

In the second half of chapter four, Paul combats accusations regarding his apostleship. He specifically addresses the adversity and suffering he's encountered throughout his ministry as being a disqualifier. On the contrary, Paul argues that the existence of hardship in his life not only serves as fruit of his apostleship, but it leverages his ability to minister to others more effectively.

2 Corinthians 4:7-18

Treasures

in Jars of
Clay

I. COMPARING OUR STORIES

MY EXPERIENCE...

YOUR EXPERIENCE...

Being a follower of Christ does not mean your life will be smooth. Often, because we choose to follow Jesus, we encounter greater hardships, coming in the form of adversity in relationships, struggles with our old desires and habits, and in some locations of the world, the adversity can be a matter of life or death.

II. CONSIDERING OUR STRUGGLES

DO you think Christians experience more or less adversity than those who don't know Him?

HAVE you ever experienced hardship, struggle, or suffering because of your choice to follow Jesus?

EXPLAIN the difference between an eternal perspective and one that is more worldly or physical.

HOW do you handle adversity or suffering in the midst of trying to maintain an eternal perspective?

2 Corinthians

4:7-18

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Read 2 Corinthians 4:7-18

OBSERVATION

What does Paul say we have and where is it stored according to vs. 7?

In vs. 7, what purpose does this possession of ours serve?

According to vs. 7-9, what does Paul say we face, and to what *limit*?

What metaphor is repeated in vs. 10-11?

What does Paul express to be confidence in, in vs. 14, and what does this ultimately accomplish (vs. 15)?

According to vs. 16, what is the outcome of the truth mentioned in vs. 14?

How does Paul refer to his circumstances of adversity in vs. 17? What does he say they are preparing him for?

Where does Paul say to fix our eyes and for what reason (vs. 18)?

INTERPRETATION

What is the treasure we have, mentioned in vs. 7? Consider vs. 6 for insight.

What is the significance of where it's stored (see Psalm 32:12, Isaiah 30:14)?

What is the meaning of the metaphor mentioned in vs. 10-11? How is death at work in Paul, but life in those at Corinth? Consider Romans 5:3-5 for insight.

What is the shared spirit of faith Paul references in vs. 13? How does the reference to Psalm 116 give insight to the point Paul is making?

How does confidence in Jesus' resurrection (vs. 14), give hopeful perspective and grace to more and more people, to the glory of the Lord (vs. 15)? Consider 1:3-5 for insight.

Why do the spiritual truths mentioned in vs. 16 cause Paul to not lose heart?

How did Jesus view the suffering and adversity he faced? (Consider Hebrews 12:1-3). How does Jesus' attitude toward adversity influence Paul's in this chapter?

APPLICATION

How do you view the adversity and suffering you face in life? Are there specific ways you could embrace it in a way that might bring God glory?