

2 Corinthians 4 Commentary -Wayne Barber

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2 Corinthians 4:1 Symptoms of One Who Has Lost Heart

Turn with me to 2 Corinthians 4, and we're going to start a new series tonight in 2 Corinthians. I'm entitling this "How to Live Without Losing Heart." And what I'm going to talk about is just in verse 1, as I'm going to depart a little bit. We're going to go to some other text. Now, I'll not going to completely cover every text, all of the context and all, because there are five of them. We're not going to go to every scripture where this is mentioned, but I want you to understand what the symptoms are of one who has lost heart. We're going to talk about that in verse 1.

Let me get you back into a little bit of a review. Paul's letter to the Corinthians, there in Corinth, it's been an encouraging letter. I hope it has been to you, but it certainly has been to me. And Paul, who had much pain and distress from these very people he's writing to, has shown us how to live our life in Christ. In verses 1-11 he told them what he did. When he was persecuted he didn't run from God, he ran to God. The God of all comfort and that's what we talked about for all those 11 verses. It is there in the beauty of His presence, when we get in the presence of God, in the beauty of His presence, that we learn that persecution in our life purifies us instead of defeating us. That's what Paul taught us. That's what he did, that's how he lived, and therefore, we learned in verses 12 all the way through verse 1 of chapter 3, that if you're a believer seeking to live a godly life, you will be falsely accused from time to time. What do you do when that happens?

Well, he tells us. We're to make certain that our walk matches our talk so that our conscience will not condemn us when those false accusations come to us. When Paul was down he was not out, and he was able in Christ to keep on keeping on. And that is such a precious truth. And we just finished seeing how that the confidence he had in his ministry was because, as he told us in chapter 3:5-6, he was a servant of a brand new covenant. Now he understood that. I wonder today if we understand that. You see, it was no longer up to him to accomplish ministry. His adequacy, as he tells us in chapter 3 and we've studied, was not of himself. He said, "I don't think of anything as coming from our self. Our adequacy is from the Lord Jesus Christ."

Now that gives you confidence; that gives you reason to rejoice. We don't do this in our own strength. It's Christ in us. Paul's message was Christ, the glory of God living in believers, changing believers as they learn daily in the Word to behold Him. He changes them from glory to glory to glory. The more we behold Him, as we are willing to get into His Word, He reveals Himself as to what His glory is. He reveals Who he is and His character. Then the more we're transformed.

The glory of God, you see, in the old covenant was up on top of a mountain—only when Moses was beckoned it was there; it wasn't just there. But only one man could be in the glory of God. You see, it's different now. The glory of God lives in us, lived in Paul. Christ is the glory of God. It lives in the person of the Holy Spirit of God, lives within us. That's new covenant talk. No wonder he begins chapter 4 with the word "therefore." Now any time you see a "therefore" always look to see what it's there for. I just told you what it was there for.

So he says in verse 1 of chapter 4, "Therefore, since we have this ministry, as we received mercy, we do not lose heart." Look at that phrase very carefully. Now that phrase is going to determine where we go. It must be understood. A lot of people don't understand that. It's acquainted with another phrase, it's really a play on words, of where we grow weary or we lose heart. Sometimes it's in the same verse.

The word "lose heart" is one word in the Greek, *ekkakeo*. And you say, "Why do you bring up these Greek words?" Because I want to explain it to you. *Ek* means "out of something, the source of something, the originator of something," and then the word *kakos* is the word that is used of something that is evil and wicked and bad. Now let me explain this to you. That second word, *kakeo*, it's the

word that is always assigned to one's flesh. Whenever you think about walking after the flesh, remember Galatians 5:16-17, the "flesh wars against the Spirit," whenever you think of the flesh, anything we can do in our own power and our own ability, it's wicked, it's evil and it's bad. And this is what he's talking about: something that's out of that which is wicked and that which is bad.

The word *kakos*, the second word there, was used of a soldier who in the midst of a battle, when he really was counted on, turned coward and turned back. The idea of the word in our context is that Paul is a servant of a brand new covenant. He's determined that he's not going to go back. He's not going to go back to resort to his wicked, evil, and bad flesh, to doing what he can do out of his own adequacy. He's completely different; he wants to be changed; he wants to experience Christ in his life. He was determined not to go back, not to turn back to that which is fleshly, evil.

When a believer—because of difficulties maybe, because of circumstances, I don't know, whatever it is—resorts back to his flesh, he has at that moment, lost heart. That's what it is. When we turn back to what we used to be and doing it the way we used to do it, we have just lost heart. In doing so we have shunned the very strength that God wants to enable us with, we have walked away and therefore we become faint-hearted. That's why it's sometimes put in the same verse, when a person loses heart and grows weary. The two go together.

You lose strength. Why? Because the flesh cannot help us. I've always believed that when one is walking in the Spirit—and I've said this many times—there's no such thing as burnout; no such thing. Now, he can be weary, he can be tired, but not burned out. No, sir, because Christ lives in us to do through us what we could never do ourselves. So losing heart then, I want to make sure we understand the term, is when one has turned back to that which is of the flesh and when that happens, that's when the faint-heartedness comes and that's when the weariness comes and that's when the burnout comes, because the flesh cannot accomplish what only the Spirit can do.

So I want today to follow this term through the Scriptures. We're not going to look at every one. I've picked five; it's used several places. And I want us to see what are the symptoms of a person who has lost heart and has really lost the joy. He's walking in that zone where everything is mechanical, the whole gamut. We've all been there from time to time. What are the symptoms of a person who has lost heart? And again, I'm not going to cover every complete context because each one of these is a message in itself. I rarely do this, but in my study, I was really enlightened when I studied this thing through the New Testament and thought you would enjoy it.

The first symptom of losing heart is prayerlessness.

First of all, the first symptom of losing heart is prayerlessness. Now the word, or phrase, as it's translated, "lose heart," is first found in Luke 18:1 and Jesus uses this phrase. He says there, "Now He was telling them a parable to show that at all times they ought to pray and not to lose heart." Now, just to give you a real quick snapshot of chapter 17 of Luke, as He concludes the chapter He's talking about when He comes back to this earth. He says society will be like a rotting corpse, pollution will be everywhere when He returns. And I believe He's also talking earlier on about the rapture, but when He returns the society is going to be very, very bad.

Now, if society is like that—and I don't know anybody in this place who would disagree that it's not like that; I live in a very nice neighborhood and two mornings ago 26 police cars, 42 policemen in full armor, two SWAT team vans, ambulances, heavy armor, shields and everything, showed up on the street right behind me. If you just look around you, folks, there's no safe place in the world anymore. The world is coming apart and He says, with that in mind, if society is really that way, He says, "Then I don't want you to lose heart and grow weary and faint. I don't want you to do that."

We can easily become weary because of what's going on around us. We can easily lose heart when we see what the condition of our world and sometimes what we don't realize is when we lose heart, prayer goes out the window. Prayerlessness becomes the symptom that we've just lost heart and given up. The word 'prayer' is the word *proseuchomai*; it means to express a deep desire of the heart to God. Isn't it sometimes interesting how you can be so overwhelmed by what's going on around you that prayer just seems to diminish in your life? Prayer is the verbal expression of our total dependence upon God, no matter how good or how bad the times are. The way we pray, the time we spend in prayer, the attitude we have in prayer tells us how much we really are depending upon God.

As James says in James 4:2-3, "You lust and do not have; so you commit murder. And you are envious and cannot obtain so you fight and quarrel. You do not have because you do not ask." And then he puts a condition. He says, "You ask and do not receive, because you ask with wrong motives, so that you may spend it on your pleasures." Even when we do ask, and have lost heart, it's really more self-serving than it is anything else.

Well, believers who have lost heart are those who have forgotten that Christ is in control; that He lives in us and He wants us to simply join Him in what He is doing. Prayer is His way of drawing us into what He is doing.

In Luke 18 Jesus is showing the heart of the Father to answer prayer, the faithfulness of God to His Word. He uses a widow and He

uses a wicked judge and He uses the persistence of that little poor widow to keep pestering this judge to do—now listen carefully—what he was appointed to do. See, finally, out of frustration because she kept persisting and persisting and persisting, the wicked judge gives her the protection that she deserves as a citizen of his jurisdiction. You see, this isn't about wicked judges, this isn't about widows, but it's about the fact that if the wicked judge had to be pestered to be faithful to what he said he would do when he took that office, then what would our heavenly Father do?

The passage doesn't teach that if we want a bass boat we just keep pestering God and God will finally give up and give it to us. That's not what He's teaching. But it's about praying for those rightful things that God promises in His Word that are ours in Christ, and, as you pray, counting on His faithfulness. This wicked judge had a legal assignment to do what was right. He wouldn't have been made a judge had he not had that. But if we come before our righteous Father we can always expect Him to be faithful to His Word. He will do exactly what He said He will do. And that's what keeps us always trusting Him no matter how bad the times get and as a result then we don't lose heart, which only comes when we start to try to take matters into our own hands, when prayer goes out the window.

Prayerlessness, lack of prayer in a person's life; and I'm not talking about how long you spend in your quiet time. I'm talking about an attitude that you live in from the time you wake until the time you go to bed of constant communication with God, trusting Him to be faithful to His Word no matter how bad circumstances get around us. So, have you lost heart tonight? Is prayerlessness a symptom that's in your life?

The second symptom of losing heart is when one is trying to achieve ministry instead of receiving it.

Secondly, a second symptom of losing heart is when one is trying to achieve ministry instead of receiving it. Now we go back to our text in 2 Corinthians 4:1; that's where we find this phrase. That's the second time I've found it in the New Testament. Paul was a servant of the new covenant, not because he just wanted to be different, but because he had a ministry that was received from God; he never set down and said, "I think I'll be an apostle." God just set him apart. He never set down and said, "I think I'll have this as my message." God gave him his message; God gave him his ministry.

Verse 1 again in 2 Corinthians 4, "Therefore, since we have this ministry, as we received mercy, we do not lose heart." When he says, "since we have this ministry," he's referring to the ministry of the new covenant that he just spent the whole of chapter 3 explaining. But notice, "since we have this ministry," notice the phrase: "as we received mercy." The word for "as" is the word *kathos*, and it means "according to" something, "in the manner in which" something happened; it could even be translated "even as" or "just as."

Now according to what manner did he receive mercy? According to what, even as what, did he receive mercy? Now this is a statement referring back to his salvation. When he was saved, his entering in to the new covenant, Paul's salvation was not achieved, it was received. Nobody could doubt that: he was stopped and blinded for three days on the Damascus Road. It was the same with his ministry. It wasn't something that he came up with. It was something that was received from God, so "just as" he was saved, which was by faith and by faith alone and by Christ alone, "just as" he received salvation, "just as" now he has his ministry. When one finally understands that ministry is given by God and not achieved by man, then he can rest in that ministry. When the glory of God comes to live in us in the Person of God the Holy Spirit, He ministers life through us.

As we saw in chapter 3, He opens the doors to ministry. Paul wrote 1 Corinthians 12 and says "He gives the gift" in verse 4; "He gives the ministry" in verse 5 of chapter 12; and He gives the effect of that ministry. It doesn't come from man. So, you and I don't have to fret about the results of ministry when we're willing to allow Christ to work the work He began in us, we don't have to fret anymore. We don't have to measure what Christ is doing. We don't have to open doors to let Him do something. We just walk through the doors that He's already opened. We simply walk by faith; we simply trust Him and His Word and His work through us.

But when we forget this, and, folks, I'm telling you it's common to all of us, when we forget how we got saved, just like the Galatians forgot, and when we try to go back and do anything in the energy of our flesh for God, rather than relating to Him and letting Him do it through us, then we all of a sudden change. We become numbers freaks, we become obsessed with obtaining what we've come up with and the bottom line is we've lost heart. That's what losing heart is. We've turned and gone back. We're living now as if we don't even know we're in the new covenant. When it's up to us in times that are hard, and we turn back to doing it our way, we don't pray, but not only do we not pray, we start trying to achieve something for God rather than receiving something from Him.

So understanding losing heart is turning back to something that comes out of the flesh, then prayerlessness and achieving ministry are two of the symptoms of a person who's done just that.

The third symptom of losing heart is when we forget our eternal destiny.

The third symptom of losing heart is when we somehow forget our eternal destiny. If you'll turn over, the next one is actually in 2 Corinthians 4:16. But isn't it interesting when life gets tough that sometimes we forget that we're heaven-bound and we forget what's

coming? We forget the hope that we have in Christ Jesus. And when that happens we lose heart. Paul said in 1 Corinthians 15, "If we're only hoping in Jesus for now, we're of most men to be pitied." We've got a better thing coming. Yes, we enjoy Jesus every day, but if we forget where we're headed, if we forget we're strangers in an alien world, a hostile world, and if we forget the glorious day that's coming, we lose heart.

Paul's talked about that day in Romans 8:18. He said, "For I consider that the sufferings of this present time are not worthy to be compared with the glory that is to be revealed to us." You see, suffering sometimes, suffering whether it be physical, whether it be persecution, can cause us to lose our focus and become so depressed over a situation that we forget who we are, Whose we are, and where we're headed. In the same chapter, 2 Corinthians 4, which we're studying, he begins to lead up to verse 16 by talking about the suffering that he's had to go through down here. He talks mainly about persecution, but it's still suffering any way you look at it. He knows that the knowledge of his suffering is causing some people to grieve and he doesn't want them to do that, so he says in verse 16, "Therefore we do not lose heart, but though our outer man is decaying, yet our inner man is being renewed day by day."

You know what the outer man is? The physical part of us that feels the pain that builds the suffering, it's decaying. The word "decaying" is the word meaning to corrupt, to die, to perish: it's dying. I don't know if you figured it out or not, but the moment that you breathed your first breath you begin to die. Has anybody figured it out yet? And even getting older is not for sissies. It's not fun and the older you get the more you realize this important truth.

We're dying, folks. The outer man is decaying. Disease and all this other stuff is a result of sin in this world, the original sin, and we live in a fallen earth that way. But that's not what Paul's point is. Paul's point is, yes, that the outer man suffers and suffers greatly—and the kind of suffering Paul had was mainly through persecution—but he's talking about something else: who we are in the Spirit, our inner man is growing stronger all the time. So in verse 16 he says, "Therefore we do not lose heart, but though our outer man is decaying, yet our inner man is being renewed day by day. For momentary, light affliction," now when we get over to chapter 12 you're going to see what he calls "momentary, light affliction." I mean, this guy has been through it. And he says, "is producing for us an eternal weight of glory far beyond all comparison, while we look not at the things which are seen, but at the things which are not seen; for the things which are seen are temporal, but the things which are not seen are eternal."

But it's amazing to me; I had one dear friend. He had something come over him, it was a disease of some kind. It was cancer and he was going to lose his sight and they said it would probably ultimately take his life. And I came back from a trip one time, and my wife told me, "Gene took his life."

Listen to me, what I'm saying, that you can lose heart to the point that you lose all basis of rationale, and this is what Paul is trying to say. You can't do that. You've got to keep looking at God. Yes, the outer man is decaying. We don't know how we're going to go out of this world, but we sure flat know where we're going when we leave. And he says the inner man is growing stronger. Why? Because he's walking by faith trusting God, no matter what comes his way. When we lose focus and we begin to be overwhelmed by the circumstances, we can so lose heart. There's no telling what might end up in our life.

Paul didn't lose heart. My encouragement to you is that if you're going through something don't you dare let it overwhelm you. Anything that is over your head is under His feet. And don't ever forget that; because when you lose heart you turn back to the flesh, and the flesh can produce nothing but that which is evil and that which is harmful and that which is wicked. Paul didn't lose heart. He realized that whatever he went through there was Someone living in him, strengthening him from within. That's awesome.

Well, the symptoms of one who has lost heart: prayerlessness; they don't pray. You know why? They don't trust God. Secondly is trying to achieve a ministry they can't achieve and they're frustrated that it's not doing what they thought it would do. And thirdly, forgetting our eternal destiny.

The fourth symptom of losing heart is when we forget the timing of the Lord in our life.

But the fourth thing, the fourth symptom of one who has lost heart, is when we forget the timing of the Lord in our life. Now, there's the law of the harvest, and he's going to bring this up. God does what He's going to do when He gets good and ready to do it. I've tried my best to learn this lesson. Look in Galatians 6:9. He says, "And let us not lose heart in doing good, for in due time we shall reap if we do not grow weary." See that's one of those verses that puts both of the phrases in there and it's a play on words. But it gives you the idea of the result of what happens to cause that result. Of course verse 9, in my Bible, somehow always follows verse 8 which always follows verse 7. Does that happen in every chapter of your Bible?

Well, you have to look back to see what he said in 7-8. He's talking about sowing and reaping. And he says in Galatians 6:7, "Do not be deceived, God is not mocked; for whatever a man sows, this he will also reap." And then he tells you about that, it's not the Word of God he's talking about here. It's a choice he makes to either walk after his flesh or walk after the Spirit. And verse 8 says, "For the one who sows to his own flesh shall from the flesh reap corruption, but the one who sows to the Spirit shall from the Spirit reap eternal life." That's not just salvation: Christ is eternal life. And if you sow, you keep on sowing in the right field, the field of the Spirit, you keep on saying yes to Christ. Galatians 2:20 says, "It's not me but it's Christ living through me and the life I now live I now live

by faith." If I'm willing to live that way, I'm sowing in the right field.

