

# ...BUT NOT DESTROYED



## 2 CORINTHIANS 4:7-10

8 *We are troubled (hard-pressed) on every side, yet not distressed (crushed); we are perplexed, but not in despair;* 9 *Persecuted, but not forsaken; cast down (struck down), but not destroyed.*

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There is a phrase common to the American language. Its meaning is obscure. It's a saying that no doubt has been passed down from generation to generation by **obscure** texts and by ancient *cryptic* writings.

- **The saying is this:** “*It’s not over until the fat lady sings!*”

And the other day, I wondered to myself: What is the “it” that the saying is referring to... *who* is this lady... and *why* or *what* is she singing?

So, I looked into the matter and studied the origin of this phrase or saying – and found something quite extraordinary.

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As far as we can tell, the saying originates from a work of *musical* composition by German composer **Richard Wagner** in 1876.

- You see, Richard Wagner was somewhat of a **Maverick** in German opera.
- And he took things to the next level and chose to create epic dramas with his music.
- He used music to tell stories that were rich in meaning and symbolism.

And in 1876, audiences flocked to see one of these productions, created by Wagner, entitled: “*The Twilight of the Gods.*”

It told the story of heavenly, immortal beings in conflict with each other and used the symbol of FIRE-WAR-DEATH and GREAT FLOODS and THE WASHING AWAY OF ALL THINGS to represent a great *life cycle* in the heavenly realm.

- The musical production was a total of 14 hours long, split between 3 different acts.

### ACT 1 – ACT 2 – ACT 3

This 14-hour epic was part of a longer series full of rich symbolism.

- The music would start out softly, gently, and quietly – **representing birth.**
- At times, it would grow faster and rise to rhythmic heights and then drop suddenly – **representing death.**

And Wagner's production was so long that he created a musical device in the story...

...he inputted a special character.

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Her name... was BRUNNHILDE.

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And it was her 10-min solo that concluded the whole thing.

And this character, Brunnhilde, was created within the story by Wagner and designed to be quite stately...

...because only a powerful woman with a strong voice was able to sustain the concluding 10-min solo – in which she summed up the entire production.

You see, at the end of Acts 3, she would walk out, and through *song*, she would mark the death of the story's chief characters...

...thus, ending the “**TWILIGHT OF THE GODS.**”

In Wagner’s story, her ending solo represented **FINALITY** and **COMPLETION**.

And because this epic musical drama was so long – Wagner used the image of Brunnhilde as a tool to get people to stay throughout all **3** acts.

At the end of **ACT 1** and the end of **ACT 2**, it would seem to be over...

...but really, it was just a **PAUSE** in the larger story.

It seemed that the action of the story had concluded and that the meaning expressed in the lives of its characters was over...

...but really, it was just the end of an Act.

And in the next Act, the action would pick back up and continue through all **3** acts *until* it arrived at Wagner’s pre-determined conclusion.

And until the concluding solo – that summed it all up – the story would continue.

**You see...**

**“IT’S NOT OVER UNTIL THE FAT LADY SINGS.”**

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You think the story has ended – but really, *it’s just the end of an act!*

Give it time, and the music will pick back up, and the story will continue...

...directed by the maker and creator of all things,

...the great orchestrator of our lives,

And he will guide the **tempo** and the **rhythm**, and the **events** within the story, until all things arrive at *his*...

**...PRE-DETERMINED END.**

## **A FUTURE AND A HOPE**

In scripture, we see a similar message conveyed in the Old Testament book of Jeremiah.

As Jeremiah chapter **29** opens, the people of God are *stuck* and *trapped* as slaves and captives in the foreign kingdom of Babylon...

...and while in captivity, God speaks to them and says:

“For I know that thoughts that I think toward you, saith the Lord, thoughts of peace, and not of evil to give you... an EXPECTED end.”

In other words, he told them that their conclusion was *not* written by the current circumstances of their lives!

- **Rather, it was written by his own hands!**

Other translations convey “an expected end” to mean a FUTURE and a HOPE.

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To put it in our language today, what God spoke to the people in their captivity was that...

...as long as they followed the writer of it all, and looked to their God and creator, then he would guide them and direct the story of their lives,

...through every HIGH and every LOW.

...until it arrives at the conclusion that *he* has written for them.

In other words, as long as **God** is in control of your life, and as long as you allow *him* to write the story of your life...

...then, it's not over until **HE** says it's over!

**IF YOU FOLLOW HIM** - He is able to direct the **rhythm** and **events** of your life through every high and every low... *of every act...*

...and every season, until you arrive at the end *he* has created for you!

In this season and act of your life...

You may be **TROUBLED** and hard-pressed on every side...

...there may be a heavy issue weighing you down,

...but if you allow the Lord to work *in that issue* then – IT WILL NOT **CRUSH** YOU.

You may feel perplexed and overwhelmed right now, but if God is allowed to write your story...

...then there is no reason to despair!

The events of your past may persecute you, but in *his hands...*

...you are never forsaken!

Life may have knocked you down...

...but if you build your future on the foundation of *His Holy Word*,

...YOU WILL **NOT** BE DESTROYED.

## WHAT EASTER IS ABOUT

You see, your emotions may tell you that you're stuck in a hard season of life with no way out.

Some things you *trusted in* and *counted on* may have fallen to pieces...

...but if you trust in the Lord, **HE WILL HOLD YOU TOGETHER.**

You may feel surrounded and overwhelmed...

...like Jeremiah, you may have come to the end of your rope,

...and haven't yet *figured out* your next move,

But know today that there is a God who is able to write a new chapter into your life... **AND REDEEM WHAT HAS BEEN LOST.**

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And *that* – is really what Easter is all about.

