

II CORINTHIANS 4

Please turn in your Bibles this evening to II Corinthians chapter 4 as we continue our study through the Word of God and this second letter that Paul wrote to the church in Corinth.

And, what I love about this chapter is that the focus is not on the instrument that God uses but upon God Himself. He is the One who enables us to do all things!

And, even in the midst of difficulties, of tribulations, God is still working, and He will see us through. One writer summed this chapter up like this. He wrote,

One of the underlying themes of 2 Corinthians is that God's power is demonstrated in weakness. First Paul renounces the hidden things of shame in the proclamation of the truth of the Gospel. In doing so the light of this Gospel dispels the darkness by which Satan blinds the eyes of those who do not believe. The treasure is then contained in people of clay "that the surpassing greatness of the power may be of God and not from ourselves."

- Dan Mitchell, The book of Second Corinthians – Grace Under Siege, p. 73

With that as our background, let's begin reading in II Corinthians chapter 4, beginning in verse 1 and let's see what the Lord has for us as we study through His Word.

II CORINTHIANS 4

VERSES 1-2

First of all, when you see the word "**therefore**" ask yourself "What is it there for?"

Paul uses it here because God has removed the covering from our eyes, what he said back in chapter 3, and we can see Jesus, and so let us boldly bring the Gospel of Christ forward, let us not be a *“faint-hearted coward.”*

Keep in mind that when Paul says that **“we do not lose heart”** that is the idea, a “faint-hearted coward.”

The ancient Greek word has the connotation of not only a lack of courage but of bad behavior and evil conduct.

And this is Paul’s point. He is saying that, despite all of the suffering and savage attacks against him by false apostles and teachers yet he had not given in to fear or behaved like a coward. These things were not going to move him from the course that God had for him!

And that should be true for us as well. You see, if God has done this for us, we should be able to go forth and bring the message to others.

Spurgeon gives us this insight to what we should and shouldn’t do. He wrote, “The preacher should either speak in God’s name or hold his tongue. My brother, if the Lord has not sent you with a message, go to bed, or to school, or mind your farm; for what does it matter what you have to say of your own? If heaven has given you a message, speak it out as he ought to speak who is called to be the mouth of God.”

Exactly. And yet, what we see happening in Corinth and today is that we have false teachers with a false message using their craftiness to catch people with their lies. And it worked back then, and it continues to work today!

In fact, you can translate II Corinthians 4:2 like this, ***“In contrast to the false teachers who have come among you - we have denounced their shameful handling of God’s Word. We don’t conduct our ministry like them using crafty words to trick and entice people nor do we handle the Word of God deceitfully.”***

If God’s Word is not sufficient for us, then our God is not worth worshipping! But God’s Word is more than sufficient for us and our God is worthy of our worship!

Let me share these words from Charles Spurgeon, written a long time ago but it does fit into what is happening in the church today perfectly. He wrote,

Certain divines tell us that they must adapt truth to the advance of the age, which means that they must murder it and fling its dead body to the dogs . . . which simply means that a popular lie shall take the place of an offensive truth.

- Charles Spurgeon

Think about that and today’s Seeker Friendly churches. They try to trick people to come in and then they water down the Gospel so much with the idea that some might get saved.

Paul tells us that he just speaks the truth, he doesn’t water it down or try to trick people into the kingdom of God and may we be like Paul!

Paul’s ministry, his life was one of integrity and even if some would try to come against him, their own conscience knew Paul was a man of integrity, a man of truth. May that be seen in our own lives!

I want to share this with you because it is a growing trend, that is how false teachings are. They are new and they are embraced by many. This is about Christian witches! That is right, people who consider themselves Christians and witches at the same time! Listen carefully to what we are told of this group,

A group of so-called “Christian witches” is hosting their very first convention in Salem, Massachusetts – a city known for its notorious witch trials in the late 1600s.

Rev. Valerie Love is the woman behind the event and says her “Divine assignment” on earth is to promote witchcraft. Love says she is an ordained minister of spiritual consciousness and recently founded the Covenant of Christian Witches Mystery School.

She says she was born a witch but grew up as a Jehovah’s Witness and had to hide her identity.

“For as long as I can remember I’ve always been ‘magical’ . . . seeing things that people said ‘weren’t there’ or daydreaming in far-away worlds as a child and being constantly ‘snapped’ back to ‘reality’ by teachers and other big people,” she explains in a post on her website. “The word Witch engenders power in some and fear in others. The determining factor in what comes up for us when we hear the word ‘Witch’ is consciousness. One person is ecstatic about the possibilities of Magic while another is stricken with terror.”

