

Good morning and thank you for joining us. You have many places to choose from to worship, and we're glad you're here this morning. We're resuming our verse by verse study through 2 Corinthians, so would you please turn in your bibles to 2 Corinthians 4?

One of the distinctives of CC, and my own personal conviction, is to teach the entire bible. Paul told the elders of Ephesians at Miletus "I have not shunned to declare to you the whole counsel of God."

Yet going through all the Bible has its challenges, because there are parts of the Bible we'd rather proly not talk about, and this morning's study is one such section.

This morning, we'll only be studying 8 verses- 11-18, as we do an in depth study of what the Bible has to say about the topic that we all can relate to. The subject of suffering.

This difficult topic is addressed throughout the pages of God's word, so we'll also spend some time looking at some of the many bible verses that deal with trials and tribulations that we face, because the bible has much to say on the topic of suffering.

The title of this mornings message is Keeping Perspective Pt 2
Let's pray.

In order to make sure we fully understand the text that lies before us, we're going to remind ourselves of the first 10 verses, then we'll dig into verse 11.

1 Therefore, since we have this ministry, as we have received mercy, we do not lose heart. 2 But we have renounced the hidden things of shame, not walking in craftiness nor handling the word of God deceitfully, but by manifestation of the truth commending ourselves to every man's conscience in the sight of God. 3 But even if our gospel is veiled, it is veiled to those who are perishing, 4 whose minds the god of this age has blinded, who do not believe, lest the light of the gospel of the glory of Christ, who is the image of God, should shine on them. 5 For we do not preach ourselves, but Christ Jesus the Lord, and ourselves your bondservants for Jesus' sake. 6 For it is the God who commanded light to shine out of darkness, who has shone in our hearts to give the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ.

7 But we have this treasure in earthen vessels, that the excellence of the power may be of God and not of us. 8 We are hard-pressed on every side, yet not crushed; we are perplexed, but not in despair; 9 persecuted, but not forsaken; struck down, but not destroyed— 10 always carrying about in the body the dying of the Lord Jesus, that the life of Jesus also may be manifested in our body.

11 For we who live are always delivered to death for Jesus' sake, that the life of Jesus also may be manifested in our mortal flesh. Now there's both a physical and spiritual reality to Paul's words here in verse 11. The possibility of death was always close by because of Paul's preaching of Jesus. He was in constant

danger of physically dying because the enemies of Jesus were opposing him and trying to hunt him down.

Now I don't think any of us in this room are in any physical danger of death because of our faith in Christ. Praise God we still live in a country where we can worship freely.

But there's a spiritual reality to verse 10 that applies to each and every follower of Christ. It's the dying to self that we all have to experience in the name of Christ. It's the dying of our selfish ways, and surrendering all to Christ.

Philippians 3:8 Yet indeed I also count all things loss for the excellence of the knowledge of Christ Jesus my Lord, for whom I have suffered the loss of all things, and count them as rubbish, that I may gain Christ 9 and be found in Him, not having my own righteousness, which is from the law, but that which is through faith in Christ, the righteousness which is from God by faith; 10 that I may know Him and the power of His resurrection, and the fellowship of His sufferings, being conformed to His death,

Christians want to know the power of Jesus' resurrection, but most of us want nothing to do with the fellowship of Jesus' sufferings or being conformed to His death.

When we confess that Jesus is not only our savior from our sins, but also that Jesus is Lord of our life, it means He has complete and free access to override any ambitions and desires we may have. **Galatians 5:24 And those who are Christ's have crucified the flesh with its passions and desires.**

And

Romans 13:14 But put on the Lord Jesus Christ, and make no provision for the flesh, to fulfill its lusts.

Whether it was the possibility of physical death, or the constant state of dying to himself, Paul rejoiced in knowing both the suffering and the glory, because Paul knew that suffering and glory are connected.

12 So then death is working in us, but life in you.” Paul sacrificed himself and his own ambitions for the sake of others. And Paul had done to himself that which we are also called to do. Romans 12:1 beseech you therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God, that you present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable to God, which is your reasonable service.

Paul wasn't focused upon his present situations, because he knew death is not the end of the story.

Remember, you cannot kill a dead man. When a man or woman recons themselves dead, saying their life is not their own but is in fact Christ's to do as He pleases, there is no telling what the Lord will do through them!

