

From The Pulpit Of



IMMANUEL
BAPTIST
CHURCH

What's Your Why?

No. 11

2 Corinthians 4:13-18

Series: 2 Corinthians

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Theodore Siu

Text

[13] Since we have the same spirit of faith according to what has been written, "I believed, and so I spoke," we also believe, and so we also speak, [14] knowing that he who raised the Lord Jesus will raise us also with Jesus and bring us with you into his presence. [15] For it is all for your sake, so that as grace extends to more and more people it may increase thanksgiving, to the glory of God.

[16] So we do not lose heart. Though our outer self is wasting away, our inner self is being renewed day by day. [17] For this light momentary affliction is preparing for us an eternal weight of glory beyond all comparison, [18] as we look not to the things that are seen but to the things that are unseen. For the things that are seen are transient, but the things that are unseen are eternal.

Introduction:

- Arouse Interest:
 - There are a lot of things that Friedrich Nietzsche said that I disagree with. But there's one popular quote of his that I think is pretty good. "He who has a why to live can bear almost any how."¹
 - That's pretty solid. It sounds good, and it matches up with our experience of life.
 - Athletes can bear the pain and sacrifice when they're aiming at peak physical performance.
 - Homeowners can weather the stress of a terrible job for the sake of their next mortgage payment.
- Surface Need:
 - But what happens when your health takes a dip for the worst? When the bank forecloses on your home for an unexpected reason? What's your why to keep going then?
 - For those of us who are Christians, you and I are not immune to the sufferings of this world. As a matter of fact, Jesus himself promises his followers that "in the world you will have tribulations." (John 16:33).

¹ Friedrich Nietzsche and Reginald John Hollingdale, *Twilight of the Idols and The Anti-Christ*, Repr. with a new chronology., Penguin Classics (Penguin Books, 2003).

- But why? What benefit do we gain by suffering for Christ? Can we truly say that there is a good reason for enduring the persecutions and tribulations of the Christian life?
- Orient to Text:
 - The Apostle Paul has gone through a lot. As we can see even in the paragraph right above ours today, this was a man who, for the sake of his ministry, endured immense suffering and persecution.
 - But in spite of his suffering, Paul could still say with confidence:
 - 2 Corinthians 4:8–10
 - [8] We are afflicted in every way, but not crushed; perplexed, but not driven to despair; [9] persecuted, but not forsaken; struck down, but not destroyed; [10] always carrying in the body the death of Jesus, so that the life of Jesus also may be manifested in our bodies.
 - How could he say this? What was the purpose of his struggle? How could a man like Paul still have hope, even after suffering so much?
 - This is what Paul addresses here in verses 13-18. Here Paul gives two reasons why he goes on in the Christian life in spite of its significant trials. In verses 13-15, Paul argues that he goes on for them. Then in verses 16-18, Paul argues that he goes on this for himself.
- In short, Paul’s argument here can be summarized like this: ***God’s people have good reasons to keep on going.***

For Them (13-15)

- Paul begins this section by emphasizing that the faith he seeks to proclaim is not unique to him. According to verse 13, Paul is simply proclaiming the same faith that the Psalmist proclaims in the Old Testament. Paul writes here:
 - [13] Since we have the same spirit of faith according to what has been written, “I believed, and so I spoke,” we also believe, and so we also speak,
- This is a citation of Psalm 116:10. In the larger context, the Psalmist is praising the Lord for delivering him from the threat of death. We’re not told the exact details of the danger, but what we know for sure is that the situation was dire and the hope for rescue was slim. But in the nick of time, God came through and delivered the Psalmist from his present dangers.
- And now, the Psalmist is praising the name of the Lord in the presence of all of God’s people.
 - Psalm 116:18–19
 - [18] I will pay my vows to the LORD
 - in the presence of all his people,
 - [19] in the courts of the house of the LORD,
 - in your midst, O Jerusalem.

- Praise the LORD! (ESV)
- The intended effect is that all people who are in dire situations would see God's deliverance and would call upon the name of the Lord for themselves.
- Now, what is Paul doing with this quotation from Psalm 116? Well, Paul states in 2 Corinthians 4:13 that he too shares the same spirit of faith as the psalmist in the Old Testament. Notice the similarity in wording here at the end of 2 Corinthians 4:13:
 - "I believed, and so I spoke," we also believe, and so we also speak,
- Just as the Psalmist sought to persuade everyone to look to the Lord in their distress, Paul is seeking to persuade everyone in his day to trust in God as well. To do what God's people have always done in hard times. To cry out to the Lord.
- But notice the proof that Paul gives for his faith is a little different than the Psalmist in the Old Testament. While the Psalmist cites his own experience, Paul states that he believes and he speaks:
 - [14] knowing that he who raised the Lord Jesus will raise us also with Jesus and bring us with you into his presence.

