

SO WE DON'T LOSE HEART

I. [2 Corinthians 11:18-23](#) [2 Corinthians 4:7-18](#)

A. Have you ever had one of those days? Ever had one of those weeks or months! Most believers who have been around the block a few times have had difficult and challenging seasons in life. Paul had many. In fact Paul's life seemed to be a continuous looping season of troubles, trials, and tribulations.

B. If you're going through tough times of any kind and you want read about someone who could identify with you, listen to Paul's words in [2 Corinthians 11:18-23](#) (ESV): **18** *Since many boast according to the flesh, I too will boast. 19* For you gladly bear with fools, being wise yourselves! **20** For you bear it if someone makes slaves of you, or devours you, or takes advantage of you, or puts on airs, or strikes you in the face. **21** To my shame, I must say, we were too weak for that! But whatever anyone else dares to boast of--I am speaking as a fool--I also dare to boast of that. **22** Are they Hebrews? So am I. Are they Israelites? So am I. Are they offspring of Abraham? So am I. **23** Are they servants of Christ? I am a better one--I am talking like a madman--with far greater labors, far more imprisonments, with countless beatings, and often near death. **24** Five times I received at the hands of the Jews the forty lashes less one. **25** Three times I was beaten with rods. Once I was stoned. (**Only once?!**) Three times I was shipwrecked; a night and a day I was adrift at sea (**The Acts 27-28 shipwreck would be his fourth, followed by being bitten by a viper, all on the Island of Malta!**); **26** on frequent journeys, in **danger** from rivers, **danger** from robbers, **danger** from my own people, **danger** from Gentiles, **danger** in the city, **danger** in the wilderness, **danger** at sea, **danger** from false brothers; **27** in toil and hardship, through many a sleepless night, in hunger and thirst, often without food, in cold and exposure. ("**Through many dangers, toils, and snares, I have already come. Twas grace that brought me safe thus far, and grace will lead me home!**") **28** And, apart from other things, there is the daily pressure on me of my anxiety for all the churches. (**Most pastors can relate to this anxiety.**) **29** Who is weak, and I am not weak? Who is made to fall, and I am not indignant? **30** If I must boast, I will boast of the things that show my weakness. **31** The God and Father of the Lord Jesus, He who is blessed forever, knows that I am not lying. **32** At Damascus, the governor under King Aretas was guarding the city of Damascus in order to seize me, **33** but I was let down in a basket through a window in the wall and escaped his hands. (**Paul goes on in Chapter 12 to talk about the thorn in his flesh, his prayer to God three times to remove it. God's answer to that prayer: "My grace is sufficient for you, for My power is made perfect in weakness."**)

C. When I read those words of Paul, how does it make me feel? Like a spiritual wuss! A wimpy weakling! How do they make you feel? When I read about Paul or Job or Jeremiah or read about Jesus' suffering on the cross, it puts everything into perspective. Despite the TV preachers with toothy grins who tell you that your faith proclamations will bring you perennial seasons of health, wealth, and worldly bliss, we should remember that Paul truly did exemplify what the victorious Christian life really looks like.

D. [2 Corinthians 4:7-18](#) (ESV) will help us see our afflictions as lightweight, momentary, useful, and preparatory, readying us for the eternal heavyweight glory that God's promised. Better days are ahead: **7** *But we have this treasure in jars of clay (The Gospel), to show that the surpassing power belongs to God and not to us. 8* We are afflicted in every way, but not crushed; perplexed, but not driven to despair; **9** persecuted, but not forsaken; struck down, but not destroyed; **10** always carrying in the body the death of Jesus, so that the life of Jesus may also be manifested in our bodies. (**What an attitude!**) **11** For we who live are always being given over to death for Jesus' sake, so that the life of Jesus also may be manifested in our mortal flesh. **12** So death is at work in us, but life in you. **13** Since we have the same spirit of faith according to what has been written (Ps 116), "I believed, and so I spoke," we also believe, and so we also speak, **14** knowing that He who raised the Lord Jesus will raise us also with Jesus and bring us with you into His presence. (**Selah!**) **15** For it is all for your sake, so that as grace extends to more and more people it may increase thanksgiving, to the glory of God. **16** So we do not lose heart. Though our outer self is wasting away, our inner self is being renewed day by day. **17** For this light momentary affliction is preparing for us an eternal weight of glory beyond all comparison, **18** as we look not to the things that are seen but to the things that are unseen. For the things that are seen are transient, but the things that are unseen are eternal. (**No our affliction doesn't feel light or temporary. But juxtaposed to eternity, it does get a whole lot lighter.**)