And this is what happened to Paul. Paul knew the spiritual blessings that he brought to the Corinthian Christians came in part through the terrible suffering he endured. And here's a difficult reality that Paul recognized-God made Paul more effective in ministry through Paul's suffering.

Sometimes we think that if someone is really spiritual or really used by God they will live in a constant state of ease. But not so- the Bible is clear- God's servants often experience brutal suffering. But, and here's the key, God has a good and glorious purpose in allowing it.

Remember, we are following a Savior who bled and died, why would we think we are ever exempted from suffering???

Jesus was persecuted; we will be persecuted. **John 15:20**
"Remember the word that I said to you, 'A servant is not greater than his master.' If they persecuted Me, they will also persecute you. If they kept My word, they will keep yours also.

As children and heirs, we will share in Jesus' suffering. **Romans 8:16** The Spirit Himself bears witness with our spirit that we are children of God, 17 and if children, then heirs—heirs of God and joint heirs with Christ, if indeed we suffer with Him, that we may also be glorified together. 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.

Suffering for Christ's name is a guarantee. **Philippians 1:29.**
For to you it has been granted on behalf of Christ, not only to believe in Him, but also to suffer for His sake.

When we do suffer, we mustn't be ashamed of it because our suffering will not go to waste. **2 Timothy 1:12** For this reason I also suffer these things; nevertheless I am not ashamed, for I

know whom I have believed and am persuaded that He is able to keep what I have committed to Him until that Day.

When we are confronted with suffering, we need to endure it. **2 Timothy 4:5 But you be watchful in all things, endure afflictions, do the work of an evangelist, fulfill your ministry.**

BTW you won't ever find one of those prosperity gospel peddlers speak on these verses. They don't give the full counsel of God.

So knowing all the hardships Paul endured for being a follower of Christ, why did Paul continue to serve God faithfully even though it meant suffering for him?

13-14

13 And since we have the same spirit of faith, according to what is written, "I believed and therefore I spoke,"[fn] (quoting Psalm 116:10) we also believe and therefore speak, 14 knowing that He who raised up the Lord Jesus will also raise us up with Jesus, and will present us with you. Paul knew that death was not the end of the story!

The resurrection of Jesus guarantees the resurrection of every follower of Christ **1 Corinthians 15:23 But each one in his own order: Christ the firstfruits, afterward those who are Christ's at His coming.**

Paul wasn't worried about this body because he knew he was going to get a new, glorious heavenly body! We'll talk more about this next week.

And notice Paul's reference to being reunited one day with the Corinthians in heaven. This shows his genuine love for them, even though many of them thoroughly mistreated Paul!

Here's a provocative thought-these believers, as misguided and troublesome to Paul as they were, would be reunited with Paul in heaven! **Ephesians 5:27 that He might present her to Himself a glorious church, not having spot or wrinkle or any such thing, but that she should be holy and without blemish.**

That's one of the beauties of heaven. There will be no divisions, not even denominations in heaven. It's not the baptists over there in their suits, the pentecostals are over there speaking in tongues-the calvary guys are over there in their hawaiian shirt. No when we get to heaven we're all there together-not divided over doctrine or interpretation.

We all know fellow christians who love the Lord, but for whatever reason we don't get along. But in heaven, those dividing lines disappear!

15 For all things are for your sakes, that grace, having spread through the many, may cause thanksgiving to abound to the glory of God. All the difficult things that Paul had been experiencing had resulted in the Corinthians' good and God's glory. Paul had brought God's grace to Corinth, and now the Corinthians were taking that grace to other people in other places.

All the pain, all the hurt, all the heartache and heartbreak, Paul considered life's sufferings worth it, knowing God was being glorified.

16 Therefore we do not lose heart. Pause here. Remember whenever you see therefore, you have to see what it's there for! And Paul, summarizing these last 15 verses, gives 3 reasons, despite his hardships, gives 3 reasons he refused to allow himself to become discouraged as he served the Lord:

Reason #1 Back in verse 1 Paul recalled that he had received a divine commission to proclaim the gospel. **1 Therefore, since we have this ministry, as we have received mercy, we do not lose heart**

Reason #2- He looked forward to sharing Jesus Christ's resurrection from the dead (v. 14).

