

Title: Pressed for a Purpose
Text: 2 Corinthians 1: 8-9
Date: February 23, 2017
Place: SGBC, New Jersey

2 Corinthians 1: 8: For we would not, brethren, have you ignorant of our trouble, which came to us in Asia, that we were pressed out of measure, above strength, insomuch that we despaired even of life.

This was probably the trouble Paul had in Ephesus but whatever trouble it was, notice the effect it had on Paul. “*We were pressed*”—weighed down like a man whose knees buckle under a heavy load. “*Out of measure*”—beyond calculation in its weight and severity. “*Above strength*”—beyond Paul’s natural strength. “*Insomuch that we despaired even of life*”...he saw himself a dead man.

Why would God do this?

Proposition: God presses each of his elect children for a purpose, which is the eternal good of his child.

Title: Pressed for a Purpose

2 Corinthians 1: 9: But we had the sentence of death in ourselves, that we should not trust in ourselves, but in God which raiseth the dead.

GOD PRESSES

2 Corinthians 1: 9: But we had the sentence of death in ourselves...

Every child of God will enter into eternal life by first being pressed by God so that we despair of life. When God makes us hear the law for the first time, he puts the sentence of death in ourselves.

Romans 7: 9: For I was alive without the law once: but when the commandment came, sin revived, and I died. 10: And the commandment, which *was ordained* to life, I found *to be* unto death...13...sin by the commandment..[became] exceeding sinful.

In our text, Paul is speaking of his personal experience. I will do the same. The first time I heard the law speak, I was so pressed by it that I truly despaired of life. It convinced me I was a dead sinner, worthy of eternal condemnation. Any hope of eternal life by the law was dead.

But this pressing does not end there. God continues to press his children through trials of every sort for the same purpose—“*to put the sentence of death in ourselves.*” God graciously brings us into circumstances beyond our control to press us beyond all strength to put the sentence of death in us. It is painful but necessary for our spiritual well-being.

So if you are hearing the law for the first time and you are pressed down, despairing of life, pay attention! This is what God does to those he saves. And if there is a believer who is suffering in a trial, pay attention, remember it is God who presses his child with the trial. It is for a purpose.

SAVED FROM SELF-TRUST

2 Corinthians 1: 9: But we had the sentence of death in ourselves, that we should not trust in ourselves...

God presses his child to save us from a terrible sickness called self-trust. Sin makes every sinner think it is wise to trust ourselves. That was Paul's problem when he thought he could obtain eternal life by the law.

Romans 7: 11: For sin, taking occasion by the commandment, deceived me, and by it slew *me*.

What makes religious folks imagine they can keep the law of God? What makes irreligious folks think God will receive them based on the exact same principle of personal works? It is sin. The sinful heart deceives us into trusting in ourselves. Sin deceives us into thinking God gave the law for us to work out our own righteousness. Sin deceives us into thinking we have actually kept it and we are pretty good.

This is why the world says things like "Believe in thine own self." But God says,

Proverbs 28: 26: He that trusteth in his own heart is a fool: but whoso walketh wisely, he shall be delivered.

To walk wisely is not to trust in yourself: not to get you through one day, much less for salvation.

Jeremiah 17: 5: Thus saith the LORD; Cursed *be* the man that trusteth in man, and maketh flesh his arm, and whose heart departeth from the LORD. 6: For he shall be like the heath in the desert, and shall not see when good cometh; but shall inhabit the parched places in the wilderness, *in* a salt land and not inhabited.

When God crosses his path with the gospel, left trusting himself, he does not see that good has come his way. He rejects the gospel and goes on living in parched places in the wilderness, in a salt land, not inhabited.

And believers are not exempt from self-trust, either. God did this for the apostle Paul so that he would not trust in himself. The apostle Paul! Nobody ever wrote so clearly that sinners are saved by God's grace, apart from our works. Yet, Paul also, had to be given this sentence of death to keep him from trusting in himself. He said,

2 Corinthians 12: 7: And lest I should be exalted above measure through the abundance of the revelations, there was given to me a thorn in the flesh, the messenger of Satan to buffet me, lest I should be exalted above measure.

Our fleshly nature, causes us to forget we are helpless sinners. We come across something that one of this world's most famous writers penned. Then we post it as being so wise when it is absolutely contrary to scripture and contrary to what we have heard preached a thousand times. Sinful flesh makes us put our brains in neutral and forgot what we have been taught.

Spurgeon said, "When we say, "I am surprised that I should have acted so unwisely," we betray our secret pride and confess that we thought ourselves wonderfully wise."

So God sends the sentence of death into our hearts. He makes us hear the law and never lets his child stop hearing it, when we need to be brought down to the dust. And the purpose for this pressing is to bring us to the end of ourselves—that *we should not trust in ourselves*.

PRESSED TO TRUST GOD

2 Corinthians 1: 9: But we had the sentence of death in ourselves, that we should not trust in ourselves, but in God which raiseth the dead.

The purpose for which God presses his child is turn us to him who is our only salvation.

God raised the dead when he chose his people in Christ before as yet we died in Adam. That's right! Before we died, God raised his people from the dead by trusting his Son to save us. Then God raised his people from the dead when he raised Christ and raised us in Christ.

Ephesians 2: 5: Even when we were dead in sins, hath quickened us together with Christ, (by grace ye are saved;) 6: And hath raised *us* up together, and made *us* sit together in heavenly *places* in Christ Jesus: 7: That in the ages to come he might shew the exceeding riches of his grace in *his* kindness toward us through Christ Jesus.

The exceeding riches of his grace is that by his hand, Christ has fulfilled the law for those given to him and redeemed us from the curse by being made a curse for us. God raised him from the dead because the dead could not have any claim on him who satisfied the law, nor can it on his people.

Then God raised his people from the dead, when he gave us spiritual life and faith in Christ.

Ezekiel 37: 5: Thus saith the Lord GOD unto these bones; Behold, I will cause breath to enter into you, and ye shall live: 6:...and ye shall know that I am the LORD.

We only know him as our LORD when he has caused breathe to enter us and live. That is so all our days!

Therefore, God raises us from the dead in every trial when he brings us to cease trusting ourselves and trust him alone. Only when we are nothing, is Christ our All. Only when we are weak, is Christ our strength. Only when God presses us do we truly trust him alone.

Jeremiah 17: 7: Blessed *is* the man that trusteth in the LORD, and whose hope the LORD is. 8: For he shall be as a tree planted by the waters, and *that* spreadeth out her roots by the river, and shall not see when heat cometh, but her leaf shall be green; and shall not be careful in the year of drought, neither shall cease from yielding fruit.

God presses us for a purpose. We have the sentence of death in ourselves that we should not trust in ourselves, but in God who raises the dead. To every child of God, let us heed the apostle Peter's word,

1 Peter 5: 6: Humble yourselves therefore under the mighty hand of God, that he may exalt you in due time: 7: Casting all your care upon him; for he careth for you.

Amen!