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Knocked Down but not Out

2Corinthians 4:8-18

Ministry can be hard-emotionally draining--concern for wellbeing of sheep—dealing w/ false teachers, strange doctrine, falling into sin, divisions, pressure to compromise word. Plus outside forces opposed to gospel, pastor & people.

Paul says this treasure: Christ, gospel, eternal life is in earthen vessels (**clay pots-fragile, no natural beauty**) that the power, glory be of God not man. **God says of Paul** *he a chosen vessel of Mine to bear My name before Gentiles, kings, and the children of Israel. Acts 9:15*

Most people want the glory & measure **success** by accomplishments, recognition or financial attainment. World looks at a person, evaluates what they've achieved & if it's a lot, say, **'there's a successful person'**. God sees differently

The problem w/ earthly achievement is, it's transitory (fame is fleeting) & empty (can hug \$-won't hug back). What's **hot** this year is **not** next year.

What you thought would bring ultimate satisfaction ends up betraying you. You wonder where do I go from here & why am I not fulfilled & still longing for something more?

One 24 year old singer-songwriter who won a Grammy afterward. ***"I thought that fame & success would solve your problems--that there would be a sense of peace or self-esteem raised by having all this external success. So the question became, if not this, then what can make me feel connected?"***

Article in Advertiser **'Slaying the giant'** Ken Bradshaw rode the biggest wave ever on the North Shore w/ a 80' face. He felt empty **after the ride he'd waited for all his life**. ***"I was complacent; I had lost some fire. How can you get that high again? How can you feel good again?" went into a weird depression***

Come Nov **People magazines'** 'sexist man in the world' cover shoot w/ **2 1/2 bill** men to choose from. You can't live on & be satisfied w/ fleeting fame, fortune & success. Fabio **king of romance** novels **80's 90's**—Flabio :16 **outward decaying**

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Mans deepest need is spiritual. Momentary fame, Affluence & achievement brings short term satisfaction but can't reach the deepest part of our being -
- a desire to know God—*treasure*. *Eccl 3:11 ...God has planted eternity in their hearts...Ps 42:2 My soul thirsts for God, for the living God.*

Paul in his day was considered successful. Like climbing ladder to executive position in a major corporation-Paul climbed top of ladder of Judaism. Pharisees the cultural elite of his day & he was one of them.

Gal 1:14 and I was advancing in Judaism beyond many of my contemporaries among my countrymen, being more extremely zealous for my ancestral traditions.

Phil 3:4-8 although I myself might have confidence even in the flesh. If anyone else has a mind to put confidence in the flesh, I far more: circumcised the eighth day, (true to mosaic command) of the nation of Israel, (genealogy traced to patriarchs) of the tribe of Benjamin, (remained true to Judah when ten divided kingdom) a Hebrew of Hebrews; (Both parents-no mix of gentile blood) as to the Law, a Pharisee; (strictest sect) as to zeal, a persecutor of the church; (eliminate factions) as to the righteousness which is in the Law, found blameless. Paul a self made man

*7-8 **But** all these things that I once thought very worthwhile—**now** I've thrown them all away **so** that I can put my trust and hope in Christ alone. Yes, everything else is worthless when compared with the priceless gain of knowing Christ Jesus my Lord. I have put aside all else, counting it worth less than nothing, in order that I can have Christ, (TLB)*

Paul's values changed when he encountered Christ. He now had an eternal perspective w/ heaven's values. Preaches treasure in earthen vessels

Jesus said **count the cost** if you are going to follow Me-Eternal perspective brings w/ it conflict w/ fleshly appetites, ego & among people who only live for the temporal life-*This is all there is* attitude.

There is also a conflict w/ religion – having a form of godliness but denying the power. Bible as *literature* but not the literal Word of God-how we live.

When you become a Christian your life becomes a ministry. You show to the world this *treasure in earthen vessels* by how you live & *knocked down*

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is part of it *'all who live Godly in Christ Jesus shall suffer affliction/persecution'*.

It's why many fail to follow thru w/ their commitment to Christ & fall away.

8 we are afflicted in every way, but not crushed; perplexed, but not despairing; 9 persecuted, but not forsaken; struck down, but not destroyed;

Pushed to breaking point, emotionally spent but we keep going. God will guard the vessel as long as the vessel guards His treasure.