Love says she left behind the Jehovah’s Witnesses and found the freedom “to be the Goddess I AM today.” It’s worth noting that Christian theologians and church leaders do not consider the Jehovah’s Witnesses to be a Christian group, labeling it as a cult.

Meanwhile, Love says she wrestled with being a witch and being an alleged Christian. She claims she found inner peace by writing “The Christian Witch’s Creed,” which says “I am a Christian Witch; I love my cross and my wand. I consult my Tarot deck and my Bible. I adore & am devoted to Christ and the Goddess.”

A man named Calvin Witcher, who calls himself a “prophet,” will also attend the conference. He claimed during a Facebook live-stream two months ago that the Bible is full of witchcraft.

“The Bible is a huge book of sorcery. You literally can’t get around that. You can’t get around Jesus being a magician. There’s just no way,” he said.

“You’re talking about the whole of Jesus’ adult ministry is all magic, all sorcery. Even if we just say ‘Jesus.’ Every particular miracle Jesus does defies human law, defies the laws of the universe and the world. So . . . you can’t really talk about being a Jesus follower without doing what he did which is magic,” Witcher claims.

Both Love and Witcher offers readings and coaching sessions for upwards of \$50,000. Witcher also hosts a cable show that “blends the Mystic, Eastern Traditions, Biblical, Occult, Ancient Truths, Modern Wisdom, and everything in-between; designed for your spiritual evolution.”

Meanwhile, the Bible explicitly rejects witchcraft more than a dozen times in both the Old and New Testaments. 1 Chronicles 10:13 states that King Saul died because he consulted a witch or “medium.” God commands in Leviticus 19:31, “Do not turn to mediums or seek out spiritists, for you will be defiled by them. I am the LORD your God.”

And Revelation 21:8 states, “But the cowardly, the unbelieving, the vile, the murderers, the sexually immoral, those who practice magic arts, the idolaters and all liars - they will be consigned to the fiery lake of burning sulfur. This is the second death.”

Jennifer LeClaire, founder of Jennifer LeClaire Ministries, says the idea of Christian witchcraft is dangerous.

“I’ve seen a rise of Christians practicing witchcraft. Or maybe they aren’t Christians at all. I won’t judge someone’s salvation, but when people in church release word curses, pray against you, and conduct unholy fasts to destroy you, the fruit of the Spirit is clearly lacking,” she wrote on her blog in 2017. “Galatians 6 lists both the fruit of the Spirit and the works of the flesh. Witchcraft is among (the works of the flesh). But there is a higher level of witchcraft that some so-called Christians are tapping into and it’s dangerous.”

The Bible prescribes the death penalty for witchcraft in Exodus 22:18 and Leviticus 20:27. Even though Scripture instructs believers how to pray, worship, and fear the Lord, Love says no one can tell her how to worship.

“Stop thinking you can tell people how to worship. Stop thinking you can tell people how to connect with the divine. I could tell you how many people have told me, ‘You can’t be a Christian witch’ but here I am. See, you can’t tell me how to worship. You cannot tell me how to connect with the divine. That’s between me and God. You cannot tell me how to pray,” Love said in a Facebook post last year.

- <http://bit.ly/2KOimoj>

And I know that some do struggle with some false teachers, they don't want to move away from them because there is some truth in what they say. Hey, even the Devil speaks some truth, but it is mixed with enough lies to destroy you.

And the bottom line is this, false teachers are so dangerous because they can affect a person's eternity.

VERSES 3-4

Notice that Paul is not blaming God or even himself for those that reject Jesus.

First the Devil has blinded their eyes and secondly, people are responsible for rejecting the Lord, for not wanting to believe.

You see, they don't believe because they love the darkness, the sin, the things they are doing more than God and thus, they are condemned for it!

Today we have all these different sunblock's. In our house we have anywhere from SPF 6 to SPF 30!

The idea is these lotions are to block out the harmful rays of the sun, so we don't get skin cancer.

Now, in regard to our spiritual life, we can put things in our lives that block out the Son of God. You see, we have so much stuff that He can't touch our lives and transform us. Let Jesus shine on you and you will shine for Him!

