

Throughout Paul's ministry he faced persecution and even threats of death from those who opposed the preaching of the gospel of Christ. Despite the opposition, Paul relied upon God's strength and power to enable him to persevere in the name of Jesus Christ and continue preaching the gospel for the benefit of the Corinthians and others who would come to Christ through his ministry.

Verses 1-7: Recognizing the glory of the ministry of the gospel that had been given to him and his ministry companions which he described in chapter 3, Paul states that they do not become discouraged. On the contrary, they boldly and openly proclaim the truth of Christ. This truth is only hidden from the lost, who have been blinded by Satan so that they cannot see the truth of Jesus Christ. Paul and his companions, however, preached Jesus Christ and it was God Who shines His light into believers' hearts so that they could believe on Christ. Paul then acknowledges that he and his companions are but earthen vessels who have been given the treasure of the light of truth within them so that God alone is glorified.

8 *We are troubled on every side, yet not distressed; we are perplexed, but not in despair; 9 Persecuted, but not forsaken; cast down, but not destroyed;*

Because they have this treasure from God (the enlightening truth of the gospel), Christians are able to face the trials that the world throws at them.

“We are troubled [lit. to press; metaph. To afflict or distress] on every side, yet not distressed [to compress; crushed]” – The NKJV renders this as “We are hard pressed on every side, yet not crushed.” Paul knew that God would not allow the pressures of the world to succeed in crushing them.

“we are perplexed [to not know what to do], but not in despair [to lose hope; to give up]” – Paul admits that there were times when they didn't know how to face the persecutions that came their way, and yet they did not give up or lose hope. They trusted that God would help them.

“Persecuted, but not forsaken” – Paul knew that through the persecutions that they were suffering, God had not and would not abandon them.

“cast down [to throw to the ground], but not destroyed [to kill; to bring to an end]” – Paul and his companions had been “knocked down” because of the gospel of Christ, but, through God, they had always been able to get back up. No matter what the enemies of the gospel did, Paul was able to keep going for Christ. At one point, Paul was stoned and left for dead outside the city of Lystra, but God enabled him to continue on for Christ (Acts 14:19-20).

10 Always bearing about in the body the dying of the Lord Jesus, that the life also of Jesus might be made manifest in our body.

“Always bearing about in the body the dying of the Lord Jesus” – The same hatred that the world had for Christ that motivated the crucifixion was now turned toward Paul and all those who, like him, proclaimed the gospel of Christ. They wanted to kill Paul, just as they did Christ.

“that the life also of Jesus might be made manifest [to make known; to make visible] in our body” – Paul's ability to persevere in spite of the world's persecution caused Christ's life-giving power to be evident because it was Christ's strength and not Paul's that enabled him to continue. This was a testimony to Christ's power and glory and another reason that God allows His people to suffer.

11 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. 12 So then death worketh in us, but life in you.

“For we which live are always delivered unto death for Jesus' sake” – The phrase “delivered unto death” refers to a prisoner being handed over to the executioner. Paul is speaking of the fact that he and his ministry companions were constantly were facing persecutions and the possibility of death for the sake of Christ.

“that the life also of Jesus might be made manifest in our mortal flesh” – However, God allowed this to happen so that Christ's life and resurrection power could be seen by the lost world.

“So then death worketh in us, but life in you” – Paul risked death in order that the Corinthians and the others could hear the gospel and receive eternal life.

13 We having the same spirit of faith, according as it is written, I believed, and therefore have I spoken; we also believe, and therefore speak;

“We having the same spirit of faith, according as it is written, I believed, and therefore have I spoken” – Paul quotes from Psalm 116:10, where the psalmist speaks of his confidence that the LORD will take care of him. Paul says he has the same spirit of faith in the power of God that the psalmist had.

“we also believe, and therefore speak” – Paul's faith in God gives him the confidence to also speak of the blessings that God gives to those who trust in Him.

14 Knowing that he which raised up the Lord Jesus shall raise up us also by Jesus, and shall present us with you.

Paul was not disturbed by the constant threat of death that he faced and did not let it deter him from proclaiming the gospel. He was confident that the same God that raised Christ from the dead would also raise him from the dead, even if the enemies of the gospel were to succeed in killing him. Paul was also confident that he would see the Corinthians again when they were all presented to God in heaven.