E. When I look out on this sanctuary week after week I look into the eyes of many who have known affliction, suffered loss, battled hard. People who limp, crawl, wrestle, and *fight-the-good-fight*. People who sometimes ache down deep. I hope you're also people who know what it means to cry out to God! Ever talk to God face down on the ground? Ever pray with tears streaming down your face? Ever sing Paul & Silas-like hymns at midnight while you feel like you're in chains? Sometimes all we can do is cry out, "*Help me Lord!*" I believe God hears those kinds of prayers.

F. The answer is not positive thinking. The answer is not naming or claiming. Nor is the answer to throw in the towel. (God doesn't need more quitters!) The answer is raw honesty before God and putting our full weight down on Him and His Word! ("*Though He slay me...*" "*I can do all things through Christ...*" "*Hear my cry O Lord, attend unto my prayer...*" "*My soul thirsts for Thee, my flesh yearns for Thee...*") **Yes--putting our full weight on God and His Word even till we breathe our last or until He breaks through with answers or remedies or direction or rest or a peace that surpasses chaos and fear and doubts and lack of understanding.**

G. So we don't lose heart. We take heart instead. We give encouragement to the fainthearted, as much as we can, to everyone who has need. We help each other cry. We co-mingle our tears. We don't cross the road and pass by on the other side when someone is bleeding. We tend to the wounded. We offer the cold drink of water, our five loaves and two fish, our last batch of flour and oil, we toss in our last two pennies, we go the extra mile, and all this with God's all-sufficient grace helping us.

* Close with Prayer...

[Scriptures, Videos, & Bonus Stuff](#)

[2 Corinthians 11:18-23 \(ESV\)](#)

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[2 Corinthians 4:7-18 \(ESV\)](#)

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[Film Clips & Other Links](#)

"Though He Slay Me" - Shane & Shane (featuring John Piper)

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=qyUPz6_TciY

"Even Unto Death" - Audrey Assad

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=uAfp8vg4Jz8>

"Lord of Eternity" - Fernando Ortega

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=u-ZAQwXZ7YQ>

"Through It All" - Bebe Winans and Andrae Crouch

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=XWcxfOICl3M>

"All Day Singin' and Dinner on the Grounds" - Martin Hicks

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=YNcaQxjjSMs>

Bonus Stuff

2 Corinthians 12:1-10 (ESV)

1 I must go on boasting. Though there is nothing to be gained by it, I will go on to visions and revelations of the Lord. **2** I know a man in Christ who fourteen years ago was caught up to the third heaven--whether in the body or out of the body I do not know, God knows. **3** And I know that this man was caught up into paradise--whether in the body or out of the body I do not know, God knows-- **4** and he heard things that cannot be told, which man may not utter. **5** On behalf of this man I will boast, but on my own behalf I will not boast, except of my weaknesses-- **6** though if I should wish to boast, I would not be a fool, for I would be speaking the truth; but I refrain from it, so that no one may think more of me than he sees in me or hears from me. **7** So to keep me from becoming conceited because of the surpassing greatness of the revelations, a thorn was given me in the flesh, a messenger of Satan to harass me, to keep me from becoming conceited. **8** Three times I pleaded with the Lord about this, that it should leave me. **9** But He said to me, "My grace is sufficient for you, for My power is made perfect in weakness." Therefore I will boast all the more gladly of my weaknesses, so that the power of Christ may rest upon me. **10** For the sake of Christ, then, I am content with weaknesses, insults, hardships, persecutions, and calamities. For when I am weak, then I am strong.