William Macdonald summed it up like this for us, **“In our physical universe, the sun is always shining. We do not always see it, but the reason for that is that something has come between the sun and us. So it is with the gospel. The light of the gospel is always shining. God is always seeking to shine into the hearts of men. But Satan puts various barriers between unbelievers and God. It may be the cloud of pride, or of rebellion, or of self-righteousness, or any one of a hundred other things. But all of these serve effectively to hinder the light of the gospel from shining in. Satan simply does not want men to be saved.”**

VERSES 5-6

Today, if the preacher spends more time talking about himself than the Gospel of Jesus Christ, something is surely wrong. Pastor’s don’t save people, Jesus does!

And we not only see pastor’s promoting all that they have done, but we also see all kinds of programs in the church today, even 12-step programs and they miss the point, it is a one-step program – it is Jesus Christ!

Paul is going to tell us in II Corinthians 5:17, **“Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation; old things have passed away; behold, all things have become new.”**

Or as The Amplified Bible puts it, **“Therefore if any person is [ingrafted] in Christ (the Messiah) he is a new creation (a new creature altogether); the old [previous moral and spiritual condition] has passed away. Behold, the fresh and new has come!”**

The light of God has touched our lives and like being out in the sun affects our skin, so being in the Son of God affects our nature!

If you want to be more like Jesus, spend more time with Him!

VERSE 7

When a jeweler wants to display the beauty of a diamond, he places it on a black cloth.

Why does he do that? Because all the attention is drawn to the diamond and because of the blackness of the cloth, the diamond shines forth its brilliance!

Think about that for a minute.

God has taken this treasure, the Gospel of Jesus Christ, the light of God, this beautiful diamond you might say, and placed it in these bodies of flesh, kind of like the black cloth!

Why? Because I can't boast in how great I am and how lucky God is to have such a wonderful man as me, and neither can you – all the glory goes to God!

Make no mistake about it, as Christians we are all these “**earthen vessels**” in which God has placed the treasure of the Gospel of grace, this diamond and He has command us to go into all the world and share it with those in darkness!

Again, we don't get the glory, but God does. That is the point that Paul was making when he said in I Corinthians 1:26-29, “**For you see your calling, brethren, that not many wise according to the flesh, not many mighty, not many noble, are called. But God has chosen the foolish things of the world to put to shame the wise, and God has chosen the weak things of the world to put to shame the things which are mighty; and the base things of the world and the things which are despised God has chosen, and the things which are not, to bring to nothing the things that are, that no flesh should glory in His presence.**”

In Judges chapter 7 we read the story of Gideon battling the 135,000 Midianites. You remember the story, Gideon had 32,000 soldiers and the Lord told Gideon it was too many so whoever was fearful was to leave and 22,000 left!

Still too many and the Lord brought Gideon's army down to 300 men against 135,000 Midianites.

Why did He do that?

So when Israel was victorious they would not take the glory but give it to the Lord.

Now here is the battle plan for Gideon and his men, **“Then he divided the three hundred men into three companies, and he put a trumpet into every man's hand, with empty pitchers, and torches inside the pitchers. And he said to them, ‘Look at me and do likewise; watch, and when I come to the edge of the camp you shall do as I do: When I blow the trumpet, I and all who are with me, then you also blow the trumpets on every side of the whole camp, and say, “The sword of the LORD and of Gideon!”” So Gideon and the hundred men who were with him came to the outpost of the camp at the beginning of the middle watch, just as they had posted the watch; and they blew the trumpets and broke the pitchers that were in their hands.”** Judges 7:16-19.

And God gave Israel the victory but let me say this. The clay pots had to be broken before the light of the torches could shine and thus, Paul is now going to speak of brokenness, a brokenness that allows God to shine forth through us!

VERSES 8-12

Notice the contrasting points Paul is making here. Yes, he is being pressured, squeezed in but he is not crushed because the Lord is with him.

How could Paul feel that way? Yes, the Lord was with him, but I think it was because he took the time each day to strengthen the inner man. And because of that he was not crushed!

Make no mistake about it, Paul faced much persecution in his life for Christ, he suffered much but he knew the Lord would not leave him there, the Lord would see him through it because the Lord was with him. Yes, he was cast down, thrown down, stoned but God spared him, saved his life!

Not only did Paul build up the inner man, but he also saw that the sufferings of Christ, all He went through, and realized as the servant of the Lord he has and will continue to have to go through these things for a servant is not better than his master!

