

2 Corinthians 4 Commentary

[PREVIOUS](#)[NEXT](#)

CLICK VERSE
To go directly to that verse

- [4:1](#)
- [4:2](#)
- [4:3](#)
- [4:4](#)
- [4:5](#)
- [4:6](#)
- [4:7](#)
- [4:8](#)
- [4:9](#)
- [4:10](#)
- [4:11](#)
- [4:12](#)
- [4:13](#)
- [4:14](#)
- [4:15](#)
- [4:16](#)
- [4:17](#)
- [4:18](#)

2 CORINTHIANS - PAUL'S MINISTRY IN THE LIGHT OF THE INDESCRIBABLE GIFT

Click chart to enlarge

Charts from [Jensen's Survey of the NT](#) - used by permission
[Another Chart](#) from Charles Swindoll
[A Third Chart](#)

Overview of Second Corinthians

2Co 1:1-7:16 Character of Paul	2Co 8:1-9:15 Collection for the Saints	2Co 10:1-12:21 Credentials of Paul
Testimonial & Didactic	Practical	Apologetic
Past: Misunderstanding & Explanation	Present: Practical Project	Future: Anxieties
Apostle's Conciliation, Ministry & Exhortations	Apostle's Solicitation for Judean Saints	Apostle's Vindication of Himself
Forgiveness, Reconciliation Gratitude	Confidence	Vindication
Ephesus to Macedonia: Change of Itinerary Explained	Macedonia: Preparation for Visit to Corinth	To Corinth: Certainty and Imminence of the Visit
2Co 1:1-7:16	2Co 8:1-9:15	2Co 10:1-12:21

[2Corinthians written ~ 56-57AD - see Chronological Table of Paul's Life and Ministry](#)

INTRODUCTIONS TO SECOND CORINTHIANS:

- **IRVING JENSEN** - [Introduction and study tips](#) - excellent preliminary resource - scroll to page 1877 (Notes on both 1-2 Cor begin on p 1829)
- **JOHN MACARTHUR** [2 Corinthians Introduction - same as in the Study Bible](#)
- **JAMES VAN DINE** [2 Corinthians - Author, Purpose, Outline, Argument](#)
- **CHARLES SWINDOLL** - [2 Corinthians Overview](#)
- **MARK SEIFRID** - [The Message of Second Corinthians: 2 Corinthians as the Legitimation of the Apostle](#)
- **J VERNON MCGEE** - [2 Corinthians Introduction](#)
- **DAN WALLACE** - [2 Corinthians: Introduction, Argument, and Outline](#)
- **DAVID MALICK** - [An Introduction To Second Corinthians](#)

2 Corinthians 4:1 Therefore, since we have this ministry, as we received mercy, we do not lose heart,

- seeing: 2Co 3:6,12 5:18 Eph 3:7,8
- as: 1Co 7:25 1Ti 1:13 1Pe 2:10
- we faint not: 2Co 4:16 Isa 40:30 Ga 6:9 Eph 3:13 Php 4:13 2Th 3:13 *marg: Heb 12:3 Rev 2:3
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Therefore, since we have this ministry, as we received mercy, we do not lose heart,

2 Corinthians 4:2 but we have renounced the things hidden because of shame, not walking in craftiness or adulterating the word of God, but by the manifestation of truth commanding ourselves to every man's conscience in the sight of God.

- renounced: 1Co 4:5
- dishonesty: or, shame, Ro 1:16 6:21 Eph 5:12
- not: 2Co 1:12 2:17 11:3,6,13-15 Eph 4:14 1Th 2:3-5
- by: 2Co 5:11 6:4-7 7:14
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but we have renounced the things hidden because of shame, not walking in craftiness or adulterating the word of God, but by the manifestation of truth commanding ourselves to every man's conscience in the sight of God.

