

2 Corinthians 4:6-5:11 What Kept Paul Going?

Tonight we come to v. 6 of Chapter 4

A) I have never been much of a long distance runner – but I admire those who are.

B) No matter the level at which they run

C) One morning driving to work - 3 runners

First guy – gray T-shirt – grey gym shorts – regular tennis shoes- trudging along in agony – looked like it / pain on face /

A) This guy looked like he was hating every minute of it why did I eat that extra piece of cake last night / should have said no to that 8th slice of Pizza

B) 2nd was this lady – sweat pants sweat shirt – also regular tennis shoes – she was doing one of those walk run kind of things –

1) Where – she was moving head like this / Arms were moving like running – legs were bent – but the speed was – mild walk

C) I Thought – God bless her – at least she is out here / HONK

D) The first two I wondered – what made them get out of bed today and run ?

1) What keeps them going

3rd Guy: WELL He was a runner: JUST TELL –

A) nylon shorts / tank top / expensive light weight running shoes – Bounce in his step –

B) His whole appearance, the pace/ the bounce Portrayed the attitude *I LIVE TO RUN – I enjoy running – I am out here – because I want to be*

C) If I was going to compare the Apostle Paul in his race for Jesus to these three runners

1) I would say he was a combination of the all three –

Sometimes he looked like the 1st guy – didn't really have the outward appearance of a runner

A) Runny eyes – bowed legs – would not fit in the cool hipster Pastors of today

B) Sometimes was just trudging along like the lady

1) Barely making progress

C) Sure that often times Paul felt like the wind was in his face

But he always had the attitude of the 3rd guy – Running for Jesus and serving Jesus was what Paul lived for.

A) For me to live is Christ – Die is gain!

B) Tonight in the passage before us – we are going to answer the question what Kept Paul going?

C) As we unpack the answer to that question

1) we will also gain insight into what should keep us going in the race before us.

6 For it is the God who commanded light to shine out of darkness, who has shone in our hearts to give the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ. 7 But we have this treasure in earthen vessels, that the excellence of the power may be of God and not of us.

A) What Kept Paul going? #1 His understanding of God's Purpose

B) Here Paul is likening the Believer in Jesus to an Earthen Vessel or a Clay Pot { Not very Flattering

1) It is kind of a major blow to the ego – Just a clay Pot?

But This is a great Picture to use because A clay pot, or earthen vessel, is made to hold something { So are We

A) We were made to hold someone/& that someone is God himself.

B) And this is the amazing thing:

1) By His Spirit, God places the Treasure of His Son into the clay pots of our lives!

C) This is like placing the Hope diamond in a Glad trash bag.

D) Something of that value goes in a safe / nice case

Gold box – not a brown bag – what have in there?

Therefore, it's a mystery indeed as to why God would place the Treasure of His Son in clay pots like us

A) But the reason becomes evident as God works in our lives

B) The attraction is not in the packaging but the contents

V.7 **But we have this treasure in earthen vessels, that the excellence of the power may be of God and not of us.**

C) The whole thing is about contrast – the weakness and frailty package –

1) magnifies the greatness of what is inside

Like taking a beat up old Ford Focus and putting a super charged turbo engine inside

A) Pull up at a light – Fancy sports car next to you

B) You give the guy the look – rev your engine

1) He gives you that look – like you're on

C) The light turns green – and you punch it and just blow him out of the water

D) Next light – what do you got in that thing

That is the purpose of our lives

A) When God is using our lives – response is What is in him or her – Jesus!

B) Paul's perspective what this: God puts his son into these ordinary clay pots

1) so that the world can see that the power is from God and not us – Jesus glorified in us

Paul shares 3 things that he understood about God's desire to be glorified in our lives

1st God's power gets manifested in our weakness

Paul illustrates this from his own life

V. 8 **We are hard pressed on every side, yet not crushed; we are perplexed, but not in despair; 9 persecuted, but not forsaken; struck down, but not destroyed--**

A) Notice the weakness of the "pot" Paul says

"We are hard pressed; we are at Preplexed or at our wit's end, we are persecuted, we are knocked down."

B) On the other hand, notice the Power of God
V. 8 **We are hard pressed on every side, yet not crushed; we are perplexed, but not in despair; 9 persecuted, but not forsaken; struck down, but not destroyed—**

C) What Paul is saying is that whenever we go through hard times,

1) there is opportunity for God's Power to shine forth thru the breaking of the vessel .

Brokenness is sometimes the means of God getting out of us – what He has put into us!

A) Or it is the means thru which he gets us going in His direction.

B) It is ironic that most things in our culture lose their value when they are broken

1) Less values when they are cracked or marred

C) But not the Christian – awesome to know

1) God puts a Premium on Broken things – especially on Broken People

"The sacrifice pleasing to God is a broken spirit. You will not despise a broken and humbled heart, God."
Psalms 51:17 CBS

D) Brokenness leads to humbleness and dependency – two traits that are attractive to God!

1) He resist the proud but gives grace to the Humble.