In Mark 10:45 Jesus said, **“For even the Son of Man did not come to be served, but to serve, and to give His life a ransom for many.”**

Also, in Philippians 3:10 Paul said, **“that I may know Him and the power of His resurrection, and the fellowship of His sufferings, being conformed to His death.”**

You see, for the light to shine the vessel must be broken.

For the fragrance of Jesus to be released, the vessel must be broken.

I like what Theodore Steinway said, that forty-thousand pounds of pressure are exerted on the two-hundred forty-five strings of a piano that create beautiful harmony.

For the music of Christ to come from our lives, pressure needs to be applied!

Listen again to what Paul said in II Corinthians 4:12, **“So then death is working in us, but life in you.”**

Why did Paul say that?

Because some Corinthian believers had no pressure on them, and they put Paul and the other Apostles down because they did.

Paul is saying the only reason they have life in Christ is because of the sufferings he has gone through for them. Not boasting but a reality!

VERSES 13-15

Paul could speak forth the Gospel message because Paul believed the Gospel message!

What a great principle for us to follow.

Morgan, very strongly, put it this way, “That is one great secret of power and success in the Christian ministry. If you do not believe, shut your mouth. That is a word for young ministers. If you do not believe, do not talk.”

I know that sounds harsh, but what are you going to give to people if you yourself don't believe?

Now, because Paul believed in resurrection life, he lived every day like it might be his last knowing that to be absent from the body, this tent, is to be present with the Lord!

You see, if you don't believe that, then all kinds of things will move you from the course that God has for you.

Listen to how The Living Bible translates II Corinthians 4:15. We are told, “**These sufferings of ours are for your benefit. And the more of you who are won to Christ, the more there are to thank him for his great kindness, and the more the Lord is glorified.**”

In a sense, Paul is telling us, “*This is my attitude in ministry - I believe that serving the Lord and proclaiming the gospel is the only life worth living. I even welcome persecution because it manifests the life and ministry of Jesus through my life. And even if I am killed for my faith, I know that He will raise me up along with all true believers and we will be presented to Him as His Bride forever.*”

Make no mistake about it, perspective is everything!

May we keep our eyes on Jesus as **“We are hard-pressed on every side, yet not crushed; we are perplexed, but not in despair; persecuted, but not forsaken; struck down, but not destroyed.”** II Corinthians 4:8-9.

And then speak forth what you believe so that others can come to Jesus and grow in Him! That is a healthy perspective knowing that man can't touch us apart from God allowing it. And, knowing that God is in control, even in death, we live!

VERSE 16

Here again we see that word, **“Therefore”** and we must ask ourselves, ***“What is this there for?”***

And his point is simple. In light of all these things, don't give up, don't lose heart, don't be afraid, don't be weary, tired, discouraged and-so-on.

Why?

Because these bodies are going back to the dust of the earth anyway, God is not building them up, but He is building up the inner man.

It is as Michelangelo said, “The more marble wasted, the more the statue grows.”

I don't know about you, but for me, I don't need any proof that the ***“outward man is perishing.”***

How do I know? Every morning when I get out of bed, I am reminded that the outward man, this physical body is perishing!

That is a fact, these bodies will not last forever. These physical bodies are growing old, they are wearing out. That is not the issue.

The issue that is of importance is the inward man and the inward man, the spiritual man needs to grow stronger. And the inner man will grow stronger as we walk with the Lord, as we stay in His Word, as we submit and surrender to the Spirit's power and control in my life!

And yet even though our physical bodies are growing old and are wearing out - the inward man is growing stronger and more mature the longer I walk with the Lord! At least is should be!

We tend to spend more time on the outward man that is perishing than the inner man that is eternal!

VERSES 17-18

Here it is – ***PERSPECTIVE!***

Now you may be thinking, ***“How in the world can Paul say, ‘light affliction,’ he has no clue what I am going through?”***

The reality is, you don't know what he went through.

In II Corinthians 11:23-33 we are told of all that Paul went through:

Stripes. Prisons. Beaten. Stoned. Shipwrecked. Perils of waters. Robbers. In perils of my Own countrymen. In perils of the Gentiles. In perils in the city. In perils in the wilderness. In perils in the sea. In perils among false brethren. In weariness and toil. In sleeplessness often. In hunger and thirst. In fastings often. In cold and nakedness.