Now there comes a law of the harvest. He's talking about harvesting here. It's important to remember, especially when we're allowing Christ to do something through our life, you have to remember this, and I want you to pray for me that I'll get it. First of all, you reap what you sow; you can put tomato seeds in the ground and you're not going to get corn. And if I choose to go back and live as if I'm under the old covenant, with the fading glory, if I'm going to do it in my own energy, my own flesh, then I'm going to reap of that flesh, no matter how sincere it was to start with. But if I step over here and be a servant of the new covenant and simply say yes to God and let God do through me what only He can do, then I'm going to reap what I sow; you reap exactly what you sow.

Secondly, you reap much more than what you've sown: a whole lot more. But here's the key that he's talking about in verse 9. The third law of the harvest is, you reap much later than when you've sown. I remember when I was in Mississippi I tried my best to have a garden. I remember those peas, you know, that you plant, I forgot what you call them. But I didn't realize that when you put all of those seeds in the ground, they're going to come up. I was out the next day looking around seeing where those things were. Where is it? And they didn't come up. Third day, fourth day, fifth day, several weeks went by and then I left town and came back and every neighbor there was mad at us. They asked us never to have a garden again, because we weren't there when the stuff came up. It comes up much later than when you've sown. Oh, how we forget this.

Paul says we will reap in due time, so don't lose heart, don't grow weary. Wait upon the Lord. Don't go back to the flesh to try to produce what is not happening quickly enough for you. Trust God; wait upon Him. I'll be honest with you: that's the hardest battle I have in my life. You want to know where my weaknesses are: that's one of them right there. I want things to happen and I want things to happen right now. But you know what God keeps telling me? "Keep sowing in the right field and it will start coming up when I'm ready for it to come up. In the meantime, don't lose heart. Don't go back to doing what 90% of everybody else is doing to produce what will fade away to begin with. Let God do it."

People that have lost heart are people that have forgotten the timing of the Lord and the law of the harvest. And I'm one of them from time to time. Pray for me, I need you to pray for me. When a believer resorts to producing results, whatever they may be, in his own strength and creative ability, that's just a symptom he's lost heart, turned coward in the midst of a fight and gone back to doing it the way he used to do it. So prayerlessness; trying to achieve ministry; forgetting our eternal destiny; and completely forgetting God's timing in the law of the harvest are four of the symptoms of a person who has just flat-out lost heart. He's bailed out on God. He's now doing it in his own strength.

The fifth symptom of losing heart is when we become undisciplined in the ordinary

Finally, the fifth symptom of losing heart, and this is one I think it hits every one of us, it's when we become undisciplined in the ordinary. You say, what in the world are you talking about? Well, let me just help you with that. You know, when we're allowing Christ to live through us, when Christ chooses to manifest Himself in such a way that we see the results, it's exciting.

But there's such a tendency of so many believers of becoming undisciplined, disinterested, with the ordinary responsibilities of life. Do you know why? Because when they watch television, life is good! When they see the programs of Christianity and then they come home and they've got to take the garbage out and they've got to do the mundane, practical things of life, and for whatever reason it becomes something that they're disinterested in, and they become undisciplined in. Ordinary things of life: paying bills on time, going to work and getting a job is what he's directly talking about here. Taking out the trash, taking care of the children. You know, how many moms come to a service and they see the great things that God is doing and yet where do they go? They have to go back home and what do they have to do? They have to take care of a little baby who just doesn't seem to understand when to go to the bathroom and when not to go to the bathroom. And changing those diapers is absolutely no fun and there's no excitement in it and there's no choir to back it up and there's nothing in it and they get so frustrated and they become undisciplined in the ordinary.

I invited a preacher to come in and he preached on if you're a young mom you ought to be having a Bible study on your block, you ought to be handing out this, you ought to be doing that. It was so joyous to get up the next week and say, "Listen to me. If you're at home with that little baby and you're taking care of that child and you're changing diapers and it's not fun and nobody is around to applaud you and you don't have time to go to a Bible study and there's not enough time, listen, don't you dare, don't you dare shame yourself, because you're doing exactly what God has told you to do."

Don't become undisciplined in the ordinary things of life. What a tendency we have in doing that. Well, I personally don't like taking the garbage out, by the way. But I do it and I'm learning to rejoice in even doing that, because even in doing that I don't get any goosebumps, I don't see any visions, I don't see anything, but yet God's in that just like He's in anything else that we do. So do it in obedience to Him.

Paul has much to say concerning the mundane and practical responsibilities of life such as going to work, earning a living, in 2

Thessalonians 3:10-11. That's our next text. He starts off in verse 10. Some people think that because the whole context of 2 Corinthians is they thought they were in the day of the Lord—which was a crazy thing, but Paul had to straighten it out—the best is yet to come and he says that many people think that people just grew lazy. My goodness, why do anything anyway if we're in the day of the Lord, but I don't know about that.

Verse 10, "For even when we were with you, we used to give you this order," now listen carefully to what Paul says, "if anyone will not work, neither let him eat." He didn't say if anyone was out of a job. That is not what he says. He says if anyone was not willing to work. Not willing to work, then he ought not to eat. And you can see what's happening there. They're taking care of people that are just on welfare. They weren't willing to work. He says in verse 11, "For we hear that some among you are leading an undisciplined life, doing no work at all, but acting like busy bodies." In other words, they had so much time on their hands they got in everyone else's business.

Whatever the problem was that caused this, Paul counters it in verse 12, and that's our verse, "Now such persons we command and exhort in the lord Jesus Christ to work in quiet fashion and eat their own bread." Now, the next verse really is the one, but he counters it right here. And again, the church had become welfare to people who wouldn't work to begin with. But then Paul turns to the others who were responsible and they were disciplined in the ordinary things of life and he says to them in verse 13, "But as for you brethren," he turns to a wholly different group, the people that were going to work, earning a living, doing what was necessary, and there wasn't any excitement in it. They just did what God told them to do. "But as for you, brethren, do not grow weary of doing good."

Boy, how we need to remember that life has its responsibilities and we have to bear our own responsibility and that's just as godly as going to church or praying or anything else. It's carrying through. He says in Galatians 6:5, "For each one shall bear his own load." That's a different word than was found in Galatians 6:2 when he says, "Bear you one another's burden and so fulfill the law of Christ." It's two different things he's saying there.

The word in verse 2 is when a brother is responsible, willing to work, willing to do whatever, but the load has gotten so heavy on him he can't carry it anymore, and he's doing everything he knows to do: trusting God in the midst of it. And he says when you see a brother like that, you go on and help him pick that load up. You get up under it for him, help him out. But the word in verse 5 is the word that means responsibility, the word *bastazo*. It was used of a soldier bearing his own backpack and he says, "Hey, we have to bear our own backpack. We have a responsibility." We must not lose heart or grow weary as it is translated in 2 Thessalonians, in doing the mundane responsibilities of life.

When you lose heart, if you're here and you've gone back to the flesh, it's almost as if you're back in the old covenant that had a fading glory to it. As a matter of fact there's no glory left because Jesus has replaced that in the new. And you've gone back to doing things in your own power and your own way. And then there are some characteristics of your own life. Prayerlessness is one of them; trying to achieve a ministry instead of receiving it; forgetting in the midst of a difficult circumstance your eternal destiny and rejoicing that the inner man is growing stronger; forgetting the timing of the Lord in the law of the harvest. It comes in due season. Keep sowing in the right field. Keep sowing in the right field. Or becoming undisciplined in the ordinary responsibilities of life. When these things begin to show up, somebody has stepped back to the flesh and has lost heart.

Well, as we close let me just ask you a question. Have you lost heart? There have been times in my life that if somebody had asked me that I would have had to say yes I have. Have you lost heart? You don't have to live that way. It all goes right back to where you began, right where you departed. Just come back and say, "Oh, God, I have sinned against You. I have chosen to take matters in my own hands; I've chosen not to trust You and not to trust Your Word. I've chosen to do things my way and I confess it as sin." And let the blood just cleanse you and then walk out of this place tonight a brand new person, ready to be up under the new covenant, letting Jesus be Jesus in you. Let the glory that lives within you be seen on the outside of you.

That's what it's all about. And I just thought as I was studying this that it ministered a lot to me and I thought maybe it would minister to you. Losing heart, going back to that which is out of the flesh, which is evil, bad and wicked. Right in the middle of the battle being overwhelmed and taking your eyes off the Lord and putting them on the lions and puts us right back to where we don't want to be.

By the way, anybody ever been there besides me? Boy, it's no fun, is it? That's why we can comfort wherein we've been comforted. Boy, if you just put the messages together, if you've got somebody here that has lost heart, Christianity has become mechanical to you, cold, you can't get into anything anymore. You come into praise, you just don't like the music, you don't like the words, you don't like this, and you don't like that. Have you ever noticed somebody that's not walking in the Spirit, they have this negative nerve or something. I'm telling you, when you're walking in the Spirit, it's different. You know God's doing it, and you're willing to rest in that and you're praying all the time, talking to Him all the time. I love that way to live.

Sometimes I'll stop at a stop light talking to Him. People look over like "what is he doing? There's nobody in the car." And I don't realize I'm actually talking out loud. I wasn't even thinking about that. It's so much joy folks to live in the joy of the new covenant.

That's what made the difference in Paul. Now, if you want the old you've got your choice; but you see the results of it.

2 Corinthians 4:1-5

The Secret of Not Losing Heart

I want you to turn to 2 Corinthians 4. Today we're going to look at verses 1-5. We're really going to pick up where we left off the last time. We're going to talk today again as we're in a little mini-series here, "How to Live Without Losing Heart." The last time we saw the symptoms of one who has lost heart. But now we're going to talk about the secret of one who has not lost heart. I don't know about you but I'm so encouraged by verse 1 of chapter 4, when Paul says, "Therefore, since we have this ministry, as we received mercy, we do not lose heart."

The reason that encourages me is because we can live without having to lose heart. How many of you besides me have lost heart sometimes in the ministry and in living your life as a Christian? We all have. It's a bummer, isn't it? Nobody wants to go there. It's not a fun thing to happen when a believer loses heart. It's the word *ekkakeo* that means lose heart. It's associated with being weak and faint-hearted, but it really has more of a deeper meaning of "fleshly"; of a person who has turned back. That's the root idea of the word, to go back to the evil wicked ways of his flesh, trusting his flesh to do what it cannot do. It's going back to doing things one's own way instead of depending upon Christ who now lives in us. It was used of a soldier turning coward in the midst of battle and going backward instead of forward. Paul says he does not lose heart.

You know, if you put that in context with what he's been teaching, of the fact that he's a minister of a new covenant, he doesn't lose heart. He said, "I'm not going to go back to the way I'm used to doing it. I'm not going to resort to my old fleshly agenda of trying to accomplish a ministry for God. I'm going to live in the light that God has given to me."

Chapter 3:5-6 he said, "I'm now a minister of a new covenant, a servant of a new covenant." In verse 5 he says, "Not that we are adequate in ourselves to consider anything as coming from ourselves, but our adequacy is from God, who also made us adequate as servants of a new covenant, not of the letter, but of the Spirit; for the letter kills," he's talking about the law and how it puts to death every fleshly effort to please God, "but the Spirit gives life." Now because he's a servant, and, by the way again, I said minister, but that's inter-changeable; that word "servant" can be translated "minister." Because he's a minister of a new covenant, Paul has discovered a brand newness of life as he talks about in Romans 6. He's found his adequacy is no longer in himself as we just read. His adequacy is in Christ. It's not up to him anymore. It's up to Christ who lives within him. The law says say no to sin. Grace said say yes to Christ, and it's a huge difference of the focus of the believer. It's about what Christ has done and what Christ is doing and what Christ wants to do not only in Paul's life but others as well.

In fact, he told us in chapter 3, the last part of it, he is daily being changed from glory to glory as he lives practicing the very presence of Christ. He will not burn out because he's not going to depend upon his flesh anymore. Now, he may be worn out, but he'll never burn out, because when you live this way depending upon the One who lives within you, you don't burn out. You're living in His strength, not your own.

We looked at the symptoms last time of what it means to lose heart, and I'm going to hit them very quickly as we review. Prayerlessness is the first one, found in Luke 18:1. It's a symptom of a person who is no longer depending on God. Prayer is the symptom of a person depending upon God, and prayerlessness is a symptom of a person who has stopped depending upon God. And we saw that when life overwhelms us, and circumstances gets our eyes off of Jesus, and we go back to trying to figure everything out and trying to come up with a solution ourselves without depending on Christ, we've lost heart.

We saw that the symptom of trying to achieve a ministry instead of receive it is a person who has lost heart. He's turned coward in battle; he's not going to trust God, he's going to go back to producing what he thinks he can do and he's not trusting God, and that's in chapter 4:1 of our text. We're actually going to look at that verse again today. True ministry is something received from God, not achieved for God, and a person who is trying to achieve has lost heart. He's using his flesh; he's depending upon his flesh.

Well, we saw in 2 Corinthians 4:16 when we lose sight of our future hope, we've lost heart. This has happened so often, especially when age creeps up on us, when we start focusing on the physical presence, we've lost hope. You see, we've lost heart. What he's trying to say is when you look ahead you see the great things that are ahead for us. This life is a vapor—it's here and it's gone; but the eternity that we will spend with Him. Paul says that our outer man is decaying and our inner man is growing stronger. You know, getting older is not for sissies and all of us understand that. Paul said that these very Corinthians, back in 1 Corinthians 15:19, "If we have only hoped in Christ in this life only, we are of all men most to be pitied." You see, we have something great that's ahead of us.

We saw in Galatians 6:9 how that when we grow impatient waiting on results we've lost heart. We've taken our focus off the law of the harvest, and he tells us, in Galatians 6:7-8 he talks about sowing and reaping and sowing in the right field, and then he says in

verse 9, "Let us not lose heart in doing good, for in due time we will reap if we do not grow weary." That law of the harvest I have to remember every day. And I've asked you to pray for me, it's helpful to me, that the law of the harvest, if you sow the right seed you're going to get exactly what you sow, so keep sowing the right kind of seed. Make the right choices, sow in the field of the Spirit by saying yes to Christ. But not only that, you reap more than you sow. Every time you plant seed you're going to get more than you planted. But then thirdly, you're going to reap a whole lot later than you planted, and God's timing has to figure in here. You can have a squash plant overnight, but it blows away in the first storm. But an oak tree takes a long time to take root and for it to come up and be what it ought to be.

Paul taught us in 2 Thessalonians 3:10-13 that when we grow undisciplined in the ordinary practical mundane things of life, we've lost heart. It was so good this past week to tell the young people who were at camp, paying our bills, getting a job, doing the things that we're supposed to do is just as spiritual as going on a retreat or mission trip. This is part of life. And we are to be good citizens of this earth not only of heaven, but we're to do the things we're responsible to do. And when a person just slacks off of that responsibility it's obvious that he's lost heart. And somehow his focus has changed away from Christ.

Well, today we want to look at the secret of one who has not lost heart. And this is not a formula, and I don't want you to understand it as such. Perhaps my title may mislead you. It's almost as if "you do these three things." No, these things are the results of something else. Paul's life could be centered and explained in the fact that Christ was his life and he lived yielded to Christ, chained to his chariot, as we saw in chapter 2. And the things that we'll see today, they are the secret of his life but, again, don't think of them as a formula. Think of them as really a symptomatic type of thing. The real secret is that he lets Jesus be Jesus in him. Living grace is what it's all about.

But let me read the verses to you, verses 1-5 and then we'll jump in. "Therefore, since we have this ministry, as we received mercy, we do not lose heart, but we have renounced the things hidden because of shame, not walking in craftiness or adulterating the word of God, but by the manifestation of truth commending ourselves to every man's conscience in the sight of God. And even if our gospel is veiled, it is veiled to those who are perishing, in whose case the god of this world has blinded the minds of the unbelieving, that they might not see the light of the gospel of the glory of Christ, who is the image of God. For we do not preach ourselves but Christ Jesus as Lord, and ourselves as your bond-servants for Jesus' sake."

Paul did not lose heart because he was grateful for his ministry

Now let's look very carefully at these verses and let's just see if we might be encouraged, challenged, about a man who did not lose heart. Let's just see what God might say to our hearts. But first of all, Paul did not lose heart because he was grateful for his ministry. Boy, that's a great word, isn't it: gratefulness. He was grateful for his ministry. This is something that God had done. There is so much spiritual pride in ministry today, but you didn't see this with Paul. Paul understood something. It says in verse 1, "Therefore, since we have this ministry, as we received mercy, we do not lose heart."

Now what ministry is he talking about? Well, certainly the ministry of the new covenant, servants of a new covenant. But you have to go even further than that. Paul was an apostle to the Gentiles. Remember Galatians? Peter had the assignment to the Jewish world and Paul had the assignment to the Gentile world. He was an apostle, but also he was a preacher. He took a message; an apostle is one sent forth with a message. And the message that he had was the message of that new covenant. That was his life; that was his calling; that was his assignment.

It's unfortunate that there is a chapter break here, chapter 4, verse 1, because when this letter was written there were no chapters or verses and somebody put those in. And sometimes when you come to a new chapter you think Paul is changing subjects but he's not. It's a continuation of what he's already said. In fact, we're helped here because he put the word "therefore" in the verse. That's the first word of chapter 4. Anytime you see a "therefore," look to see what it's there for. And he's already told us what it's there for. He's a servant of a new covenant, a minister of a new covenant. Paul was continuing his thoughts on being a servant of a new covenant.

