 7:

--What *treasure* is Paul talking about here? It is not doubt ***the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ***. All new covenant ministry is the spiritual showing out of that light from our life—words and deeds. No life. No light. No true ministry.

--What are the ***earthen vessels*** Paul is speaking of? The context makes it clear that they are our literal human bodies—made from the dust of the earth. There are some that would tie the image back to the use of earthen vessels in the victorious Roman march, or even to that of Gideon and his men, but the rest of this section makes it clear that Paul has literal, frail, humanity in his mind.

--If there is any image in mind, most of the people in that day would have placed some type of valuables into an earthen pot at some point—sometimes even burying them. They didn't have banking system as we do.

--Whatever image he had in mind the point was very clear. The picture is to stress the clear incongruity between the visible means and the powerful effect. The onlooker would have to admit that the real power at work must be in God and not in men. \*Moses, Samson, the disciples, Paul, etc.\*

--The vessel is not pointless—it is only secondary. The source of the excellence of the power should clearly be in God—in the supernatural. Still, God uses specific types of vessels for specific types of jobs.

**\*Acts 9:15: But the Lord said to him (Ananias), "Go, for he is a chosen vessel of Mine to bear My name before Gentiles, kings, and the children of Israel.\***

**\*2 Timothy 2:20-21: But in a great house there are not only vessels of gold and silver, but also of wood and clay, some for honor and some for dishonor. Therefore if anyone cleanses himself from the latter, he will be a vessel for honor, sanctified and useful for the Master, prepared for every good work.\***

### Verses 8-10:

--Here Paul further illustrates what he has just declared. He explains all the various types of weakness assailing their earthen vessels as they lived for Christ.

--**(8) 1) *Hard-pressed on every side***: Which gives the idea of not having room to maneuver. They were closed in by their various weaknesses.

--***Yet not crushed***: Squeezed but not broken or cracked!

--**2) *Perplexed***: In doubt or at a loss as to what to say or do in situations.

--***But not in despair***: They may not know what seems to be best but they trust the power of God. Paul didn't have to be in control.

--**(9) 3) *Persecuted***: Gives idea of being handed over to the power of men.

--***But not forsaken***: But not handed over from the presence of God.

--4) **Struck down:** Knocked down in a battle. The very last place you wanted to be. Helpless and vulnerable.

--**But not destroyed:** The death blow had not come.

--(10) What does Paul mean when he talks about **always carrying about in the body the dying of the Lord Jesus**? He is talking about the principle that the death of Jesus went the farthest to illustrate. That death working in a human body can be the very means of God to work the life of Jesus Christ. Paul talked of the same principle in various ways:

**\*Romans 8:36-37: As it is written: "For Your sake we are killed all day long; we are accounted as sheep for the slaughter." Yet in all these things we are more than conquerors through Him who loved us.\***

**\*1 Corinthians 15:31: I affirm, by the boasting in you which I have in Christ Jesus our Lord, I die daily.\***

**\*Galatians 6:17: From now on let no one trouble me, for I bear in my body the marks of the Lord Jesus.\***

--The point here is that natural outward bodily weaknesses led to the witness of supernatural reality. It was obvious that what happened wasn't Paul—it was God. It is in our weakness and brokenness that the life of another shines through. \*Cancer patient, Material loss, Wronged by someone, Life priority, etc.\*

--In all of this, the life of God is **manifested in our body**. Something of the light and life and glory of Jesus Christ is seen and known in us.

### **Verses 11-12:**

--Again, the context here is clearly what can be seen and experienced **in our mortal flesh**. We **live** yet in that life are also **delivered to death**. Death to the world, the flesh, and the devil!

--This life and death combo is seen in so many ways: Missions, ministry for less money, service to leave friends. The contrast between this type of life and the prosperity gospel or dominion theology where Christians conquer the earth is startling.

--To show forth the excellence of God, we do not trust in our bodily strength or life and we do not fear bodily weakness or mortification.

--Notice as well here, something very important Paul throws in to draw a line. We are delivered to death **for Jesus' sake**. Whatever mode this principle of death comes to our mortal bodies it should come along the lines of obedience and faith in Christ. We are not called to face death or hardship for our own gain or due to our own sin and folly.

--We don't need to seek for this dying at all. But when it comes, we also don't need to fear it.

Paul had come to learn well enough that God would make His strength perfect in his weakness.

--So death might be working in Paul. But the life of God would work in them. In the same way, we all carry the burden of this principle of life through death so that others might be blessed, in one fashion or another.

### Verse 13:

--Despite all his trials and sufferings and near death/actual death experiences—Paul had not lost his confidence in God. In fact, his confidence only grew.

--Paul quotes a psalm (**Ps. 116:10**) to say that he had the same belief in God as the embattled writer of Psalm 116. That confidence made him proclaim aloud his faith.

--Don't take that for granted. Paul's speaking was often the catalyst to his dying. People didn't like him for what he said—not necessarily what he did.

### Verses 14-15:

--**(14)** Here Paul comes back to the ultimate example of this principle of death working life. The God who raised up Jesus' dead body and now offers that life to the world—will also ultimately raise up our mortal bodies when they too finally succumb fully to death.

