



# **STRENGTH TRAINING**

**Growing daily in the things that really matter!**

**Rotting or Renewing?**

**2 Corinthians 4:16-18**

**Men's Breakfast**

**Sermon given on April 27, 2019**



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# Rotting or Renewing?

## 2 Corinthians 4:16-18

### Opening Comments

- Today we start a new series: **STRENGTH TRAINING: Growing daily in the things that really matter!**
- Turn in your Bible to **2 Corinthians 4**
- There are things that Christians say they believe about the nature of God
- Omnipotent = all-powerful – nothing beyond God’s power
- Omniscient = all-knowing – nothing God doesn’t know – including our secret thoughts and intents
- Omnipresent = everywhere-present – there is no place that God isn’t present all the time
- Sovereign = God is in control – always – over everything
- The spiritual implications of those four truths is radical
- It means that your life is never out of God’s sight or control
- Nothing in this world is out of God’s sight or control
- The Bible also teaches us that God, in His sovereignty, gave mankind free will – invited us to choose Him and His will
- One of the great mysteries of Christianity is how God gives free will and retains sovereignty – I believe it, even if I don’t understand it
- Why is that important to us as men? Because sometimes we act like God isn’t one or more of those things, especially the fourth one
- We sometimes behave as if God is not in control
- Everything that comes into our lives has come for a purpose – ordained by God to do something inside of us
- Our problem is that often we don’t allow that work to happen
- And when, through our free will, we don’t let God’s work to happen, there is a negative impact upon our lives
- We can learn to avoid that negative impact
- Let’s pray and then we will get into it
- **Pray**

## Teaching

- The title of this morning's message is **Rotting or Renewing?**
- In 2 Corinthians 4, the Apostle Paul is telling the Corinthians about the nature of the ministry God gave them
- **2 Corinthians 4:5**
- It was all about Jesus
- And that didn't make them special – just useful
- **2 Corinthians 4:7**
- And then Paul told them the ministry was not easy
- **2 Corinthians 4:8-10**
- Paul didn't shy away from the hard work of the ministry
- If you are a believer in Jesus Christ, He has given you a ministry
- It won't be as radical as Paul's, but is still a ministry and, at times, it will get hard
- You are called to be a minister of reconciliation **2 Corinthians 5:18-19**

**Now all things are of God, who has reconciled us to Himself through Jesus Christ, and has given us the ministry of reconciliation, that is, that God was in Christ reconciling the world to Himself, not imputing their trespasses to them, and has committed to us the word of reconciliation.**

- Notice the phrase, 'all things are of God' = nothing comes into your life but by the hand of God
- Our text for today starts in verse 16
- **2 Corinthians 4:16**
- Even though things are not easy – things are hard – life is sucking
- Don't lose heart = we don't get discouraged
- Discouragement is a natural response to difficult things in life – it can just happen
- But it is a choice to stay in discouragement **Galatians 6:9**  
**And let us not grow weary while doing good, for in due season we shall reap if we do not lose heart.**
- Paul continues, 'outward man is perishing'
- First, we should note that Paul tells us that there are two parts to men – an outward part and an inward part
- One of the doctrines of Christianity is that humans consist of an immortal soul housed in a mortal body

- Our mortal bodies are temporary dwelling places for the soul while we are on this earth

- Look at the next chapter **2 Corinthians 5:1-4**

- Peter talked about this also **2 Peter 1:13-14**

**Yes, I think it is right, as long as I am in this tent, to stir you up by reminding you, knowing that shortly I *must* put off my tent, just as our Lord Jesus Christ showed me.**

- At some point, no matter how strong you might be today, this tent we call our body will wear out, be broken, or fail

- Paul refers to the outward man perishing

- The outward man is not just our body but the desires and passions of the flesh

- The word ‘perishing’ = decaying, decomposing, wasting away, gradually incapacitated

- In our culture there is a multi-billion-dollar industry promising to slow down, and maybe even prevent that from happening

- Notice how matter-of-fact Paul is – ‘the outward man is perishing’

- As if to say, ‘Accept it – this body is wearing out’ – Hebrews 9:27 = appointed to die once

- And then, ‘yet the inward man is being renewed day by day.’