2 Corinthians 4:3 And even if our gospel is veiled, it is veiled to those who are perishing,

- our: Ro 2:16 1Th 1:5 1Ti 1:11
- it is: 2Co 4:4 2:15,16 3:14 Mt 11:25 1Co 1:18 2Th 2:9-11
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And even if our gospel is veiled, it is veiled to those who are perishing

2 Corinthians 4:4 in whose case the god of this world has blinded the minds of the unbelieving so that they might not see

- the god: Mt 4:8,9 Joh 12:31,40 14:30 16:11 1Co 10:20 Eph 2:2 6:12 1Jn 5:19 *Gr: Rev 20:2,3
- blinded: 2Co 3:14 1Ki 22:22 Isa 6:10 Joh 12:40
- lest: 2Co 4:6 3:8,9,11,18 Joh 8:12 12:35 Ac 26:18 Col 1:27 1Ti 1:11 Tit 2:13
- the image: Joh 1:14,18 12:45 14:9,10 15:24 Php 2:6 Col 1:15 Heb 1:3
- shine: 2Co 4:6 Ps 50:2 Isa 60:1,2 2Pe 1:19 1Jn 2:8
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in whose case the god of this world has blinded the minds of the unbelieving so that they might not see the light of the gospel of the glory of Christ, who is the image of God

The writers of the New Testament adapted the term Gospel as God's glorious message of salvation for lost otherwise hopeless, helpless sinners. [Euaggelion](#) is found in several combination phrases, each describing the gospel like a multifaceted jewel in various terms from a different viewpoint (from the NASB, 1977):

1. the gospel of the kingdom (Mt 4:23+, Mt 9:35+, Mt 24:14+)
2. the gospel of Jesus Christ, the Son of God (Mk 1:1+) because it centers in Christ
3. the gospel of God (Mk 1:14+, Ro 15:16+, 2Co 11:7+, 1Th 2:2+, 1Th 2:8,9_±, 1Pe 4:17+) because it originates with God and was not invented by man
4. the gospel of the kingdom of God (Lu 16:16+)
5. the gospel of the grace of God (Acts 20:24+, Ro 1:1+),
6. the gospel of His Son (Ro 1:9+)
7. the gospel of Christ (Ro 15:19+, 2Co 2:12+, 2Co 9:13+, 2Co 10:14+, Gal 1:7+, Phil 1:27+, 1Th 3:2+)
8. the gospel of the glory of Christ (2Co 4:4+)
9. the gospel of your salvation (Eph 1:14+)
10. the gospel of peace (Eph 6:15+)
11. the gospel of our Lord Jesus (2Th 1:8+)
12. the glorious gospel of the blessed God (1Ti 1:11+)
13. In Ro 16:25, 26+ Paul called it "**my Gospel**" indicating that the special emphasis he gave the gospel in his ministry.
14. **An eternal gospel** - Rev 14:6_± (Some writers such as C I Scofield interpret this as a "different gospel" than the other "gospels" mentioned above but I think such a distinction is incorrect and is poorly substantiated).

For a rewarding study, study the preceding references in context making notation of the truth you observe about the gospel. If you would like a special blessing, take an afternoon to go through all 76 uses of **euaggelion** in context making a list of what you learn about the gospel. The Spirit of God will enlighten your heart and encourage your spirit in a very special way...and you'll want to share the "good news" with someone because of your "discoveries"!

Euaggelion - Matt. 4:23; Matt. 9:35; Matt. 24:14; Matt. 26:13; Mk. 1:1; Mk. 1:14; Mk. 1:15; Mk. 8:35; Mk. 10:29; Mk. 13:10; Mk. 14:9; Mk. 16:15; Acts 15:7; Acts 20:24; Rom. 1:1; Rom. 1:9; Rom. 1:16; Rom. 2:16; Rom. 10:16; Rom. 11:28; Rom. 15:16; Rom. 15:19; Rom. 16:25; 1 Co. 4:15; 1 Co. 9:12; 1 Co. 9:14; 1 Co. 9:18; 1 Co. 9:23; 1 Co. 15:1; 2 Co. 2:12; 2 Co. 4:3; 2 Co. 4:4; 2 Co. 8:18; 2 Co. 9:13; 2 Co. 10:14; 2 Co. 11:4; 2 Co. 11:7; Gal. 1:6; Gal. 1:7; Gal. 1:11; Gal. 2:2; Gal. 2:5; Gal. 2:7; Gal. 2:14; Eph. 1:13; Eph. 3:6; Eph. 6:15; Eph. 6:19; Phil. 1:5; Phil. 1:7; Phil. 1:12; Phil. 1:16; Phil. 1:27; Phil. 2:22; Phil. 4:3; Phil. 4:15; Col. 1:5; Col. 1:23; 1 Thess. 1:5; 1 Thess. 2:2; 1 Thess. 2:4; 1 Thess. 2:8; 1 Thess. 2:9; 1 Thess. 3:2; 2 Thess. 1:8; 2 Thess. 2:14; 1 Tim. 1:11; 2 Tim. 1:8; 2 Tim. 1:10; 2 Tim. 2:8; Phlm. 1:13; 1 Pet. 4:17; Rev. 14:6