15 For all things *are* for your sakes, that the abundant grace might through the thanksgiving of many redound to the glory of God.

“For all things *are* for your sakes” – Paul was willing to endure these persecutions and threats of death for the benefit of the Corinthians and other believers. He wanted to see souls saved and for believers to grow in their faith.

“that the abundant grace might through the thanksgiving of many redound [*abound; overflow*] to the glory of God” – God is glorified by the thanks that grateful believers express to Him and in the hearing of others for their salvation. Paul wants to see more souls saved so that God would receive more glory.

16 For which cause we faint not; but though our outward man perish, yet the inward *man* is renewed day by day.

“For which cause we faint [*to become exhausted; to become discouraged*] not” – The world might consider Paul and his ministry partners to be insane for devoting their lives to a cause that endangers their lives and for which they suffer near constant persecution. The world would believe that Paul should just give up and find something else to do. But Paul was not discouraged because of the confidence in God that he mentioned in the previous verses.

“but though our outward man perish” – The “outward man” refers to his physical body, which bore the scars and other lasting effects of the persecutions he had suffered. His body had taken a beating, both figurative and literal, in the service of Christ.

“yet the inward *man* is renewed day by day” – Despite the fact that his body had suffered injuries that may have had permanent consequences, Paul was not discouraged nor did it deter him from preaching the gospel. His body was suffering but the “inward man” (his soul) was growing and maturing in Christ more and more each day. This spiritual growth was something the enemies of the gospel could not stop.

17 For our light affliction, which is but for a moment, worketh for us a far more exceeding *and* eternal weight of glory;

“For our light affliction, which is but for a moment” – Paul puts these persecutions into perspective. Later in this letter he summarizes some of the things he has suffered for Jesus Christ (2 Cor. 11:23-28), and yet here he describes them as “light affliction” lasting “but for a moment.” These afflictions were light compared to the blessings that were waiting for him in heaven. They were also brief compared to eternity.

“worketh for us a far more exceeding *and* eternal weight of glory” – Paul looked forward to the glory that he would share with Christ and considered it to far outweigh the afflictions that he was suffering on earth. He also recognised that this glory was eternal, far overshadowing the relatively brief time of suffering in this life. **Rom. 8:16-18** *“The Spirit itself beareth witness with our spirit, that we are the children of God: And if children, then heirs; heirs of God, and joint-heirs with Christ; if so be that we suffer with him, that we may be also glorified together. For I reckon that the sufferings of this present time are not worthy to be compared with the glory which shall be revealed in us.”*

18 While we look not at the things which are seen, but at the things which are not seen: for the things which are seen *are* temporal; but the things which are not seen *are* eternal.

The world looks at “the things which are seen” (the physical universe) as if that is all there is. Christians, through the Spirit of God, understand that there are things “which are not seen” (the spiritual domain). We Christians are not to focus ourselves on the visible things of this world (riches, honor, pleasure, etc.) because they are “temporal” [*temporary; existing only for a time*]. The things of God, which are invisible, are eternal. There is a famous quote that recognizes Paul’s point here that is attributed to Jim Elliot, one of five missionaries who was killed in 1956 trying to share the gospel with the Auca tribe in the jungles of Ecuador: “He is no fool who gives what he cannot keep to gain that which he cannot lose.”

1 John 2:17 *“And the world passeth away, and the lust thereof: but he that doeth the will of God abideth for ever.”*

John 6:26-27 *“Jesus answered them and said, Verily, verily, I say unto you, Ye seek me, not because ye saw the miracles, but because ye did eat of the loaves, and were filled. Labour not for the meat which perisheth, but for that meat which endureth unto everlasting life, which the Son of man shall give unto you: for him hath God the Father sealed.”*

The ability to look beyond the immediate circumstances and what you can see with your natural eyes with the expectation of what God has promised is a characteristic of faith. **Heb. 12:2** *“Looking unto Jesus the author and finisher of our faith; who for the joy that was set before him endured the cross, despising the shame, and is set down at the right hand of the throne of God.”*