That is a pretty good list! And yet, Paul said that they were **“light afflictions.”** How could he do that?

Perspective!

You see, they are light when compared with eternity.

Yes, you may suffer every day of your life but when compared with eternity, it amounts to nothing.

These afflictions can produce anger, bitterness, hardness or glory that will be eternal. You see, if we can sing with joy in our hearts when we are persecuted, who knows whom God will touch through it!

But how did Paul allow the Holy Spirit to renew his inner man day by day?

Paul speaks of two things that he did to build up the inner man!

First of all, in II Corinthians 4:17 we see that Paul reminded himself that every time he was persecuted, or he suffered hardship for Christ, it was adding to his heavenly reward! Good perspective!

The second thing, in II Corinthians 4:18, we see that Paul kept his eyes on the eternal things, on the Lord!

The Greek word for “**look**” is “scopeo” which means “*to examine or to concentrate on.*” We get the words “telescope” and “microscope” from this word.

Paul is saying that, “*The focus of our lives is not on that which is seen but those things which are not yet seen which are waiting for us in heaven.*”

What a great perspective to have and as you do these things you will be building up the inner man, you will be growing in the Lord!

May we not lose sight of the work that is before us, the things we will go through, the suffering that will come our way and keep in mind what Paul said in I Corinthians 15:58,

“Therefore, my beloved brethren, be steadfast, immovable, always abounding in the work of the Lord, knowing that your labor is not in vain in the Lord.”

II CORINTHIANS 5

VERSE 1

We have talked about this before, but we need to keep in mind that the Bible was not written with chapters and verses. Each book, like Isaiah, was one book or letter, it was not divided up.

Way back in the 1200's Stephen Langton, the Archbishop of Canterbury divided the Bible into chapters for us.

Then some 300 years later, in the 1500's, Robert Estienne, a Protestant convert, divided the chapters into verses for us.

According to his son he did this on horseback from Paris to Southern France.

Also, keep in mind that the chapter divisions and verse divisions are not inspired, but they are very helpful for us as we study the Bible.

The thing to keep in mind is when you complete a chapter you may not be finishing a thought as is the case here in II Corinthians chapter 5.

Remember, back in II Corinthians chapter 4 Paul was speaking of these bodies of flesh perishing or rotting thoroughly, these light afflictions in contrast to the exceeding eternal weight of glory.

And thus, don't focus on these bodies that you can see, they are not going to last, but on what God has in store for us, new bodies for our spirit and soul to dwell in.

Here in verse 1, Paul being a tent-maker by trade, speaks of these tents being dissolved and that God has made an eternal body for our spirit and soul to dwell in, not of this world - this is something we know.

Keep in mind that back in I Corinthians chapter 15 Paul spoke on resurrection life and now they should understand exactly what Paul is speaking of!

Of this Spurgeon said, “Many people are in a great fright about the future, yet here is Paul viewing the worst thing that could happen to him with such complacency that he likens it to nothing worse than the pulling down of [a] tent in which he was making shift to reside for a little season.”

Folks, we need to remember that these tents, these bodies are only temporary and thus, Jesus told His disciples and us, **“Let not your heart be troubled; you believe in God, believe also in Me. In My Father’s house are many mansions; if it were not so, I would have told you. I go to prepare a place for you. And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again and receive you to Myself; that where I am, there you may be also.”** John 14:1-3.

VERSES 2-4

Why do we groan in these bodies?

Christians groan because we see both the limitations of this body and superiority of the body to come. We are earnestly desiring our new bodies.

True, we groan because we feel the aches and pains as we get older. I truly understand this fact since I am getting older.

Thus, we groan, wanting to be clothed from above, receive these new bodies where the sin nature no longer affects us and they are eternal.

VERSES 5-8

What is God preparing us for?

Heaven!

Now as you talk to some Christians they feel that God is around to make them feel good, to have fun.

But that is not the case. I am not saying I don't enjoy my relationship with God, I do. But what I am saying is that is not what God is preparing us for, fun!

God is preparing us down here to fit in up there, in heaven and Paul tells us that God does this as **“We are hard-pressed on every side, yet not crushed; we are perplexed, but not in despair; persecuted, but not forsaken; struck down, but not destroyed - always carrying about in the body the dying of the Lord Jesus, that the life of Jesus also may be manifested in our body. For we who live are always delivered to death for Jesus' sake, that the life of Jesus also may be manifested in our mortal flesh. So then death is working in us, but life in you. And since we have the same spirit of faith, according to what is written, ‘I believed and therefore I spoke,’ we also believe and therefore speak, knowing that He who raised up the Lord Jesus will also raise us up with Jesus, and will present us with you. For all things are for your sakes, that grace, having spread through the many, may cause thanksgiving to abound to the glory of God.”** II Corinthians 4:8-15.