Reason #3-Paul had the opportunity to promote the Corinthians' spiritual welfare and the glory of God (v. 15).

16 Therefore we do not lose heart. Even though our outward man is perishing, yet the inward man is being renewed day by day. No matter how banged up Paul got, he refused to give up.

He stayed focused on the inner man over the outer man - the eternal over the temporal - and focused on the spiritual over the tangible.

Verse 16 gives a potential source of great discouragement - you and I are growing older.

Here are the Top Ten Ways You Know You Are Getting Older.

10) When you walk past a bathroom and think, "I might as well go while I'm here."

9) Your back goes out more than you do

- 8) You get really excited about tea
- 7) Before you go anywhere, you consider the parking situation.
- 6) When you hear your favorite music in an elevator.
- 5) When you see expensive antiques and remember one just like it that you once threw away.
- 4) When it takes longer to rest than it did to get tired.
- 3) When it takes multiple tries to get up from your chair.
- 2) When you can't find your reading glasses because they are on top of your head.
- 1) You remember when soda machines dispensed glass bottles!

Hey our physical bodies have been dying since the day we've been born-the outward man is perishing! You know as I do that every supermodel ends up wrinkled. All body-builders wither in the grave.

But while the outer flesh is deteriorating, God's Spirit is invigorating the inner man day by day.

The first key to overcoming discouragement in our circumstances is to stay focused on the inward man, not the outer man.

A second way that Paul maintains the proper perspective to focus on his eternal rewards, not his physical troubles.

This verse is my life verse, I came across it as a teenager and have clung to it

17 For our light affliction, which is but for a moment, is working for us a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory, Let us first talk about the difficulties with this verse.

It says our light affliction?

- Gina
- Renee
- Brian F
- Baby E
- Carey

None of these are light afflictions. At best its flippant to say these are light afflictions, at worst it's insulting!

It's amazing what Paul himself endured,

2 Corinthians 11 23 Are they ministers of Christ?—I speak as a fool—I am more: in labors more abundant, in stripes above measure, in prisons more frequently, in deaths often. 24 From the Jews five times I received forty stripes minus one. 25 Three times I was beaten with rods; once I was stoned; three times I was shipwrecked; a night and a day I have been in the deep; 26 in journeys often, in perils of waters, in perils of robbers, in perils of my own countrymen, in perils of the Gentiles, in perils in the city, in perils in the wilderness, in perils in the sea, in perils among false brethren; 27 in weariness and toil, in sleeplessness often, in hunger and thirst, in fastings often, in cold and nakedness— 28 besides the other things, what comes upon me daily: my deep concern for all the churches.

But he calls them “our light affliction.” How can that be?

It's interesting, objects that are heavy on earth, when taken into outer space become light. And this is what happens to our sufferings and troubles when we see them up against eternity.

Heaven's highs will make earthly burdens seem light as a feather. Heaven is so perfect that our first nano-second with Jesus will

more than make up for a lifetime of tears on earth. Paul says "our light affliction...is just for a moment."

Compared to eternity, this life is a flash.

In verse 17 God has promised us not just "glory," but a "weight of glory..."

And not just a "weight of glory," but an "eternal weight of glory..."

And not just an "eternal weight of glory," but an "exceeding and eternal weight of glory..."

And there's even more... Not just an "exceeding and eternal weight of glory," but a "more exceeding and eternal weight of glory..." And not just a "more exceeding and eternal weight of glory," but a "far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory!"

How's that for a bright future!

This is why we must keep our eyes on heaven. Much is in store!

18 while we do not look at the things which are seen, but at the things which are not seen. For the things which are seen are temporary, but the things which are not seen are eternal.

Have you ever noticed how material things always lose their luster? Give it a few months and the object you were so excited about will start to lose its luster.

In the greek the word 'seen' here is blepo. It means a careful study. Most of our world today is just glances! We glance at our phone, at our watch, at our ipad, very few things in our world require careful study anymore-and we wonder why biblical

illiteracy is at its highest rate ever in america-we're being conditioned to glaze.

We can't effectively see the eternal things by just glancing. No there's a process of studying, and examining, and bringing into focus the things of eternity.

