



— SECOND — CORINTHIANS

The Comfort of God FOR and THROUGH His People



Part 20—“Treasure in Earthen Vessels”— 17 March 2024

Introduction:

The ministry of Paul and his companions was glorious because it openly displayed Messiah, who transforms His people in a continuous and progressive way through the indwelling of His Spirit. Even so, it has been necessary to address his critics in order to explain the afflictions and hardships that they are experiencing and how they have managed to remain encouraged.

Main Point: The _____ that we experience in life are opportunities for the _____ of Christ to be manifested in and through us for the long term benefit of others.

Life Manifested Through Death—2 Corinthians 4:7-12

- Paul explains God’s intent in using someone like him as a minister of the gospel. (4:7)

Observations:

1. He employs an illustration that would have been somewhat perplexing to his audience.

“treasure”

“jars of clay”

2. The juxtaposition of these images highlighted the difference between the apostles and the God they _____.

“surpassing power”

“The vessels into which God pours his treasure are not gold but clay, made from the dust of the earth. They are not only sufficient for the job (see 2:16; 3:5); they are far more valuable than golden receptacles because of the treasure they contain.”—David Garland

Key Point: Rightly understanding _____ and our _____ is central to remaining encouraged in the midst of difficulty and suffering.

- Paul then specifies how it is that God’s power is being displayed through frailty. (4:8-10)

Observations:

1. A series of contrasts are listed:

“afflicted in every way”

“but not crushed”

“perplexed”

“but not driven to despair”

“persecuted”

“but not forsaken”

“struck down”

“but not destroyed”

2. The sufferings described illustrate an important theological principle:

“death”—νεκρώσις (nekrōsis)—death as process, death, putting to death.

⇒ Paul understands his sufferings in relation to those of _____. As Jesus’ apostles, they suffer in the ways that He did.

“Paul does not strive to imitate Christ’s sufferings...but [they] are working themselves out in his life.” —David Garland

3. The purpose of carrying the death of Jesus in his body is that it is possible for the life of Jesus to also be on display.
“life”

⇒ It is the _____ life of Christ that Paul is referencing. It is the power of God through the life of Christ that sustains them through the sufferings that they endure.

Key Point: Christ suffered _____ us vicariously on the cross, but we do well to remember that He also suffered _____ us in a fallen world.

- Paul goes on to explain how the display of God’s power through their weakness was ultimately for the benefit of others. (4:11-12)

Observations:

1. The sufferings and afflictions they are experiencing serve to advance the _____.

“death”—θάνατος (*thanatos*)—Death as the termination of life; used of the danger or threat of death.

“for Jesus’ sake”

2. The reality of Christ’s resurrection _____ means that His people can continue in faithful service even under the continual threat of death.

“mortal flesh”

3. The _____ of their suffering was ultimately that the Corinthians might share in the life of Christ.

“It was through Paul’s preaching of the gospel in the power of the Spirit, albeit in the midst of persecution and suffering, that Jesus’ life was mediated to others.”
—Colin Kruse

Key Point: The _____ of Christ is manifested in those who desire to join with Him in carrying out the _____ of Christ in the world.

Concluding Thoughts

- Our suffering is _____ in God’s plans to use us for His glory in the world.
- Jesus goes _____ us in our sufferings and has triumphed _____ them.
- Jesus is with us _____ in our sufferings to encourage us.



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Concluding Thoughts

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- Jesus goes before us in our sufferings and has triumphed over them.
- Jesus is with us personally in our sufferings to encourage us.