God is molding and shaping our lives and He uses various situations to accomplish that!

How do we know these things to be true?

Because God has given to us His Spirit as a **“guarantee”** of our entry into heaven.

The word that Paul uses for “**guarantee**” in the Greek is ARRHABON, (ar-hrab-ohn’) and it speaks of “part of the purchase money or property given in advance as security for the rest.”

In other words, the Holy Spirit is the down payment and it is the guarantee that God is going to receive us up into heaven and give us new bodies!

Interestingly enough, in the Modern Greek language this word means “engagement ring.” When I gave Julie her engagement ring it was a guarantee to her that I was going to marry her and several months later, on May 25, 1979 we got married.

Granted, at times these earthly guarantees fall apart, but I am not talking about an earthly guarantee here. God has made this guarantee to us and He is faithful to keep it – you can take that to the bank!

God has given to us His Holy Spirit as a type of engagement ring with the guarantee that one day He is coming back to receive His bride, the church, you and me!

Paul put it this way in Ephesians 1:13-14, “**In Him you also trusted, after you heard the word of truth, the gospel of your salvation; in whom also, having believed, you were sealed with the Holy Spirit of promise, who is the guarantee of our inheritance until the redemption of the purchased possession, to the praise of His glory.**”

We have this guarantee! Thus, we can be confident even in the difficult times we go through of this truth!

Now in these verses there are two important false doctrines that are blown out of the water.

The first is soul sleep, that is when you die you are placed in some kind of suspended animation until the resurrection. Paul clearly tells us that as soon as we are absent from these bodies, we are present with the Lord!

Secondly, the false doctrine of Purgatory. This is a place, they tell us, where believers go until they can be cleansed by suffering in Purgatory, and then they will get into heaven. Again, Paul spoke of being absent from the body and present with the Lord and we can't cleanse ourselves from sin, only Jesus can!

Of this Spurgeon tells us, "He did not expect to be roasted alive for the next thousand years, and then to leap from purgatory to Paradise; but he did expect to go, as soon as ever his earthly house was dissolved, into his eternal house which is in the heavens. He had not even the thought of lying in a state of unconsciousness till the resurrection."

Thus, get rid of those false doctrines that are not helpful, but they are hurtful. And what a glorious promise we have, when these bodies go to the dust of the earth, we will **ALWAYS** be with the Lord!

One last point before we move on and that is this statement by Paul, "**For we walk by faith, not by sight.**" II Corinthians 5:7.

What does that mean?

Think about this for a minute. We have never seen the Lord face-to-face, all we have is His Word and His promises to us and thus, it is by faith we walk.

Notice I didn't say leap, God wants us to just walk and trust in Him, as you did for your salvation!

Can you walk daily trusting in the Lord? He wants you to!

VERSES 9-10

Folks, you are never going to please everybody but make it your priority, make it your goal, strive to live a life that is pleasing to God because it has eternal consequences attached to it.

Our goal must be to please God!

And here is Paul's motivation, that one day he will have to appear, as we all will, before the Judgment Seat of Christ or the Bema Seat of Christ.

The Bema Seat was the place where you, as an athlete, would go to receive your rewards for the competition you were in.

It was also used of the judgment seats of Pilate (Matt. 27:19; John 19:13), Herod (Acts 12:21), and Festus (Acts 25:6, 10, 17).

There was also a bema at Corinth, where unbelieving Jews unsuccessfully accused Paul before the Roman proconsul Gallio (Acts 18:12, 16, 17).

For the Christian, it is the place we will go to receive our rewards, our crowns for service in this life.

This is not a salvation issue but a reward for our faithful service, and God is going to be looking at the motivation of our hearts.

It is as Harris put it, "Appearance before Christ's tribunal is the privilege of Christians. It is concerned with the assessment of works and, indirectly, of character, not with the determination of destiny; with reward, not status."

In Hebrews 10:31 Paul tells us that it is a terrifying thing to fall into the hands of the living God! Why is that? Look at what Paul now says in II Corinthians 5:11.