--So Jesus' life, death, and resurrection become the basis for Paul's faith and confidence. Jesus is our Firstfruits and Forerunner. The Firstborn among many brethren. This was how the life of God came to us. This is still how it is working in the world today.

--The Christian ministry ends with all of us raised up in the presence of Jesus—never to die again.

--**(15)** The grace of God working the life of God through the principle of death will bless everyone in the end. As what God did in and through Paul became a blessing to both him and them.

--As we stand in heaven, we will all rejoice to hear every single little thing God did through our mortal flesh in this life.

### Verse 16:

--***Therefore we do not lose heart.*** Because human weakness becomes a channel for the life of God and because human death becomes a channel for the resurrection life of Christ—***Therefore we do not lose heart.***

--It is easy to lose heart in this life if our aims are not what Christ's aims are. The Christian will not find joy if they are looking for it in places where Christ cannot take joy.

--Paul realized the hand and ways of God even in his weaknesses and ultimately even in his death. That is why he didn't lose heart or give in to the conflict. \*This is all the hell we will ever endure!\*

--Still, the Christian doesn't ignore the harder realities of life. We acknowledge that the ***outward man is perishing***, but we also acknowledge that the ***inward man is being renewed day by day.***

--For Paul, the reality of bodily corruption was less weighty than the reality of daily inward renewal in Christ. Maybe I could describe it like a wind pushing you back and a motor pushing you forward. The truth, and life, and force of Christ's work in us is greater than the force of sins work against us. \*Wealth and comfort are more dangerous to us than suffering!\*

### Verses 17-18:

--This is the language of someone living out the reality of **verse 16**. And this man who calls the difficulty of his life *light affliction* had quite a bit of affliction! **\*11:23-28!** And that is only half the story of his life!\*

--He could have fainted. He could have given it all up and escaped it all. He could have said it was too much and turned back like John Mark or turned to the world like Demas or turned to money and cashed out like Judas.

--Instead, he turned from the *moment* to the *eternal*. Measure life however you will, but if you admit the reality of eternity, everything changes. Now there are new scales to measure with.

**\*Romans 8:18: For I consider that the sufferings of this present time are not worthy to be compared with the glory which shall be revealed in us.\***

--Again, it isn't that the Christian suffers physical pain, loss, or death as something that it is not. It is just that we also experience God's strength, mercy, grace, power, and ultimately a *far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory* in any place suffering has touched us in this life.

--But *How?* does this happen for us practically? *What?* does living like this look like?

1) First, we live obedient lives and take up our cross when God sees fit to give it. We don't seek pain, loss, suffering, or death. We trust God and express faith and obedience when they come.

2) Second, we focus our vision on the eternal things.

--The word for *look* in **18** is the Greek *skopeo* which has the idea of: contemplating, to mark, or to fix your gaze on. We are not to glance at and forget the eternal things of God. We have to put them in front of our eyes and keep looking at them with contemplation.

--If you don't think that sounds powerful enough, you don't know yourself or Satan. How much sin in the world begins with a single look somewhere else? Then a longer look. Then contemplation. Then a life given over to lust, or covetousness, or hate, etc.

--Chrysostom (Homilies on 2 Corinthians) said of his day: *For I hear many saying these words worthy of all scorn: 'Give me today and take tomorrow.'*

--Satan's lies never change! He only wants us to think about today, or my immediate life right here and right now. He doesn't want you to think about consequences or reward—especially those of eternity.

--If you want to look at, scope out, contemplate, eternal things it will only happen by a firm decision. It will not happen by magic. You will never slip into it.

--Read the Scriptures about eternal things—heaven, hell, the judgment seat of Christ, etc. Get some good books on heaven. Gather regularly with believers and set your mind on things above. Worship God. Get your eyes off of the passing things of this world!

**\*Colossians 3:2: Set your mind on things above, not on things on the earth.\***

--Why? Because eternity changes the scales! The pain and sufferings here are passing and temporary but the glory there is eternal and weighty. \*How many in this life will work hard and suffer just to “rest” in retirement but take no care or effort for glory in eternity?\*

--Here time may seem so long when we are in pain and suffering or laboring, but 100,000 years from now, when we are radiant and powerful in the light and life of eternity, it will seem like nothing.

***\*Hebrews 12:25-29: See that you do not refuse Him who speaks. For it they did not escape who refused Him who spoke on earth, much more shall we not escape if we turn away from Him who speaks from heaven, whose voice then shook the earth; but now He has promised, saying, "Yet once more I shake not only the earth, but also heaven." Now this, "Yet once more," indicates the removal of those things that are being shaken, as of things that are made, that the things which cannot be shaken may remain.***

***Therefore, since we are receiving a kingdom which cannot be shaken, let us have grace, by which we may serve God acceptably with reverence and godly fear. For our God is a consuming fire.\****

--Who has told us these things? Where do they come from? From God. From the Eternal One.

--This world is the dream and when we wake up it will be in eternity where things don't change. All of creation will come into right relation to God. Only God's thoughts matter. They are everlasting and weighty.