

Confirmation in Ministry

2 Corinthians 4: 10-12

We have discovered much in our previous studies within this chapter. Paul emphasized the importance of Christ-centered ministry. He had not sought to promote his ministry or agenda, but the Lord Jesus Christ, crucified, buried, and risen. He then dealt with the struggles every believer encounters as they seek to serve the Lord. While there may be great difficulty, we are never defeated or beyond the help of the Lord. That affords great confidence in ministry.

Our text today continues to deal with the difficulties and sufferings that accompany service to Christ. These are part of life in ministry, and we need to maintain a proper perspective in regard to the sufferings we face. Rather than seeking to avoid them, or viewing them negatively, we should embrace the trials we face. Although we may not realize it, there is great benefit in the struggles we face. In fact, they serve as confirmation of our calling and work. Those who never face any opposition in ministry are accomplishing little. If you are committed to serving the Lord, especially if your efforts are fruitful, you might as well expect opposition.

I want to look at the [aspects](#) of suffering Paul reveals as we consider: [Confirmation in Ministry](#). First Paul addresses:

I. Our Identification with Suffering (10a) – [Always bearing about in the body the dying of the Lord Jesus](#). We must remember that Paul is speaking to the church, those who are within the body of Christ and engaged in ministry for Him. Consider:

A. The Consistency – The struggles and sufferings Paul mentions are not occasional attacks or difficulties. He doesn't imply that those who serve the Lord will encounter difficulty once in a while. Our sufferings, as we identify with the Lord, will be continual. We are always bearing in our bodies the dying of the Lord Jesus Christ.

- Now, Paul isn't saying we will never have a moment of rest or a reprieve from our sufferings for Christ, but they will be our constant companion as we journey through life. We will never reach the place spiritually or vocationally in ministry when troubles and suffering completely cease. As long as you live for the Lord, you will always bear His death in your body.

B. The Clarity – Some may be a bit confused in regard to this suffering. What exactly is Paul referring to as he speaks of bearing the dying of the Lord in our bodies. He is simply reemphasizing a great truth our Lord taught the disciples. If we are to serve the Lord, we must be

willing to deny ourselves, take up our cross, and follow Him daily. [Luke 9:23 – And he said to *them* all, if any *man* will come after me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross daily, and follow me.](#) There seems to be a push in modern Christianity to glamorize the bearing of one's cross. Although such activity is demanded, and very beneficial to the believer, there is nothing glamorous about bearing our cross for the Lord. Jesus is not implying that we are expected to make a few sacrifices along the way and deal with some minor inconveniences. He is not referring to simply bearing our burdens for Him. We are to take up the cross daily and follow Him. The cross is an instrument of death. It was used solely for executions. We must be willing to deny ourselves, literally dying to the lusts and the desires of the flesh. We must identify with the death of Christ in our own bodies.

- This is never an easy task. This body of flesh is demanding. It desires to be fulfilled. Those who determine to crucify the flesh and follow the Lord will have to deal with suffering. Christ lived in a body of flesh, and yet He never submitted to the demands of the flesh. We must strive to live as He did, crucifying the flesh daily!

II. Our Sanctification through Suffering (10b) – [Always bearing about in the body the dying of the Lord Jesus, that the life also of Jesus might be made manifest in our body.](#) Paul didn't say this process would be easy, but he knew it would be beneficial. Those who die to self, experience sanctification in the Lord. That simply means we become more like Him. Consider:

A. The Conformity – Paul knew those who were willing to identify with the sufferings of Christ would enjoy great benefit spiritually. As we identify with His sufferings, literally dying to the desires of the flesh, the life of Jesus is manifest in us. The more we identify with His sufferings, the more we experience the Lord and reflect Him through our lives. This is not an immediate process. In fact, the work of sanctification is a continual process as long as we live. However, as we die out to self, we are being conformed to the image of Christ. We reveal more of Him than we do our fleshly tendencies and desires. [Gal.2:20 – I am crucified with Christ: nevertheless I live; yet not I, but Christ liveth in me: and the life which I now live in the flesh I live by the faith of the Son of God, who loved me, and gave himself for me.](#)

B. The Conquest (10b) – It is interesting to note this manifestation of Christ is not reserved for the new, glorified bodies we will have in heaven. Those will be free of sin, bearing the image of Christ; but we do not have to wait until then for the life of Christ to be manifest in our lives. That is possible in this body of flesh. As we are conformed to the image of Christ, revealing more of Him than our fleshly desires, we defeat the flesh. While it is not easy, one can gain victory over the flesh. I do not imply that we will live entirely free of sin, or without difficulty, but the spiritual man

will overcome the desires of the flesh more than it gives in to its lustful ways. It is possible to be victorious over the flesh as the life of Christ is manifest in our bodies.