1 Corinthians 4:9-13 (Phillips)

9-13 I sometimes think that God means us, the messengers, to appear last in the procession of mankind, like the men who are to die in the arena. For indeed we are made a public spectacle before the angels of Heaven and the eyes of men. We are looked upon as fools, for Christ's sake, but you are wise in the Christian faith. We are considered weak, but you have become strong: you have found honour, we little but contempt. Up to this very hour we are hungry and thirsty, ill-clad, knocked about and practically homeless. We still have to work for our living by manual labour. Men curse us, but we return a blessing: they make our lives miserable but we take it patiently. They ruin our reputations but we go on trying to win them for God. We are the world's rubbish, the scum of the earth, yes, up to this very day.

James 1:12 (ESV)

12 Blessed is the man who remains steadfast under trial, for when he has stood the test he will receive the crown of life, which God has promised to those who love Him.

Quote by John Newton

"Faith upholds a Christian under all trials, by assuring him that every painful dispensation is under the direction of his Lord; that chastisements are a token of His love; that the season, measure, and continuance of his sufferings, are appointed by Infinite Wisdom, and designed to work for his everlasting good; and that grace and strength shall be afforded him, according to his need."

Quote by Edmund Clowney

"Trials should not surprise us, or cause us to doubt God's faithfulness. Rather, we should actually be glad for them. God sends trials to strengthen our trust in Him so that our faith will not fail. Our trials keep us trusting; they burn away our self confidence and drive us to our Savior."

Quote by Theodore Epp

"We are so easily entangled in earthly affairs and so easily consumed with the desire for those things that do not last. We will not live on this earth forever, so even our trials should be viewed in the light of eternity."

Quote by Franklin Graham

"No matter what storm you face, you need to know that God loves you. He has not abandoned you."

Quote by Kay Arthur

"In any trial, in any bitter situation, you are not alone, you are not helpless, you are not a victim. You have a tree, a cross, shown to you by the Sovereign God of Calvary. Whatever the trial or temptation, it is not more than you can bear. It is bearable. It can be handled. You can know as Joseph knew, "You meant evil against me, but God meant it for good in order to bring about this present result, to preserve many people alive" (Genesis 50:20)."

Quote by Charles H. Spurgeon

"I would go to the deeps a hundred times to cheer a downcast spirit. It is good for me to have been afflicted, that I might know how to speak a word in season to one that is weary."

Quote by John Newton

"It belongs to your calling of God as a minister, that you should have a taste of the various spiritual trials which are incident to the Lord's people, that thereby you may know how to speak a word in season to them that are weary; and it is likewise needful to keep you perpetually attentive to that important admonition, "*Without Me ye can do nothing.*""

Quote by John Wesley

"We are to bear with those we cannot amend, and to be content with offering them to God. This is true resignation. And since He has borne our infirmities, we may well bear those of each other for His sake."

Quote by Charles H. Spurgeon

"You may readily judge whether you are a child of God or a hypocrite by seeing in what direction your soul turns in seasons of severe trial. The hypocrite flies to the world and finds a sort of comfort there. But the child of God runs to his Father and expects consolation only from the Lord's hand."

Quote by A.B. Simpson

"There are two ways of getting out of a trial. One is simply to try to get rid of the trial, and be thankful when it is over. The other is to recognize the trial as a challenge from God to claim a larger blessing than we have ever had, and to hail it with delight as an opportunity of obtaining a larger measure of divine grace."

Quote by Samuel Rutherford

"Keep God's covenant in your trials; hold you by His blessed word, and sin not; flee anger, wrath, grudging, envying, fretting; forgive a hundred pence to your fellow-servant, because your Lord hath forgiven you ten thousand talents: for, I assure you by the Lord, your adversaries shall get no advantage against you, except you sin, and offend your Lord, in your sufferings."

Quote by Charles H. Spurgeon

"Good people must never expect to escape troubles; if they do, they will be disappointed, for none of their predecessors have been without them."