Yes, he's an apostle, yes he has a ministry to the Gentiles, but the real thing he's talking about is that he gets the opportunity to preach the message of grace to a world that has never heard it. It was a gift from God. In fact, you can tell that in the verb tense of the phrase "as we received mercy." It's in the aorist indicative passive. Aorist tense means that the same time I got saved, God assigned me; indicative mood means that you can take that to the bank; and then when you put it in the passive voice, passive voice means somebody else initiated this action. I'm benefiting from it, but I didn't initiate it. In other words, Paul didn't go after a ministry. The ministry came after him. God's the One who initiated it into his life.

Now, when you add the word "mercy" into this equation, knowing that Paul didn't seek this ministry, Paul didn't even really seek God, God sought him and found him on that Damascus Road and God gave him the ministry. Well, you add to that the word "mercy" and you've got exactly the understanding. That ministry here was totally undeserved. Now, for whatever reason, there are a lot of Christians that don't see this. They still think they can do something for God. They don't understand that the ministry is even

undeserved. Not only does it come from God, we don't deserve it to begin with. Mercy is when God gives us what we don't deserve.

Paul's salvation, Paul's ministry, Paul's message were all given by the grace and the mercy of God. His ministry was a gift out of the very loving heart of God and he didn't deserve it. And if anybody understood that Paul did. That was the secret of his not losing heart. When you realize that God gave you the ministry, when you realize that what God initiates God sustains, you're not going to lose heart. And what this does is it begins to frame an attitude of gratitude. And that's what you see in Paul. That's the secret of a person's life: he understands that his ministry is not from himself, his ministry is from God; and if God wants to do something through him, then he's simply a vessel to accommodate that work.

Paul's even mentioning the mercy of God, as I said, in connection with his ministry, shows again he has a deep appreciation. It's a privilege for him to do what he does. The fact that his ministry was preaching the awesome good news of the covenant, which had transformed his own life, produced such a gratitude in his heart. This old legalist man; can't you see the council of God in heaven when they said, "We need somebody to preach the message of grace to the Gentile world but he's got to be a legalist, he's got to know the law to his toes. And before he was ever born, in says in Galatians, in his mother's womb, God already had decided it was going to be Paul. Here's that little boy growing up thinking he was going to do something for God, if you've ever read his pedigree, and then finally, on the Damascus Road, God just wipes him out. And he sees it. I know when it hit me, I cried for three days. Paul was blinded for three days. It's incredible how when God reveals to you what grace is, how transforming it is in your life, and then what a thrill, what a privilege to take that message to people who have never heard.

This is why in chapter 3 it said he spoke so boldly. It said, "Therefore, having such a hope, we use great boldness in our speech." Here's an old legalist that's been changed through the message of grace and he said, "I speak with boldness." The hope that Paul was referring to is the that the glory of God has now come to live in him and it's changing him every day and will come to live in anyone who bows and trusts Christ as their Savior. He's being changed from glory to glory. What a privilege was Paul's thought. You can see his heart coming out in the verse. What a privilege, what a gift to preach a message that literally sets people free. No wonder he didn't lose heart. No wonder. Daily he lived in the presence of God and drew upon His adequacy for his life.

So we won't lose heart when we live in that attitude of gratitude, that gratefulness, when we're humble enough to admit that the ministry that God has given to us, the gift that He gave to us to accomplish that ministry, the results, they're all of God and we don't deserve one ounce of any of it. It's such a privilege. It's such a privilege. We won't lose heart when we finally realize that ministry is received, not achieved.

You know, I don't know what Paul felt. I know the ministry God's given to me. Do you know the ministry God has given to you? I've heard people say over the years, "You're the minister and we come to hear you but we have other things we do." Now, that's in the book of Hesitation, folks. It's chapter 13:5! You can memorize that one. Every person who is saved, with it came a gif; with it came a function, a ministry; and with it came the effects that God is going to bring out in that person's life. Every single believer, none of us deserve it. God said, "I'm going to include you with what I'm doing down on earth."

Now, it may be the dilemma this morning that we don't even know what our ministry is. I can't help you there. But I can say to you that whatever it is, it's a gift and it's a privilege. Like I said, I don't know what Paul felt. I know a fraction. But I'll tell you one thing, you may think I preach a whole lot, but I want to tell you something: you don't know any better the great joy that I get in fulfilling the assignment, the ministry God has given. When I see children grasp it and I see their lives transformed, there's nothing that touches me anymore than that, other than just being in the presence of God. It's a joy, it's a privilege.

You know I don't know if you've ever seen that movie "Chariots of Fire." Every now and then they'll rerun it. I like that man that's a Christian; he had such convictions. And it came out how that guy gave him the note "if you honor God, God will honor you." I'm not so sure how biblical that is. God honors us when we don't honor Him, but anyway, that's alright. But I liked one statement he made in the movie. And he said this, he said, "When I run, I feel the pleasure of God." And I have to identify with that. I'm not so sure theologically where we can anchor all of that, but I'll tell you one thing: I can identify with what he's saying. When you realize you don't deserve anything—I don't deserve anything—and there's a gratitude, there's a gratefulness in your heart, you're not going to lose heart. As a matter of fact, your whole focus is on depending on Him. You know that your ministry was received, not achieved. That's a secret of somebody that doesn't lose heart. Life in that attitude of gratitude and receive what God has given you as a deep loving privilege that He's given to you.

Paul did not lose heart because he was careful about his manner

Well secondly, not only was he grateful for his ministry, he was careful about his manner. I could have said method. The way he went about his ministry was very important to Paul because he was grateful that it came from God. And if God gave it, only God could sustain it. He didn't lose heart because he had that carefulness in his character. Ministries are a dime a dozen. And he knew that. In verse 2, "but we have renounced the things hidden because of shame, not walking in craftiness or adulterating the word of God, but by the manifestation of truth commending ourselves to every man's conscience in the sight of God."

Now Paul knew that in Corinth there were a lot of people calling what they were doing ministry. And it was fake, it was false and he knew that. Like I said, they're a dime a dozen. And he said, "I'm very careful in my ministry not to put anything of me into it. I want God to get the glory for it and therefore the way I preach and what I say is different from the way they do what they do." Now, he's already mentioned these folks before, if you've been with us. In 2:17 he says, "For we are not like many, peddling the word of God, but as from sincerity, but as from God, we speak in Christ in the sight of God." Paul understood who his audience was and he says it again in our passage here.

Paul's ministry and Paul's message were entirely different than the false ministries and the selfish, proud ministries, because he was so grateful he was careful to make sure the One who initiated it got the glory for what he was doing in his life. He says in verse 2, "but we have renounced the things hidden because of shame." Now what is he talking about? The word "renounced" has the meaning of "to speak against, to denounce, to renounce, to put away." We don't incorporate their methods at all. There are other people in ministry, but it's all about them, it's all about their own twist they have on the Word. It's all about their agenda. But we don't incorporate those methods at all. The tactics practiced by the false teacher were not practiced by Paul.

Verse 2 illustrates for us the deceptive message that they used. If you just keep reading the verse it explains itself. He says, "not walking in craftiness." One of the methods that were hidden and nobody could see it right up front was because they were ashamed of it, the people that did it, and that was walking in craftiness. The word craftiness is the word *panourgia*. It means cunning, shrewd, crafty. Every now and then I'll take my garbage out and here comes that coyote, comes down the street and I can tell that animal is crafty. He's watching me. You know how they'll circle their prey during the day and then attack them at night. They wait until the darkness of night, the cover of night to do a lot of their killing. It's kind of that idea of crafty, shrewd, cunning. It refers to the unscrupulous ways of false teachers who would stoop to any level to get their message across.

Now we know that from Galatia, they stooped to a level and tried to put law back on the people. They did it in Colossi with Gnosticism. Any second epistle that you read in scripture usually deals with these false teachers in some way. This is 2 Corinthians and he's dealing with it here. He further clarifies this craftiness by another phrase. He says, "or adulterating the word of God." The word "adulterating" is *doloo*, and in this context it means to deceive by mixing error with truth. This was a common practice. One of the crafty things that they did, one of the things that were hidden from the people up front because they really were ashamed of it but they did it, was that they would put error right beside truth. Now, they wouldn't put the error first; they'd put the truth first and they would disarm the people by the truth and then they would slip in the error and nobody was paying attention.

I was out in California several years ago and as I looked at the television, a guy was preaching. And I knew this particular individual, and knew where he was off theologically, but yet I watched him, and on faith he was absolutely astounding. For thirty minutes, twenty to thirty minutes he was just, I mean, as good as anything you wanted to hear.

And, you see, when he had disarmed everybody by them thinking he must be good, then he slipped the error in, and the people were yelling and cheering and clapping and the place was just packed with people. And I'm thinking, "Does anybody understand sound doctrine any more?"

But that was going on, nothing new under the sun; that was going on in Paul's day. Listen to what Peter says about it. He says the very same thing in his second epistle that deals with false teachers. In 2 Peter 2:1-3, "But false prophets also arose among the people, just as there will also be false teachers among you, who will secretly introduce destructive heresies, even denying the Master who bought them, bringing swift destruction upon themselves. And many will follow their sensuality, and because of them the way of the truth will be maligned; and in their greed they will exploit you with false words; their judgment from long ago is not idle, and their destruction is not asleep."

That little word "false" in that phrase where it says, "and in their greed they will exploit you with false words," that little word "false" is interesting. It's the word in the Greek that we get the word "plastic" from. I don't know if you know about it, but you can take plastic and heat it and what can you do with it? Anything you want to do with it. And you know how a false teacher can heat up a crowd. They can get them emotionally charged. They've got to have that going first, and once you heat up the crowd you can take anything that you want to say, change the meaning of it, and get people to believe whatever you believe, if they do not understand sound doctrine. He takes his words, a false teacher will, change the meanings of them and you don't know that, and use them to manipulate a crowd like nothing you've ever seen.

But Paul is not that way. Paul understands what they did. The apostle Paul said, "Wait a minute, that's not us. First of all, I don't even deserve the ministry I have. And secondly if the One who initiated it and sustains it, He's going to have to be the One doing any. We don't employ those kinds of methods." Look at the contrast, "but by the manifestation of truth." I love that. The word "manifestation" is the word *phanerosis*, which means to make something so clearly visible everybody can see it. Nothing is hidden at all; everything is seen, everything is open. Paul's manner of preaching of the message of the new covenant was so open, so honest, and so clear everybody knew what he was saying. It either offended or they responded to it, but everybody knew exactly what he was saying. He had no hidden agenda, and they knew that.

He says, “commending ourselves to every man’s conscience in the sight of God.” Now the word “commending” here doesn’t mean commending ourselves in the sense of who we are as much as it does the message that we’re preaching; because he’s commending the message as the word of presenting something that is worthy, a message that is worthy. Paul says that his preaching was so honest and truthful that it was committed to the verdict of every man’s conscience. You see, where the false teachers appealed to the flesh of man, Paul appealed to the conscience of man, the deep area of man that is where the spiritual discernment was. And the people could discern whether or not they could hear truth.

But the reason he did this—and it all builds together—is that the most important audience that Paul felt that he had was God Himself. He says, “in the sight of God.” Paul knew that every time he spoke he was speaking in the presence of God. Christ lived in him. I wish I could tell you, but there’s no way to tell you. If you’re a teacher or preacher you know what I’m talking about. Right now my hands are sweaty. I noticed right before I came up here I had a nauseated feeling in my stomach. It doesn’t matter if I’ve had breakfast or if I don’t have breakfast. It’s always there. It’s there if there are ten people, it’s there if there are 1,000 people, it’s there if there are 5,000 people. It doesn’t matter. You know why? Because it’s been drilled in my head a long time ago: God is in this place this morning.

And I’m not just speaking to you as an audience, I’m speaking to Him as an audience. And I want to tell you something. James says that anybody who stands up and takes the Word of God will stand in a greater judgment one day for how he accurately handled the Word of God. And Paul understood that. How can there be a hidden agenda when you’re standing in the presence of God? God lived in him.

And then he says in verse 3, after clarifying that, he says, “And even if our gospel is veiled, it is veiled to those who are perishing.” You see, what Paul is saying is, “My message is so clear and it’s such a manifestation of truth, some people will reject it but it is a veil to them and they can’t understand. It’s not because of my preaching, it’s because of their perishing and unwillingness to believe.” There’s a big difference there.

Like Roy Hessian told me years ago, “Wayne, God will never judge you for whether people responded to your message or not. He will judge you, however, for how you set the table. So you better get in the Word and get before Him and make sure when you stand up you’re speaking in the presence of God.” That’s what Paul was talking about. And Paul says, “It’s clear that there’s no way anybody can misunderstand it, so if there is a veil that has blinded them in any way, it’s not because of the preaching.”

Now he had said this earlier about how the veil would be there and he even says it more succinctly in verses 15-16 of chapter 2. He says, “For we are a fragrance of Christ to God among those who are being saved and among those who are perishing; to the one an aroma from death to death, to the other an aroma from life to life. And who is adequate for these things?” Paul says, “I don’t know how to figure this out. I can just be who I am. I can just be clear and honest. I can’t make decisions for people, whether they see it or not, that’s God’s business. No man is adequate to figure that one out.” So he continues in verse 4 and he talks about those people who were perishing and he talks about the veil on their eyes, which is nothing he put there, but somebody else has put there. He says, “in whose case the God of this world has blinded the minds of the unbelieving, that they might not see the light of the gospel of the glory of Christ, who is the image of God.”

But what about the Gentiles? What do we do with that? How can they be blinded? Well, we know that he says in another place, “To the Jews a stumbling block, to the Greeks a foolishness.” Maybe it’s just the message itself and to people who have to figure everything out. Maybe that’s part of it. But you know one of the thoughts I had? One of the thoughts that came to me as I was studying this is that the false tactics of the false teachers could be one of the things that has veiled people from hearing the true gospel. You turn your television set on and you might have three programs that are solid as a rock; you will have 30 that are not. And when people see the shenanigans and they see the obvious deceit, they can see people exposed for what they are, get off the air, come back on three years later on and have a crowd that will just knock your eyes out and there’s the money and everything that goes in to it, could be one of the tools that he’s suggesting that causes the unbeliever not to see.

Well, I know that there are many more, and I understand that the world has been blinded in many ways. But I tell you what, when you see that health, wealth, and heresy around, it doesn’t have anything to do with scripture, it makes you wonder how people just turn it off to start with even though the person they’re listening to might be solid. Well, whatever.

So we see how Paul kept from losing heart. It was all Christ in him, but there was an attitude of gratitude. He was grateful for his ministry. He saw it as a privilege; he didn’t see it as a job, he didn’t see it as a drudgery. He saw it as an awesome privilege and he did not deserve that privilege, but in that gratefulness caused him to be careful, careful in the manner in which he went about that ministry because he was up against others who were doing it a fleshly way. And he wanted to make sure God was honored and that he did what he did in the sight of God.

Paul did not lose heart because he was humble about his message

And then thirdly, he was humble about his message; a humility that you don't see many places, but he had it. In verse 5, "For we do not preach ourselves but Christ Jesus as Lord, and ourselves as your bond-servants for Jesus' sake." Paul was not in love with himself. He didn't have the virus that some preachers have when they stand in front of a mirror and sing "How Great Thou Art." He wasn't in any way thinking more highly of himself than he ought to think. The fact that Paul had received the ministry from Christ, the fact that he didn't deserve it, the fact that he saw the false ministries all around him; it just caused him to be humble about his message. He didn't have people walk away impressed with Paul. He had people walk away impressed with who Jesus is and what Jesus wanted to do in their lives.

He said that to the Corinthians. He said, "I didn't come with superiority of speech or wisdom. I didn't come with methods and I didn't come with a message that would in any way overwhelm what the Word of God has to say. I want people to leave impressed with one thing and that is Christ." That was his heart in chapters 10-18. But I'm just going to read two verses. Verses 17-18 of chapter 10 really captures his thought and when he compares himself to these other ministries. He says, "But he who boasts, let him boast in the Lord. For not he who commends himself is approved, but whom the Lord commends." In other words, that's the man who is approved. In other words, if he's pleasing men he's not pleasing God, so he said, 'I live my life to please God and if He commends me, if He approves of me, then I'm approved. It doesn't matter what men think.'

Paul is such an example of true humility. He did not in any way trust in himself as we saw in 2 Corinthians 1:9; he didn't in any way commend himself as we saw in chapter 3:2-5; and here he doesn't in any way preach himself. He just simply preaches Christ and the fullness that Christ offers to individuals who will bow before Him. So he only wanted to preach the message that had overwhelmed his own life. "For we do not preach ourselves, but Christ Jesus as Lord, and ourselves as your bond-servants for Jesus' sake." Christ was his life. Colossians 3:4, "When Christ, who is our life;" Paul wrote that. Philippians 1:21, "For to me, to live is Christ and to die is gain;" Paul wrote that. Galatians 2:20, "It's not me, it's Christ living in me;" Paul wrote that. In fact, it's through every one of his epistles.

And the apostle Paul didn't have anything to interject; there was nothing about Paul that would be impressive to people or especially to God. So he just preached Christ. He just preached Christ. Did he share illustrations out of his own life? Absolutely. Very honest about himself, but he simply preached Christ. Christ was his life. He was a true bond-servant to Christ. The word is *doulos*, a slave, and he was truly a servant to people. But it was all for Jesus' sake. Everything he did was for Jesus' sake. No wonder he didn't lose heart.