- That is encouraging and convicting at the same time. I don't know a one of us who doesn't struggle with the flesh. The desires of this body serve as our greatest hindrance. We can overcome through the Lord. In order to do so, we must be willing to deny ourselves, take up our cross daily (die to self,) and follow the Lord.

III. Our Recognition in Suffering (11a) – *For we which live are always delivered unto death for Jesus' sake.* Paul understood the suffering of which he spoke was reserved for the believer. While it was not enjoyable, a proper recognition would assist the believer while dealing with these sufferings. Notice:

A. Our Redemption – Paul speaks of those who live. This is not referring to physical life. All people deal with a certain amount of adversity and pain. He speaks here of those who have been redeemed in Christ, delivered from sin and provided eternal life through Him. Life was difficult for Paul, but he was aware that this life and its difficulty were not all he had to look forward to. He had received abundant, eternal life. He speaks of spiritual, eternal life.

- Life is hard; we all have our share of heartache and suffering. Those who are committed to living for Christ will have to deal with more adversity in the days to come, but we must maintain a proper perspective. This life, and the suffering it holds, will not last forever. Those who are in Christ have the promise and assurance of life eternal with the Lord. Recognizing our place in Christ makes it much easier to deal with the struggles we face. *2 Cor.4:17-18 – For our light affliction, which is but for a moment, worketh for us a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory; [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.* *1 Cor.15:19-20 – If in this life only we have hope in Christ, we are of all men most miserable. [20] But now is Christ risen from the dead, and become the firstfruits of them that slept.*

B. Our Responsibility (11a) – *For we which live are always delivered unto death for Jesus' sake.* Paul counted it an honor to suffer for the Lord. He was content to deal with whatever adversity he faced, as long as it brought honor to the Lord. Paul had determined that he was not living for self, but unto the Lord Jesus Christ. He sought to serve and glorify Christ every day he lived through every circumstance he faced. He would happily give his life for the cause of Christ.

- This too helps us deal with the sufferings of life. If we were suffering for our own purposes, with no hope of life beyond the grave, this would be a miserable existence. However, we have the privilege and responsibility to identify with Christ and honor Him in all we do. Our lives have a more noble cause than mere existence and status on this earth. We have the privilege of serving the Lord and bearing the good news of the Gospel. Our Lord bore our sin on the cross and provided eternal life as He rose triumphant from the grave. Surely we can commit our lives in service to Him!

IV. Our Inspiration while Suffering (11b-12) – As he closes this thought, Paul seeks to inspire those who were suffering while serving the Lord. Consider:

A. The Testimony (11b) – *For we which live are always delivered unto death for Jesus' sake, that the life also of Jesus might be made manifest in our mortal flesh.* As Paul patiently endured suffering in his body, the Lord was manifested through him. Those who knew Paul saw the Lord through the life he lived. Even in suffering, Paul bore a profound witness to the Lord. His endurance in suffering was an undeniable testimony to the grace of God. Paul knew it was easy to serve the Lord when things were going well, but the world could not miss a faithful servant who remained committed in the midst of adversity.

- History teaches us, with the exception of John, all of the apostles gave their lives for the cause of Christ. Men would not be willing to die for a hoax. In death, their lives bore tremendous testimony to the risen Christ. We are never more effective in our witness than when we remain steadfast in the midst of suffering and hardship.

B. The Transformation (12) – *So then death worketh in us, but life in you.* Here Paul uses somewhat of a play on words. As he offered his life physically for the Lord and the work of the ministry, others would benefit spiritually. The believers would be equipped and encouraged to follow his example, experiencing a richer spiritual walk with the Lord. Unbelievers would examine the sacrifice and sufferings of Paul for Christ and be convicted by them. Many would be led to Christ, being saved from sin and given eternal life, due to the faithfulness of God's man.

- What is a life worth? What would you be willing to do to ensure someone received Christ as their Savior and escaped eternal torment in the lake of fire? These are hard questions, but they need to be answered. Are we willing to suffer for the cause of Christ in order to win those who have yet to be saved? Are we willing to endure some discomfort in this life to ensure we will have the opportunity to spend eternity with our friends and neighbors? This won't be an easy life to live, but it will be worth it as we stand before the Lord.

Conclusion: I am sure that each of us can identify with the text today. If you are a child of God, saved by His grace and placed within the body of Christ, you have dealt with difficulty for the Lord. These trials and sufferings will likely increase in the days to come. How do we view these sufferings? Are you struggling spiritually, almost ready to forsake the work our Lord has called you to perform? If you need strength and guidance, seek the Lord today.

Maybe you are unsaved; you don't have a personal relationship with Christ, having never responded to His call for salvation. Likely you have watched others who are believers and their life has born witness of Christ. If the Lord is dealing with you in regard to salvation, now is the time to respond to that call. Come as the Lord speaks!