Application

- In other words, if the Psalmist back then had good reasons to cry out to God then, you and I today have far greater reasons to cry out to God today.
 - Back then God saved David from the threat of death, but today God raised the greater David right out of death.
 - Back then God's people knew God could preserve their life from the grave, but now God's people know that God in Christ gives resurrection life beyond the grave.
- Friends, if Jesus Christ truly did rise from the dead, then you and I today have all the reason in the world to persevere in the Christian life. We have a message that everyone alive today desperately needs to hear. And even if we have to suffer to get that message out, it is 100% worth it.

Illustration:

- One of my favorite movies is the World War I film *1917*. The film follows Lance Corporal William Schofield as he is crossing the battlefield of Northern France to deliver a message to Colonel Mackenzie. It's imperative that he deliver the message to Colonel Mackenzie because the next morning, the 2nd Battalion of the Devonshire Regiment are scheduled to attack the German army at the Hindenburg Line. But what they don't know is that they are walking into a trap. The Germans are heavily fortified and prepared to overwhelm their forces with artillery.
- So you follow William as he traverses a battlefield to get this message to Mackenzie. And it's intense. Mines go off around him. Planes are shot down in front of him. Snipers keep trying to pick him off, but Corporal Williams keeps on trucking.

- Right as he's getting close to the 2nd Battalion, Colonel Mackenzie starts the attack. William has to run through a live war zone screaming, "I have a message for Colonel Mackenzie." Finally, at the very last second, Corporal William finds Mackenzie and hands him the message just in time to call off the attack.
- It was hard. It was a struggle every step. But it was 100% worth it. By getting the message across, Corporal William saved 1,600 men from marching to their death.

Application

- Brothers and sisters, I get that the Christian life is not easy. You and I are called by Christ to be a peculiar people in a hostile world.
- We're fighting sin on the inside, enduring bitter circumstances on the outside, weathering the storms of spiritual attacks, all while doing our best to share the good news of Christ to people that often don't want to hear it. Friends, the Christian life is hard.
- But what else can we do? Look around you. Every one in this sanctuary, every one in this neighborhood, everyone in this city is one day going to die. We are all marching to our deaths, and we will all have to stand before God on judgment day. And that's terrifying.
- But you and I, we have something to say! For anyone who's not a believer hearing this right now, I've got a message for you today!
- There is hope. There is a way to be saved. Jesus Christ has been raised from the dead. And those who trust in Christ can be sure that we too will rise to be with him.
- Not only will we rise, but as Paul says in verse 14 those who trust in God know:
 - that he who raised the Lord Jesus will raise us also with Jesus and bring us with you into his presence.
- The word for presence here is the same word Paul will use in 11:2 when he describes the church being presented to Christ as his bride.
 - In other words, not only can you be raised with Christ, but by faith you can have a right relationship to Christ.
- You can know that all the punishment for your sins have been laid on Christ and all his righteousness is now laying on you.
- Friend, in Jesus Christ, there is salvation from all the powers of sin, death, and condemnation.
- And brothers and sisters, if that's true, then that's a message that's worth running for. That's a mission that's worth fighting for. That's a why that's worth even suffering and dying for.
- After everything he's been through, all the trials of ministry, the betrayal, the heartache, the persecution and tribulation, the apostle Paul still believed that all of this would be worthwhile when one day he gets to see all of God's people safe and sound in heaven's gates praising God for his salvation!
- That's the why that kept Paul going. Is that the kind of why that can keep us going today? When your family's struggling, and your friends let you down? When your classmates or co-workers don't think it's cool to be a Christian anymore? Is the

hope of seeing your loved ones in heaven enough of a why to take it all on and keep going?

For you (16-18)

- Not only did the apostle Paul endure immense suffering for the sake of the others around him, but as we see in verses 16-18, Paul also persevered in the Christian life for his own spiritual benefit as well.
- According to Paul, the immense sufferings of this life were not a discouragement to him, because he knew in God's providence these trials were preparing him for the next life.
- Paul makes this point by contrasting his outer self with his inner self. Now when you see Paul talk about the outer and inner self in verse 16, it's not exactly the same thing as the body and soul of a person. When we look at Paul's usage of this phrase the inner self, it seems pretty clear that Paul is speaking about that part of us that is regenerated by the Holy Spirit (Rom. 7:22; Eph. 3:16).
- Hence the outer man is something closer to the part of Paul you can see in the age, but the inner man is the part of Paul we will see in the age to come. In the age of the spirit.
- Notice the contrast between the outer self and the inner self.
 - The outer self is wasting away, but the inner self is being renewed day by day.
 - The outer self suffers light momentary afflictions, but the inner self is being prepared for an eternal weight of glory.
 - The outer self is seen, but the inner self is unseen.
 - The outer self is transient, but the inner self is eternal.
- Now why is Paul bringing all this up here? Well we need to remember that the people that Paul is talking to is the Corinthian church. This was a church that was shallow and transfixed on outward appearances. They were doubting the ministry credentials of this seemingly weak apostle, who stuttered and suffered so much. They were intrigued by false teachers with worldly credentials and allure.
- Part of what the apostle Paul is trying to do here is flip the mindset of these Corinthian believers.
 - You've been looking on the outside, but God's been looking at the heart.
 - You've been spending your time acquiring earthly treasures, but God asks us to lay up for ourselves treasures in heaven.
 - You've been preoccupied with the kingdoms of this world, but God wants us to focus on the kingdom to come.
- By all measure of earthly success, Paul ought to have been discouraged and depressed.
- But Paul was focused on the things that were unseen.
 - Even though he couldn't see God at work, he knew that as God was breaking down the outer self he was building up the inner self.
 - He knew that in God's providence, the afflictions of this life were being used to prepare him for an eternal weight of glory beyond all comparison.

