

## Despairing

*“we are afflicted in every way, but not crushed; perplexed, but not despairing”*

**2 Corinthians 4:8**

**Despairing**—This looks like a difficult word in Greek, *exaporoumenoi*. But if you sound it out you will discover that it has a familiar ring exasperated. It is made from two words *ek* (meaning “out of” with intensity) and *aporeo* (meaning “to be at a loss”). So, we get “to be completely without resources” exasperated.

Paul contrasts this situation with “perplexed.” This Greek word means “not knowing what to do.” Paul is giving us a very clear picture of the difference between the Christian and the non-believer. Christians certainly face troubles in life. But they are not stuck. The “Little Instruction Manual of Life” that they have is clear. Life is in God’s hands.

I have an astute business colleague who often says, “When people don’t know what to do, they do what they know.” If my world is confined to my own resources, I will find that exasperation overcomes me. I am not enough on my own to deal with all this world can throw at me. But the Christian is never left without any resources. Oswald Chambers puts it this way: God will tax the last grain of sand and the most distant star to bring help to His children.

The Christian has an answer to despair. Despair is the end of myself. I have nothing left, no place to turn, no exit. God deals with despair in the same way He deals with all of those emotional states that result from me trying to control everything. He demonstrates the futility of trying to live life on our terms. Despair is the *divinely planned* experience of my insufficiency. It is intended to lead me beyond myself into the arms of the only One who can completely care for me. Paul knew we would face situations where we did not know what to do. But God knows what to do. Our inadequacy is never His adequacy. Perplexed? Yes! Hopelessly at the end? Never! God demonstrates His power in my weakness.

Have you thanked God for your experience of despair? Do you see now that it was designed to lead you to His grace?