

**Intro:** Sooner or later we all come to the place spiritually where we feel like we just can't go on! We are ready to quit! Sometimes it comes: Relationship issue, Church issue, Personal struggle, Financial or health issue, Work For whatever reason we find ourselves saying... "I just CAN'T do this any more!"

Continue our Series: (Finding God's Strength In Our Weakness)  
How Do You Keep Going When It Feels Like You Have Nothing Left?  
Today: Finding Strength To Persevere  
2 Cor 4:1-18 Pg 818

### 1. Refuse to Compromise Your Character.

4:1-6

When the pressure is on, and it feels like you have reached the end of your rope, THAT is when Satan does his worst! The temptation to compromise your character in order to get out from underneath the strain is overwhelming. DON'T!!! The temptation comes in many different forms: All of them look like an easy way out. Just make one small compromise.... ~DON'T DO IT!

- Lose Heart: Lit = *to be weak hearted! behave badly, give in to evil, lose courage* (I quit!)
- Secret ways: Lit = *renounce, speak away from oneself; hidden things, things done in secret (underhand)*
- Shameful ways: Lit = *do something wrong shameful, disgraceful, dishonest (cut corners)*
- Deception: Lit = *to be clever, cunning, deceitful: (to catch with bait) (work angles)*
- Distort word: Lit = *adulterating the word of God (wine or gold) make it impure (ADD to deceive)*

Paul says, listen: You make sure that you live your life in a way that honors God in all the details, Don't compromise! When you are under pressure, don't give in to the temptation to compromise your character to alleviate the pressure

~INSTEAD DO 3 THINGS:

- Set forth truth plainly: *This is who I am! This is gospel! Show me! (Martin Luther: Here I Stand!)*
- Preach Jesus as Lord: *God is in charge: He has not blinked, forgotten, cast me down or ignored me! Busy*
- Remember: I'm a servant!: *This might not be about me at ALL! (Job)*

When trouble comes...when you are ready to give up...Refuse to compromise your character, regardless of temptation

### 2. Remember That God Has A Purpose For The Pain!

4:7-15

Here Paul is going back to where he began in his letter to the Corinthians, and revisiting and developing this more fully ADD He has already talked about a couple of different Purposes for Pain. Remember what we have already studied.

- In our Pain He comforts us SO THAT we can comfort others: 1:3-4
- In our Pain He teaches us to rely upon Him, not ourselves: 1:9
- Today: #3: *In our Pain, Jesus life is revealed in us!* 4:7,11 (Testimony)
- Today: #4: *In our Pain God will be glorified as people see Him faithful!* 4:15 (for YOUR benefit)

Look at how Paul puts this together! Vs 7

We have this treasure (gospel of Jesus in our lives) to SHOW that this power is from God!

We are HIS example...or what HE can do in the lives of people!

Show: Lit = Grammatical Flag: SO THAT!!! For the purpose of illuminating that it is GOD'S power...not ours!

- Hard pressed: *crowded, pressed in narrow grapes* Not crushed: *Not immobilized, not unable to move*
- Perplexed: *no way out, at a loss (mental)* Not in despair *Not ready to despair and give up*
- Persecuted: *being hunted down* Not abandoned *Not left behind, abandoned, on our own*
- Struck down: *thrown down, cast down* Not destroyed *Not dying, not perishing, not abolished*

IN THE MIDDLE OF OUR TRIALS AND PAIN, WHEN WE LIVE RIGHT....

~TRUE SPIRITUAL LIFE IS REVEALED: Our struggles help the LIFE of Jesus be revealed for all to see!

When we are walking through the greatest trials, we find His greatest strength!

His LIFE is shown: MADE APPARENT: Paul talks about that in Phil 2: Shining like stars in the darkness

When we are walking in "death" and Jesus LIFE is revealed in us: It shows: It SHINES It is a testimony

Illus: Job: How many people have been encouraged through the ages by his story!

God wants to do that through you!

~GOD IS GLORIFIED:

As a result, our struggles lead others to GLORIFY God for His faithfulness!

When they see us walking in faith through the trials, trusting God, honoring Him, pointing others to Him

It causes them to glorify God! To speak well of Him. (Look at what GOD can do!)

We believe in Faith: The one who raised Jesus (vs 14) will also raise us!