Christ, Who is the image of God.

in whose case the god of this world has blinded the minds of the unbelieving, that they might not see the light of the gospel of the glory of Christ, who is the image of God. 1

Then the glory of the LORD will be revealed, And all flesh will see it together; For the mouth of the LORD has spoken." 2

No man has seen God at any time; the only begotten God, who is in the bosom of the Father, He has explained Him. And the Word

became flesh, and dwelt among us, and we beheld His glory, glory as of the only begotten from the Father, full of grace and truth. 3

Jesus said to him, "Have I been so long with you, and yet you have not come to know Me, Philip? He who has seen Me has seen the Father; how do you say, 'Show us the Father'? 4

And He is the radiance of His glory and the exact representation of His nature, and upholds all things by the word of His power. When He had made purification of sins, He sat down at the right hand of the Majesty on high; 5

And by common confession great is the mystery of godliness: He who was revealed in the flesh, Was vindicated in the Spirit, Beheld by angels, Proclaimed among the nations, Believed on in the world, Taken up in glory. 6

in whom we have redemption, the forgiveness of sins. And He is the image of the invisible God, the first-born of all creation. 7

For whom He foreknew, He also predestined to become conformed to the image of His Son, that He might be the first-born among many brethren; 8

And just as we have borne the image of the earthly, we shall also bear the image of the heavenly. 9

1-2Co 4:4; 2-Isa 40:5; 3-Joh 1:18,14; 4-Joh 14:9; 5-Heb 1:3; 6-1Ti 3:16; 7-Col 1:14,15; 8-Rom 8:29; 9-a1Co 15:49;

2 Corinthians 4:5 For we do not preach ourselves but Christ Jesus as Lord, and ourselves as your bond-servants for Jesus' sake.

6 For God, who said, "Light shall shine out of darkness," is the One who has shone in our hearts to give the Light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Christ

- we: Mt 3:11 Joh 1:21-23 3:27-31 7:18 Ac 3:12,13 8:9,10 10:25,26 Ac 14:11-15 Ro 15:17,18 1Co 1:13-15,23 3:5,6 10:33 Php 1:15 1Th 2:5,6 Tit 1:11 1Pe 5:2-5 2Pe 2:3
- Christ: 2Co 1:19 Mt 23:8 Ac 2:36 5:31 10:36 Ro 14:8,9 1Co 1:23 2:2 8:6 1Co 12:3 15:47 Php 2:11
- and: 2Co 1:24 5:14,15 Mt 20:25-27 Lu 22:25,26 Joh 13:14,15 Ro 15:1,2 1Co 9:19-23 Ga 5:13 2Ti 2:10
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FOR IN DEPTH COMMENT ON THIS VERSE CLICK [2 Corinthians 4:5](#)

For we do not preach ourselves but Christ Jesus as Lord, and ourselves as your bond-servants for Jesus' sake.

6 For God, who said, "Light shall shine out of darkness," is the One who has shone in our hearts to give the Light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Christ

2 Corinthians 4:6 For God, who said, "Light shall shine out of darkness," is the One who has shone in our hearts to give the Light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Christ.