Psalms 34:18

18 The LORD is near to those who have a broken heart, And saves such as have a contrite spirit.

So often We want to move through life protected from all the dangers and all the difficulties.

A) Like a ride at Disneyland a little adventure – a little frightened – be we come out untouched

B) But that is not the way that it works – Brokenness is a part of the Christian life

1) It is a means thru which God's Power is Revealed

C) God doesn't give us a Menu - **"Well, I'll take a few afflictions, but I don't want to be knocked down."**

1) We get what God sends. Whatever He allows

D) But we are never Destroyed / Never Knocked out { that is the Point

1) His Power is manifested in our weakness – for His Glory

So the first thing that we see about Paul perspective of God's purpose is that God's power is manifested in our weakness

2nd God's son is manifested in our constant dying

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

A) Paul clearly understood that the More that Paul died the More that Paul was Broken

1) the More opportunity – Jesus had to be Seen

B) Every new city was an opportunity – each day for Paul to present himself to God as a living Sacrifice

C) Paul understood something that we need to understand –

1) that in & of Himself – he had nothing to offer to those in bondage / darkness / in need

D) Paul understood the more that He died – the more Jesus was seen in Him!

Galatians 2:20 “I have been crucified with Christ; it is no longer I who live, but Christ lives in me; and the life which I now live in the flesh I live by faith in the Son of God, who loved me and gave Himself for me.”

E) Josiah – Die Poppy – Die Daily

So the first thing that we see about Paul perspective of God's purpose is that

1st God's power is manifested in our weakness

2nd God's son is manifested in our constant dying

3rd God's life is manifested through our sacrifice

12 So then death is working in us, but life in you.

It was piano craftsman Theodore Steinway who said that it is the forty thousand pounds of

pressure exerted on the 245 strings of a piano that creates beautiful harmony.

A) Sometimes, it is the pressure, the persecution we undergo that causes a song to resonate in the hearts of those with whom we share.

B) Paul knew this. That is why he could say, The sufferings we go thru are producing death in us – but life in you!

C) The sufferings that Paul encountered brought a credibility to His message.

1) beaten/ stoned/ jailed/ etc –

Paul lived with this conviction that the love and life and power of Jesus would be seen in his weakness

13 And since we have the same spirit of faith, according to what is written, “I believed and therefore I spoke,” we also believe and therefore speak, 14 knowing that He who raised up the Lord Jesus will also raise us up with Jesus, and will present us with you. 15 For all things are for your sakes, that grace, having spread through the many, may cause thanksgiving to abound to the glory of God.

Paul got knocked down but

A) He just kept coming back with the same message. JESUS

B) Lystra stoned to death – crying – he is brought back to life

1) He gets back up and goes back into the city again and preaches

C) Result – God brought Timothy to faith during that time

1) Paul's son in the faith – pastor at Ephesus –

D) We love Resurrection but before you can have a Resurrection you have to have a death.

So what Kept Paul going?

#1 His understanding of God's purpose

#2 His Hope for the future

16 Therefore we do not lose heart. Even though our outward man is perishing, yet the inward man is being renewed day by day. 17 For our light affliction, which is but for a moment, is working for us a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory,

18 while we do not look at the things which are seen, but at the things which are not seen. For the things which are seen are temporary, but the things which are not seen are eternal.

Now the key to this paragraph is found in v. 18 – The word Look – We do not look

A) This word look here is not referring to a casual glance.

B) It is a word that suggests an intense examination, a constant scrutiny and a steady gaze.

1) it is the word used of picking up a telescope to bring something far away into view

C) Telescope: **You fix it on a point far away and then work at bringing that object into focus.**

D) Paul was always bringing heaven and glory into focus!

Concerning his hope for the future – Paul reminded himself of 2 things

A) 1st Even though the outward man was perishing the inward man was being renewed from day to day.

B) The outward man is perishing: Another translation – perishing – decaying – getting rotten

C) How many of you know that the outward man is decaying?

1) Commercial says *You are not getting older – getting better* – **40 new 30** Not true

You are getting older – not getting better

A) Gravity sets in muscles start sagging- takes longer to get into Shape - Reality of Life -

B) But Paul declares that *He doesn't lose heart* because day by day his heart, his inner man, is being renewed. – RENOVATED

C) Every day my inward man is being renewed { The Physical man is dying day by day – but the spiritual man is growing day by day

1) Day by day becoming more and more alive in Jesus

D) Every day – every experience is a new opportunity to grow in Christ.

E) V.17 The affliction was producing something of eternal weight! V.17

1) Working = working – to completion. Finishing something.

The Philippians 1:6

“Being confident of this very thing, that He who has begun a good work in you will complete it until the day of Jesus Christ.”

2nd thing that Paul reminded himself of was that our future is brighter than our present

18 while we do not look at the things which are seen, but at the things which are not seen. For the things which are seen are temporary, but the things which are not seen are eternal.

