

PERSECUTED, BUT NOT ABANDONED

2 Corinthians 4: 7-12 (NIV)

But we have this treasure in jars of clay to show that this all-surpassing power is from God and not from us. ⁸We are hard pressed on every side, but not crushed; perplexed, but not in despair; ⁹persecuted, but not abandoned; struck down, but not destroyed. ¹⁰We always carry around in our body the death of Jesus, so that the life of Jesus may also be revealed in our body. ¹¹For we who are alive are always being given over to death for Jesus' sake, so that his life may be revealed in our mortal body. ¹²So then, death is at work in us, but life is at work in you.

- hard pressed on every side, **but not crushed** (v8)
 - *we all go through hard times; financial, emotional, physical hardships*
 - *not all experience the same levels/degrees, but all experience some*
 - *can feel like being squeezed, pressed, flattened*

Isaiah 53:5

But he was pierced for our transgressions, he was crushed for our iniquities; the punishment that brought us peace was upon him, and by his wounds we are healed.

- perplexed, **but not in despair** (v8)
 - *questions of why? why me? why now?*
 - *having all the questions, but none of the answers*
 - *can feel like nothing makes sense*

Psalms 46:1-3

God is our refuge and strength, an ever-present help in trouble. Therefore we will not fear, though the earth give way and the mountains fall into the heart of the sea, ³though its waters roar and foam and the mountains quake with their surging.

- persecuted, **but not abandoned** (v9)
 - *physical, emotional, social*
 - *separation, distance, uncomfortable*
 - *can feel like we're different, wrong, "not with it", not wanted/appreciated*

Psalms 23:4

Even though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I will fear no evil, for you are with me; your rod and your staff, they comfort me.

- struck down, **but not destroyed** (v9)
 - *tired, sick, lost,*
 - *results of sickness, accidents, error/sin, anger/hatred from others*
 - *can feel weak, useless, a burden, wanting to give up*

Psalm 23:5-6

You prepare a table before me in the presence of my enemies. You anoint my head with oil; my cup overflows.

⁶ Surely goodness and love will follow me all the days of my life, and I will dwell in the house of the LORD forever.

Sinclair Ferguson:

True faith takes its character and quality from its object and not from itself. Faith gets a man out of himself and into Christ. Its strength therefore depends on the character of Christ. Even those of us who have weak faith have the same strong Christ as others!

The Character of Christ

- it's all about Jesus
 - the gospel is the good news announcing Christ's devotion to us, not our devotion to him.
 - the gospel is not a command to hang onto Jesus.
 - it's a promise that no matter how weak your faith may be in seasons of spiritual depression God is always holding on to you
 - "I can't do it" – you're right!
- **we have this treasure in jars of clay (v7)**

2 Corinthians 4:6 (NIV)

For God, who said, "Let light shine out of darkness," made his light shine in our hearts to give us the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Christ.

 - yes, we're weak
 - we break
 - our treasure is the face of Jesus

- **this all-surpassing power is from God and not from us (v7)**
 - life, success, health, accomplishments, future – all relies on God
 - the pressure is off us
 - not about our goodness, our righteousness, our abilities
- **We always carry around in our body the death of Jesus, so that the life of Jesus may also be revealed in our body (v10)**
 - Jesus is within us through his Holy Spirit
 - as we are faithful, available and open, he will be seen through us
 - we will have trials, experience pain and loss, fail and fall over – we are clay pots!
 - but Jesus' life will be revealed in us and to us – now and in glory

Direction

*When you're on the brink of despair-looking into the abyss of darkness, experiencing a dark-night of the soul, turning to the internal quality of your faith will bring you no hope, no rescue, no relief. Every internal answer will collapse underneath you. Turning to the external object of your faith, namely Christ and his finished work on your behalf, is the only place to find peace, re-orientation, and help. The gospel always directs you to something, **Someone**, outside you instead of to something inside you for the assurance you crave and need in seasons of desperation and doubt. The surety you long for when everything seems to be falling apart won't come from discovering the dedicated "hero within" but only from the realization that no matter how you feel or what you're going through, you've already been discovered by the "Hero without."*

Romans 5:8

God demonstrates his own love for us in this: While we were still sinners, Christ died for us.

2 Corinthians 4: 16-18

Therefore we do not lose heart. Though outwardly we are wasting away, yet inwardly we are being renewed day by day. ¹⁷For our light and momentary troubles are achieving for us an eternal glory that far outweighs them all. ¹⁸So we fix our eyes not on what is seen, but on what is unseen. For what is seen is temporary, but what is unseen is eternal.

NOT ON WHAT WE DO, BUT ON WHAT HAS BEEN DONE