- Paul says this is the part of us that loves God and His Word **Romans 7:22**

**For I delight in the law of God according to the inward man.**

- It is the inward man that is redeemed by God through the sacrifice of Jesus Christ

- The outward man is unredeemable – only one thing to do with it **Galatians 5:24**

**And those *who are* Christ’s have crucified the flesh with its passions and desires.**

- The inward man, according to Paul is being ‘renewed’

- ‘renewed’ = to be or become reestablished in a like-new and often improved manner

- Something mysterious happens when we receive Christ – **2 Corinthians 5:17**

**Therefore, if anyone *is* in Christ, *he is* a new creation; old things have passed away; behold, all things have become new.**

- When we are saved, we are a ‘new creation’, but not a perfect creation

- Perfection does not come in this lifetime – it comes when we are in the presence of Christ
- Look back at our text in **2 Corinthians 4**
- Paul’s words here are meant to change our perspective about life
- To see through the physical, material, perishing world to the eternal, glorious realities of heaven
- God’s goal in every man’s life is to make him better through a daily renewal until you resemble His Son Jesus as much as is humanly possible
- In the next two verses I see three perspectives for becoming a better man
- These three perspectives are how God renews us day by day and makes the inward man better and better
- And you will notice that Paul is applying these perspectives to the reality of the outward perishing man living in a perishing world
- The first perspective for becoming a better man – **Scale**
- **2 Corinthians 4:17a**
- ‘light affliction’, ‘moment’ – in verse 16 Paul said ‘we do not lose heart’ – including himself
- Turn to **2 Corinthians 11**
- To appreciate the immensity of what Paul is saying here we need to understand the afflictions he endured
- **2 Corinthians 11:22-29**
- You can turn back to chapter 4
- If I had made that statement in verse 17 you could easily disregard it
- Many of you have experienced things far worse than I have
- But I am guessing that none of you have experienced what Paul did – and that list is only some of the things he endured – there was more
- This doesn’t mean these things aren’t hard to deal with in the moment, but by having the right perspective I can tolerate them better
- An example for me is my back – I have occasionally had lower back problems
- When it first happened, it consumed my mind
- But the last time it happened, my perspective was that I could endure the pain, because I had done it before – I knew that a couple of trips to

the chiropractor and some rest and I would be back to normal in a few weeks

- It doesn't make it any more fun, but does make it more tolerable
  - And I have found it changes the way I behave while I am going through it
  - Compared to the eternal perfection of glory in heaven, anything we have to endure in this life is a 'light affliction' and only lasts for a 'moment'
  - The second perspective for becoming a better man – **Purpose**
  - **2 Corinthians 4:17b**
  - This outward man is perishing – and that includes pain
  - Pain is a reality of living in a world broken by sin
  - Pain can be physical, relational, emotional, or spiritual
  - God does allow pain to touch the lives of His people
  - The glorious thing is that God doesn't waste our pain
  - He uses it for His glory – Paul understood that – the thorn in his flesh
- 2 Corinthians 12:9**

**And He said to me, "My grace is sufficient for you, for My strength is made perfect in weakness." Therefore most gladly I will rather boast in my infirmities, that the power of Christ may rest upon me.**

- Notice Paul says our 'light affliction' is 'working for us'
- When we trust God in our pain – it brings great glory to Him
- But there is a sense here that God will compensate us for the pain we had to endure in this life
- And the compensation is immeasurably greater than the pain we had to endure
- And while the pain in this life was but for a 'moment', the glory in heaven is eternal
- The third perspective of becoming a better man – **Vision**
- **2 Corinthians 4:18**
- This is an exhortation not to focus on the things of this perishing outward life, but on the spiritual things that only the inward man can see
- Pain, or afflictions, have a way of attracting our attention
- That is natural, and Paul's thorn in the flesh proves that it happened to him

- But that wasn't where his attention remained
- His thorn in the flesh led Paul straight into the presence of God
- Listen – that which fills your vision fills your life
- If your vision is filled with the pain or afflictions of life, then that is what your life will be
- And your life will bear the fruit of your pain and affliction
- Or you can use your pain and afflictions to drive you to God and let Him fill your vision – and the fruit of the Holy Spirit will be come out of your life
- This outward man is perishing because we live in a sin-broken world that is perishing
- Becoming a better man begins with a change in our perspectives
- **Scale** – As big as your issues are – the right perspective is that they are light and will only last for a moment
- **Purpose** – God will use them for His glory in this life and will result in an immeasurable amount of glory for us
- **Vision** – Look through your pain and afflictions to the God who is able to carry you through to the end of it
- Guys, we have a choice – we are either rotting or renewing
- We are either focused on the outward man that is perishing or the inward man who is being renewed day by day for God's glory
- Change your perspective and you will change your life
- **Let's pray!**