

2 Corinthians 4:1-10

Therefore, since we have this ministry, as we have received mercy, we do not lose heart. But we have renounced the hidden things of shame, not walking in craftiness nor handling the word of God deceitfully, but by manifestation of the truth commending ourselves to every man's conscience in the sight of God. But even if our gospel is veiled, it is veiled to those who are perishing, whose minds the god of this age has blinded, who do not believe, lest the light of the gospel of the glory of Christ, who is the image of God, should shine on them. For we do not preach ourselves, but Christ Jesus the Lord, and ourselves your bondservants for Jesus' sake. For it is the God who commanded light to shine out of darkness, who has shone in our hearts to give the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ. But we have this treasure in earthen vessels, that the excellence of the power may be of God and not of us.

We are hard pressed on every side, yet not crushed; we are perplexed, but not in despair; persecuted, but not forsaken; struck down, but not destroyed— always carrying about in the body the dying of the Lord Jesus, that the life of Jesus also may be manifested in our body.

SUFFERING WITH EXPECTATION

Philip Yancey concludes his book "Where is God When it Hurts" with this thought: "In one sense, there will be no solution to pain until Jesus returns and recreates the earth. I am sustained by faith in that great hope. If I did not truly believe that God is a Physician and not a Sadist, and that He "feels in Himself the tortured presence of every nerve that lacks its repose," I would immediately abandon all attempts to plumb the mysteries of suffering."

Hope presses the believer to expect more from God! This was evident in Paul's life as he expressed his own attitude toward suffering in the Second Epistle of Corinthians. Paul makes reference to three specific expectations of suffering. First and foremost, he expects to see God glorified: "For we which live are always delivered unto death for Jesus' sake, that the life also of Jesus might be made manifest in our mortal flesh. So then death works in us, but life in you... For all things are for your sakes, that the abundant grace might through the thanksgiving of many redound to the glory of God" (2 Corinthians 12:11-15).

The heart beat of Paul was to see God glorified as the One True God, all sufficient in times of trial and distress. Paul had already alluded to this: "Not that we are sufficient of ourselves to think any thing as of ourselves; but our sufficiency is of God" (2 Corinthians 3:5).

Paul expresses a second expectation of suffering: "But we all, with open face beholding as in a glass the glory of the Lord, are changed into the same image from glory to glory, even as by the Spirit of the Lord" (2 Corinthians 3:18). Here Paul speaks of the practical affect of living by faith in the all sufficient God. The path of suffering that evidences human weakness, necessitates a deep dependency upon the provision of God. This deep dependency demands a close communion with God, which in turn, results in the transforming of a life into godlikeness. Paul speaks of practical sanctification, raised to a higher level by the sufferings of ministry: "For our light affliction, which is but for a moment, works for us a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory" (2 Corinthians 4:17).

He expected to experience greater power: "And he said unto me, My grace is sufficient for thee: for my strength is made perfect in weakness. Most gladly therefore will I rather glory in my infirmities, that the power of Christ may rest upon me." (2 Corinthians 12:9-11). Paul, through sickness, weakness and suffering, was made more like Christ. Therefore, by grace, he was assured of more of the unique power of Christ in his life.

In suffering, the Christian finds hope in God being glorified, life being sanctified, strength being fortified, all this and heaven too! No wonder Paul could say "For me to live is Christ, and to die is gain!" (Philip. 1:21). Has your heart found such expectation in suffering?

What is my response:
