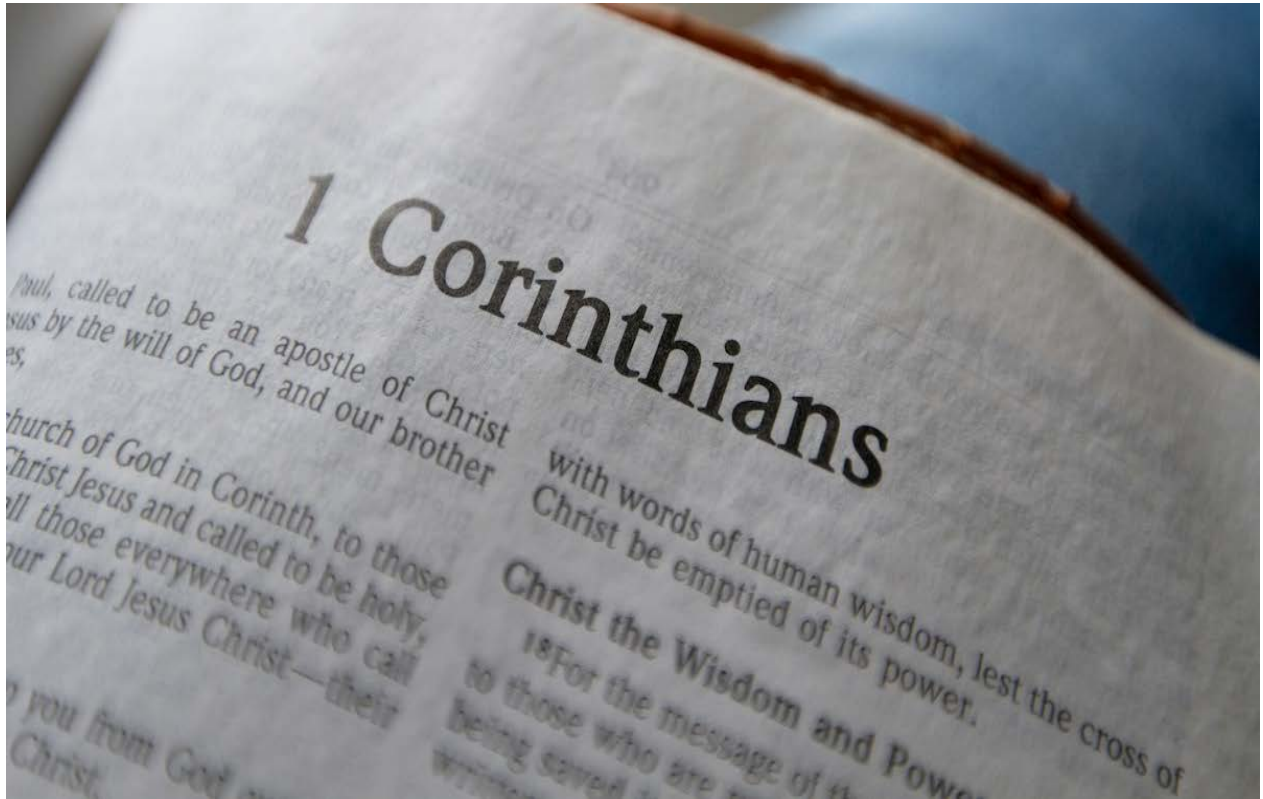


Grace Spreaders

2 Corinthians 4
1 and 2 Corinthians Part 21



T. M. AND SUSIE MOORE

A Scriptorium Study from The Fellowship of Ailbe

Grace Spreaders!: 2 Corinthians 4
1 and 2 Corinthians Part 21
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Introduction to *2 Corinthians 4*

We have come to faith in Jesus and the veil that separates us from the glory of God has been torn asunder; now we have free and abundant admission into the radiant Presence and before the glory-filled face of Jesus. Living on the other side of the veil is transforming (2 Cor. 3.12-18). It's also a little disconcerting, that is, for those who have not yet come through the veil.

Our calling is to show the world what life within the veil is like. The warmth of Jesus' love, the radiance and brilliance of His truth, the fellowship of loving brethren, the loving transformations His glory achieves. We live within the veil to help those whose faces are still veiled learn the truth that is in Jesus.

If you find these studies, or any of our other resources, helpful, we hope you will consider making a contribution to help support our work. You can do so by using the donate button at the website or by sending your gift to The Fellowship of Ailbe, 103 Reynolds Lane, West Grove, PA 19390.

We hope you find this study instructive and helpful to equip you for your walk with and work for the Lord. Thank you for joining us.

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1 Don't Lose Heart

Pray Psalm 40.1-3.

I waited patiently for the LORD;
And He inclined to me,
And heard my cry.
He also brought me up out of a horrible pit,
Out of the miry clay,
And set my feet upon a rock,
And established my steps.
He has put a new song in my mouth—
Praise to our God;
Many will see *it* and fear,
And will trust in the LORD.

Sing Psalm 40.1-3.

(Dix: *For the Beauty of the Earth*)

I waited patiently for God; He inclined and heard my cry,
lifted me up above the sod, set me on a Rock on high!
New songs in my mouth He gave; may He through me many save.

Read and meditate on 2 Corinthians 4.1-4.

Preparation

1. How did Paul commend himself to the consciences of others?
2. Why are some people's minds blind to the Gospel?

Meditation

Ministering the grace of the Lord throughout your Personal Mission Field can be frustrating. You want people to know the Lord and to rejoice in Him, but it seems your opportunities for witness-bearing or encouraging a fellow believer are few and far between. And when you do step up to the plate, you often feel like you've struck out.