God gets glory from weak vessels. Hudson Taylor 'all Gods giants have been weak men who did great things for God because they reckoned on Him being w/ them.' All the above **fractures** the vessel to let out the

treasure w/in. *God is opposed to the proud but gives grace to the humble Ja 4:6*

10 always carrying about in the body the dying of Jesus, that the life of Jesus also may be manifested in our body. 11 For we who live are constantly being delivered over to death for Jesus' sake, that the life of Jesus also may be manifested in our mortal flesh.

Our life a revelation of His life—always conscious of what He did for me, dying--holy for unholy, righteous for unrighteous, pure for impure—a motivation for me to die to self & live for Christ.

Constantly delivered over to death putting to death the deeds of the flesh daily. *Rom 8:13.....if by the Spirit you are putting to death the deeds of the body, you will live. 1Cor 9:27 but I buffet my body and make it my slave..... Col 3:5 So put to death the sinful, earthly things lurking within you.....NLT*

Death to our sinful passions so we are pleasing God—at same time Christ shines thru us like clear glass--once dirty washed clean *'Wash me'*

Dying of Jesus is motivation to die to self so that His life be our life.

Fellowship in Christ suffering-**Abraham/Isaac** Gen 22-**James 2:22** *You see that faith was working w/ his works, & as a result of the works, faith was perfected*

Jesus life is my life otherwise nothing to offer *'in my flesh dwells no good thing'*.

If Jesus not *manifest* in us, who knows what terrible things we'd be doing.

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Paul's enemies stole converts didn't win them--ate the sheep & did not feed the sheep. Turned people against Paul.

12 So death works in us, but life in you. 13 But having the same spirit of faith, according to what is written, "I BELIEVED, THEREFORE I SPOKE," we also believe, therefore also we speak; 14 knowing that He who raised the Lord Jesus will raise us also with Jesus and will present us with you.

Death works – high price the Good Shepherd paid & Paul & all good shepherds who are faithful to the flock. True evidence not pulpit star but a servant w/ scars *'I bear in my body the the marks of Lord Jesus'* Gal 6:17

Same spirit of truth speaking to David Ps 116, now 1000 years later revealing truth to Paul and us. Truth has no shelf life. Out of which comes our testimony...faith in the truth God reveals in His Son. ***Faith comes by hearing and hearing by the word of God...***unsaved have no testimony of God

A sure testimony--God will raise us because He raised Jesus, He is good to His word. ***1Pet 1:3 Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who according to His great mercy has caused us to be born again to a living hope through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead,***

15 For all things are for your sakes, that the grace which is spreading to more and more people may cause the giving of thanks to abound to the glory of God. 16 Therefore we do not lose heart, but though our outer man is decaying, yet our inner man is being renewed day by day. 17 For momentary, light affliction is producing for us an eternal weight of glory far beyond all comparison, 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.

2nd Law Thermo Dynamics—all things are winding down so not focus on growing old, it happens to the best of us but focus on growing in grace and knowledge of Jesus Christ—inner man

Faith gives true perspective of suffering *'light afflictions'* puts in balance w/ eternal glory.

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AW Tozer 'The invisible world described in the bible was the only real world' We see invisible world of God thru eyes of faith in word of God.

What kind of *'light afflictions'*?

Rom 8:18 For I consider that the sufferings of this present time are not worthy to be compared with the glory that is to be revealed to us.

2 Cor 11:23-30 in far more labors, in far more imprisonments, beaten times without number, often in danger of death. 24 Five times I received from the Jews thirty-nine lashes. 25 Three times I was beaten with rods, once I was stoned, three times I was shipwrecked, a night and a day I have spent in the deep. 26 I have been on frequent journeys, in dangers from rivers, dangers from robbers, dangers from my countrymen, dangers from the Gentiles, dangers in the city, dangers in the wilderness, dangers on the sea, dangers among false brethren; 27 I have been in labor (**reduced to weariness**) and hardship, through many sleepless nights, in hunger and thirst, often without food, in cold and exposure. 28 Apart from such external things, there is the daily pressure on me of concern for all the churches. 29 Who is weak without my being weak? Who is led into sin without my intense concern?