No wonder he didn't lose heart. Why would he go back to his flesh when he had this kind of attitude that was spawned by the transforming work of God in his life? Grateful for his ministry, knew he didn't deserve it. Careful about his manner, his method of going about, making sure that his agenda or anything about him wasn't interjected into the message to twist it. And he was humble in his message. It wasn't about him, it was about Christ.

What about you today? What about you today? What is your ministry? What is it God is saying to you today? I wonder if many of us have retired from ministry? You know, you don't retire from ministry, you just re-fire. As long as your heart is beating, God's got a purpose. How do you feel about that purpose? "Lord, You're letting me live but I'm filled with pain." And God says, "I know, because I'm not through with you and you're one of the few people I can trust to suffer." "You mean to tell me as long as I'm on this earth, God, You have a purpose for me if I'm a believer?" Absolutely. Do I deserve this? Absolutely not. But He loves me enough that He wants to use me until that day.

There was a little lady, and she couldn't get out of bed. And she said, "I just want to go on and be with God." I said, "Why? He's not through with you yet." "What can I do but pray?" I said, "That's not bad." And, buddy, she became a prayer warrior. I told her one day if she ever prays for me to die I'm going to crawl in the box! And finally God was finished and said, "Okay, come on over here. You're closer to My house than you are to yours. Come on over to My house." And she's with Him today.

Isn't that awesome? That's life. Why would anybody want to get discouraged or depressed knowing that Christ is their life, He is eternal life and we are in Him and with Him forever? I don't know, but I've done it, and you have to, and it just makes us go back and be perplexed, doesn't it? The flesh is a lot stronger than we thought it was. But we don't have to lose heart.

2 Corinthians 4:7-11

Learning the Basics

We've been in a little mini-series called "How to Live Without Losing Heart." That word "losing heart" is the word in the Greek that means to turn back to the ways of the flesh. And how many of us have done that? It ends up making us faint-hearted and weary, but that's what the root of it means. How to live without losing heart. This is part 3, and today we're going to talk about learning the

basics. If we're going to live without losing heart, we're going to have to learn the basics. Now this is going to be verses 7-11.

Let me get you into it today by going back and reviewing a bit. All of us at one time or another have lost heart. I promise you, you have lost heart, whether you understand the word, what it means or not, you have. Every believer has; at points in our life we've stopped trusting God. Maybe it was a tragedy, whatever, but we didn't trust God. We've gone back to doing things the way we used to do them in our own strength, in our own power.

Prayerlessness, trying to achieve a ministry rather than receive it, forgetting our future hope by being overwhelmed by present circumstances, impatient in wanting to see immediate results, and then a lack of discipline in the ordinary things of life that we've already studied. These have all been familiar symptoms to each of us at one time or another. And what we've done, we've underestimated the deceitfulness of our flesh even when it comes to what we would call "good things." But the encouraging thing is, we don't have to live that way. I love this. And I can choose to live that way, but I don't have to live that way. Once we realize the new covenant, that we are not demanded in any way to perform, it's not based upon our performance, but under the new covenant, it's Christ doing through us what we could never in a million years do ourselves.

Once we recognize that our adequacy, our sufficiency is not in our flesh but our adequacy and sufficiency is in Christ who lives in us; once we see that Christ is changing us into His image from glory to glory, as we learn to yield to Him and to His Word and to His will, then victory is no longer something that causes me to think about conquering my flesh. Victory is not me conquering my flesh, victory is Jesus overcoming and conquering me. It is in the new covenant that we can say that we're dead to sin and alive unto Christ.

Well, it is this truth of the new covenant that has radically transformed the apostle Paul. He used to be a man under the old covenant. Now he's a minister, as he told us in chapter 3, of a new covenant, a servant of a new covenant, and this is caused a gratitude, a gratefulness in his heart for the ministry that God has given to him. In 4:1 he says, "Therefore, since we have this ministry, as we received mercy, we do not lose heart." Received mercy, received ministry. You see, just as he received his salvation, he received his ministry. This was not something he sought out; this is what God did in his life. He was given the ministry of being an apostle, a preacher to the Gentile world to take to them the message of the new covenant. Paul knew that his ministry was not deserved, he understood that. He didn't deserve to be saved, he understood that. He talks about the mercy, when he received mercy, that lets you know immediately the attitude of his heart. And because his ministry was from God, not from him to God, but from God to and through him, because of that it made him very careful about his manner, the way he went about doing what he did.

Paul was very aware of the false teachers and preachers that were invading Corinth. He understood that. And so he says in verses 2-4, "but we have renounced the things hidden because of shame, not walking in craftiness or adulterating the word of God, but by the manifestation of truth commending ourselves to every man's conscience in the sight of God. And even if our gospel is veiled, it is veiled to those who are perishing," hang on to those terms, "in whose case the god of this world has blinded the minds of the unbelieving, that they might not see the light of the gospel of the glory of Christ, who is the image of God."

Now what Paul is saying there, as we looked at the last time, he's horrified at thinking of any fleshly agenda ever mixing with the awesome truth of the gospel of Christ. He would never adulterate, it's what that's called, the Word of God. His message was so clear, it was so devoid of any flesh of Paul that when people heard it they understood it. And if the people didn't understand, as if a veil was there, it wasn't the preacher; it was the darkened and hardened mind of the hearer. Now this caused him to frame an attitude of what he preached about. His message wasn't about man, about himself. He says in verse 5, "For we do not preach ourselves but Christ Jesus as Lord, and ourselves as your bond-servants for Jesus' sake."

You have to ask the question, why was Paul so adamant about his ministry and his message being so devoid of anything to do with self? What was his point? Why would he say, "For we do not preach ourselves but Christ Jesus as Lord?" Well, if you'll read verse 6, the answer is there. There is no other message. There is no other message that can pierce the spiritual darkness of men's minds. Look at verse 6, "For God, who said, 'Light shall shine out of darkness,' is the One who has shone in our hearts to give the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Christ."

He says, "For God who says 'Light shall shine out of darkness.'" What does he mean by that? The word "out of" is the word ek. Ek is the word that means something that comes out right in the midst of everything else. Like something would happen inside this room, not out there, but in here. Something happened right out of the darkness. What's he saying? Christ, the Son of God, came to this earth to become the God-man. He became one of us in a sense. He was not exactly like us; He was the perfect man, the God-man. He was always God, but He came to this earth to become a part of humanity. He got His humanity of the nation of Israel through the tribe of Judah, through the line of David. And He came to this earth and out of the darkness, in the midst of it, the light shone.

He says in John 9:5, "While I am in the world, I am the light of the world." He was the light, born in a manger, born to a virgin, born sinless. He became the light. You have to understand being in darkness to understand His being the light. Light came out of the darkness. "For God, who said, 'Light shall shine out of darkness,' is the One who has shone in our hearts," I love this. The word "shone" is the word lampo. We get the word "lamp" from it. God who promised the light, became the light, but not only did He

become the light, He's the One who turned on the light. That's what he says. The word "light" is the word *photismos*, which means to illuminate. It was God who illuminated our hearts. All of us were in darkness, all of us were blinded by the god of this world, but when Jesus came and when He ministered and revealed Himself to our life, He turned on the light. He illuminated the light. It was God who illuminated the light of the Lord Jesus, the gospel of the glory and the grace of Christ. All of us were living, as I said, in darkness. I think we forget this from time to time. But God in His power pierced that spiritual blindness and that darkness and revealed the good news of His Son.

Now, I want to tell you, the messages of the false teachers of Paul's day and of today, the messages of false teachers could not pierce that darkness. It might entertain people, it might get a crowd, but it cannot in any way pierce the darkness of men's mind that have been blinded by the god of this world. It couldn't do it then, and it can't do it now. But Paul said early in our text the god of this world has blinded the people, and the idea is of them being in darkness.

I wonder if you have ever been in just pitch darkness? I mean real darkness. On our honeymoon I took my wife to Mammoth Cave. One afternoon we decided to take the tour down into the cave. We were real excited to find that there were three busloads of first graders going with us. We got down to the very bottom of that cave and I want to tell you, it was dark. But a guy said, "I want to show you people who think you've been in darkness what darkness really is." And he made everybody, if you had a watch or anything you had to put it in your pocket, anything that had any kind of light to it of any kind, had to turn it off. And I want to tell you it was loud; darkness was loud. I mean, it hurt my eyes. And of course the first graders weren't really excited about that. Then he took a pin light and he turned it on, and that little tiny bit of light was so refreshing, it just ministered to our eyes. We can see something. And that's what we've got to get in our minds as to what the light that shown into the darkness of this world.

He says the god of this world has blinded the unbelieving. Now "the unbelieving," *apistos*, is referring to those who have no faith. It's used 23 times in the New Testament. Sometimes it's used in a very harsh way; sometimes it's used in a very general way just to depict people who don't understand. Any one you know that's an unbeliever today fits this category. He's blinded by the god of this world and he lives in spiritual darkness and he's perishing, headed toward an eternal death, eternal separation from God. The unbelieving, trapped in spiritual darkness, Jesus came into this world and became the light and turned the light on in the midst of their darkness.

Please hear me just for one second. The message that Paul preached was so clearly Jesus and so clearly His Word and so clearly the gospel. Why? Because any method of a false teacher, any method of a well meaning believer who is trying to do anything other than preach the gospel of Jesus, the good news of Christ, cannot in any way pierce the darkness of spiritual lies, of spiritual darkness of people's minds. It cannot do that. And we're living in a day where there are so many Christian shenanigans that have somehow put Jesus on it somehow, and people think that this is a great thing. Listen, the Lord Jesus Himself said, "No man comes to Me," now listen carefully, "except the Father draw him."

"Well, I thought it was the music. I thought it was the casual way we came to church. I thought it was the big facility. I thought that's what caused people to come." No, sir! Jesus said, "No man comes to Me except the Father draw him." And this is Paul's point. Why would you preach anything else because only the message of Christ who is the Light, only that message, only He can turn the light on in the darkness, the spiritual darkness of people's minds?

I wonder if Paul was not even thinking about the day when he got saved? You talk about light. He saw Him and it blinded him for three days. And the light had come into the world, but now had come to live inside of Paul. And Paul became the lamp, but Christ was the Light that shown through Paul. When you heard Paul, yes, you heard a man. You heard him give his life experiences, but you heard a message that was pointed and directed and focused on the Lord Jesus Christ. You didn't hear all this other stuff. You heard the Word of God, you heard the gospel, the message of God, and that was what was changing people. That was what was changing the darkness of their minds. No wonder he didn't lose heart.

No wonder he'd been radically changed by the divine light that had illuminated the gospel to him and now that light, in the person of Christ and the person of His Holy Spirit had come to live in him. I know there's somebody here that's saying in your mind if you're not saying it out loud, you're saying, "I want to be a lamp. I want to be that lamp that the light of Jesus could shine through me. I want to do that. I've lost heart. I've gone back to doing things my own way. I've been sincere about it, but I'm frustrated, I'm at the end of myself. How can I be a lamp? How can I have the message of Christ so alive in me that other people can look at me and they see Jesus in me?"

That's really what we want to talk about today. There are three basics we've got to learn. We've got to learn the basics. Somebody told me of a famous coach that sent all of his plays for the next game to his opponents. All of the plays he was going to run. He said, "Now you can practice all you want. I'm not going to beat you on the plays; I'm going to beat you on the basics." Do you realize the person that starts skiing has worse injuries later on down the road than he does when he first starts? Do you know why? Because he's done it and done it and done it for so long he's forgotten the basics of what kept him from getting hurt to start with and he makes stupid choices and that's when he gets hurt or killed. That's what happened.

We need to go back to the basics. We need to understand that if I'm going to walk in the fullness of what God offers me, if I'm going to live as a servant of the new covenant, if I'm going to be a lamp that the light of Christ can shine through me, then I've got to go back to what the basics are. And if I don't understand these basics, I'm not going to walk in the fullness of what Christ says is mine in Him. Three things Paul brings out in verses 7-10 I want you to see this morning.

The first basic is that we must understand the frailty of our flesh

First of all, one of the basics we've got to understand is that we must understand the frailty of our flesh. The frailty of our flesh. Look at verse 7, "But we have this treasure in earthen vessels, that the surpassing greatness of the power may be of God and not from ourselves." Now, the first thing that happens when I study this, my eyes drift toward the word "treasure" or the word "earthen vessels." But before we look at the word "treasure," let's make sure we understand the "earthen vessel."

The word for "earthen" is the word *ostrakinos*. It's the word that means a clay pot. Used in a metaphorical way as it is here, it pictures human frailty. Now if you want to get real excited, look in the mirror in the morning and say, "Good morning, clay pot," because that's basically what we are. The word for vessel is the word *skeuos*, which is a vessel that is hollow and has to be filled with something. It's like a hollow clay pot. Now this helps us quickly understand what we are not, apart from Christ. We are hollow clay pots. Without His Spirit living in us, without His Spirit manifesting God's power through us as Christ's character and life is manifested, we are empty clay pots. I want you to do that in the morning. When you get up in the morning, look in the mirror and say, "Good morning, empty clay pot. Now, Lord Jesus, You're the treasure. I want You to do something in my life today."

Now the word for "treasure" is the word *thesauros*. We get a word from that which refers to wealth that is not wealth that has been accumulated overnight. I mean, you can accumulate wealth overnight and it's gone overnight. This is wealth that over the years, wealth that has accumulated slowly and therefore will always stand and continue to be wealthy. Now Paul knows that the treasure of the message that has illumined his heart is a treasure that has started back before the foundations of the world and nobody could ever take it away from him. It would always be a treasure; a treasure beyond description. But if you'll follow the context, the treasure is not the gospel message itself, it certainly comes from it, but the treasure is Christ Himself. Christ Himself, the Jewel of God has been deposited into the life of believers. Christ, the life, the light the love, He's God, has come to live in us, in earthen vessels, in clay pots. Paul understands this.

So many believers don't seem to get it. They still think that because they can be successful in the world they can be successful in Christianity, but when it comes to the spiritual dimension of our life, we look at God and we're nothing but empty clay pots apart from His empowering us and apart from His Spirit living in us. Paul understands this. There's no power to deliver the message apart from God. No power to minister. As a matter of fact, all clay pots can be apart from Christ would be a frail, weak, pitiful vessel. The only thing they are capable of coming up with when it comes to ministry is nothing more than depraved simple agendas and fleshly goals. That's all it is.

You know if we could just come back to what the good news is: that God didn't come to renew our flesh, God came to replace it. We have come so far from what Christianity is. I love Vance Havner. I used to listen to him on the Founder's Conferences at Moody's Founder's Week. And he would say, "Do you know what the problem is with our generation?" And everybody would listen to him because he always had something to say. And this was in the 20th century; we're in the 21st century. He said, "You know what the problem with our generation is, in our Christianity? We've lost the wonder of our salvation." And I'll tell you what, that goes deep inside of me. We've lost the wonder, folks. We're living in such a CEO mentality, such a corporate structure, we think we can do for God what only God can do through us. We haven't yet come back to the point that apart from His power, we're nothing more than an empty clay pot, capable of nothing impressive to God.

The only time God is impressed with us is when He looks at us and sees Himself. But what a treasure He has put within us. He not only gives us the message, He is the message. He wants His life and His light to shine through us. He wants others to look at us and make sure they understand the power is not from us but is from Him. Listen to what he says. "But we have this treasure in earthen vessels, that," that's a purpose clause, "that the surpassing greatness of the power may be of God and not from ourselves."

Now what is he saying here? The word "surpassing" is the word *hyperbole*. We get the word *hyperbole*, English word. It means an extravagant exaggeration, but used here it has the idea of something that is far beyond something else. In this context he's talking about that the power always must be of God which is so far above and beyond anything a man could do. The greatness of His power; the word for power is *dunamis*. *Dunamis* refers to the ability, the divine ability that God gives us and so it's beautiful what he's saying. We have this treasure within earthen vessels and he wants people to see that treasure so that the surpassing greatness of the power will be of God and not of ourselves. That little verb "will be" is in the present tense which means "might always be," never, ever be any different. However it's in the subjunctive mood. What does that mean? It means it's really iffy. It means that it's a wish that he has, but he knows that people have a choice of whether or not his happens or not.

There are many times in my life that I would rather do it in my own power, to accomplish my own results than I would do it God's way,

and you've been the same place. And on those days the power is not the surpassing greatness pointing to God. Paul knows the basics. He understands this basic. He understands the frailty of his flesh, when many Christians do not seem to understand this basic truth. His adequacy as he says back in chapter 3:5-6 is not from himself. He said, "I consider nothing as coming from myself, but my adequacy is in Christ."

But we have this treasure in earthen vessels so that the surpassing greatness of the power will be of God and not from ourselves. So to live not losing heart, we've got to learn the basics; and the first basic we've got to learn is that apart from Christ empowering our lives we're no more productive than an empty clay pot capable of nothing but empty ideas, fleshly creativity that only entertains people and never sees them changed. Paul understood that if you're going to walk without losing heart, which means going back and resorting back to the flesh, which brings about a faint-heartedness, if you're going to live that way or don't want to live that way, you need to get this truth down. You've got to start by saying "Lord I can't, You never said I could. You can, You always said You would." It starts right there.