VERSE 11

Paul's point is this, *“Since we have been saved from the terror of the Lord, the condemnation of God because of rejecting Jesus Christ, we persuade, try to convince others of coming into this relationship with Jesus so they too can be saved from the terror, the exceeding fear of the Lord.”*

Jesus put it this way in Matthew 10:28, **“And do not fear those who kill the body but cannot kill the soul. But rather fear Him who is able to destroy both soul and body in hell.”**

Folks that should be the passion of every believer, to persuade men to come to Jesus!

Now Paul doesn't have to persuade God regarding his love for Jesus, God knew, and He knows our hearts. But for some reason the Corinthian believers refused to see this in Paul, and it did frustrate him.

VERSE 12

What Paul is basically saying here is this, *“I've already reminded you of the purity and sincerity of our ministry when we were among you, so I don't have to speak in our defense again. But I mention it again so that those of you who love and defend us against all the false accusations being directed toward us by some in Corinth might be able to answer these attacks and boast on our behalf.”*

Now the Corinthians boasted in their appearance and thus they looked down upon this little man with a big, crooked nose, Paul, for all his trials and things he went through.

Keep in mind what the Lord said to Samuel in I Samuel 16:7, “... **‘Do not look at his appearance or at his physical stature, because I have refused him. For the LORD does not see as man sees; for man looks at the outward appearance, but the LORD looks at the heart.’**”

God is not looking for those that are tall, dark and handsome, He is looking at our hearts. Men, on the other hand, look at the appearance and how often are they fooled!

VERSES 13-15

As we have seen, many of the Corinthian believers did not love Paul, in fact, they came against him.

And as the Corinthians saw all the trials and tribulations that Paul was going through, they thought he was crazy, that he was mad to be content living that kind of life when the Corinthians had no problems, at least at this point.

But Paul wants them to understand that he is living his life to please the Lord and has learned how to be satisfied in whatever state, whatever condition he is in.

He knew what his Lord went through, and he was going to do no less to see the Gospel message go forward!

Warren Wiersbe, who pastored Moody Church in Chicago for a while, the same church that D. L. Moody founded, said this,

“When Dwight Moody was ministering at his large Sunday School and church in Chicago, people often called him ‘Crazy Moody.’ In the eyes of the unsaved world, Moody was ‘crazy’ to have given up a successful business career to become a Sunday School worker and evangelist; but time has proved his decision to be a wise one. Today, we don’t know the names of the people who laughed at him, but we do know - and honor - the name of D. L. Moody.”

I hate to even go here, but it is a sad state of affairs. Did you know that the average pastor stays in the pulpit less than 3 years!

I think that is true for many who are involved in any ministry as well.

Why is that?

Because their motivation for service is wrong. That may seem harsh but why did Paul stay in ministry, enduring all those hardships?

For one simple reason, the love of Christ compelled him; it constrained him to keep on going.

You see, it was not for the attention, it was not for this person or that person he was doing it, it was the love of God that had shown in his heart and instead of just being a container to hold God’s love, he was a channel for God’s love to flow through and that should be the motivation of our hearts to serve, the love of Christ compels us!

Remember, there is only one life and it will pass and only those things we do for Christ will last!

Now, here in II Corinthians 5:15, Paul says that Christ **“died for all.”** And in this he is speaking of those who are believers and for unbelievers!

In I John 2:2 we are told, “**And He Himself is the propitiation for our sins, and not for ours only but also for the whole world.**”

And in John 3:16 Jesus said, “**For God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son, that whoever believes in Him should not perish but have everlasting life.**”

So, yes, Jesus died for the sins of the world but notice what Paul also says here as we read on in II Corinthians, “**then all died**” and that can only be speaking of believers.

Paul, in Romans 6:5-7 tells us, “**For if we have been united together in the likeness of His death, certainly we also shall be in the likeness of His resurrection, knowing this, that our old man was crucified with Him, that the body of sin might be done away with, that we should no longer be slaves of sin. For he who has died has been freed from sin.**”

Thus, being a new creation in Christ we serve the Lord as we serve others. Now, one last point before we move on. Jesus did die for the sins of the world as I have said, He died for all of us, He paid for all of our sins, and the Scriptures tell us that. The problem is that not all will receive that free gift into their lives, it is their choice, free will, and if they reject Christ they will die in their sins even though Jesus made the propitiation for their sins!