- who: Ge 1:3,14,15 Ps 74:16 136:7-9 Isa 45:7
- hath: Gr. is he who hath
- shined: Eph 1:17 5:8 2Pe 1:19
- the light: 2Co 4:4 3:18 Ex 33:18-23 34:5-7 Ps 63:2 90:16 Isa 6:1-3 35:2 40:5 Isa 60:2 Joh 11:40 Ac 7:55,56 1Pe 2:9
- in the: Lu 10:22 Joh 1:14 12:41 14:9,10 Php 2:6 Col 1:15 Heb 1:3 1Pe 1:12
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For God, who said, "Light shall shine out of darkness," is the One who has shone in our hearts to give the Light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Christ.

John MacArthur relates the truth of **physical creation to spiritual redemption** in 2 Corinthians 4:6+. -- Paul says "is the One who has shone in our hearts" is the same God of creation who turned on the light physically (Genesis 1:2+) and here turns on the light spiritually. Redemption is as much a divine operation as was creation and it's as much a creative operation. Spiritual darkness covers the minds of men until God shines in their hearts. **John MacArthur** explains the point Paul is "making is **creation and redemption are each works of God**. God commanded the light to shine out of darkness at the creation. And the light which shined

in a **creative** way has now begun to shine in a **redemptive** way. The **light of creation** has become the **light of salvation**. The light placed in the **heavens** has now become a light placed in the **heart**. The light which was **material** has become **moral**. The physical light of the **sun, s-u-n**, has become the spiritual light of the **Son, s-o-n**. The **universal** light has become the **personal** light. A sovereign God shines the gospel light into the human heart when the truth is preached and God designs to save....What is the light? It is to know who Christ is, that He is God incarnate, that He is the clearest revelation of God. He is the illumination of the truth about God revealed in Christ. ([Looking at the Face of Jesus, Part 5](#))

2 Corinthians 4:7 But we have this treasure in earthen vessels, so that the surpassing greatness of the power will be of God and not from ourselves;

- this: 2Co 4:1 6:10 Mt 13:44,52 Eph 3:8 Col 1:27 2:3
- in: 2Co 5:1 10:10 Jud 7:13,14,16-20 La 4:2 1Co 1:28 4:9-13 Ga 4:13,14 2Ti 2:20
- that: 2Co 3:5,6 12:7-9 13:4 1Co 2:3-5 Eph 1:19,20 2:5,8,9 Col 2:12 1Th 1:5
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But we have this treasure in earthen vessels, so that the surpassing greatness of the power will be of God and not from ourselves

2 Corinthians 4:8 we are afflicted in every way, but not crushed; perplexed, but not despairing;

- troubled: 2Co 1:8-10 6:4 7:5 11:23-30
- yet: 2Co 4:16,17 12:10 1Sa 28:15 30:6 Ps 56:2,3 Pr 14:26 18:10 Ro 5:3-5 Ro 8:35-37 Jas 1:2-4 1Pe 1:6,7 4:12-14
- not in despair: or, not altogether without help, or means, 1Sa 31:4 Job 2:9,10 Ps 37:33 Joh 14:18 1Co 10:13
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we are afflicted in every way, but not crushed; perplexed, but not despairing

2 Corinthians 4:9 persecuted, but not forsaken; struck down, but not destroyed;

- but: Ps 9:10 22:1 37:25,28 Isa 62:4 Heb 13:5
- cast: 2Co 7:6 Job 5:17-19 22:29 Ps 37:24 42:5,11 Isa 43:2
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persecuted, but not forsaken; struck down, but not destroyed;

2 Corinthians 4:10 always carrying about in the body the dying of Jesus, so that the life of Jesus also may be manifested in our body.

- bearing: 2Co 1:5,9 Ro 8:17,18 Ga 6:17 Php 3:10,11 Col 1:24
- that: 2Co 13:4 Joh 14:19 Ac 18:9,10 Ro 8:17 2Ti 2:11 1Pe 4:13 Rev 1:17
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always carrying about in the body the dying of Jesus, so that the life of Jesus also may be manifested in our body.

