



Carstairs-Bancroft United Church

October 15, 2021

**DAILY ENCOURAGEMENT
DURING COVID-19 PANDEMIC
By Rev. Maria Szabone Berces**



Source: Our Daily Bread

Beloved Carstairs Bancroft United Church Members,

Today's Inspiration in one sentence

“... we know that the one who raised the Lord Jesus from the dead will also raise us with Jesus...” (2 Corinthians 4:14)

Did You Know?

- Scholars are certain that the author of **2 Corinthians** is Paul. The letter is stamped with his style and contains more autobiographical material than any of his writings.
- The available evidence indicates that the year AD 55 is a reasonable estimate for the writing of this letter. From 1 Corinthians 16:5-8 it may be concluded that 1 Corinthians was written from Ephesus before Pentecost (in the late spring) and that 2 Corinthians may have been written later that same year before the onset of winter, probably from Macedonia.
- The opening greeting of the latter states that it was addressed to the church in Corinth and to Christians throughout Achaia (the Roman province comprising all of Greece south of Macedonia).
- In this letter Paul encourages the Corinthian believers to be reconciled with him and to reject false apostles who are challenging his authority and creating dissension in the church.

(The NIV Study Bible; 2 Corinthians)

Personal Insight

As years are passing by, the experience about which Adam writes below are getting more and more familiar to me as well. Our whole body - including joints, muscles and even our brain - tells us that we are not in our twenties any longer. I heard from some of you that tasks and chores take more time to be accomplished than they used to. Is it comforting to know that we are not alone in this human struggle?

But there is something else that might be encouraging. What Paul is telling to the believers in Corinth can be heartening for all of us. The all-powerful God is willing to hold us in his everlasting hands and we can gain strength from this fact when we put our trust in his beloved Son.

It doesn't mean that we stop in aging, or that we would never suffer from any illness, trial or loss. Our **“treasure”** - our soul that was redeemed by Jesus - remains **“in jars of clay”**. This means that we are still physically vulnerable. But the more we cling to our faith in God's saving and caring love showed in Christ, the more we will be able to identify with Paul words: **“Though outwardly we are wasting away, yet inwardly we are being renewed day by day.”** (2 Corinthians 4:16)

Grace and Peace to You All,

Rev. Maria



The Dwindles

Therefore, we do not lose heart. Though outwardly we are wasting away, yet inwardly we are being renewed day by day.

2 Corinthians 4:16

READ 2 Corinthians 4:7 – 18

It started with a tickle in my throat. Uh oh, I thought. That tickle turned out to be influenza. And that was just the beginning of bronchial affliction. Influenza morphed into whooping cough—yes, that whooping cough—and that turned into pneumonia.

Eight weeks of torso-wracking coughing—it's not called whooping cough for nothing—has left me humbled. I don't think of myself as old. But I'm old enough to start thinking about heading in that direction. A member of my small group at church has a funny name for the health issues that assail us as we age: "the dwindles." But there's nothing funny about dwindling's work "in action."

In 2 Corinthians 4, Paul too wrote—in his own way—about "the dwindles." That chapter chronicles the persecution he and his team endured. Fulfilling his mission had taken a heavy toll: "Outwardly we are wasting away," he admitted. But even as his body failed—from age, persecution, and harsh conditions—Paul held tightly to his sustaining hope: "Inwardly we are being renewed day by day" (v. 16). These "light and momentary troubles," he insisted, can't compare to what awaits: "an eternal glory that far outweighs them all" (v. 17).

Even as I write tonight, the dwindles claw insistently at my chest. But I know that in my life and that of anyone who clings to Christ, they'll not have the last word. – By **Adam Holz**

REFLECT & PRAY

Father, even as our bodies "waste away," help me to see those physical struggles through the lens of our hope in Jesus and the glory He promises. Amen.

What "dwindles" are affecting you or someone you love right now? What can help you maintain your faith and hope during seasons of struggle or discouragement with health issues?

SCRIPTURE INSIGHT

A common theme in Paul's writing is the connection between human frailty and God's power. In 2 Corinthians 4:7, Paul says we're like jars of clay, yet we hold great treasure. He illustrates this contrast by showing how the power of God has sustained him. Although he was persecuted, struck down, and continually faced harm because he was a believer in Jesus, he wasn't crushed, in despair, abandoned, or destroyed because God's power was at work in him (vv. 8–10). Paul returns to this theme in chapter 12, where he delights that God's "power is made perfect in weakness" (12:9). – By **J.R. Hudberg**

Used with permission