2 Cor 6:4,5,8 but in everything commending ourselves as servants of God, in much endurance, in afflictions, in hardships, in distresses, 5 in beatings, in imprisonments, in tumults, in labors, in sleeplessness, in hunger, 8 by glory and dishonor, by evil report and good report; regarded as deceivers and yet true;

Pauls list of light affliction is not our list. We'd be embarrassed to compare. To stand for biblical principles means conflict in a secular society. No peer approval, popularity sinks, friends and family angry, treated as outcast, unkind things said about you, boss is on your case about things others he lets slide, sometimes violent reaction from those you share your faith with.

1 Pet 4:3-4 For the time already past is sufficient for you to have carried out the desire of the Gentiles, having pursued a course of sensuality, lusts, drunkenness, carousing, drinking parties and abominable idolatries. In all this, they are surprised that you do not run with them into the same excesses of dissipation/partying, and they malign you;

But these afflictions Paul tells us work for our benefit. Hammering an eternal weight of glory in us. Lampstand - hammered work, one piece Ex 25:31.

Suffering in itself does not automatically make us holy, godly or better people. It can make a person a far worse Christian, where they grow bitter,

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critical and disgruntled. They go from *bad to worse* instead of *glory to glory*. Their focus is on the temporal instead of the eternal.

Extreme pressure forms diamonds. Resisting pressure impedes growth, lessens value.

'Look' at eternal - not a casual glance, but as focusing a telescope on a distant star, intense examination, constant scrutiny, steady gaze. Looking with faith is so intense it brings resolve, conviction, determination and desire.

1 Pet 1:6-9 In this you greatly rejoice, even though now for a little while, if necessary, you have been distressed by various trials, so that the proof of your faith, being more precious than gold which is perishable, even though tested by fire, may be found to result in praise and glory and honor at the revelation of Jesus Christ; and though you have not seen Him, you love Him, and though you do not see Him now, but believe in Him, you greatly rejoice with joy inexpressible and full of glory, obtaining as the outcome of your faith the salvation of your souls.

A.W. Tozer

The invisible world described in the Bible was the only 'real world'. If we would only see the visible world the way God wants us to see it, we would never be attracted by anything it has to offer.

The great men and women of faith in Heb 11 are those who saw the invisible world.

Heb 11:26,27 **Moses** considered the reproach of Christ greater riches than the treasures of Egypt; for he was looking to the reward. By faith he left Egypt, not fearing the wrath of the king; for he endured, **as seeing Him who is unseen.**

Heb 11:9-10 **Abraham** by faith sojourned in the land of promise, as in a strange country, dwelling in tents....for **he looked for a city** which has foundations, whose builder and maker is God.

2 Cor 12:7-10 Because of the surpassing greatness of the revelations, for this reason, to keep me from exalting myself, there was given me a thorn in the flesh, a messenger of Satan to torment me-- to keep me from exalting myself! Concerning this I implored the Lord three times that it might leave me. And He has said to me, "My grace is sufficient for you, for power is perfected in weakness." Most gladly, therefore, I will rather boast about my weaknesses, so that the power of Christ may dwell in me. Therefore I am well content with weaknesses, with insults, with distresses, with persecutions, with difficulties, for Christ's sake; for when I am weak, then I am strong.

Speech impediment, Asian eye disease, constant bouts of Malaria.

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1 Pet 5:10 After you have **suffered** for a little while, the God of all grace, who called you to His eternal glory in Christ, will Himself perfect, confirm, strengthen and establish you.

1 Cor 2:9-10 but just as it is written, "THINGS WHICH **EYE** HAS NOT SEEN AND **EAR** HAS NOT HEARD, AND WHICH HAVE NOT ENTERED THE **HEART OF MAN**, ALL THAT GOD HAS **PREPARED FOR THOSE WHO LOVE HIM**." For to us God **revealed** them through the Spirit; for the Spirit searches all things, even the depths of God.

James 1:12 Blessed is a man who **perseveres** under trial; for once he has been **approved**, he will receive the **crown** of life which the Lord has promised to those who love Him.

2 Tim 4:6-8 For I am already being **poured out** as a drink offering, and the time of my departure has come. I have **fought** the good fight, I have **finished** the course, I have **kept** the faith; in the future there is laid up for me the **crown** of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous Judge, will **award** to me on that day; and not only to me, but also to **all** who have loved His appearing.

‘Soon this life will be past and only what is done for Christ will last.’