2 Corinthians 4:11 For we who live are constantly being delivered over to death for Jesus' sake, so that the life of Jesus also may be manifested in our mortal flesh.

- are alway: Ps 44:22 141:7 Ro 8:36 1Co 15:31,49
- our: 2Co 5:4 Ro 8:11 1Co 15:53,54
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For we who live are constantly being delivered over to death for Jesus' sake, so that the life of Jesus also may be manifested in our mortal flesh

2 Corinthians 4:12 So death works in us, but life in you.

- death: 2Co 12:15 13:9 Ac 20:24 1Co 4:10 Php 2:17,30 1Jn 3:16
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So death works in us, but life in you.

2 Corinthians 4:13 But having the same spirit of faith, according to what is written, "I BELIEVED, THEREFORE I SPOKE," we also believe, therefore we also speak,

- **the same spirit of faith:** Ac 15:11 Ro 1:12 1Co 12:9 Heb 11:1-40 2Pe 1:1
- **I believed:** Ps 116:10 (= "I believed when I said, "I am greatly afflicted.")
- **we also believe:** 2Co 3:12, Pr 21:28
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But having the same spirit of faith, according to what is written

Kruse - Paul is saying that despite death being at work in us we still operate in the same spirit of faith as the psalmist....There has been debate whether "spirit of faith" refers to a human disposition, as indicated when the initial letter is rendered as lowercase ("spirit"—so Augustine, ACCSC, 234; Thrall 1:339) or to the Holy Spirit in which case the initial letter would be uppercase ("Spirit"—so Hafemann 187, Seifrid 209; Barnett 240 n. 7). The former is the better option as Paul is saying that like the psalmist, his faith in God persists despite the sufferings he encounters. He is not making a point about the Holy Spirit being the one who inspires faith. ([2 Cor-EGGNT](#))

"I BELIEVED, THEREFORE I SPOKE," we also believe, therefore we also speak,

Kruse - Paul quotes Ps. 116:10 (LXX Ps 115:1) to say that despite the difficulties of his ministry he operates with the same "spirit of faith" as the psalmist did in the midst of his distress, and in this faith Paul goes on speaking, either when (like the psalmist) he poured out his heart to the Lord or as he proclaimed God's word. ([2 Cor-EGGNT](#))

THOUGHT - Paul was in great distress and affliction. Notice what Paul relied on when in dire straits. Paul held fast to the Scripture! And the Scripture held him fast. In this case it encouraged him to keep on believing and keep on speaking! Scripture will (or can) do the same in your life beloved when you are in dire straits! Try it!

2 Corinthians 4:14 knowing that He who raised the Lord Jesus will raise us also with Jesus and will present us with you.

- that: 2Co 5:1-4 Isa 26:19 Joh 11:25,26 Ro 8:11 1Co 6:14 15:20-22 1Th 4:14
- shall present: 2Co 11:2 Eph 5:27 Col 1:22,28 Jude 1:24

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knowing that He who raised the Lord Jesus will raise us also with Jesus and will present us with you.

2 Corinthians 4:15 For all things are for your sakes, so that the grace which is spreading to more and more people may cause the giving of thanks to abound to the glory of God.

- all: 2Co 1:4-6 Ro 8:28 1Co 3:21-23 Col 1:24 2Ti 2:10
- the abundant: 2Co 1:11 8:19 9:11,12 Ps 50:14,23 Ga 1:24 Eph 3:20,21 Col 3:16,17 Heb 13:15,16 1Pe 2:9 4:11 Rev 4:8-11 5:8-14 19:4-6
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For all things are for your sakes, so that the grace which is spreading to more and more people may cause the giving of thanks to abound to the glory of God.

2 Corinthians 4:16 Therefore we do not lose heart, but though our outer man is decaying, yet our inner man is being renewed day by day.