The second basic is that we must expect the fight of our life

The second basic we've got to learn is that we must expect the fight of our life. Now, this is a bittersweet truth that he's going to bring out, but it's going to be the fight of our life. Verses 8-9, Paul shows that the battle starts when we learn to let the treasure be manifest, when we learn to depend upon His strength and His power and not our own. He understands the battle. He shows the vulnerability of the vessel. This is so neat. He puts the weakness of the vessel on one side and the power of the treasure on the other side. You're going to see it and it's bittersweet. The bitter part of it is that we're going to have some pain that's going to be involved in our walk trusting God. We're clay pots and we're weak and we're going to have times when we're lost in knowing what to do. We're going to have times when we feel pushed in to the point we think we're going to be crushed. We're going to have times when we're going to be persecuted and followed after, we're going to have all kinds of these things happen, but he's going to show you the balance to that. We can expect to battle.

He says in verse 8, "we are afflicted in every way, but not crushed." Now the context of 2 Corinthians tends to lend to the fact that much of what he's about to say, his affliction, his being perplexed, has to do with the church at Corinth. Other things brought about in his life certainly brings that out in chapter 11, but most of what he's talking about is what happened at Corinth. There are some people there that have really treated him badly. The church of Ephesus didn't really, later on, it just left its first love, but Philippi and Colossi, you find other pleasures, but Corinth was a thorn to him. Corinth was a pain to him and it caused him a lot of grief.

Let me show you what I mean. That word 'afflicted' that's used there in verse 8 is the word thlibo. Thlibo means to be troubled, to be pressed in on both sides as if you just can't take it anymore. By the way, have you been there in your serving the Lord? It's a painful word, both physically or emotionally; it can be either way or both. Look over in chapter 7:5. Let me show you how it connects with the Corinthian church. "For even when we came into Macedonia our flesh had no rest, but we were afflicted on every side: conflicts without, fears within." There's your word. Now what's he talking about? Let me put it in context for you.

When he goes to Macedonia he goes over there to find Titus. He was supposed to have met him in Troas, but Titus didn't show up. Paul had two concerns. One was that he was concerned for the welfare of Titus, but the other one was that he had to know how that the church of Corinth had responded to a letter written to them that we do not have. And he had evidently scolded them because of the way people had treated him in that church and they wouldn't bring them to a church discipline and so he sent that letter, but he didn't know how they had responded. He loved these people, he hated to see them walk in the fleshly mindset that they'd walked in. And Titus, he met Titus in Macedonia and before Titus came he was full of this affliction. It was causing him conflicts without and within but verse 6 says, "But God, who comforts the depressed, comforted us by the coming of Titus."

Titus had good news. In fact, 2 Corinthians is the response to that good news. But all of this turmoil, all of this emotion, all of this affliction that he went through was caused mainly by the church of Corinth, and so he wants to make sure the Corinthians understand what he's talking about. The point is he was fiercely challenged in his apostleship by the Christians at Corinth: much pain. Now that's what vessels can expect when they realize that they are nothing but a clay pot and they let the Treasure manifest His light and power through them. They can expect this: darkness and light just don't get along real well and they can expect a conflicting situation.

Well, he next mentions the word "perplexed" if you'll go back to our text, chapter 4:8. He mentions "perplexed." The word is aporeo. The word means to "be hesitant, to not know which way to turn." You see, some people think that's sinful in their lives when they get into a place like that. No, no, no, no. We're weak vessels. We're clay pots. Clay pots can get to this point. Certain things can happen within the context of ministry even to where we're afflicted, but it can bring us to a point of not knowing what to do.

Several things right now in my life I don't know what to do. I don't know whether to turn left, turn right. This is the word used over in John 13:22 when it says the disciples began looking at one another at a loss to know to which one He was speaking. Those words "at a loss" is this word aporeo. You get to that point like a mugwump that sits on a fence: he's got his mug on one side and his wump

on the other. He doesn't know which way to go.

It's at a loss. That's the word "perplexed." Whatever happened to Paul, and we'll never know the complete details, whatever it was at the church of Corinth, really caused him some emotional upset in his life. And had brought him to the point of not knowing whether to turn to the left or turn to the right. He didn't know what to do.

Look at verse 9: not only that, "persecuted, but not forsaken." What can we expect? What is this fight you're talking about? You can expect to be afflicted from every side. You can expect to be brought sometimes as a weak vessel to the point where you don't know which way to go. You don't even know what to say. You can definitely expect to be persecuted. I can promise you that.

The word "persecuted" is the word *dioko*. I get a kick out of this word. It means "to pursue." It is used to pursue with the intent to kill. To be hunted like an animal. And I love to deer hunt. I was hunting with some friends of mine near Appomattox, VA. I didn't know they ran dogs. I'd never been with anybody that ran dogs when they hunted. I don't particularly think that's the best way. You get a big old redbone hound, he'll run a doe or fawn to death and I just don't think that's very sporting but that's what they were doing.

I was sitting there and I heard shots, and I couldn't see what was happening but I could see the ridge. And I could hear "boom, boom, boom, boom." Whoever it was was not a very good shot. But the dogs were behind, and I knew it was a deer, but the dogs were over here. I couldn't see any of this, but I could hear the sounds and kind of piece it together. Over here was howling and here come those hounds. And you could hear the boom, boom, boom as that thing was running. And that thing evidently made it through there and got down into the creek. I'm sitting on the creek. And I'm thinking, "Here it comes." It was a doe.

And that doe had been run to where its tongue was hanging out. And that doe, I felt so sorry for it, it came up and stopped and was panting because it had been running from those dogs. It wasn't so much afraid of those people who couldn't shoot, she was worried about the dogs. And she looked back and she leaned down and lapped some water because she was so thirsty and boy, she just took out like a bolt and I thought to myself, "That's the word *dioko* right there.

You might be saying, "I'm a believer now. Things are wonderful. I'm healthy, I'm wealthy, I've got a big house." Folks, that's got nothing to do with Christianity. If you're not hearing the dogs behind you on the trail, then there must not be much to pursue. You see, you don't have this until you start letting the treasure be manifested in your life. There's no battle: when Joshua and the people crossed over the Jordan River, they didn't have warfare until they got into the land. The river was not a warfare; that was a circumstance. The battle started once they got over to possess what God said was theirs. You don't even know what warfare is until you start releasing the treasure and letting the light shine out of you and then you can expect to be persecuted: hunted down like an animal. Ask Paul if he understood that.

Wait until we get to chapter 11 and he starts talking about what had happened to him. You can expect the fight of your life: if you get saved and you go home to an unbelieving husband or you go home to an unbelieving wife, you can expect a conflict like you have never before experienced in your life, because light and darkness have clashed. And you're going to be afflicted, you're going to be perplexed to the point you don't know which way to turn, you're going to sense the hound dogs on your trail.

But not only that, he mentions one other thing in verse 9. He talks about "struck down, but not destroyed." If you took that literally, "struck down" simply means to be thrown down physically, *kataballo*. *Ballo* means "to throw or cast," and *kata* means "down," to cast down. But if used in a figurative way like it is here, yes, he was thrown down many times, beat up and thrown down, but what he's talking about here is in the sense of people trying to knock down and stop what God is doing in your life: trying to stop you. Kind of like when they put him in prison in Philippi. You can be struck down. People will try to stop you in that which God is doing through you.

Well, like I said, this is bittersweet. That's the bitter side. We're vessels; you can expect to be perplexed. Don't think that's sinful: that's just being a weak vessel like a pot of clay. You can expect to be at times when you sense people hunting you down and you begin to even have fears without, conflict within. You can expect that, but look at the balance here, look at the balance. This is the beauty of it, this is the sweet part. On the one side we've seen the vessel, now let's look at the power: let's look at the treasure.

Verse 8, "we are afflicted in every way," that's the vessel, "but not crushed;" that's the treasure. That's God in you. The word crushed means not brought to that point that you cease to exist in the ministry that you have. God's power in and through Paul never let him get to that point. He got to a certain point, but He never took him that far. The affliction caused him to be momentarily perplexed. He didn't know which way to turn, he didn't know what to say, even when he was dealing with Corinthians, but he did not despair. And the word 'despair' means to be at a total loss of what to do. He was never at a total loss of what to do because God gave him wisdom in the midst of every situation. He never got that far.

The light of Christ shining through him caused him to be hunted down like an animal, but never forsaken. Even when he says in 2 Timothy, "Everybody departed from me, Demas left me, and no one stood with me when I was first put on trial," but he was never alone. He says, "But God delivered me." And that doesn't mean kept him from dying. He "drew me to Himself." And what he was

saying is that “I was really never alone. God was right there with me. He’s beneath me, He’s above me, He’s behind me, He’s in front of me, and the new covenant says He lives in me,” and Paul says in Colossians, he says, “I’m hidden in Christ who is in God.” Yes, I can be persecuted and I will be and it’s going to be bad; it’s going to be affliction, it’s going to be pain, it’s going to be a time of perplexity, but hey, I’m not alone, God’s not going to allow me to be crushed and God’s not going to let me despair. God is there. The treasure is in the vessel.

So we see that he was struck down but not destroyed. “Destroyed” is *apollumi*; it means “to be completely destroyed” or “to perish.” And you say, “Wasn’t Paul martyred for the faith?” Yes, he was, but now listen: the message that he preached could never be stopped, and that’s what he’s saying. He went on to be with the Lord. He said, “Hey, it’s gain for me to see Him.” But the message could never be stopped. I’m preaching out of 2 Corinthians that God inspired him to write by the Holy Spirit and he’s still blessing people today in the 21st century. Nobody could shut down the ministry that God had begun within him.

So when we allow Christ to live in us, if we’re going to be the lamp to let the light shine through us, we’d better learn the basics. And the first thing we’d better learn is that we’re nothing but clay pots apart from Christ: we can do nothing, ministry means nothing. It’s a man’s term, it’s not what God does until the Treasure fills us and until the Treasure, the light of God, empowers us and the power is always pointing back to Him. We must understand the frailty of the flesh. We must understand that we can expect the fight of our life. I know a lot of people seem to want to be entertained in this day and time. There’s not much entertaining in this because Christianity is not a game that we play on Sundays. Christianity is a life, a relationship. It’s letting Jesus be Jesus in you, and you’d better learn to expect this. That’s what Peter had to tell the ones suffering in 1 Peter. He says, “What in the world, do you think this is some strange thing? My goodness, look at your life. It’s lived for Christ. Don’t think it’s strange that you’re being put to the test.”

The third basic is we must display the furtherance of His sufferings

Finally, the last thing, we must display the furtherance of His sufferings. Big difference between suffering His sufferings and suffering the ones I caused myself. Verse 10, “always carrying about in the body the dying of Jesus,” a tough phrase, “that the life of Jesus also may be manifested in our body.” What are you saying here? Didn’t Jesus die once for all? Didn’t He suffer once for all? That’s true, He did. But now He lives in us in the Person of His Holy Spirit.

You need to understand something: the world out there hates Jesus as much or more today than they did when He first came to this earth and light shown out of the darkness. They’re still trying to kill Him; get His name off of everything. I thought Hollywood has been thrown a complete curve ball by the movie, *The Passion of Christ*. Now they’re trying to find out what they can do for Christians because it makes money. Will they ever get a clue?

People hate Jesus as much today, and I want to tell you, when you see it coming from the pagan world, you’d better remember something: they hate Him as much as they’ve ever hated Him. They’re just appealing to our pocketbook. It’s different. And you see, the problem is He still lives in us, so they’re seeking to kill us. That’s the downside, that’s the bummer. If they’re seeking to get rid of Him and seeking to kill Him, He lives in me and therefore they’re seeking to come after me. They’re coming after you. Because they hated Him, they hate us because He lives in us.

Jesus said it would be that way. He said in John 15:18, “If the world hates you, you know that it has hated Me before it hated you.” So what he’s talking about is that Jesus is the Good News of God. He is the Light, the Treasure, and when people of the world see Him in us, that’s going to automatically cause us to suffer, not our own suffering, but the sufferings of Christ. They continue on in us because He lives in us, “always carrying about in the body the dying of Jesus, so that,” *hina*, that’s a purpose clause, “the life of Jesus also may be manifested in our body.”

It’s important that we participate in the sufferings of Christ instead of the ones we bring on ourselves by not keeping our big mouth shut. Have any of you been in those situations? I find that 75% of the persecution that comes to me, I started it myself. If I could have kept my big mouth shut, if I could have kept on doing what I knew to do, I could have avoided a lot of pain in my life. There are a lot of ministries that are nothing more than self-inflicted martyrdom. And they get out there and make everybody in the world mad, they say the wrong thing at the wrong time and they cause their own problems. What he’s talking about here is something entirely different.

When Jesus is being Jesus and I’m suffering because of that, the world sees it and he says, “so that the life of Jesus also may be manifested in our body.” And the word “manifested” means “put on display.” In other words, when Paul suffered, everybody in the Praetorian Guard knew that he was suffering for the sake of Christ. They knew that he didn’t do it himself, they knew he was there not as his own initiation, and that’s when the message is even clearer. In the midst of our suffering He’s glorified, they see His life in us. They understand; they connect the dots. The suffering—the life; the light—the darkness. They see the difference and so therefore we must display the furtherance of His sufferings, not the sufferings that come from running our own mouth and doing what we shouldn’t have done when we did it, causing our own pain in our life.

So the basics: we must understand the frailty of our flesh, we’re only empty clay pots apart from His filling us. We must expect the

fight of our lives which is bittersweet. If we continue to trust Him, He's the Treasure, even though the vessel is weak. And we display the furtherance of His sufferings.

I don't know if you've every read Hannah Whitehall Smith. She's not a theologian. She's a dear woman that loved the Lord and she's written some devotional books and one of the little books she wrote I happen to be looking at this past week. She said, you know, she came to a point in her life that she was overwhelmed by something, I don't know what happened. She didn't tell what it was, but Paul would have said she was perplexed. She just didn't use the term quite right in her article. She was afflicted from every side. She was perplexed; she didn't know what to do.

And she said, "I kept hearing in my spirit the verse, 'Be still and know that I am God.'" She said that just kept coming to her over and over again. She said, "You know what I did? I just took it literally and I just shut every window, I shut every door, I got in a room and I made myself just get as still as I possibly could get. I just wanted to be able to sense and to experience the wisdom that only God could give to me." And she said it was incredible. How many times we won't be still enough to experience Him. And she just got good and still and God gave her the wisdom and took her through that situation and she said, "I learned something in it that I want to say to all my Christian friends and that's this: I learned in the midst of that situation, my only strength, Paul would say the strength of an empty clay pot, the only strength it has is in being still." Because when we get still that's when we begin to understand the treasure that lives within us.

Folks, if you want to lose heart, go back to doing it your way: frustrated, judgmental, critical, that's the Pharisee of today. If you would really like to be a lamp to let the light of Jesus flow through you, understand you're a clay pot apart from Him. You can do nothing. And understand the conflict that comes, and understand, don't make it your own sufferings, let it be His and His life will be manifest in the midst of that suffering.

2 Corinthians 4:11-15

Living the Life of Faith

Well, turn in your Bibles to 2 Corinthians 4:11-15. We're going to continue in our little series. We've been talking about how to live without losing heart. And today we're going to talk about what's involved in living the life of faith. Now, this whole series began in verse 1 of chapter 4 as we're working our way through 2 Corinthians, and it was talking about losing heart.

Verse 1 says in chapter 4, "Therefore, since we have this ministry, as we received mercy, we do not lose heart." Now maybe you've been on vacation and you haven't been with us during this series; maybe you're visiting today and you don't really know what I mean by "losing heart." Now, this is very important. Losing heart: yes, it's acquainted with faint-heartedness or growing weary, but in the Greek it means that a person has changed. He's stopped trusting God; something's happened. Something in his life has overwhelmed him or deceived him and he's gone back to doing things his own way.

It was the word used of a soldier in battle who would turn coward and go back. It's not a good thing. And all believers have been there. For example, it's when a believer is so overwhelmed with the events happening in this world that instead of praying, instead of trusting that God is faithful and that God is in control, the world is not falling apart, it's coming together, what happens is they let go and they let their own fears cause them to grow weak and faint-hearted. And prayerlessness begins to show up in their life.

This past week was the London bombings that reminded all of us of 9-11, and then we also had the hurricanes that are coming in, and people are getting a little bit antsy and they're saying, "What's going on in this world. Is it really falling apart?" No, it's not, but when a person lets that overwhelm them and overcome them, they've lost heart. That's why they're weak and that's why they're afraid and that's why they are depressed.

Well, it's when a believer allows the world to influence his thinking. He gets to the point that he thinks that, as he was successful in the world in business, he can certainly be successful in ministry. And he tries to do ministry in his own flesh and in his own power and as a result he burns out. We saw that in 2 Corinthians 4:1. It's when a believer allows his own fears about what others will say about him or what they may do to him to keep him from sharing the precious message of grace, of the Lord Jesus Christ to other people. And he grows weary. And he loses heart. And he begins to show the results of that in his life. That's 2 Corinthians 4:16. It's when he grows weary waiting on God.

You know, sometimes—people have told me all my life: God is slow, but He's never late. He's slow in my mind, but not in His. Time is of no essence to Him—and when we grow impatient and we've done the right thing, we've asked God, we've trusted God, He is faithful, but nothing is happening, nothing is happening that we believe God is doing in our life. And so therefore we take matters into our own hands and we try to produce the results ourselves. That's what it means to lose heart. We saw that in Galatians 6:9.

