

Mid-Week Bible Study: Hard Questions about Pain & Suffering

Week 7: How do I honor God in my suffering? **Text:** 2 Corinthians 4:7-18 NIV

Introduction:

Q: What are some ways you have seen someone honored in a memorable way?

Point: Every part of life-including difficulties is an opportunity for glorify God.

2ND CORINTHIANS 4:7-11

Verse 7: Paul used the term **Treasure.**

- Treasure is something we seek after. We prize the poke or things we love as treasures. While some debate what Paul really meant when he was referring to this treasure. Was it his ministry or the knowledge of our saving grace through Jesus?
 - We're not totally sure. But whatever it was it was precious to both God and Paul.

Then he suggests that the treasure was placed in clay jars.

- In Paul's day and out clay jars were fragile and easily break. As a result, they did not have a lot of value.
- This is interesting because why would anyone put anything of significant value in a fragile and less valued object?

Verse 7b: Paul answered this question here. "so that the extraordinary power may be from God and not ourselves."

- In other words, God did this to contrast God power with human weakness.
 - Therefore, God's power is so amazing that with its inside of us, it can overcome and override our weakness.
 - *Despite our fragile nature God still grants us the privilege of carrying this treasure.*

Q: When have you seen someone glorify God when afflicted, perplexed, persecuted or struck down?

Verse 8-9: These two verses show God power works in a believer's life despite our human weaknesses.

- **Affliction** – probably refers to Paul's past troubles in Asia Minor.
 - **Greek word for Affliction:** oppressed, suffer hardship, pinched, squeezed
 - This word is used 11 times in 2nd Corinthians.
 - Despite being afflicted Paul was not crushed (restricted) – he was still able to press through and accomplish what God called him to do.
- **Perplexed** – at a loss, confused, uncertain, discouraged
 - Despite this he was not in despair. Paul knew God had provided a way.
 - **Read 1st Cor 10:13.**
- **Persecuted** – pursued, chased, yet he knew that God was still with him.
 - Yet God had not abandoned him – **Deuteronomy 31:16** (Never leave nor forsake you)
- **Struck Down** – beat up
 - Yet Paul maintained that God would not let him be destroyed, so he could keep on going.

Verse 10-11: Both of these verses use similar vocabulary and address the same things: suffering, death and resurrection.

- Death (verse 10) – the process of physical dying.
- Death (verse 11) – a different Greek word – used 40 times in Paul's writings and refers to the result of death.

Paul in both verses, is referring to the suffering he personally experienced while ministering and serving God.

- Suffering was difficult for Paul, as it is for us to see its purpose.
 - *We often don't see the positive results our suffering can bring.*
 - **KNOW THAT THERE IS PURPOSE IN YOUR PAIN.**

2ND CORINTHIANS 4:12-15

Here Paul reminds his readers and us that we should our situations and sufferings as opportunities to offer or thanksgiving and praise to God.

Verse 12: In order to understand verse 12 one has to ask and figure out, what Paul meant, "death is a work in us, but life in you."

- Here Paul is comparing and contrasting death and life. Paul's preaching was resulted in two things:
 - He was bringing death to himself i.e. suffering
- He was bringing life to the church at Corinth because the gospel of Jesus brings life and not death to those that hear it.

Verse 13: Paul informs his readers that he and his team can maintain despite of suffering because of their faith. He states that they have the same spirit of faith as those who were believers in the O.T. This is proven because here Paul quoted one of the Psalmist.

- **Read Psalm 116:10** – this verse would have been encouraging to Paul. For he believed that if God delivered the Psalmist back then, believed that God would surely deliver him now.
- Paul continued to stress that his faith in the scriptures urged him to push forward. Especially since Paul believed that those scriptures pointed to Jesus being the messiah.

Verse 14:

Verse 14 is a *promised which Paul staked his life and ministry on*. Because Paul believe Jesus was the messiah, who died and was resurrected, then he knew (by faith) that if God had raised his son, he would raise his servant also.

- This promise or confession is critical, because you cannot say that you believe in Jesus and not believe in their resurrection.
 - **Read Romans 10:9 & Colossians 1:18**
- Paul's talk about resurrection is not i.e. deliverance from suffering but its in refers to our future resurrection from the dead.
 - **Read 2nd Timothy 2:11 & Romans 6:5.**

Verse 15: Paul here uses the word "everything" = all things.

- Everything = all of Paul's ministry (preaching, suffering, writings, visits, and the lifestyle since his Damascus Road encounter.
 - Thus, it is here that Paul suggests that both his good days and his days were **beneficial** so the Corinthians would come to believe in Jesus.

Question: How can suffering lead to the spread of the gospel?

- Therefore, Paul purpose for going to hell and high water is so that others would come to the saving knowledge of Jesus Christ, share the in the gifts of grace and become disciples of Jesus.
 - The increase of believers brings God glory.

2nd CORINTHIANS 4:16-18

Verse 16: Paul phrase here “that we do not give up” was the mantra for his ministry and life.

Question: But who is the “we” in this statement?

- The **We** was not just his team, nor the Corinthians, but he is staying that this **should be every believer’s mantra.**
 - In times of hardship and suffering we must be like the energizer bunny. **“We take a licking and keep on ticking”**. because there is more at stake than just our wellbeing. God’s glory and other’s salvation is on the line.
- Paul was able to have this mindset, because of his belief system.
 - **Outer person VS Inner man**
 - The Outer person – he acknowledges was being destroyed (death and suffering)
 - The Inner Person - was being renewed by God’s spirit.

Pain and suffering hits us all. For some its only brief, and others its more prolonged. All of us are currently suffering. But even then, our sufferings are varied.

Question: What keep you from giving up?

Verse 17: Paul endured suffering, but he kept pushing forward.

- **Read Romans 8:18**

Paul here contrasted **momentary** with **eternal**.

- The text suggests that that we don’t ignore our current circumstances but to put them into proper perspective.
 - Light affliction < God’s glory



Verse 18: Paul concludes with stating that he is able to endure because is not simply looking at his current circumstance but his focus in on his eternal destination.