

# Glad Tidings

“And we bring you good tidings of the promise made unto the fathers...” (Acts 13:32)

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## The Suffering Christian's Focus

(Jerry Fite)

**P**ain heightens attention. Usually the attention is directed to where we hurt, and we focus on finding relief. After the pain subsides, we are able to move on. How do you move on from chronic pain? When the suffering gives little opportunity for relief, how does a Christian live a productive life?

While pain persists, and self-sufficiency dwindles, we should focus on what Paul learned. Paul writes, “...yea, we ourselves have had the sentence of death within ourselves, that we should not trust in ourselves, but in God who raiseth the dead...” (2 Corinthians 1:8). Viewing his circumstances, Paul felt within himself that he was going to die. If he were relying on himself, there was no out. He did not let his dire situation distract him, but allowed the sentence of death within him to sharpen his focus on God. Paul might feel powerless, but His God has power to even raise the dead. Reasoning from the greater to the lesser, Paul trusted in God's ability to deliver him out of his present danger.

Suffering humbles the sufferer. But humility does not have to lead to depression. Instead, the

Christian should allow chronic pain to be a continual reminder that he or she should always trust in God. Humbling circumstances are sometimes the best teacher of true faith.

The suffering Christian should embrace afflictions like Paul. *“Wherefore we faint not, but though our outward man is decaying, yet our inward man is renewed day by day. For our light affliction, which is for the moment, worketh for us more and more exceedingly an eternal weight of glory...”* (2 Corinthians 4:16-17). Day by day afflictions do not have to continually darken our spirits. Day by day, we can be renewed. Paul is not ignoring reality. He sees the outward man decaying, but he focuses on the inward man.

The inward man focuses on what the outward man cannot see. Paul's inward eye of faith sees the reality of eternity: *“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”* (2 Corinthians 4:18). Because Paul can see beyond this life while in a corrupting body, he has an empowering perspective

for constant renewal. Regardless of how chronic the pain and persistent the suffering, afflictions are temporary in view of our total existence. The heavy afflictions we bear under now are working for us “more exceedingly an eternal weight of glory”.

Paul's afflictions not only sharpened his faith in God's power, but they sharpened his focus on his eternal glory in heaven.

Did you know that even in the darkness of chronic pain, you can be a shining light for others? How? Do not murmur against God! *“Do all things without murmurings and questionings: that ye may become blameless and harmless children of God...seen as lights in the world”* (Philippians 2:14-15). By faith, draw close to God with dependence and thanksgiving. People around you will see the light.

Paul was not given relief from his thorn in the flesh. *“My grace is sufficient for thee”* was God's answer to Paul's persistent prayer to have the thorn removed (2 Corinthians 12:9). Empowered with grace, Paul could endure the chronic thorn and glorify God in his life. Sharpen your focus on these things.