

# THIS WEEK'S MESSAGE

MAY 5TH, 2024 // 2 CORINTHIANS

## THE LIGHT OF THE GOSPEL (2 CORINTHIANS 4:1-6) THEREFORE...

The ministry Paul is referring to here is the new covenant. Being given the gift of grace is an honor and **that honor should fuel our endurance** in the ministry.

- We are not shown mercy because we have endured, but instead we endure because we have been shown mercy. **Our endurance is not conditional!**

## A TEACHER IS DISTINGUISHED BY MOTIVE

Paul goes on to justify his motives by the things he has done and said. Many times, in the Bible, false teachers are judged according to their motives (2 Peter 2, Romans 2:6-8).

- He did not preach a twisted version of the Gospel, and, therefore, had to defend his actions in accordance with his intentions. Paul's motive was to share the truth and to love appropriately.

## ULTERIOR MOTIVES

We can know that Paul did not have ulterior motives in his writings because they supported his goal: **to openly display the truth!**

- **The Gospel needs no additions.** We must never add anything to corrupt and, therefore, dilute the Gospel. **When we practice a sincere faith in a pure and honest fashion, the goal is accomplished.**

## "BEFORE GOD TO EVERYONE'S CONSCIENCE"

Just as Paul had done, if we are openly proclaiming a true Gospel, we have nothing to hide. Our entire ministry should mimic Paul's in being transparent, honest, and loving.

- We should welcome evaluation and commend others for asking questions. **Comfort in welcoming evaluation comes from knowledge of the truth.**

## A VEILED GOSPEL

There were some Corinthian Christians who believed the Gospel Paul was sharing was being distorted or misinterpreted on his account.

- While some may misunderstand the Gospel, if we are sharing the truth as Paul did, responsibility falls on the hearer. **"The sun is no less resplendent because the blind do not perceive its light."** – Calvin

## FOR THOSE WITH EARS...

The message here is the same as in Matthew 13. **Jesus used parables to separate the hearers from the listeners.** Because our culture has been blinded by the enemy, we are unwilling to listen.

- **If we are unwilling to see or hear the Gospel, the enemy has been given an easy foothold in our lives. The light shines in the darkness, but for those that refuse light, there is only darkness.**

## "THE GOD OF THIS AGE"

In the Bible, "this age" or present times refers to a time before "the coming age" in which Jesus will return (Mark 10:30). Ultimately, the earth is the Lord's, but spiritual warfare as we see exemplified many times in the Bible exists because of a certain amount of dominion the enemy has in our world.

- **By trusting in the victory of Jesus, we do not allow our adversary jurisdiction.** (Ephesians 6:10-12)

## SHINING LIGHT

Light was shone in the beginning of creation (Genesis 1:3-4). Not only does light illuminate the darkness, but, if we are called to shine the light of Jesus as Christians, that light regenerates us as new creations, too!

- Jesus described himself as "the light of the world" (John 8:12), and instructs us to reflect that light. Living in this manner is the best witness!

## ORDINARY VESSELS (2 CORINTHIANS 4:7-15)

### JARS OF CLAY

As Christ followers, we have the most precious gift of all, the Gospel of Jesus Christ, in the most ordinary vessels. Sometimes, the most glorious cargo is contained in the most normal package.

- Jesus is a perfect example! The Son of God was born not as an emperor, a wealthy politician, or a world-renowned celebrity, but as a suffering servant.

## WHERE WE ARE WEAK, HE IS STRONG

Later on, in chapter 12, Paul writes about boasting in his weaknesses because, "[His] power is perfected in weakness." Paul understood what it meant to have authentic humility, which lead to complete dependence on the Lord's strength.

- **Experiencing more than we can handle does not show weakness in the Christian, but it allows God's strength to be proclaimed.**

## HARDSHIPS EXPERIENCED IN MINISTRY

The only way we do not experience total failure ("crushed," "despair," "abandoned," "destroyed") while ministering is **total reliance on God's strength.** Even so, enduring these hardships without the purpose of the Gospel sounds daunting.

- **We may be under pressure, confused, hunted, or experience setbacks. The goal of sharing the truth must propel us.**

## ARE WE WILLING TO SUFFER FOR JESUS?

In Philippians 3:10, Paul wrote, "My goal is to know him and the **power of his resurrection and the fellowship of his sufferings, being conformed to his death.**" **Many Christians want everything to do with the power of His resurrection, but nothing to do with the fellowship of his sufferings.**

- The suffering we experience is also for those who will come to know Jesus in the future.

## LOSE YOUR LIFE TO FIND YOUR LIFE

In Matthew 10:38-39, Jesus talks about losing and finding your life in accordance with following after Him. If we are not willing to take up our cross, we are not worthy of following Him!

- How can we display the life of Jesus in us if we are not willing to first die to ourselves? **For the life of Jesus to be displayed in our body, we must carry the death of Jesus.**

## "I BELIEVED, THEREFORE I SPOKE"

In verse 13, Paul quoted Psalm 116. This was a reference to a prayer of deliverance and thanksgiving. The persecution Paul and other Jesus followers experienced resonated with the psalmist.

- We can be thankful for the suffering we will experience, and that suffering will turn to glory through the resurrection for all Believers.

## SUFFERING FOR THE SAKE OF OTHERS

Just as Jesus suffered for us, Paul illustrated that his suffering was for the good of the Corinthian church. He hadn't pushed the Gospel for his own personal gain, but instead endured for the benefit of the Corinthians and beyond.

- The intention was not only for the Gospel to reach all humanity, but also for the overflow of thanksgiving.

## FOCUS (2 CORINTHIANS 4:16-18)

### THEREFORE...

It is as if Paul knew the question was coming. How can we not give up or be discouraged after hearing about all this affliction? Without hope in a spiritual renewal, the pains we will endure as Christians are easily disheartening.

- **Even though we may go through physical degeneration, the Holy Spirit encourages spiritual regeneration!**

## "MOMENTARY LIGHT AFFLICTION"

If anyone knew affliction, it was Paul, and for him to describe his afflictions (prisoner, stoned, hunted, beaten, robbed, etc.) as momentary or light, puts our momentary light affliction into proper perspective.

- When comparing the difficulties we may endure in this life to the eternal weight of glory, they truly are momentary, light afflictions.

## TEMPORARY VS. ETERNAL

Seen and unseen has less to do with the physical and spiritual, and more to do with current discomforts and future salvation. Paul wanted to ensure that the Corinthian church, along with all Believers, understood that our focus needed to **remain on the eternal.**

- **Through hope in the eternal, endurance is produced rather simply.**

## ENDURANCE

- Are we comfortable in our weaknesses?
- Does hope in the unseen fuel our endurance?
- **Some of the most beneficial lessons we learn in life are due to endurance through trial and tribulation.**

## AFFLICTION

- **We will not experience constant victory in this life. God still has a plan (Romans 8:28).**
- How do we respond to the adversity we face as a Christian?
- **Let us not compare our afflictions with other Believers, but instead lay them on the scale next to His glory.**