That spirit of Faith is a powerful testimony to anyone watching...God is faithful, Gives what you need in trials!

Applic: Treasures in Jars of clay: The most COMMON and ordinary container...cheap...everywhere...nothing special

The only way that treasure is EVER seen...is when you BREAK the jars!

When you do that...the light and the glory and the grace and the beauty of God's faithfulness and strength SHINES!!

SHINES: Everyone watching sees: Look at the Hand of God in that woman's life!

Glorify God! (Saw that happen on the Cross: Centurion: "Surely this man was the Son of God!") PURPOSE!!!

### 3. When You Are Ready To Give Up, Focus On The End Result, Not The Process.

Vs 18

What is that old saying? No one wants to see how the sausage is made?

It is tasty...we all love it...the final result is amazing. But, watching the process is difficult! Tough...Not fun

The same thing is true about finding the strength to persevere. We have to look at the end result, not the process!

The process is painful. And, if you focus on that, it will discourage you. But, if you look at result, it will encourage you!

- **Process:**
  - ~Outwardly: Wasting away: Lit = *rotting away, being ruined, falling apart, being corrupted and destroyed*
  - ~Inwardly : Being renewed Lit = *to be refreshed, renewed, restored*
- **Process:**
  - ~Light and momentary troubles: *These things will not last!*
  - ~Achieving eternal glory! *The work of God lasts forever. God's final product in us and through us eternal*
- **Process:**
  - ~Don't look at what is seen: **Temporary:** *Not the circumstances, not the pain, not the struggle, not the cost*
  - ~Fix eyes on unseen: **Eternal:** *We fix our eyes by FAITH on what we haven't seen, but has been promised*  
Heb 11:1: For faith is the substance of what is hoped for, evidence not yet seen!

#### SO WHAT IS OFTEN NOT SEEN?

1. **The Unseen Work of God behind the Scenes:** **Ruth**  
3 chapters of pain, struggle, difficulty and uncertainty. Living on the ragged edge of starvation, depending on others  
But then, in ch 4 something happens. After seeking help Ruth returns home with no guarantee for the future  
But ch 4:1 Opens with a single word. MEANWHILE! (Just like the sat am westerns when I was a kid)  
Good guys are pinned down, all is lost...CUT AWAY...Meanwhile! The rescuers are on the way!  
But, they don't see them...don't know...feel like all is lost  
God does that for us. We fix our eyes on the promises of God...."I will never leave you or forsake you!" Walk thru fire, ...
2. **Unimaginable Power of God:** **Tomb**  
Think about it. We are approaching Easter. Jesus was arrested, tried, crucified, dead and buried  
For 3 days his body lay in the tomb...And all of hell celebrated...while all of his followers cried  
But one thing was forgotten...One thing was unseen...One thing NO ONE took into account. Power of God  
And on that 3<sup>rd</sup> morning...The Spirit of God worked in that dark tomb of death...and LIFE shone forth!
3. **Future that Only God Can See.** **Isaiah**  
Is 43:14-21 "Behold I am doing a NEW THING...Don't you see it?  
When God is at work...behind the scenes, with his unimaginable power...The future is what HE SAYS it is...  
NOT WHAT WE SEE!!!  
Ez: Valley of Dry bones..."Can these bones live?" **ONLY YOU KNOW GOD!**

CONCL: So how do you find the strength to persevere

1. **Don't compromise your character:** Is that temptation in front of you today? Is the evil one whispering in your ear  
Its ok, no one will know, no one will see, you can get out from under this burden  
Don't do it!  
Instead, come and ask for strength to endure  
**PRAY: God Give Me Strength**
2. **Hold on to the purpose of God:** He is using you as a testimony to others.  
Not easy, not quick, not painless: BUT  
It isn't random and pointless either.  
God is at work  
When it is all said and done, if you do it RIGHT...HE will be glorified!  
**PRAY: God Help me Understand Your Purpose**
3. **Focus On The Result, not process:** It is passing...temporary, not eternal  
It is nothing compared to the glory to come  
God is at work in ways YOU CANNOT SEE: **TRUST THAT!**  
~Behind the scenes  
~Immense power on your behalf  
~He has a future that He can see...and you can too if you look w eyes of faith  
**PRAY: God Help Me See What YOU See**