VERSE 16

Paul is saying here, “*We are no respecter of persons. We don’t care about outward beauty, human achievements, worldly wisdom or any other outward characteristics - all we care about is the spirit of man because that alone is eternal.*”

Also, from this it would seem that Paul heard Jesus teach before He was crucified and before Paul was saved, and also after the death and resurrection of Jesus on the road to Damascus.

When did he hear Jesus before he was saved? Keep in mind that as part of the Sanhedrin, the Jewish religious body, he would have listened to this so-called trouble maker and it just ate at his heart because he believed Jesus was going against everything he was ever taught when in reality, Jesus was the fulfillment of what the Scriptures said, what he was taught!

But for us, Jesus said, **“Nevertheless I tell you the truth. It is to your advantage that I go away; for if I do not go away, the Helper will not come to you; but if I depart, I will send Him to you.”** John 16:7.

We have not seen Jesus face-to-face, heard Him teach, but it is to our advantage in a way because now we have the Holy Spirit in us, teaching us!

VERSE 17

What is the key to this promise?

Being **IN** Christ – you must be saved!

Paul is speaking of the new life and what God is doing and has done! Don’t live in the past, you are brand new in Christ and thus, live accordingly.

It is as Clarke said, “The man is not only mended, but he is new made . . . there is a new creation, which God himself owns as his workmanship, and which he can look on and pronounce very good.”

One author put it well when he wrote, ***“God plants new desires, loves, inclinations, and truths in the redeemed, so that they live in the midst of the old creation with a new creation perspective (cf. Gal. 6:14). That perspective, as it is nourished and developed, helps believers gain victory in the battle against sin and conforms them to the image of Jesus Christ.”***

May we not forget that! God sees the finished product; we are perfect in a positional sense.

And in a practical sense, God is still working, just don't live in the past and what you have done, but in the present and what God has done and is doing in your life!

VERSES 18-19

The Bible tells us that sin has separated us from God and God became flesh, dwelt among us, and He paid in full the penalty for our sins so that enormous gap between God and man could be bridged, we could be reconciled back to God.

Peter put it this way in I Peter 3:18, **“For Christ also suffered once for sins, the just for the unjust, that He might bring us to God, being put to death in the flesh but made alive by the Spirit.”**

Jesus has reconciled us back to the Father and now, as we come to Christ, we have that ministry of reconciliation. Not that we can save anyone, but we can tell people of Jesus, the One who can and has reconciled man to God!

J. Vernon McGee put it like this, ***“The ministry of reconciliation is actually God’s call to lost men everywhere to come to Him with all their sins, all their burdens, all their problems, all their difficulties, and to be reconciled to God.”***

That is what the Great Commission is all about, bringing the Gospel message to the lost world and then making disciples of those who come to Christ, teaching them the things of God from the Word of God!

VERSE 20

Because all that Christ has done for us, reconciling us back to God, we, as His ambassadors need to bring that message of reconciliation to the world.

Keep in mind that an ambassador doesn't speak for himself but for the one who sent him, and for us it is the King of Kings and Lord of Lords, Jesus Christ!

Thus, as we go out, we implore people; we come alongside people urging them to receive Jesus Christ as their Lord and Savior, to not allow the terror of the Lord to come upon them, the wrath of God for their rejection of Jesus!

VERSE 21

What more can you say? God who was sinless became sin for us. The sins of the world were placed on Him so that we could obtain the righteousness of God by faith in Christ. God became sin so we could become sinless and tragically, many reject this free gift of God, eternal life by grace through faith in Jesus!

Now let me be clear on this. Jesus did not become a sinner on the cross for us, but He paid in full the penalty for our sins, He endured the wrath of God upon His own life that was for us so that we could be spared that judgment and live with God eternally! Our sins were placed upon Him!

Thus, our sins are not counted against us and thus, we should share with others the love that God has shown us!

It truly is an amazing grace; it truly is a sweet sound in our ears because we know that God loved us so much that He saved a wretch like you and me! Praise the Lord for that!

This is the whole truth of justification stated simply: Our sins were on Jesus, and His righteousness is on us. And, “As Christ was not made sin by any sin inherent in him, so neither are we made righteous by any righteousness inherent in us, but by the righteousness of Christ imputed to us.” (Poole)

Let me leave you this evening with these words from Paul in Romans 6:23 where he said, **“For the wages of sin is death, but the [free] gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord.”** Amen to that!