

2 Corinthians 4:17

Authorized King James Version (KJV)

For our light affliction, which is but for a moment, worketh for us a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory;

Analysis

For our light affliction, which is but for a moment (to gar parautika elaphron tēs thlipseōs hēmōn, τὸ γὰρ παραυτίκα ἐλαφρόν τῆς θλίψεως ἡμῶν)—after cataloging imprisonments, beatings, shipwrecks, and stonings (11:23-28), Paul calls it elaphron (ἐλαφρόν, 'light, easy, insignificant')! Parautika (παραυτίκα, 'momentary, transient') describes 70+ years of hardship. Only from eternity's perspective is a lifetime 'momentary'; only compared to glory is catastrophe 'light.'

Worketh for us a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory (kath' hyperbolēn eis hyperbolēn aiōnion baros doxēs katergazetai hēmin, καθ' ὑπερβολὴν εἰς ὑπερβολὴν αἰώνιον βάρος δόξης κατεργάζεται ἡμῖν)—kath' hyperbolēn eis hyperbolēn (καθ' ὑπερβολὴν εἰς ὑπερβολὴν, 'beyond all measure, to an extraordinary degree, surpassing excellence') is superlative heaped on superlative. Baros (βάρος, 'weight, burden') contrasts with 'light'—affliction is featherweight, glory is massive. Katergazomai (κατεργάζομαι, 'to work out, produce, accomplish') shows suffering actively producing glory, not just preceding it. Affliction isn't merely endured; it's the divinely appointed means of glory's production.

Historical Context

Jewish apocalyptic literature spoke of 'the weight of glory' awaiting the righteous after suffering (4 Ezra, 2 Barabbas). Paul intensifies this: glory's weight infinitely exceeds suffering's lightness, glory's eternity dwarfs suffering's momentariness,

and suffering itself produces glory. This theodicy makes sense only from resurrection perspective, which Paul thoroughly embraced.

Related Passages

John 3:16 — God's love and salvation

Ephesians 2:8 — Salvation by grace through faith

Revelation 20:12 — Judgment according to deeds

Romans 2:1 — Judging others

Study Questions

1. What helps you genuinely regard your present sufferings as 'light and momentary' without minimizing their real pain?
2. How does Paul's 'working for us' language challenge the view that suffering is purposeless or meaningless?
3. In what ways have past afflictions 'worked' an eternal weight of glory in your character or faith that you can now recognize?

Interlinear Text

τῆς	γὰρ	παραυτίκα	ἐλαφρόν	τῆς	θλίψεως	ἡμῶν
which	For	is but for a moment	light	which	affliction	our
G3588	G1063	G3910	G1645	G3588	G2347	G2257
καθ'	ὑπερβολὴν	εἰς	ὑπερβολὴν	αἰώνιον	βάρος	
a far		more exceeding		and eternal	weight	
G2596	G5236	G1519	G5236	G166	G922	
δόξης	κατεργάζεται	ἡμῖν				
of glory	worketh	for us				
G1391	G2716	G2254				

Additional Cross-References

Romans 8:18 (Glory): For I reckon that the sufferings of this present time are not worthy to be compared with the glory which shall be revealed in us.

1 Peter 5:10 (Glory): But the God of all grace, who hath called us unto his eternal glory by Christ Jesus, after that ye have suffered a while, make you perfect, stablish, strengthen, settle you.

James 1:12 (Parallel theme): Blessed is the man that endureth temptation: for when he is tried, he shall receive the crown of life, which the Lord hath promised to them that love him.

2 Corinthians 3:18 (Glory): But we all, with open face beholding as in a glass the glory of the Lord, are changed into the same image from glory to glory, even as by the Spirit of the Lord.

Romans 8:37 (Parallel theme): Nay, in all these things we are more than conquerors through him that loved us.

1 Peter 4:7 (Parallel theme): But the end of all things is at hand: be ye therefore sober, and watch unto prayer.

1 Corinthians 2:9 (Parallel theme): But as it is written, Eye hath not seen, nor ear heard, neither have entered into the heart of man, the things which God hath prepared for them that love him.

Romans 8:34 (Parallel theme): Who is he that condemneth? It is Christ that died, yea rather, that is risen again, who is even at the right hand of God, who also maketh intercession for us.

Romans 2:7 (Glory): To them who by patient continuance in well doing seek for glory and honour and immortality, eternal life:

Jude 1:24 (Glory): Now unto him that is able to keep you from falling, and to present you faultless before the presence of his glory with exceeding joy,