

Gospel Therefore

Gospel Endurance, part 2

Choosing the Long View

Grace Fellowship Church, Pastor Brad Bigney, March 18, 2012

You WILL suffer in this life... there's no way around it.

The Question Is...

Will you suffer well? Will you suffer in a way that glorifies God?

Will you suffer in a way that puts Christ on display to everyone around you?

2 Cor. 4:1-18

Two Big Changes that take root in a life that's been impacted by the Gospel

I. You Stop Trying to Be So Strong – and You Learn to Embrace Weakness and Uncertainty Knowing that's When Jesus Gets Put on Display Most Fully in Your Life

2 Corinthians 4:7–10 “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.”

It's when we're weak that God can get the most done IN us and THROUGH us.

Philippians 4:11–12 “¹¹ Not that I speak in regard to need, for I have learned in whatever state I am, to be content: ¹² I know how to be abased, and I know how to abound. Everywhere and in all things I have learned both to be full and to be hungry, both to abound and to suffer need.”

Contentment is something Paul had to LEARN.

2 Corinthians 4:8-9

‘But not...’ Two words that pump hope into what so often looks like a hopeless, crushing situation.

(1) Hard pressed on every side

This alludes to the fact that we have all kinds of pressures on us from all kinds of places, but not crushed!

(2) Perplexed

Often we're at our wits' end. We don't know what to do. We're confused and reeling from the suffering, but not in despair!

For the Christian, even if we have no idea what's going on, we know who does! Life is not easy. God has never promised it would be.

(3) Persecuted

We're persecuted by other people, but not forsaken, never abandoned by God.

(4) Struck down

The word in the Greek for ‘struck down’ is a technical term that refers to a wrestler who throws his opponent to the floor.

So as we're hard pressed and perplexed and persecuted and body-slammed... the person of Christ and the power of God gets put on display in our lives!

2 Corinthians 4:7-11 "We carry this precious Message around in the unadorned clay pots of our ordinary lives. That's to prevent anyone from confusing God's incomparable power with us. As it is, there's not much chance of that. You know for yourselves that we're not much to look at. We've been surrounded and battered by troubles, but we're not demoralized; we're not sure what to do, but we know that God knows what to do; we've been spiritually terrorized, but God hasn't left our side; we've been thrown down, but we haven't broken... Our lives are at constant risk for Jesus' sake, which makes Jesus' life all the more evident in us." *The Message*

Suffering is God's ammonia-strength Windex and gracious squeegee that works in us to wipe away so much that is keeping people from seeing the glory of Christ in and through us!

When you're hard pressed, perplexed, persecuted, struck down... you're NOT being crushed or forsaken or destroyed... you're being transformed more and more into the image of Christ.

2 Corinthians 4:10-11 " 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."

Jesus suffered. The apostles suffered. Great men and women at every point in history have been refined by God through adversity... so that Christ can be seen more clearly.

II. You Stop Obsessing Over What this Sin-Cursed World is Doing TO You – and You Start Rejoicing in What God is Already Doing FOR You!

2 Corinthians 4:16-18 ¹⁶ Therefore we do not lose heart. Even though our outward man is perishing, yet the inward man is being renewed day by day. ¹⁷ For our light affliction, which is but for a moment, is working for us a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory, 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."

So there's no need to pretend that everything's great – it's not!

But for the Christian, decay is not the main thing happening. In the midst of this continual dying, the inner man is being renewed day by day!

What a comfort it is to know that our pain and suffering is never wasted and it's never random, because a wise and loving God has designed it to work IN us and FOR us an eternal weight of glory.

God uses ALL of the suffering in a believer's life – including YOURS right now whatever it is – to work FOR YOU.

God doesn't just want you to suffer... He wants you to suffer well, because when you suffer well, people around you see Jesus, and people desperately need to see Jesus.

Questions to Consider...

- What is your attitude towards suffering?
- Have you learned to embrace weakness and uncertainty – knowing that's when Jesus gets put on display most fully in your life?
- And have you crossed the line yet from obsessing over what this sin-cursed world keeps doing TO you and started rejoicing in what God is already doing FOR you through the suffering?