- It's interesting, in the Greek the phrase is literally something like from hyperbole to hyperbole.
- According to Paul, the splendor of heaven is so blinding that you and I need a Holy Spirit upgrade inside and out to fully enjoy heaven's riches.
- But part of the way God's people are spiritually prepared to enjoy heaven is by being spiritually sanctified by the afflictions of this life. As he says in verse 17:
 - For this light momentary affliction is preparing for us an eternal weight of glory beyond all comparison,
- This didn't make suffering easy. But In light of the glory that is to come, Paul was able to say that the afflictions that befell him were light and momentary.

Application

- Now, I don't want to be glib here. I know that many of you here today are going through things in life that you would never want to call light or momentary. I don't want to belittle the significance of your burdens this morning.
- At the same time, I don't want to belittle the kinds of suffering that Paul himself went through during his life either. As we saw in 2 Corinthians 1:8, Paul states:
 - For we were so utterly burdened beyond our strength that we despaired of life itself.
- Friends, Paul knew what it meant to suffer in this life. He knew the temptation to succumb to anxiety and despair.
- Nevertheless, Paul did not lose heart. In the moments when Paul was able to look up and see his life in light of eternity, Paul found enough reason to persevere in the Christian life. He found a why worth living for.
- But notice what Paul had to do to get there. To gain that kind of perspective on his life, Paul needed to keep his focus on the things that are unseen in verse 18. Paul needed to have more hope invested in heaven than he had invested in the realities of the here and now.
- And this is important for us to hear today. Friends, we live in a culture that is perpetually fixated on the things of this world. Our books are selling us our best life now. Our newscasts are 24/7 fixtures of global problems. You and I spend the majority of our time thinking about the market of our day, the politics of our time, or even the celebrity gossip of our era.
- And I'm not saying that these things are bad or insignificant. But friends, if all our hope is invested in this present age, we will always find ourselves depressed, let down, and overwhelmed by the realities of a broken world. We won't have a why that's substantial enough to bear with the sorrows of our circumstances.
- But there is a way to fix our eyes on God. If we can meditate on who he is. If we can remember what he's doing and where he's taking us, then, even when we lose some things in this life, you and I can still have hope that we gain everything in the life to come. We can rest secure on a foundation that isn't shifting with the sands of time.

- Friend, I may not know what you are going through this morning. I may not be able to understand the sorrows of your heart. But I can say this on the basis of God's Word today. The apostle Paul suffered more than any of us here in this room.
- But because Paul was able to look up, to remember what God was doing and to see where God was ultimately bringing him, Paul was able to say that the tribulations of this life are light and momentary in light of the hope of an eternal weight of glory beyond all comparison.
- But that's the catch isn't it? You gotta be able to look up. You gotta every now and then break away from the rat race, look away from the world, and look to Christ in faith.
- Brothers and sisters, this is why basic things like prayer and Bible reading are so important. This is why discipleship within the church matters so much. Why that phone call to a brother and sister matters. This is why the regular weekly rhythms of Sunday morning gatherings are so fundamental to the Christian faith. This is why these things are most important when you are dealing with the most disrupting tragedies of your life.
- It's because the Christian life is hard. It's because the trials and tribulations you and I face are overwhelming. And we will be overwhelmed by the losses of this life, unless we regularly remind one another that our ultimate hope and treasure is in the life to come.
- There are many times in my life when I am too focused on the problems of the present. And I am anxious and depressed because I don't know how all of this will turn out.
- But when a brother or sister in Christ reminds me of what God has done, what he is doing, and what he will one day do for me, then I am reminded that in Christ God ultimately is for me. The circumstances he lets into my life are for my good to conform me into the image of Christ. To prepare me to meet my Savior face to face when I am brought before his presence.
 - Romans 8:28-29
 - [28] And we know that for those who love God all things work together for good, for those who are called according to his purpose. [29] For those whom he foreknew he also predestined to be conformed to the image of his Son, in order that he might be the firstborn among many brothers.
- Beloved, if God has a good reason for our present circumstances, then you and I have a good reason to keep going in the Christian life. But for those of you who are just visiting today, do you have a good reason to keep going in your life today? What's your why today?
- As Christians we believe that Jesus Christ lived the life we could never live, died to pay the price we could never pay, and rose again from the dead so that one day those who trust in him will one day rise to be with him forever.
- And because we believe this, we have good reasons why we choose to endure through the trials of this life. It's because we believe that ultimately whatever happens to us in this life it is for our good, it is for the good of God's people, and

ultimately it is for the glory of our God as we all will one day gather in his presence to declare the excellencies of our Savior together.