

77 years ago. Our boys stormed the beaches, D-day. great courage, not losing heart, this mighty work, knowing the great significance what was taking place. 10k would give their life. It began the push toward Berlin, even to liberate a place called Buchenwald. Buchenwald concentration camp, where Pastor Paul Schneider was imprisoned. To this day, a cell there is dedicated to this Lutheran pastor who refused to salute the Nazi flag, go along with an evil government. Pastor Schneider was tortured; from his cell window, he was known to shout encouragement to the others; speaking the words of Scripture, preaching Christ. Pastor Schneider died from his torture, the first of many pastors killed, for their rebellion against an evil empire. Now, did God's promises to provide for him fail? Did God's love for him fail? No. They were simply fulfilled in a different, greater way than he could have ever imagined. Has God's love, His care, His promises ever failed you? **We are afflicted in every way but not crushed, perplexed but not driven to despair, persecuted but not forsaken, stuck down but not destroyed. Christ manifested, His life in us. So we do not lose heart, even as our outer self is wasting away, our inner self is being renewed day by day.**

How sad, frustrating for us to see those we love get into trouble or become trapped in their sins do not turn to God. Just when they need God, Pastor, the Church most in their lives.

How sad, frustrating when you do not realized, what did that say, **the power belongs to God, not us.** We also fail, fail in our love to others, failed to trust God more than we trust in the security of our bank account, our health, and our own ability to get by.

As in the garden of Eden you give into temptation to easy, as do I. Tempted to despair; doubt God's word and power in your life; or think He must prove Himself to you -in only good things. To question if God is really there, really caring for you, really providing, so inwardly focused.

That God is holding back on you, greater joy if you just take a bit of the apple, take care of yourself. The devil is lying to you. He never delivers. There is no easy way, no paradise on earth, no family is without hardship. There is not a family here that is not touched by unbelief or divorce or abuse or mental illness or disease.

**Afflicted in every way, perplexed, persecuted but... we do not lose heart.** Yes, this life is hard. Many know well about this outer nature wasting away. And you buy Advil, aspirin in bulk. Your prescription list grows. But

even greater, you know this struggle against the forces of darkness is tiresome. Faith means a life-long warfare against the powers of darkness. Yet your future is certain!. **Eternal weight of glory beyond all comparison.** But even now, in the midst, says, **Christ is manifested in our bodies-** that's the Lord's Supper, His body and blood joined to you and **the inner self that is renewed day by day** is your baptismal life.

When informed the 101<sup>st</sup> airborne was surrounded at Bastogne, one of our war heroes, a Lutheran, Maj. Winters said, "we are paratrooper, we're suppose to be surrounded." We too are surrounded, attacked on all side, persecuted for the sake of Christ, persecuted by our sinful nature and sinful actions, persecuted by others. But we do not lose heart, for Christ is in us, with us, caring for us, rescuing us.

Our Lord suffers, dies upon the cross for this very purpose: To recruit us traitorous rebels for His army, to make us strong in Him, to win the Victory for you. In this warfare, to pick you up, bind your wounds, comfort your hurts.

After months of planning, Gen. Eisenhower didn't know exactly what D-Day would bring, you have no idea what tomorrow brings. We hit the fields and trust in God. It doesn't matter what you lack or how you failed. What matters is the Lord will provide, He will see to your good, He will attend to you. He keeps every promise. **So we do not lose heart.**

He said you would have afflictions. Your afflictions also show how the Lord provides. For this Lord only eats with and receives sinners. It is only the sick who need this Physician; only the sorrowful have the comfort of the Holy Spirit. We live by faith, not in what is seen. Faith sees things afflicted, and confesses against them. Like standing in the cemetery where the body has finally wasted away and say, **O grave, where is thy victory?** In the midst of evil, affliction, sorrow -faith says, **The Lord is good; works all things together for my good.** He hears your prayers. He is merciful. He is good. This is the foundation of all our praise, the reason you are bold to pray at all. Yes, we are sinners, unworthy of God's grace in Christ, but He is steadfast in His love. He has made a promise. He is not stopped by your sin. The great, eternally significant, mighty work of Christ taking place in you. You have this treasure in this, your jar of clay; **the power belongs to God, not you. Not crushed, not driven to despair, not forsaken, not destroyed, the life of Christ, manifested** in you here.