Whenever we settle our focus on the things we can see, we'll lose heart after some time. But when our focus is upon the reality of heaven, our faith will grow.

We can face suffering because we know we have God's inheritance. **Hebrews 10:32-34 32 But recall the former days in which, after you were illuminated, you endured a great struggle with sufferings: 33 partly while you were made a spectacle both by reproaches and tribulations, and partly while you became companions of those who were so treated; 34 for you had compassion on me[fn] in my chains, and joyfully accepted the plundering of your goods, knowing that you have a better and an enduring possession for yourselves in heaven.**

Because of heaven, we can consider it pure joy to face trials. **James 1:2 My brethren, count it all joy when you fall into various trials, 3 knowing that the testing of your faith produces patience. 4 But let patience have its perfect work, that you may be perfect and complete, lacking nothing.**

Our suffering is refining our faith. **1 Peter 1:6-7 6 In this you greatly rejoice, though now for a little while, if need be, you have been grieved by various trials, 7 that the genuineness of your**

faith, being much more precious than gold that perishes, though it is tested by fire, may be found to praise, honor, and glory at the revelation of Jesus Christ

We suffer because Christ suffered.

1 Peter 2:20 For what credit is it if, when you are beaten for your faults, you take it patiently? But when you do good and suffer, if you take it patiently, this is commendable before God. 21 For to this you were called, because Christ also suffered for us,[fn] leaving us[fn] an example, that you should follow His steps: 22 “Who committed no sin,
Nor was deceit found in His mouth”:[fn]

23 who, when He was reviled, did not revile in return; when He suffered, He did not threaten, but committed Himself to Him who judges righteously;

We are blessed for suffering for what is right. 1 Peter 3:13-14

14 But even if you should suffer for righteousness' sake, you are blessed. “And do not be afraid of their threats, nor be troubled.”[fn] 15 But sanctify the Lord God[fn] in your hearts, and always be ready to give a defense to everyone who asks you a reason for the hope that is in you, with meekness and fear;

We suffer yet rejoice because we suffer for Christ.

1 Peter 4 12 Beloved, do not think it strange concerning the fiery trial which is to try you, as though some strange thing happened to you; 13 but rejoice to the extent that you partake of Christ's sufferings, that when His glory is revealed, you may also be glad with exceeding joy.

And

1 Peter 4:16 Yet if anyone suffers as a Christian, let him not be ashamed, but let him glorify God in this matter.[fn]

If you remember, when Elisha's servant heard that the king had dispatched men to take the Elisha captive, he was frightened. But Elisha wasn't scared, because the prophet had eyes of faith. He saw more than his servant's eyes could see. Elisha prayed that God would open his servant's eyes. And we're told, 2 Kings 6:14 Therefore he sent horses and chariots and a great army there, and they came by night and surrounded the city. 15 And when the servant of the man of God arose early and went out, there was an army, surrounding the city with horses and chariots. And his servant said to him, "Alas, my master! What shall we do?" 16 So he answered, "Do not fear, for those who are with us are more than those who are with them." 17 And Elisha prayed, and said, "LORD, I pray, open his eyes that he may see." Then the LORD opened the eyes of the young man, and he saw. And behold, the mountain was full of horses and chariots of fire all around Elisha.

God had dispatched troops of His own. The angelic secret service was protecting Elisha.

Elisha's prayer for his servant is my prayer for all of us. May the Lord help us look past the visible world, look deeper than our circumstances and open our eyes to the spiritual realities when we are suffering.

And we know one day, the pain will be gone. Revelation 21 1
Now I saw a new heaven and a new earth, for the first heaven
and the first earth had passed away. Also there was no more sea.
2 Then I, John,[fn] saw the holy city, New Jerusalem, coming
down out of heaven from God, prepared as a bride adorned for
her husband. 3 And I heard a loud voice from heaven saying,
“Behold, the tabernacle of God is with men, and He will dwell with
them, and they shall be His people. God Himself will be with them
and be their God. 4 And God will wipe away every tear from their
eyes; there shall be no more death, nor sorrow, nor crying. There
shall be no more pain, for the former things have passed away.”
5 Then He who sat on the throne said, “Behold, I make all things
new.” And He said to me,[fn] “Write, for these words are true and
faithful.”