- we: 2Co 4:1 Ps 27:13 119:81 Isa 40:29 1Co 15:58
- though: 2Co 12:15 Job 19:26,27 Ps 73:26 Isa 57:1,2 Mt 5:29,30
- the: Ro 7:22 Eph 3:16 1Pe 3:4
- is: Ps 51:10 Isa 40:31 Ro 12:2 Eph 4:23 Col 3:10 Tit 3:5
- day by: Lu 11:3
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Therefore we do not lose heart, but though our outer man is decaying, yet our inner man is being renewed day by day

2 Corinthians 4:17 For momentary, light affliction is producing for us an eternal weight of glory far beyond all comparison,

- our: 2Co 11:23-28 Ps 30:5 Isa 54:8 Ac 20:23 Ro 8:18,34,37 1Pe 1:6 4:7 1Pe 5:10
- worketh: Ps 119:67,71 Mt 5:12 Ro 5:3-5 Php 1:19 2Th 1:4,6 Heb 12:10,11 Jas 1:3,4,12
- far: 2Co 3:18 Ge 15:1 Ps 31:19 73:24 Isa 64:4 Lu 6:23 Ro 2:7 1Co 2:9 1Pe 1:7,8 5:10 1Jn 3:2 Jude 1:24
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"The pessimist sees a difficulty in every opportunity.

The optimist sees an opportunity in every difficulty."

For momentary, light affliction is producing for us an eternal weight of glory far beyond all comparison,

2 Corinthians 4:18 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.

- **we:** 2Co 5:7 Ro 8:24,25 Heb 11:1,25-27 12:2,3
- **for:** Mt 25:46 Lev 16:25,26 2Th 2:16 1Jn 2:16,17,25

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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.

A Prayer for Eternal Weight

O Eternal God,
Who measures time with mercy
and weighs suffering with glory,

I come burdened by what is seen,
pressed by frailty,
wearyed by the ache of a fallen world—
yet I confess that these troubles,
though real and piercing,
are but light and momentary
when held against the scale of eternity.
Teach my soul to see rightly.

When affliction lingers,
remind me it is not purposeless.
When sorrow deepens,
remind me it is not wasted.

When weakness humbles me,
remind me it is not the end,
but the shaping hand of grace
preparing an eternal weight of glory
beyond all comparison.

Lord, lift my eyes
from what is temporary and fading
to what is unseen and everlasting.

Train my heart to value heaven
more than comfort,
character more than relief,
Your presence more than ease.

Let every trial refine faith,
every tear polish hope,
every burden anchor me more firmly
in the promise of glory to come.

I thank You that my suffering
is measured, not infinite;
brief, not eternal;
designed, not random;
and held within the covenant love
of a faithful God.

Prepare me quietly for glory
while making me faithful here.
Make me willing to endure
what You ordain,
joyful in what You promise,
and steadfast in what You are accomplishing.

Until the day when faith becomes sight
and the unseen becomes eternal joy,

keep me walking by trust,
living by hope,
and longing for the glory
You are preparing for me in Christ.

Through Jesus—
the Man of Sorrows,
now crowned with everlasting glory.
Amen.

Henrietta Mears - Paul could sing as he suffered for he knew the wonderful grace of God. He was always conscious of the presence of the Lord Jesus Christ. He knew that the greater the suffering in this present world, the greater the glory of eternity (2 Cor. 4:8-18). Paul lived with his eye on the future! Christ nowhere promises that a Christian will be free from suffering or sorrow. Rather do we hear that "In this world you will have trouble" (John 16:33). Christ allows us to get into trouble that He may deliver us. He allowed Daniel to be put into the den of lions that He might pull him out. He allowed Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego to go into the fiery furnace that He might deliver them. He allowed Paul to be shipwrecked that He might save him. Our God is able to deliver!

THOUGHT - Wear are your eyes? On the present, passing pagan world or on the perfect eternal world to come? It makes all the difference in how you meet adversity and difficulty in this present life. See Vertical Vision. May we resolve enabled by the Spirit to emulate **Jonathan Edwards** who wrote...

- Where will all of our worldly enjoyments be, when we are laid in the silent grave?
- Resolved, to live as I shall wish I had done, when I come to die.
- Resolved, to live as I shall wish I had done, ten thousand ages hence.
- **Lord, stamp eternity on my eyeballs!**