It's when a believer becomes so distraught at life, so overwhelmed at what's going on that he becomes disillusioned and grows irresponsible in the normal everyday responsibilities of life. He has lost heart. Now, let me ask you a question. We've been in this series for awhile. How are you doing? I'm wondering how many are here today that have lost heart? You've flat-out lost heart. Maybe it's an illness, maybe it's something else that has happened in your life, but you have just flat-out just given up.

You see, you don't have to live that way. You can walk by faith. That's what we're going to be talking about today. In part 1 of this little mini-series of the symptoms of one who has lost heart, that's the first thing we saw of losing heart. And we just went over those. In part 2 of this series we saw the secret of one who has not lost heart, and that was the apostle Paul himself. In part 3 of the series, last time, we saw that if we're going to live without losing heart, we're going to have to learn the basics. There are certain basics that if we don't hold on to, it's going to cost us down the road. Just like a coach every season takes those seasoned athletes into the room and he says, "This is a football," and they think, "What is he doing?" And he's starting all over again with the basics.

There are certain basics that sometimes we tend to forget, and that's why we lose heart. The first basic that we saw was the frailty of our flesh. We've got to understand that living grace, God did not come to renew our flesh, He came to replace it. We've got to understand how weak our flesh is. In 4:7 he says, "But we have this treasure in earthen vessels, that the surpassing greatness of the power may be of God and not from ourselves." And that term "earthen vessels" that we studied last time simply means that we're nothing but empty clay pots apart from what God wants to do in our life. We can't. God never said we could. He can. He always said He would.

And the paradox of this is that within these clay pots the treasure, the Lord Jesus Himself in the person of His Holy Spirit has come to live in us. Christ lives in us, the frail vessel, the empty clay pot. He has come to live in us to do through us what we could have never done ourselves. You know, I've preached this message, tried to be faithful to it for the last three years or more. I don't know how I can preach it any different. And one of these days it's just going to be caught. I believe it's taught, but I believe it's caught. And that little chain clicks on and all of a sudden you realize it's not bad to admit you're a failure. It's not bad to say, "I can't do it. He never said I could."

You see, that's what the grace message is all about. We've got to remember the frailty of our flesh. Now, when the treasure is manifested in us, this is a wonderful truth. Christ living His life through us, but the downside of that is that we secondly, the second basic we've got to learn is when we start letting that happen we must expect the fight of our lives. The fact that the world hates Christ, it's going to hate us, folks. This is going to bring a lot of pain because, what are we? We're weak vessels and weak vessels suffer. And we're going to suffer as a result of letting Jesus be Jesus in us. But this is a bittersweet truth. The bitter side is the pain; the sweet side is the treasure that lives within us.

Paul says in verses 8-9, "we are afflicted in every way, but not crushed; perplexed, but not despairing; persecuted, but not forsaken; struck down, but not destroyed." Now he uses several words that every weak vessel can associate with. He uses "affliction" which is physical but mainly emotional stress that people put on us when Christ is living through us. He mentions being "perplexed." Every one of us has been there: at a standstill. We don't know whether to go left, we don't know whether to go right. We don't know what to do. He mentions "persecution," which is the same as being hunted down like an animal. He mentions "being struck down," and when it's used figuratively as it is here, it doesn't mean just to be thrown down because Paul was thrown down many times. But it means somebody tries to knock down what Christ is doing in and through our lives.

But, like I said, it's a bittersweet truth. That's the bitter side. And folks, there's nobody that's a Christian that's not going to suffer. People suffer, but we're going to suffer in a different way: we're going to suffer because of Christ, and these things will come into our lives. But the refreshing comfort, the beautiful truth is the treasure lives within us. And so on the one side, the weak vessel is afflicted, but on the other side, the treasure in the vessel causes him not to be crushed. On the one side the weak vessel is perplexed, but the treasure within him keeps him from being in despair. The word "despair" means at a total loss. God always shows us the way, even when we're at a standstill. On one side the weak vessel is persecuted, but on the other side the treasure within him causes him not to be destroyed. On the one side, the weak vessel is struck down, but on the other side he's not going to be destroyed.

This is a beautiful truth. On the one side the weak vessel and on the other side the treasure. And that's a bittersweet truth, but we must expect the fight of our life because we're going to begin to experience the sufferings of Christ. And that's our third basic. We must learn to make sure that our sufferings are not self-inflicted. It's not because we ran our big mouth when we shouldn't have been talking. It's not because we did something stupid and brought the thing in on top of us. It's because of living the life of faith, letting Jesus be Jesus in us, that our suffering should come to us. Suffering will come to you, suffering will come to me. We don't have to go looking for it. But His sufferings will only come as we allow Him to live through us.

Verse 10, "always carrying about in the body the dying of Jesus, that the life of Jesus also may be manifested in our body." It's so incredible. When we start suffering the right way and people look at this and they know us and they know that we didn't do something wrong to cause that suffering and they realize that we're trusting God in the midst of it, they begin to connect the dots and

the message that we've been wanting them to hear from our lips, they begin to get it from our life. And all of a sudden they connect the dots and say, "Wait a minute. That suffering, that person is willing to believe even in the midst of pain. And I see now what he's trying to tell me. I see the treasure in the midst of the earthen vessel." And this will deepen the message that we preach and that we share. Our walk will start matching our talk. We'll have more to say than just what comes out of our mouth.

The painful proof of living the life of faith

And this leads us into today's text. In verses 11-15 he shows us what is involved in living the life of faith. Now we have only two options: lose heart or live the life of faith. There are only two options: you're one side or you're the other. There's no in-between at all. But what's involved in living the life of faith? First of all, the painful proof of living the life of faith, in verse 11 and in verse 12. "For we who live are constantly being delivered over to death for Jesus" sake, that the life of Jesus also may be manifested in our mortal flesh."

Now, if you've read verse 10, and we just read it a moment ago, and you're looking at verse 11, you're saying all he's doing is rehearsing what he just said in verse 10. That's correct, but with one little addition. In verse 10 he says, "always carrying about in the body the dying of Jesus, so that the life of Jesus also may be manifested in our body." But in verse 11 he says, "For we who live are constantly being delivered over to death for Jesus" sake."

"We who live." Now, I wonder if you understand that statement? The word "live" there is in the present tense with a definite article. "We who are the living ones." He's categorizing something. Paul, by using the word "live," is not just referring to physical life. The word that's used there is a word that you can use, but it's talking more about that. We're all living physically right now and yes, we will die someday unless Jesus comes first. But the word he uses here for "live" is *zao*. And *zao* can be and is used of physical life, but when it comes to the believers; believers live in a very significant and special way.

It categorizes a way that a believer lives. Example: in Philippians 1:21, it's the word that is used: "For to me," Paul says, "to live [*zao*] is Christ and to die is gain." To live is Christ. Christ is not my motivation, He's not my inspiration, He is my life. And so it's a certain way that we live. Yes, it's physical life, but it's a certain way we live spiritually in the midst of that. Galatians 2:20, "I have been crucified with Christ. It's no longer I who live, but Christ lives in me [*zao*] and the life which I know live [*zao*] in the flesh, I live by faith in the Son of God who loved me and gave Himself up for me."

You see, believers live in a certain significant way, or they're supposed to, and that's the way of faith. Paul is saying "we, the ones who are living the life, we the ones who are walking by faith, trusting the Christ of the new covenant." Now, if you're living today in the 21st century that way, if you're living and walking by faith, you can identify with Paul. You can say the very same thing he says in verse 11. Then he adds, "For we who live," for we who are living this way, "are constantly being delivered over to death for Jesus" sake." Now that's the painful side of this.

The words "constantly being delivered over to death" means exactly that. Constantly handed over or delivered over to death. Paul was daily under the threat of being executed; he was daily under the threat of being handed over to death just like the Lord Jesus was when He walked on this earth. In fact, the words "delivered over to death" is used of Christ when He was handed over to be put to death. It's the word translated "betraying" in Matthew 26:25. He says, "And Judas, who was betraying him," handing Him over, delivering Him over, "said, 'Surely it is not I, Rabbi.'" And Jesus said to him, "You said it yourself." It was because of the life of Jesus in Paul that caused Paul to be constantly delivered over unto death.

Now how do we know that? How do we know that for sure? Well, he adds, "for Jesus" sake." That means because of Jesus, daily he's being handed over unto death. Verse 11, "For we who live are constantly being delivered over to death for Jesus" sake." Christ's life in us, if we walk by faith, will be seen and it will be displayed so that others can see us. Not us, we're just a weak vessel. They see the treasure that is in us. But because others see Jesus displayed in our life, this evokes a hatred in them, the same hatred they had for Jesus when He walked on this earth they're going to have for you and me. And that's going to be painful.

But the proof of our living faith, or our living the life of faith, regardless of its consequences, is not just the pain we go through, but the rest of the verse. He says, "so that the life of Jesus also may be manifested in our mortal flesh." "So that" means "in order that." In other words, something is happening as a result of our righteous suffering. Something is happening, "so that" the life of Jesus, the very life of Jesus also "may be manifested in our mortal flesh."

The word "manifested" means to be put on display so that everybody can see it. Now Paul rehearses again the treasure as I said of the earthen vessel. It's through our suffering for the sake of Christ that others are able to see Jesus in us. In other words, when you squeeze somebody with suffering, when you put them in a time of pain that comes as a result of saying yes to Jesus, what happens is that what's on the inside comes out.

You see, this is what Paul is saying: I'm going through the pain of suffering, but what's being squeezed out of me is that the life of Jesus is manifested in the midst of my pain. The word for "mortal flesh" there: "mortal" is the word *thnetos*. It means that it is subject

to death. We're weak vessels, folks. We are nothing; we're clay pots apart from the treasure that God has put within us. We can die and we can suffer and we will have pain, but when we're squeezed, what Paul is saying, the whole proof that we're walking by faith is that what comes out and manifested to everybody so that all can see, is the life of the Lord Jesus Christ.

So the painful proof; and it is painful because as vessels we're going to suffer. We're going to be perplexed, we're going to be persecuted, we're going to be afflicted, we're going to be knocked down, but the treasure on the other side causes people to see the life that is within us. It will be evidenced when we're squeezed. We'll feel the pain but the world will see the life in the midst of that pain. That's when you know you're living the life of faith.

The personal privilege of living the life of faith

The second thing is the personal privilege of living the life of faith. The personal privilege. Now Paul saw this as a personal privilege, and you'll see this in the text. We just saw that he was constantly being delivered over unto death. I want you to know that death is stalking everyone of us. And at some time it will conquer its prey. But the death that Paul is talking about is not the natural death that all of us will have ahead of us, but he's talking about the death that comes as the result of persecution. A result of people hating the life that is within us. Paul wants us all to know that even death cannot touch the treasure that is within us, the life that is within us.

And he says in verse 12, "So death works in us, but life in you." Now that phrase "works in us" is in the present tense. Death is constantly working in us. He's already clarified that: he's daily being turned over or handed over to possible death. People were out to get Paul; it's in the middle voice which means somebody is enabling this to happen. People were out to get Paul everywhere you'd go. And the sad thing is, many of these people who hated Paul because of the Christ in him, lived in Corinth, so the people to whom he's writing this epistle.

Paul and his crew had learned to yield their bodies to Christ no matter the cost, even if it be death. Now, this is what you've got to understand, this is what chapter 5 is all about. There's no fear of death to a believer who walks by faith, but at the same time there was a divine purpose to their suffering. Now watch this: the life of Christ in them was seen in the midst of their suffering by the people at Corinth and they were beginning to catch it. "Death works in us but life in you," because Paul and his team were willing to die for Christ if need be, they believed to the point that they were willing to speak boldly the truth. People in Corinth caught that. They saw the treasure in the earthen vessels.

The word for "life" there, "life works in you," is the word *zoe*. It's not the word for physical life again; it's the word "spiritual quality of life that only Jesus can give." And what he's saying is the believers at Corinth, many of them, were catching it and now they're living that particular life where they are. They saw that Paul was willing to go the distance, even in the valley of the shadow of death, to let that message get out of him. And now it was in them and they're letting it begin to get through them. Life was working in them and the result would be that the Corinthians now in turn would face the same problem Paul faced: death would now start hounding them. Because they've seen it in Paul; Paul was boldly willing to share it even at the expense of death. Now they've caught it, now they're sharing it, now others are catching it and it's a divine cycle.

And what a privilege to be in this divine cycle. Paul was willing not only to die spiritually, but to die physically if need be, in order that others might see his Christ-life manifested in him. And the Corinthians saw it. And as they were catching it, as they were gleaning from Paul, now that life is working in them and now others will see it as they face the same persecution that Paul faced. And what a privilege to be in the long line of people who have believed to the point that they're willing to speak the truth boldly no matter the consequence that may come to them.

That divine cycle didn't start with Paul. It's been going on since God began to draw man into Himself. Look at verse 13, "But having the same Spirit of faith, according to what is written, 'I believed, therefore I spoke,'" and Paul says as a result of that, "we also believe, therefore also we speak." And what Paul is doing is reaching back into that long line of people that have done the very same thing. And he quotes from David and he quotes from Psalm 116:10 where David said, "I believed when I said I am greatly afflicted." And the context of that Psalm that you find these words that David said is the impending death coming to David from his enemies.

You see, death stalked David just like it stalked Paul, just like it stalked the Corinthian believers and now just like it stalks us. And in Psalm 116:3, to show you that, David said, "The cords of death encompassed me, and the terrors of Sheol came upon me; I found distress and sorrow." But in the midst of that David believed without any fear. He trusted God and therefore spoke boldly. And what Paul is saying is just like David, he believed and therefore he spoke.

He said, "we also believe, therefore also we speak." And you can put in parenthesis "even though it's in the face of impending death by people who hate the message that we share." The word "believe" is the word *pisteuo*. And we need to get hold of this in the 21st century. *Pisteuo* is not something that you just comprehend. Some people say, "I believe that." Do you really? You may comprehend it, but if you believe it, then you have been changed by it. It's somebody who has been so persuaded by what he understands that he's given himself to it and it has radically changed his life. Belief goes far beyond just mentally comprehending something. If you say you believe something and it has not affected your behavior in how you speak and how you live, you do not

believe that. You understand it, but you do not believe it.

Paul so believed God that it radically changed his life. And in the midst of impending death, death working in him daily, he was willing to speak. Why? Because he believed, therefore he spoke. But what did he believe in the face of death? Verse 14, "knowing that He who raised the Lord Jesus will raise us also with Jesus and will present us with you." Wow. "Knowing" is the word *eido*, and it means "intuitive knowledge." It's the kind of knowledge you ladies have that us men are so jealous of. My wife will say, "I know something." And I'll say, "How do you know?" And she'll say, "I don't know, I just know." Oh, that bugs me. And 99.9% of the time she's right. That just kills me. But she has an intuitive knowledge. That's what the word is; it's not just knowledge that you can learn, it's knowledge that comes by walking by faith. And Paul says we have in our hearts that death is not our enemy. That the One "who raised the Lord Jesus will raise us also with Jesus and will present us with you."

"Knowing that He who raised Jesus." Now do you notice in the New Testament before Jesus went to the cross it's "Jesus Christ;" after He goes to the cross it's "Christ Jesus." "Jesus" expresses His humanity, the word "Christ" expresses His deity and the names are reversed after He is resurrected from the death.

And so he uses the word "Jesus." "He who raised Jesus from the dead will also raise us and will present us with you." That's the most fascinating truth. Let me just see if I can get it out like it got in. He's not talking about the event particularly. Don't try to get hung up in that. But it's more than that. He's saying, "Listen, I'm willing to live the life and I'm going to live the life of faith. I'm not going to lose heart. I'm not going back to doing things the way I used to do them. I'm going to trust God even in the face of death. I'm not afraid of death, because I want you to see the life of Christ in me, not just by what I say, but how I live. And when you catch it, then you'll start living it; and when you start living it, then they'll come after you; and then they'll catch it and then they'll start living it. And one day when we stand before God we'll all stand there together." What a harvest that's going to be some day. It only takes one person who believes and is willing therefore to speak and the rest is history. And one day we will see all of those who have been affected and we'll stand together in glory. It will be worth it all.

Let me ask you a question today. Do you believe, therefore do you speak? I hear these people say, "Wayne, you're not evangelistic enough. Wayne, you need to be more evangelistic." Oh, come on. Evangelism is the natural cause or consequence of an individual who believes. If he believes, therefore he'll speak. The problem is not with the speaking. The problem is with the believing in the 21st century. We don't believe. "Why do you know that, Wayne?" Because we don't speak.

We're not willing to speak in the face of what they may say back to us. We're not willing to speak in the face of what they may do to us. When God is so alive inside of us, wanting us to share that message, you can't help but share it. Peter said, "We can't but speak of the things that we've seen and that we've heard." Evangelism is not a program. Evangelism comes from an individual who, like David, and who, like Paul, says, "We believe, therefore we speak and we don't care about what the consequences are that may come to this weak body that can suffer."

