

2 Corinthians 4:9

Authorized King James Version (KJV)

Persecuted, but not forsaken; cast down, but not destroyed;

Analysis

Persecuted, but not forsaken (diōkomenoi all' ouk enkatalipomenoi, διωκόμενοι ἀλλ' οὐκ ἐγκαταλειπόμενοι)—diōkō (διώκω, 'to pursue, persecute') describes active, hostile pursuit. Enkatalipō (ἐγκαταλείπω, 'to abandon, forsake utterly') is the cry of Psalm 22:1 that Jesus quoted on the cross: 'Why hast thou forsaken me?' Paul faces persecution but never divine abandonment.

Cast down, but not destroyed (kataballomenoi all' ouk apollymenoi, καταβαλλόμενοι ἀλλ' οὐκ ἀπολλύμενοι)—kataballō (καταβάλλω, 'to throw down, strike down') evokes combat imagery; apollymi (ἀπόλλυμι, 'to destroy utterly, perish') is total obliteration. Paul is knocked down repeatedly but not knocked out. The four contrasts build from external pressure (v. 8a) to internal confusion (v. 8b) to relational hostility (v. 9a) to physical violence (v. 9b)—none succeed in destroying the treasure within the clay pot.

Historical Context

The verb forms are all present passive participles, indicating ongoing, repeated actions done to Paul by others. This wasn't hypothetical theology but lived reality. His persecutors (likely both Jewish opponents and Greco-Roman authorities) sought to silence him permanently. Yet the passive construction implies divine preservation: God allows the blows but prevents destruction.

Related Passages

Romans 2:1 — Judging others

Matthew 25:31 — Final judgment

Psalm 19:1 — Heavens declare God's glory

Genesis 1:1 — Creation of heavens and earth

Study Questions

1. When have you felt 'cast down'—and what convinced you that you weren't 'destroyed'?
2. How does Paul's experience of being 'persecuted but not forsaken' speak to times when God seems absent in suffering?
3. What practical difference does it make to know you can be knocked down but not knocked out?

Interlinear Text

διωκόμενοι ἀλλ' οὐκ ἐγκαταλειπόμενοι καταβαλλόμενοι

Persecuted

G1377

but

G235

not

G3756

forsaken

G1459

cast down

G2598

ἀλλ' οὐκ ἀπολλύμενοι

but

G235

not

G3756

destroyed

G622

Additional Cross-References

Isaiah 43:2 (Parallel theme): When thou passest through the waters, I will be with thee; and through the rivers, they shall not overflow thee: when thou walkest through the fire, thou shalt not be burned; neither shall the flame kindle upon thee.

Micah 7:8 (Parallel theme): Rejoice not against me, O mine enemy: when I fall, I shall arise; when I sit in darkness, the LORD shall be a light unto me.

Proverbs 24:16 (Parallel theme): For a just man falleth seven times, and riseth up again: but the wicked shall fall into mischief.

Psalms 42:11 (Parallel theme): Why art thou cast down, O my soul? and why art thou disquieted within me? hope thou in God: for I shall yet praise him, who is the health of my countenance, and my God.

Hebrews 13:5 (Parallel theme): Let your conversation be without covetousness; and be content with such things as ye have: for he hath said, I will never leave thee, nor forsake thee.

2 Corinthians 7:6 (Parallel theme): Nevertheless God, that comforteth those that are cast down, comforted us by the coming of Titus;

Isaiah 62:4 (Parallel theme): Thou shalt no more be termed Forsaken; neither shall thy land any more be termed Desolate: but thou shalt be called Hephzi-bah, and thy land Beulah: for the LORD delighteth in thee, and thy land shall be married.

Psalms 9:10 (Parallel theme): And they that know thy name will put their trust in thee: for thou, LORD, hast not forsaken them that seek thee.

Psalms 42:5 (Parallel theme): Why art thou cast down, O my soul? and why art thou disquieted in me? hope thou in God: for I shall yet praise him for the help of his countenance.

Psalms 22:1 (Parallel theme): My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me? why art thou so far from helping me, and from the words of my roaring?