

## 2 Cor. 4:7-18 - How not to lose heart in difficulty.

4:1 since we have this ministry by mercy, we don't lose heart...

### **3 views on how to not lose heart in difficult times.**

1. **V.7 A correct view of self.** We are nothing more than fragile, disposable, earthen vessels.
  - a. **Humility.** a correct view of self is to see yourself in light of who Jesus is; the treasure. But... God uses the foolish things to confound the wise. Moses - a murderer, with deep insecurities, Jacob... a cheat. King David's sinfulness is legendary. I'd lose heart though if I just thought I was nothing more than a useless, lowly jar of clay.
  - b. **High calling/mission:** I'm also entrusted with the highest calling on the planet. To deliver the glorious gospel of the light of Jesus. Paul doesn't lose heart for the sake of others.

V.8-9 Clay jars were fragile, disposable. We will lose heart if we listen to Satan whose chief tactic is to slander the character of God. *If He is good, how can He allow bad stuff? If He is all powerful, he'd stop bad stuff.* Paul said he knew the secret to survive it:

**2. Paul had a correct view of God.** Tragedy doesn't have the last word. God uses it. We believe that if God likes me, all will go well and the crushing won't occur plus or because we are imperfect, we can't imagine God likes us so we lose heart in the pressing/crushing. **2 Options:** we won't draw near to God or we will try to earn God's favor which will only crush us further. 2 Cor. 5:9 *we make it our aim to please him*; not to earn, but the context V.14 *Christ's love compels me.* Not out of obligation.

3. **A correct view of God's process.** V.10-12 CS Lewis said that *God knows that our happiness is only in Him. Yet we will not seek Him as long as He leaves us any other resort where it can even plausibly be looked for. While what we call "our own life" remains agreeable, we will not surrender it to Him. So he strips away all our "plausible sources of false happiness".*

V.10-12 We need daily renewal or we will be crushed.

v.13-16 Quotes Ps. 116. If we daily speak what we believe by faith about what God has said, we will be renewed and not crushed. Paul won't give up... even if the tangible world is collapsing. How?

4. **A correct view of eternity.** V.17-18 Nothing comes remotely close to the glory of eternity. No crushing, persecution, pain, turmoil, abandonment. Nothing.

### **Grow Group Questions:**

1. Do you avoid spiritual conversations for fear of your own inadequacies? How can realizing that we are clay pots alleviate that fear?
2. Think about your imperfections and brokenness. How can they be used to be a light for Jesus?
3. How has the enemy used the inevitable (v.8-9) *afflicting, persecution, perplexing, pressing down, crushing, feeling abandoned* circumstances in your life to discourage you? Where are you tempted to go with your thoughts in those moments? What encourages you about Paul's suggestions?
4. How does an eternal perspective versus a temporal perspective "change the game" in our thinking in hard times? What lies am I believing when I focus just on the temporal?
5. We live in a broken, cursed world that is full of evil. In the midst of the tangible pain and trials, how do I practically focus on what is unseen versus the more natural tendency on what is seen?