You know, we believe that we're living in bad times. How many of you believe we're living in bad times? Many of you do. Well, let me just tell you what a bad time is like. We haven't got a clue what a bad time is. A bad time to us is when the air conditioning doesn't work. A bad time for us is a lot of things. But let me take you back to 258 AD. Let me show you how bad times can get. This is to believers. This is right out of Foxe's Book of Martyrs. When it begins to talk about the different emperors and how over the centuries they persecuted different ones. This is about a man by the name of Lawrence and how he was persecuted. And some of it's written in Old English, so bear with me.

But in 258 AD, under the cruel reign of the Emperor Valerian, his general, a man by the name of Marcianus secured permission, now listen to this, for all of the Christian clergy, anybody who believed, therefore they shared, to be put to death. All of them. Now that's bad times, folks, we think we're living in bad times, that's bad times. Now I'm going to read right out of Foxe's Book of Martyrs, taken just word for word. And let me get you the story.

"Let us draw near to the fire of martyred Lawrence, that our cold hearts may be warmed thereby. The merciless power of Marcianus, understanding him to be not only a minister of the sacraments but a distributor of the church's riches, promised to himself a double prey by the apprehension of one soul. First of all, with the rake of avarice to scrape to himself the treasure poor Christians, and then with the fiery fork of tyranny so to toss and to turmoil them that they should wax weary of their profession. With furious face and cruel countenance the greedy wolf demanded where this Lawrence had bestowed the substance of the church. Who, craving three days respite, promised to declare where the treasure might be had. In the meantime, Lawrence caused a great number of poor Christians to be congregated so when the day of his answer was come, the persecutor strictly charged him to stand to his promise. Then valiant Lawrence, stretching out his arms over the poor congregants that were there, he said, 'These are the precious treasure of the church. These are the treasure indeed in whom the faith of Christ reigns in whom Jesus Christ hath His mansion place. What more precious jewels can Christ have than those in whom He had promised to dwell? For so it is written, "I was a hungered and you gave Me meat. I was thirsty and you gave Me drink. I was a stranger and you took Me in. And again in as much as you have done it unto the least of these My brethren, you've done it unto Me." What greater riches can Christ our Master possess than the poor

people in whom He loveth to be seen?’

“Oh what tongue is able to express the fury and madness of the tyrant’s heart? Now he stamped, he stared, he ramped, he faired out as one out of his wits. His eyes were like fire glowed, his mouth like a boar formed. His teeth like a hell hound grim. Now, not a reasonable man but a roaring lion he might be called.

“‘Kindle the fire,’ he cried, ‘of wood make no spare. Hath this villain deluded the emperor? Away with him! Away with him. Whip him with scourges, jerk him with rods, buffet him with fists, brain him with clubs. Jesteth the traitor with the emperor? Pinch him with fiery tongs, gird him with burning plates. Bring out the strongest chains and the fire forks and the grated bed of iron. On the fire with it, bind the rebel hand and foot and when the bed is fire hot, on with him. Roast him, boil him, toss him, turn him. On pain of our high displeasure do every man his office, oh you tormenters.’

“The word was no sooner spoken but all was done. After many cruel handlings this meek lamb was laid. I will not say on his fiery bed of iron, but on his soft bed of down. So mightily God wrought with His martyr Lawrence, so miraculously God tempered his element with the fire that it became not a bed of consuming pain, but a pallet of nourishing rest.”

In the midst of our suffering we have the privilege, the personal privilege, of believing; therefore we speak and we’re in a long line of people who have been there. Don’t you ever think you’re living in bad times. We don’t know what bad times are. But what Paul is saying is just like David spoke when he believed that he was being threatened with death, we believe and we’re threatened with death but therefore we speak. What a privilege.

Next time you’re in a situation and God wants you to share Christ with somebody and it’s burning in your heart and you choose not to do it, just remember what you’ve just chosen not to do. The problem with us getting the message out is, I don’t think the message has really deeply sunk in yet within us. We don’t believe. We don’t really believe. If we believed, we would share and the world would come to know the message that we have.

So, what does it mean to live by faith? The painful proof is in our pain His life will be squeezed out. What’s the personal privilege? We believe, therefore we speak and we’re in a long line of those who have done the same.

The powerful passion in living the life of faith

Thirdly, the powerful passion in living the life of faith. In verse 15 Paul says, “For all things are for your sakes, that the grace which is spreading to more and more people may cause the giving of thanks to abound to the glory of God.” Do you know what Paul’s passion was? Paul’s passion, no matter what it cost him, was that everyone be giving thanks to the glory of God. He just wanted people to understand the message that had overwhelmed and changed his life. Everything that happened to Paul as a result of living the life of faith was for the benefit of other people. That was his passion. That’s the way every one of us ought to live every day of our lives. “For all things are for your sakes,” he said. “All things” refers to everything in the context he’s talked about. All the suffering that he’s been through.

And he says in order that, “so that the grace which is spreading to more and more people.” That’s Christianity in action. How does it spread? In the midst of our pain, we’re willing to share. Why? Because we believe. And then somebody catches that and then somebody shares it with somebody else and then somebody shares it with somebody else. That’s what evangelism is. It’s a message you can’t help but share, and more and more and more people begin to see the message of grace. It’s spreading and abounding more and more. Unashamed to share the message of God’s grace so that others might hear and believe it and then they spread it to somebody else.

And then what? We’re all raised together and one day, you know what? Isn’t it going to be a great time when we see Jesus one day? Isn’t that going to be awesome? All the times that we were willing to share when we believed, therefore we were willing to share the message that was in us, and in the midst of our pain people saw the light manifested in us as they did in Stephen when he was stoned to death in Acts. You know, one day we’re going to get to see the results of all that. We’re not going to see it down here. We’re not going to see it down here.

Every now and then God gives us a little glimpse. I remember being in South Africa, in Cape Town one time and they said, “Wayne, do you want to go to a Precept Rally?” Because I was with Kay Arthur for 15 years, I was her co-teacher. And they said, “Wayne. Your tapes have been going over here for 5 years. You’re going to be surprised.” I walked in that church and it was standing room only in a church that would seat about 450 or 500 people and I stood there for over 4 hours when people would come by and just tears streaming down their face of how God had used the Word to transform their lives. God gives us little glimpses just every now and then just to encourage us, just a little glimpse, but one day Paul says we’re going to stand and we’re going to stand together in a great throng of people and we’re going to see the people that we’ve influenced because we believed, therefore we shared the message.

That's what it's all about. We've come so far from Christianity in the 21st century it scares me. It's nothing more than an add-on to people's schedules during the week. I've had people tell me over the last several years, "I'll give you one hour a weekend. That's all you get." No, they're not telling me they'll give me one hour. They're telling God they'll give Him one hour. It's not a life anymore. It's just something that we can manipulate if we don't like it, we'll go to another church. There's "your church," "their church," everywhere a church, church, and we'll just move around until we find what we're looking for. And it's not a life that is transformed by the Holy Spirit of God.

"For all things and for your sakes, so that the grace which is spreading to more and more people may cause the giving of thanks to abound to the glory of God." Well, folks, we live in a hostile world. If you don't believe that, you start walking the life of faith; you'll find it out. But what a privilege in the midst of the pain, to believe, therefore you'll share and the people see the light that's in you, squeezed out of you when you walk through those difficult times, and then one day, to understand that we'll all stand there together in heaven.

The painful proof, the personal privilege, and the powerful passion that only Christ can give to a believer. Let me ask you one more time, and by the way, I get passionate every now and then. It doesn't mean I'm mad. I'm just passionate. I hope you know my heart. But I want to ask you a question now: have you lost heart? Are you living your life your way? And Christ, every now and then you add Him in? He's kind of like Sweet-'n-Low, when it's not quite sweet enough you'll throw a little bit in. Sometimes you get a little too much and so therefore you back off, or are you walking by faith; are you living by faith?

And we see what the Scriptures say of what living by faith really is. We who are living the life, that's a special kind of life, trusting God moment by moment.

2 Corinthians 4:16-18

Looking at Life from God's Point of View

Turn with me to 2 Corinthians 4. And we're going to be finishing up the chapter today, but we're starting a brand new series. We're going to be talking about "Conquering the Fear of Death." And this is Part 1. And if you've read ahead of me you've got to be excited about what's in chapter 5. Today in Part 1, we're going to talk about "Learning to Look at Life from God's Point of View."

Now let me introduce this to you by just saying that death is a subject that all of us have to face. You've either experienced it with a loved one, maybe you are facing it in your own life right now with a very serious illness or whatever, but death is stalking each one of us in this place today, and one day it will conquer its prey. But we as believers should never fear death. You see, since the beginning of human life on this earth, man has feared death. You say why? Because death and the fear of death are the consequences of original sin.

In Genesis 2:17 it says, God says, "but from the tree of the knowledge of good and evil you shall not eat," and what's the penalty if they do? "for in the day that you eat from it you shall surely die." There was no death before this. This death that is mentioned here is spiritual death first. We know that because when Adam sinned, immediately he did not physically die. But something did die: there was a chasm built between us and God; the life of God went out of us. We were separated from God when Adam first sinned.

Now, however, even though he didn't physically die, he spiritually died. Physical death at that moment of his sin began to stalk him, not only physical death but the fear of that death began to come after him. You see, that death meant eternal spiritual judgment. Physical death catapulted him into eternal spiritual judgment. That was the fear of that death. We see the fear when God came looking for them in the garden and God found him and it says Adam said, in verse 10, "I heard the sound of Thee in the garden, and I was afraid." You see, that fear immediately was there. He knew the penalty for what he had done.

Well, it's because of this spiritual dilemma of all mankind that the Lord Jesus came in to this earth. In Hebrews 2:14-15, "For as much then as the children are partakers of flesh and blood," the human race, "He Himself [Christ] likewise also partook of the same, that through death He might render powerless him who had the power of death, that is, the devil; and might deliver those who through fear of death were all of their lifetime subject to bondage."

Now we need to look at this very carefully. The phrase "that through death he might destroy him who had the power of death, that is, the devil," must be very carefully interpreted. The devil did not have the authority over death; he had the power of death. It's a huge difference in the realm of death, in the realm of darkness. Let me try to explain this. The devil does not decide when and where a person dies. He does not have the authority "over" death. He has the power "of" death. You say how do you know he doesn't determine when a person dies? Well, it's relatively simple. If you read Job 1:2 you see God talking to the devil and He tells him twice in chapter 1 and in chapter 2 He tells him you can do this and this and this to Job, but you cannot kill him. Now what does that tell

you right off? You say, "Is that the only verse you have, Wayne?" No.

Deuteronomy 32:39 says this, God speaking, "See now that I, I am He, and there is no god besides me; It is I who put to death and give life." In 1 Samuel 2:6 it says, "The Lord kills and the Lord makes alive. He brings down to Sheol and raises up." In Psalms 68:20, "God is to us a God of deliverances; and to God the Lord belong escapes from death." So, you see, even in the Old Testament God was the One who decided when and where a person died. Ecclesiastes says there is an appointed time; it means a scheduled time that a man is to be born and a scheduled time that a man is to die. You and I are not going to live one day beyond when God says we're going to live. It's going to be the hour and the time, He knows exactly when that is; numbers the hairs on our head and numbers our days.

So God has the authority over death. God decides when a person dies and when a person is born and no one else can do this. If you've lost a loved one or if you're facing death, it will be in the exact, perfect timing of the Lord. And you can rest in that kind of assurance. So if God has the authority over death, but the devil has the power of death, then what is the author of Hebrews talking about when he says that? If the devil can't control when a person dies or where a person dies, then what's going on here?

Well, you have to understand the realm or the domain of death over which he has the power. When Adam sinned, Satan rightfully gained dominance over this world and its sinful state because of sin. You see in Romans 5:12 again, it says, "Therefore, just as through one man sin entered into the world, and death through sin, and so death spread to all men." You see, there's a domain of death here on this earth. It's people that are under spiritual death, they are separated from God. Every person who is born into this world is born into Satan's kingdom of darkness; born into a state of spiritual darkness over which he has the domain.

Listen to Paul's words in Ephesians 2:1. He says, "And you were dead in your trespasses and sins, in which you formerly walked according to the course of this world, according to the prince of the power of the air, of the spirit that is now working in the sons of disobedience. Among them we too [and Paul includes himself] all formerly lived in the lusts of our flesh, indulging the desires of the flesh and of the mind, and were by nature children of wrath, even as the rest."

Now in Satan's domain of darkness and spiritual death into which we were all born, there is that fear of death. Why? Because of the subsequent eternal judgment and condemnation that lies beyond. You see, people that are living in spiritual deadness are afraid of what's on the other side. Ever since Adam sinned the devil has stood upon the justice of God, and the justice of God is this: the wages of sin is death and after death the judgment. And he stands on that because it was a legal deal with the temporary control over the domain of darkness and sin on this earth. The context of Hebrews is showing how Christ came into this darkness, came into this spiritual deadness, the Light amidst the darkness. He came to earth as a man in order to rescue man from Satan's bondage and from the fear of death.

Colossians 1:13, "for He rescued us from the domain of darkness, and transferred us to the kingdom of His beloved Son." Christ was born into this world with a human body. Why? In order to die. He came to die the death that was assigned to all sinners. He paid a debt He didn't owe; we owed a debt we could not pay. He died to conquer that which had held man in bondage. He died in our place, thus breaking the power that the devil rightfully had over all that had sinned. Hebrews says to "destroy him who has the power of death."

The word "destroy" is not the normal word for destroy which means to annihilate. This word is *katargeo*. *Katargeo* means to render powerless, to render inoperative. The same word is used in Romans 6:6 when it talks about the power of sin. He didn't annihilate it; he caused it to be inoperative in our life. Well, the devil has flaunted his power over the realm of death, this domain of darkness in this world that is infested with sin and people and spiritual deadness. But when Christ came He came to strip away his power. You see, His coming to earth was not only to strip away the power, but to deliver us.

Verse 15, "and deliver them who through fear of death were all of their lifetime subject to bondage." Now, Christ had to come and die the death of all deaths. To die the death of all deaths He had to be born the birth of all births. He was born of a virgin, He came to die. His resurrection from the dead conquered not only physical death but it conquered spiritual death. That's why in 2 Corinthians—what we're getting into with all of that is, in 2 Corinthians, Paul was threatened with death every day of his life. He said, "I was daily handed over unto death." And he was speaking the truth of the Word of God. But listen, death didn't scare him at all. You see, he knew what Christ had done for him. He knew that death was just a threshold into the presence of God forever. Paul knew that one day when death ultimately claimed his life that he would be in heaven with Christ and he also knew that the believers that came to know Christ as a result of his willingness to yield and be obedient would be there with him. The Corinthian believers would be there with him.

He says in 2 Corinthians 4:14, "knowing that He who raised the Lord Jesus will raise us also with Jesus and will present us with you." We'll be there with you. He understood the resurrection; he understood the other side of physical death that it is to be in the Presence of God. And he says for this reason I don't lose heart. Now that word "lose heart" that we have studied already, the word "lose heart," *ekkakeo*, is the word that means to turn coward and go back to doing it your way. To go back to depending on the

adequacy of the flesh. Paul says, "Listen, listen, listen. I have an understanding. I believe and I'm not afraid of death. I'm not going to go back and live my way anymore. I'm going to live in His adequacy and death, physical death, is no big deal."

He says in verse 16, "Therefore we do not lose heart," we do not quit, we're not cowards, we're going to be in the midst of the battle because we know who has conquered death. Oh, that we would live and not fear death so that God could just live His life through us.

Well, let's look and see how we can conquer this fear of death. Everybody faces it. How do we conquer it, how do we get beyond it? I want you to listen to this apostle Paul, a battered man, afflicted, perplexed, persecuted and struck down, but who never, ever feared death. I want to tell you something, folks, we fear what we do not understand and, hopefull, in the studies that we're going to have in the next several weeks, including today, it will help you better understand what Christ has done for you and the fact that physical death is a piece of cake to him. It's just from here to there.

But I want you to ask the Holy Spirit to give you understanding as we go through this. It's not an easy subject to tackle. From 4:16 all the way through 5:9, Paul begins to use some contrast. One of the greatest teaching tools anywhere is contrast, and he's going to use this to show you what is and show you what isn't, and it's beautiful. It teaches itself you just watch it. So in these contrasts, we're only going to go 16-18 today, but it continues on it to chapter 5, we're going to learn how we can live conquering the fear of death. Where death is no longer an issue to us, physical death, and it's because we're learning to look at life from God's point of view.

We need to learn to think God's way. We need to learn to let the Scriptures get inside of us. It's not just us getting it in them; it's the Scriptures getting into us. Scripture is never just for information, it's for transformation. And hopefully what we're going to study will transform you, it will renew you, and it will conquer the fear of death in your life.

To see the fear of death conquered in our life there has to be a proper pursuit

Well, first of all, if we're going to live and if we're going to see the fear of death conquered in our life, there is going to have to be a pursuit, a proper pursuit. In other words, that pursuit is based upon an understanding of the difference between the temporal and the eternal. We're going to have to learn to live for the eternal instead of living for the temporal. Look at verse 16 again, "Therefore we do not lose heart, but though our outer man is decaying, yet our inner man" see the contrast "is being renewed day by day."

Now, I want to go back to an illustration I used several weeks ago. It's kind of hard to do it up here because there's no string back here, but let's just say there is. Use your imagination. Let's say it started way over there. I'm not going to walk that far but let's just say way over there I started with a piece of chalk on a blackboard and I drew a line all the way across this platform all the way to that wall over there. And I would tell you that line represents eternity. Now, we know that's a pretty inadequate illustration because it would just keep going on and on and on.

Now let me put a dot on that line, just a little dot. Here's the line going all the way across and I put a little dot right there. Do you know what that dot is? That dot is the time when you're born until the time that you die physically. That's how insignificant this life is compared to eternity. Our life, from the time we're born until the time we die is an itsy bitsy little dot barely visible on the eternal line of time. Now, when we were born we began to die and that's because of sin as we've already seen. Now Paul makes that powerful statement again in verse 16 when he says, "we don't lose heart." He's trying to tell us something. He says when we're speaking God's truth in the face of hostility we don't lose heart, we don't chicken out, we don't coward, and we don't turn back. He says we don't quit because we have an understanding.

Now see, this understanding is important. They understood the difference between the temporal life of the outer man and the eternal life of the inner man. So instead of losing heart, the verse says, "but," a contrasting word, "though our outer man is decaying, yet our inner man is being renewed day by day." Now he's weighing his sufferings on the scales of God, and it's a huge difference from our scale. The word "outer man" is a believer's outward, physical existence in this tangible world. It's his temporal life. It's his natural life here on earth amidst his surroundings and it is as a weakened vessel, we say earlier in 2 Corinthians, it is subject to death, to corruptibility.

James tells us in James 4:14 that our physical life on earth is like a vapor that quickly appears and then quickly vanishes away: it's gone. In almost the time it comes up, it's gone. And Paul shows us this temporal condition of the outer man by using the word "decaying." The word decay is diaphtheiro. It means to corrupt throughout, to die. Our outer man is in the process of dying.

Now we've got older folks in here, we've got some younger folks in here. Younger folks think they'll never die, but I promise you you're dying. Those of us, I'll be 62 pretty soon, those of us that are over 60, we know we're dying. I can see a basketball lying on a court and my mind says, "Go get it and take somebody one on one." My body says, "Don't even think about it." It's like the three ladies in the senior adult home. And their husbands had long died and they're living in a little apartment together. And there's an elevator but there are also steps. They use the steps, they want to keep their exercise going, so one day they all walked down the steps, get on the ground floor, they're fixing to go out, and one of them says, "I forgot my purse." And they say to go back and get it.

So she walked upstairs, got in the room, and she said, "Now, what did I come up here for?"

Well, the other two were standing down on the bottom floor and they said they knew what happened, she got up there and she didn't know what she went up for. "Would you go get her?" "Yes, I will." And so she said, "I'm going to use the steps too." So she got on that landing between the first and second floor and she stopped and she said, "Oh, no, am I going up or am I coming down?" The other one standing down on the bottom floor and she knows what's going on. She says, "I tell you one thing, I don't know if they'll ever get it. I'm just glad I'm not like them. Knock on wood. Yes, I'll be right there!"

Our outer man is decaying, folks. It's decaying. The word "decay" again is that word that means "to die." Now Paul knew and understood the temporary and the decaying condition of his physical body. Death was imminent at some time. And in our context, Paul's foes, the people in Corinth that had abused him and criticized him, and tore him down, were the very ones possibly bringing about this death. But Paul shows us the contrast between the temporal outer man and the eternal inner man of the believer.

In verse 16 again it says, "but though our outer man is decaying, yet our inner man is being renewed day by day." Now what's he talking about? The term "inner man" refers to our regenerate, spiritual existence in Christ who now lives in us. He is that life. By saying "is being renewed," Paul realized that he's not where he needs to be yet. You see, the Christian life is not an arrival. The Christian life is a pursuit and Paul knew he was on that pursuit and he hadn't arrived yet. The great apostle Paul, the greatest missionary in the New Testament besides Jesus, knew that he hadn't arrived and that every day inwardly he was being renewed.

Being renewed is in the present tense, middle voice. Present tense means it was constantly happening. This means he had a proper focus on life. He was focusing on that eternal thing, the inner man, not the outer man. But not only that, it's in the middle voice. The middle voice means something is enabling it to happen. Now put together what we have studied in 2 Corinthians and it'll light your fire. Paul, by believing, and therefore speaking, the hostility came back towards him and in the midst of his suffering and in the face of death, by allowing Christ to manifest His life through Paul, daily in him, changing him from glory to glory as we saw in 3:18, he was being renewed in his inner man.

You see, Paul got it. Paul understood what was going on. He was not blind to what was happening to him. He knew that God was causing life in the temporal sense to work for him in the eternal sense. He knew that even though they might have to suffer death, so be it. The outer man is temporal anyway. They were focused on the eternal. They were allowing Christ to daily conform them to His image: the inner man was being renewed day by day. That word "renew" is *anakainoo*, which means to be completely renewed. Changed from within. So much less of Paul and so much more of Christ was being seen in his life. The pressure of the affliction was driving all of this out of him.

Now, what's happening in your life today? I want to know what's going on in your life. You don't have to tell me; I'm going to ask you that though. What's going on in the outer man today? What's the pain, the suffering that you're having to deal with? Have you learned to focus on something bigger than that? The eternal inner man.

I'll tell you what. There are so many people living today that are absolutely anchored to the temporal life that we have on this earth, that little dot on that line. I've never seen a hearse yet pull a U-Haul, have you? Not one time. But I guarantee you people are so tied to this life. This is what Paul said in 1 Corinthians 15, "If we hope in Christ in this life only, we are of all men most to be pitied." It's not this life that's what it's all about. It's a dot on the line of eternity. It's forever and ever what God wants to do and when people are anchored to the temporal they're scared to death of death.

And I'll tell you why. They're scared to death because they have too much to lose. John said in his epistle, "Don't be among those who shrink back at the coming of Jesus." Why would they shrink back? Because they've got too much invested here to lose it. I hate to tell you this, and probably everybody is going to bail out on me when I get to chapters 8-9, like a covey of quails. Everybody is going to suddenly have an urge to have a vacation. Why? Because in chapters 8-9 he's going to talk about giving, which are the two better chapters on giving anywhere in the New Testament. And I want to tell you what's wrong. He's building the platform right back here. He's showing them: he's dealing with death but he's building the platform. If you're going to live for this life folks, if you're going to sink all of your investments into this crazy world and it's going to be a new heaven and a new earth, you've missed the whole point of what Christianity is all about.

Your pursuit is the temporal. Your pursuit is not the eternal. And that's the point. If I'm going to conquer the fear of death, perfect love cast out all fear, if I will just yield before Him, let Him renew me on the inner man day by day, less of me, more of Him, and live in that eternal perspective, death is a piece of cake. It's just from here to over there. But when people live in the now, but we don't live for the now. We live forever, for the One who lives forever. We live for eternity. We must understand that our pursuit has got to be that of the eternal, not the temporal.

And I want to promise you, if it's not, that's why you're afraid of death. That's why you're scared to death, because you don't know what's on the other side. You're not letting the Word of God renew your mind and the Spirit transform your life. And we've got to make up our minds: what we're going to pursue. We're going to pursue something but we only have two choices. Once this pursuit is

there, and I want to promise you that if it's not in your life this morning, you have no clue about the rest of what I'm going to say. Only when you're pursuing the eternal can you have the perception that you're going to have to have. That perception is that when we live for the eternal and not the temporary, what happens is we begin to grasp the difference between the momentary and the eternal.

To see the fear of death conquered in our life there has to be perception

Verse 17, "For momentary, light affliction is producing for us an eternal weight of glory far beyond all comparison." Now, what in the world is he talking about? What he's saying here is exactly what he says in another passage but uses different words, same exact thought. And that's Romans 8:28. Something is happening causing this. He says in Romans 8:28, "And we know that God causes all things to work together for good to those who love God, to those who are called according to His purpose." You see, what he's saying in Corinthians is the same thing. God is using the affliction in his life, the momentary light affliction He's using to create and produce an eternal weight in glory. He causes all things. You see, that affliction was a tool, a knife that was cutting him loose from all of his ties to this temporal world and freeing him to live in that which is eternal.

You see, God causes all things to work together for good to those that love God. I don't know if you've ever been to Stone Mountain, Georgia, but when you're flying east and when you get to Atlanta and you're going to land to the west, it makes a huge turn and if you know when to look down, there's that big mountain, that big rock mountain is called Stone Mountain. For years somebody told me, and I believed them without checking it out, there are three statues in those rocks. There are three Confederate generals carved out in that rock. They told me they were presidents, so I told everybody they were presidents. It took me a long time to realize the South dies hard. No, they're not, they're Confederate generals.

But one of my friends was sitting in a restaurant at the foot of that mountain one day and he came back home and he said, "Wayne, you won't believe what God showed me." And I said, "What's that?" He said, "When I looked up there and I saw those three statues carved out of the rock, it dawned on me nothing had to be added to the rock to get the image that the artist wanted. But look what had to be chipped away for the artist to bring forth the image that was there.

You see, Paul is saying affliction is just a tool. We don't get to choose the tools. Persecution, being perplexed, all that we studied back in chapter 4, all of these are just tools that God is using in the temporary to produce something in the eternal, the eternal weight of glory. Verse 29 of Romans tells you what he's talking about. He says, "For those whom He foreknew, he also predestined," that's the purpose of each of the lives of a believer, "to become conformed to the image of His Son, so that He might be the firstborn among many brethren."

You see, Paul understood and grasped this concept. He had a perception that was divine. It was a revelation to him. Why? Because he had the right pursuit, he had the right perception. And, as a matter of fact, he calls his affliction, he calls his being perplexed, he calls his persecution, being struck down, and he calls all of that "momentary light affliction." Now, how in the world could he do that? Most of us would say, "Oh, look at the dreadful load we had to endure. Woe is me."

Paul doesn't say that. He says it's a momentary, light affliction. When you grasp the difference between the momentary—now listen to me—and the eternal, it's not hard at all to understand why Paul could say that. You see, the reason he could call it light affliction is because it was only momentary. You say, "What do you mean?" Something that is momentary does not last. Something that is momentary is transient. Something that is momentary is only for the moment. Moments will fly away. But listen, when you compare the momentary to the eternal, then there's your difference right there. You can see the difference.

Whereas the momentary ends quickly, the eternal never ends. The word "eternal" is the word meaning that which is not affected by time. It's perpetual, it never ends. So he said, "For momentary, light affliction is producing for us an eternal weight of glory far beyond all comparison." The pain, the rejection, the affliction was a tool for the moment to create and to cause an eternal weight of glory. The word "weight" is the word figuratively here meaning "greatness, fullness, abundance."

Now listen, look at the context and flow. The more Paul was afflicted for the moment, the more the fullness of Christ was seen in him. The more the weight of the glory of Christ was seen in him. The more the abundance of the presence of Christ was seen in him. And that is an eternal weight of glory. But the momentary was causing it to happen, and Paul would last forever because Paul was allowing life to work for him and not against him.

We're so far off track. Folks, we're not geared to stay here. We're geared to be with Him forever. We're strangers in this world. We understand that but some people live as if they've got to have what this world gives and they're anchored to it, they're tied to it. Paul says, "Not me, I'm allowing the affliction and the persecution and the pain and the suffering to cut me loose from the chord that have bound me to a temporal world to free me to be in the eternal."

I want that eternal weight of glory to be produced within me. He'd already told the Corinthians in 1 Corinthians 3, his first epistle to them, he'd already told them that there was going to come a day that they're going to stand before Jesus and all of their works are

going to be tested by fire. And all of that garbage they came up with and called it spiritual and good and asked God to bless is going to burn at the judgment seat of Christ. But all that was precious stones, that eternal weight in glory, letting Jesus be Jesus in them, letting Jesus live His life through them, letting Jesus produce those works of righteousness that they couldn't in a million years be creative enough to produce, all of that would remain. It would be an eternal weight of glory.

Have you grasped the contrast between the temporal and the eternal? If you have, then you have a perception of realizing that whatever pain and suffering we go through here, allowing Christ to renew us day by day in the midst of it, allowing Christ to use it, to squeeze out the message of Christ in us the hope of glory, that's eternal. That's eternal. And that's what life is all about. That affects everything about us. That affects our fear of death; that affects our giving. That affects everything that we do. You cannot take a person who lives after the temporal and teach them anything about not being afraid of death or about giving or anything else. But you can take a person who is focused on the eternal and it's just an outflow of who he is.

To see the fear of death conquered in our life there has to be a pattern

The pursuit, the perception, and then finally there's going to be a pattern that will develop. When you start pursuing the eternal, not the temporary, and you begin to grasp this perception God wants you to have that is producing an eternal weight of glory within you, then you'll begin to develop a pattern. You know what that pattern is? We will focus on the unseen instead of the seen.

Look at verse 18. He's building on what he said: "while we look not at the things which are seen, but at the things which are not seen; for the things which are seen are temporal, but the things which are not seen are eternal." What an incredible verse. Most people are living in what they think is the obvious and they're missing the actual. They don't have the big picture.

There was a football announcer for the University of Georgia. Being on the radio he was the eyes of the people who couldn't see the game and so he would say to them, "Now, get the picture. Get the picture." And he would draw the bigger picture of what's going on in the game. Not that particular play but he would look at the whole picture of the game.

This is exactly what happens when you develop that pattern. You start looking at the unseen. Most of us get so hung up in the temporal, the obvious, we miss the actual. We miss what God is doing. We're always, "Oh, no, what am I going to do about this. What am I going to do about that," instead of saying, "God is in control. Now what is He up to in the bigger picture?" Each of the contrasts that we have looked at in 16, 17, and 18 build upon each other.

When we pursue the eternal instead of the temporary, the inner man being renewed, the outer man decaying, it affects our perception of life. And we begin to grasp, "Hey, wait a minute, this pain is only momentary. It's producing something that is eternal." And then that pattern sets in and we start looking at the unseen, not the things that are seen. What's God doing in America today? Everybody is scared to death of things. There are some people more afraid of losing their Social Security than they are of the world going to hell. What's God doing in the bigger picture?

What happened on 9-11? I don't know, but what's God up to? What's He trying to do to wake up a nation? What's the unseen thing that's there? Paul in continuing his thought from verse 17 says again, "while we look not at the things which are seen." Now the word "look" there is not to take a glance. He doesn't say, "I glanced over and looked at something else." It's the word that means to fix your gaze upon something. It's the word *skopeo*. It's the word we get the word "scope" from. It means to spy out, to closely observe.

You ask any hunter. When you get what you're looking for, you fix your eyes upon it and that's the word that's used here: *skopeo*. He's looking at, fixing your eyes upon the things that are unseen. Paul is saying that anything you can see, touch, and feel, is only temporary. If you ever studied the book of James, it says everything you pursue after once you get it, you realize it has you. Have you ever noticed that? Go out and buy something: it's got you. You're either going to have to clean it, fill it up full of gas, you're going to have to do something. It's got you; it owns you. That's the way it works: anything. It won't last. Affliction was only momentary; it would not last. But that which cannot be seen, that which God is doing, through that which you're going through, that's eternal. We must fix our eyes upon that.

So in conquering the fear of death—and this is just the beginning of these messages. I can't wait until the next one. I thought I'd get into chapter 5 but I couldn't quite make it—we must begin by pursuing the eternal, not the temporal so that we might have the proper perception of the pain and the suffering in this life to realize that it's only momentary and it's a light affliction compared to the eternal weight in glory, and that will develop a pattern. It will stop getting so messed up with the things we can see and start fixing our gaze on the things that are unseen. What God is doing in the bigger picture.

So in closing today I want to ask you a question. Are you living for the dot or are you living for the line? Do you know how to tell if somebody has lived for the line instead of the dot? When you die, it will tell you more about your life and the way you lived than anything else. It's the way you die. I haven't been there, so I don't know yet. I've tried to teach my children how to live and one of these days perhaps God will give me the opportunity to teach them how to die: by trusting and focusing on Christ.

R. G. Lee was the pastor of Belleview Baptist Church in Memphis, Tennessee. It was a large church in his day. He preached a lot of great sermons; probably preached on heaven more than any preacher ever that's recorded. Others may have, but that's recorded. And they said when he died—his wife had died several years before and I think I've got the story right—his daughter was there with him in another room and he cried out, "Honey! Honey! Come here, come here." And she ran in thinking, "He's fallen, something's happened." And he was looking at the unseen, which she could not see. And he said, "Oh, honey, look, look. There's Mama." That was his wife that had gone on several years before. And then he said, "Oh, there's Jesus. Honey, heaven is so beautiful. I've preached on it all these years. I've never done it justice. Oh, how beautiful." And with those words he went right on to be with the Lord Jesus Christ.

He died the way he lived. You know how a person is living when he faces death. If he's afraid of it, he's living in the temporal and not the eternal, because God, who gives saving grace, and God who gives living grace, gives dying grace. He'll take us right on through. One of these days, my prayer is for my life, to live so close to Him—and I'm being renewed, I've got a long way to go—but I'd love to get to the place that I'm living so close to Him that He could say to me in the midst of the pain and the suffering, "Wayne, you're a lot closer to My house than you are to yours. Come on over, supper is ready."

It's just a transition from here to there. What are we afraid of? I'll tell you what's wrong. We're living in the temporal and not the eternal. And everything breaks down from that point on. There are too many ties to what this world offers. We're not living in the eternal.

Where my heart is broken, we have needs in this world, in our church, and we've got people getting all they can, canning all they get, and sitting on the can and poisoning the rest. Why? Because they've got to live in this world. They have not yet understood that we live in another world that's forever.