It's about the God of heaven coming to the earth to write a season, or a new covenant, into the fabric of humanity.

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**Let's take a moment and unpack what Easter *really* means.**

What's interesting is that if we look at scripture, we discover that the word "Easter" is only used once... **in Acts 12:4.**

*"When he (Herod Agrippa – the King) apprehended him (Peter), he put him in prison, and delivered him to four groups of soldiers to keep him; intending after **EASTER** to bring him forth to the people."*

And the word "Easter" that we find here in this verse is only seen in the King James Version of the Bible.

- Every other translation of the Bible replaces the word *Easter* with the word “Passover.”

You see, in the context of Acts 12:4, the word “Easter” is used to indicate or to represent THE PASSOVER.

- In fact, the original Greek translation of the word Easter is *Pesach*, which literally means “Passover.”

So, I say that because if we truly want to understand the significance of what Jesus did on the cross...

...we must look to the **Passover**.

And if you are familiar with the Bible, you will remember that the Passover was an annual Jewish religious celebration established by God way back in the Old Testament book of **Exodus**.

The feast of Passover dates to the time of Moses when God delivered the Israelites from bondage and slavery in Egypt.

If you remember, God raised Moses to lead the Israelites out of bondage.

- And to convince the Egyptians to let the Israelites go free, God displayed his power in a series of **10** mighty miracles.

And in the last miracle, a plague of death struck the people of Egypt.

But God gave the Israelites a way to escape the touch of death. He told them to use the **blood** of an **animal sacrifice** and place it on the **doorposts** of their home.

- And when the death angel came to the home of the Israelite, it would be **saved** by the shed blood of a sacrifice – and therefore, “*pass-over*” that home.

And to remember this great event in their history and how they were saved from captivity in Egypt, the *Feast of the Passover* was established, and it was celebrated every year from generation to generation.

And in the time of the New Testament in the first century, it was during the annual Passover celebration when Jesus was **crucified in Jerusalem**.

...

And what's *truly* significant about this is that, on the cross, Jesus used a PHYSICAL event in the Old Testament – the Passover...

...to illustrate what he had come to accomplish *spiritually* in the New Testament,

*...by the shedding of his blood!*

You see, his sacrifice over 2,000 years ago – on the FIRST EASTER,

...was the fulfillment of the Passover for **you** and for **me**.

On the cross, Jesus served as a sacrificial lamb that was given for us so that we could be freed from the captivity of sin!

**1 Corinthians 5:7** states it clearly:

*“For even Christ our Passover is sacrificed for us.”*

Even while we were at our worst, Christ endured the ultimate sacrifice to save us from the burden of our past.

**Romans 5:8**

*But God demonstrates His own love toward us, in that while we were still sinners, Christ died for us.*

Jesus endured the pain of the cross and the mocking of the crowds, the beating, the scourging, and the nails through his flesh...

...for **you** and **me**.

He did it to conquer the power of sin in our lives.

He did it to free us from our mistakes.



And he did it – so that a new chapter could be written into our future!

...

So, you see, Easter is not only about the cross and the shedding of blood, but it also illustrates the promise of a resurrection.

...

At Easter, we look to the **redemptive** touch of God, we look to our Messiah helping us in our time of need, and we look to *the possibility* of NEW BEGINNINGS.

With all of this in mind, I can't help but think back to the moment when the disciples looked up and saw Jesus there *lifted up* on the cross...

...thinking that it *all was over*. I can imagine them lying wide awake that night with the images of their Lord's death fresh on their minds,

...and feeling like they had come to the end of the story.

**But, we all know, and we stand on the fact that it wasn't the end for them...**

...it was just the closing of an act. The production of their lives was only just beginning.

...

**They may have felt troubled and overwhelmed in their flesh...**

**They may have felt forsaken and all alone...**

**They may have felt cast down...**

But in God's plan for their lives, we can say that without a doubt, they were not destroyed,

**...for a resurrection was soon to come!**

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And you may be here today, thinking it's over, feeling like there's no reason to hope,

...disappointed by the way things have turned out,

...weighed down by the events of your life,

But as long as ***the conductor*** has control of your life, it's never really over until ***he*** says it's over!

You see, it is *his great desire* to redeem what has been lost in your life.

...

He is - your redeemer.

...

And I fear that many in the world today have lost an understanding of what **redemption** really means.

- And we must never throw the word “redemption” out of our theology.

Not only is the word Biblical – *it's used over **160** times in the Bible...*

But it conveys the work of Christ in us!

...

When defined, the word literally means to “buy back” and “to purchase.”

So, when scripture describes Jesus as our redeemer, it illustrates that through his shed blood on the cross – *he purchased us*.

**He paid the price that we could not pay!**

...

The word also conveys the act of being DELIVERED or RESCUED.

To say that he has redeemed us conveys that he *pulled us out from* that which was crushing us.

To say that we have been redeemed conveys that we have been RESCUED from the GRASP of sin!

...

In other words... when it was **OVER** for us,

...he stepped on the scene and resurrected what was dead *in us*.

**And he can do that for you today...**

By the resurrecting power of his Spirit, he can *renew* and *refresh* your soul.

He can write a new act into your future, not based on your regrets, your disappointments, or your pain,

...but based on his GRACE.

By his blood, he can wash you in the waters of baptism.

...

Not only is he ABLE – but he is EAGER – to **redeem** what has been lost in *you*.

...

He wants to **buy you back** from those who have sold you out.

He wants to **restore** what has been wasted in bad decisions.

He wants to **satisfy** the longings of your heart.

He wants you to know that he **exists**, that he's **real**, and that he's **active** in the world today.

You don't have to **EARN** it, you just have to **WANT** it.

It's not about being **GOOD ENOUGH**... it's about giving him **control**.