

God's eternal plan: Our response to trials (2 Cor. 4:7-18)

I. Overview

A. Scripture context: This scripture follows Paul's writings on the new covenant (2 Cor 3.) He leads up to 2 Cor 4 by speaking of the mosaic covenant being one that veils us, where as the new covenant in Christ removes the veil and enables us to reflect the glory of God.

Mosaic covenant = ministers of the letter (2 Cor 3:7)

New covenant = ministers of the Spirit, not the letter (2 Cor 3:6)

Paul describes that the light of God lives in our hearts, in order that we have the light of the knowledge of the Glory of God in the face of Christ. (2 Cor 4:6)

B. Theme: Paul is developing a theme in 2 Cor 4-6 about how we can experience God's manifest presence in a greater way. He gives insight into how our **responses to pressure** can result in two great blessings. First, an increase of God's presence in this age. Secondly and increase of our experience of God's glory in the age to come.

C. Great blessing #1: Increase of the manifest presence of God in our life and ministry in this age.

10 That the life of Jesus also may be revealed (or manifested) in our body.

(2 Cor. 4:10)

D. Great blessing #2: Increase of our experience of God's glory in the age to come.

17 For our light and momentary troubles are achieving for us an eternal glory that far outweighs them all. (2 Cor. 4:17)

E. Foundational to understanding God's **purpose for pressure** in our life is the revelation of eternity and the continuity of our life choices in this age to the measure of glory we experience in the age to come. Every believer will experience a different measure of glory in the age to come.

41 For one star differs from another star in glory. 42 So also is the resurrection of the dead. (1 Cor. 15:41-42)

II. Inspiration for this sermon.

A. Louise - Body dying but alive in her Spirit until the end.

i) But we have treasure in jars of clay (earthen vessels) to show that this all surpassing power **is from God and not from us.** 2 Cor 4:7

B. Revelation of eternity and the end times.

i) How we respond to trials now will impact our eternal assignment. God looks for overcomers to rule and reign with Him in the Millennium.

ii) Life on earth in this age can be likened to a 70-year internship (Ps. 90:10) which prepares us for the next season of our life on earth in the age to come. Our next ministry calling begins in the Millennium and will last for 1,000 years (Rev. 20:4-6; 2:26-27; 3:21; 5:10; 22:5)

iii) Our ministry in the age to come has nothing to do with how much we accomplished outwardly in this age, but how much we developed inwardly. The choices we make in our 70-year internship determine where and how we will function in our 1,000-year ministry assignment.

You were faithful over a few things, I will make you ruler over many things. (Mt. 25:21)

Well done...you were faithful in a very little, have authority over 10 cities. (Lk. 19:17)

III. Four pressures common to every believer.

We are hard pressed on every side but not crushed; perplexed, but not in despair; persecuted, but not abandoned; struck down but not destroyed. (2 Cor 4:8-9)

A. **Paradox #1** (attacking our emotions): ***We are hard pressed on every side, yet not crushed.***

i) This speaks of circumstances that pressure our emotions. Pressure comes from every direction including finances, sickness, broken relationships, accidents, failures in sin, etc. The enemy wants us to feel crushed so that we will give up in our resolve to pursue Jesus and His kingdom.

ii) The most common temptation in life is to quit with the feeling that we cannot bear it any longer.

No temptation has overtaken you except such as is common to man; but God is faithful, who will not allow you to be tempted beyond what you are able, but with the temptation will also make the way of escape, that you may be able to bear it. (1 Cor. 10:13)

B. Paradox #2 (attacking our understanding): *We are perplexed, but we are not in despair.*

i) This speaks of circumstances that perplex us, causing us pressure in our understanding. We ask the question: **“Why, God?”** It is common to yield to despair when perplexed, leading **people to lose confidence in God’s goodness.** People in despair often become hopeless and aimless because **they cannot connect their struggle with the good that it is producing in them.**

ii) God uses perplexity to train us. **The Father purposely hides many details of our lives,** including how He will bring deliverance to our problems. Why does God do this? **He wants us to have confidence and security by virtue of intimacy with Him,** rather than in having all the details of how God will provide for us in our need.

C. Paradox #3 (attacked by people): *We are persecuted, but not forsaken.*

i) This speaks of persecution, causing us pressure from people. Instead of being appreciated by others as we serve and stand for truth, they resist us and influence others to join them. All who stand for truth will be resisted; **sometimes it even comes from within the Church.**

ii) Look at Job, Nehemiah, Paul (2 Cor 6: 3-10)

iii) **The enemy lies to us, saying that because some people have forsaken us God has also forsaken us,** and that He has overlooked us when we are mistreated. When man’s favor is lifted from you that does not mean that God has taken His favor from you. When people feel forsaken, they lose sight of God’s love for them and become fearful.

D. Paradox #4 (attacking our life purpose): *We are struck down, but not destroyed.*

i) This speaks of **major setbacks in life** that threaten to destroy our primary life purpose. Over an entire life, there are usually only a few major setbacks that are life-altering enough to make one feel struck down.

These can include suffering through the death of a loved one, a divorce, abuse, prison, a sickness, a serious accident, financial calamity, a natural disaster, etc. **The enemy lies, telling us that such calamities have the power to destroy our primary life purpose in God.**

ii) We combat the enemy by:

- Coming into agreement with God's word and speaking it. (2 Cor 4:13)

- Understanding that through our setbacks, our life purpose exists.

- Understanding these setbacks in light of eternity.

We do not lose heart. Even though our outward man is perishing, yet the inward man is being renewed day by day. For our light affliction, which is but for a moment, is working for us a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory... (2 Cor. 4:14-17)