Ch.5 For we know that if our earthly house, this tent, is destroyed, we have a building from God, a house not made with hands, eternal in the heavens. 2 For in this we groan, earnestly desiring to be clothed with our habitation which is from heaven, 3 if indeed, having been clothed, we shall not be found naked. 4 For we who are in this tent groan, being burdened, not because we want to be unclothed, but further clothed, that mortality may be swallowed up by life. 5 Now He who has prepared us for this very thing is God, who also has given us the Spirit as a guarantee.

His afflictions for Christ sake were adding to his eternal reward.

A) Ironic he calls them v.17 Light afflictions:

B) Statement of CONTRAST

This side of eternity affliction is never light – when we are in the midst of it!

A) It is the heaviest thing we have ever encountered

B) Remember Paul already said in v.8 – **he felt times when he was hard pressed on every side.**

1) Almost killed him - That was how he felt in the moment

C) But as he looked at it now he realized – didn't compare to what awaited him –

1) He calls it an eternal weight of Glory – It is a Glory that is Weighty

In Romans 8:18 he puts it, *"the sufferings of this present time are not worthy to be compared with the glory which shall be revealed to us."*

D)What is coming is so much greater –

1)In comparison – our worst trial is going to seem like nothing in light of the greatness of eternity.

The Present is temporal – the Future is eternal

A)The present is filled with joy and happiness – but also lots of pain sorrow affliction and trials

B)The Future is only going to be filled with Joy happiness and glory

C)In the present we are reminded everyday – that our bodies are temporal and dying

Paul likens the Body to a tent

A)Tents are temporal structures – tents wear out

B)What is waiting for us is so much better - 5 For we know that if our earthly house, this tent, is destroyed, we have a building from God, a house not made with hands, eternal in the heavens.

John 14:1-3

"Let not your heart be troubled; you believe in God, believe also in Me. 2 In My Father's house are many mansions; if it were not so, I would have told you. I go to prepare a place for you. 3 And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again and receive you to Myself; that where I am, there you may be also.

C)Now when we think of a MANSION – what think of - SPACE - 10 –20,000 SQ. FEET / LUXURIOUS

1)Talking New bodies

We are groaning for these bodies –

A)Wake up groaning – feet hurts – hip hurts – stretch these days

B)This body was made for planet earth –

**1)Scuba for the ocean
2)Space suit for space**

C)New bodies made for Heaven –

**1)No pain – no dying – no aging – no weight gain
2)Limitless – effortless**

Pastor Rob that just sounds so good to be truth – It is Good and it is truth – Bank on it – How?

5 Now He who has prepared us for this very thing is God, who also has given us the Spirit as a guarantee.

A)The Holy Spirit as a guarantee – down payment –

B)Engagement ring I am serious about marrying you

C)That is what the engagement ring means to the groom to be

1)What about to the bride be ?

D)Constant reminder that what is coming is going to be better than what is now.

1)Now alone – later sharing life

2)Now cold bed – electric blanket – later warm body

The Holy Spirit in our hearts is constantly reminded you this world is not your home –

A)This is not it! – Why you can have the best experience here on earth and shortly after feel discontent

B)Sense there must be something more – the Holy Spirit is whispering THERE IS – HEAVEN – GLORY – ETERNITY WITH JESUS

So Paul was able to keep on going because:

#1 His perspective on God's purpose

#2 His Hope for the future

#3 He walked by faith and not by sight

6 So we are always confident, knowing that while we are at home in the body we are absent from the Lord. 7 For we walk by faith, not by sight. 8 We are confident, yes, well pleased rather to be absent from the body and to be present with the Lord.

9 Therefore we make it our aim, whether present or absent, to be well pleasing to Him. 10 For we must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ, that each one may receive the things done in the body, according to what he has done, whether good or bad.

Paul lived with a confidence in the promise and God

A)Walked by faith and not by sight

B)Sight can be so deceiving can't it – things are just not what they seem

C) So many things in this world are like cotton candy

1) Big – way awesome – filling – dissolves in your mouth not filling at all

D) Other things in this life are like plastic fruit –

1) Looks good – actually gross

Paul was not allowing his life to be impacted or dictated by what he could see but in a trust in the word of God and heart of God

A) Faith – trusting in the Lord

B) Believing for his reward

⁶ For I am already being poured out as a drink offering, and the time of my departure is at hand. ⁷ I have fought the good fight, I have finished the race, I have kept the faith. ⁸ Finally, there is laid up for me the crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous Judge, will give to me on that Day, and not to me only but also to all who have loved His appearing. 2 Timothy 4:7,8

C) For Paul Heaven was not just a destination it was a motivation

So Paul was able to keep on going because:

#1 His Perspective on God's purpose

#2 His Hope for the future

#3 He Walked by faith and not by sight

#4 He had a Message to preach

¹¹ Knowing, therefore, the terror of the Lord, we persuade men; but we are well known to God, and I also trust are well known in your consciences.

A) Judgment of Commendation

B) But also condemnation – Paul lived to persuade men to embrace Jesus

C) Why Paul didn't quit – more people to get saved –

D) I might get knocked down but I am getting right back up – Lives to be touched

Question: Are you running? – Stopped –

A) How are you running ?

B) Running just to run or running to win!