Don't lose heart! Yes, as Paul admitted, doing the Lord's work is difficult. We have received a ministry just as Paul did (v. 1), so we should expect nothing less than what he knew. Follow his example of forthrightness, purity, truth, and God-honoring living (vv. 1, 2), all the while knowing that some people will never get it. The veil that smothers their hearts and the lies that blind their eyes are just too dense (v. 3). At least, for now.

Why? Because "the god of this age" (v. 4) has powerful hold on people, even on some believers. This is not a reference to the devil. Jesus indicated that he has already been dethroned and bound (cf. Jn. 12.32; Matt. 12.22-29). A better way of translating this phrase, which lines up well with Paul's teaching in Romans 1.18-32, is "the god which consists of this age". It's not that the lost people of this world don't have their own gods. They do, and largely these consist of the stuff of this material world. The more they seek and cling to these things, the blinder they become to the truth that is in Jesus.

But we do not lose heart (v. 1), because we know the truth is power, the Spirit is lively, and the lies of this wrong-believing age can never satisfy the deep need of people's souls. Only Jesus can do that, and when it pleases Him to show His glory, He will do so. And He may even do so through us.

Treasures Old and New: Matthew 13.52; Psalm 119.162

Jesus' ministry encompassed many towns and lots of people. He and His disciples spread abroad His message of the Kingdom and of new life through repentance and forgiveness. Jesus was perfect. He loved people perfectly. He was a man of integrity, kindness, and a perfect follower of the Law of God. He did all things well. Surely all who heard Him would not have hearts that were veiled. He was not only the perfect Deliverer of the truth, He was the Truth; and yet, not all who heard Him believed in Him.

Joseph of Arimathea and Nicodemus are two examples that come to mind. We read in John's gospel: "After this, Joseph of Arimathea, being a disciple of Jesus, but secretly, for fear of the Jews..." and "Nicodemus, who at first came to Jesus by night (Jn. 3.1, 2), also came..." (Jn. 19.38, 39). These two secretive and fearful men, where belief in the Gospel was concerned, both presented themselves before the man who had just sentenced Jesus to death, and asked for His body, to give Him a proper burial.

The Holy Spirit "is lively" and suddenly removed the veil "that smothered their hearts and blinded their eyes"; and they became courageous and bold and were willing to lose everything, all their earthly gods, for Jesus Christ, the Son of God. Because finally they realized, like Peter did, they had no one else to go to: "You have the words of eternal life. Also we have come to believe and know that You are the Christ, the Son of the living God" (Jn. 6.68, 69). And that made all the difference!

Jesus did not lose heart in His ministry, nor did Paul, nor should we: "For consider Him who endured such hostility from sinners against Himself, lest you become weary and discouraged in your souls" (Heb. 12.3).

They prevailed because they fully believed the promises of God: "Be strong and of good courage, do not fear nor be afraid of them; for the LORD your God, He is the One who goes with you. He will not leave you nor forsake you" (Deut. 31.6).

And about the people we dearly love—longing daily for them to believe this Good News—the Holy Spirit will act, in His time, and powerful way, to shine "the light of the gospel of the glory of Christ, who is the image of God" into their once-veiled hearts to liberate them into the Truth.

Joseph and Nicodemus finally came around.

So keep praying, keep sharing, and don't ever lose heart!

For reflection

1. What could cause you to "lose heart" in your walk with and work for the Lord?
2. What should you do when you feel like you're losing heart?
3. Whom will you encourage today not to lose heart in our work for the Lord?

The best of men would faint, if they did not receive mercy from God. And that mercy which has helped us out, and helped us on, hitherto, we may rely upon to help us even to the end. Matthew Henry (1662-1714), *Commentary on 2 Corinthians 4.1-7*

Pray Psalm 40.9-13.

Pray for an opportunity to encourage a fellow believer and to share the Good News of Jesus with a friend. Ask God for mercy and grace to meet all your needs today.

Sing Psalm 40.9-13.

(Dix: *For the Beauty of the Earth*)

LORD, Your truth will I proclaim to Your people gathered 'round,

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nor will I my lips restrain—let Your precious ways resound!
Of Your saving grace and Word I would speak, most loving LORD.

Keep Your mercy not from me; let Your love and truth prevail.
Evil and iniquity make my trembling heart to fail.
LORD, be pleased to rescue me! Let my shelter with You be.

2 The Goal of Ministry

Pray Psalm 71.14-16.

But I will hope continually,
And will praise You yet more and more.
My mouth shall tell of Your righteousness
And Your salvation all the day,
For I do not know their limits.
I will go in the strength of the Lord GOD;
I will make mention of Your righteousness, of Yours only.

Sing Psalm 71.14-16, 3.

(Solid Rock: *My Hope Is Built on Nothing Less*)

But as for me my voice I raise to sing in hope and constant praise!
With saving grace my voice will swell Your never-ending grace to tell.

Refrain v. 3

A Rock of habitation be; command Your Word to rescue me;
my Rock and Fortress ever be!

Read 2 Corinthians 4.1-6; meditate on verses 5, 6.

Preparation

1. Whom did Paul preach?
2. To what end did he preach and minister?

Meditation

Paul summarizes his calling and ministry in these two verses. He acknowledges that God commanded His light to shine on him, to lift him out of the darkness of sin and wrong belief into the glorious light of Christ and His Kingdom (v. 6). This is where every believer's ministry begins—called by God, saved by Jesus, indwelt and enlightened by the Holy Spirit, and sent by God as a servant to the world.

So our message is not ourselves (v. 5) but Jesus. We are His bondservants for the people to whom He sends us each day, that we might bear witness to Christ in all our words and deeds.

As we come to God's Word day by day, He gives us light to know Jesus better and to experience the glory that radiates from His face (v. 6). As God works in us, so we work as a servant to others, by our words and deeds seeking to lead them into the glory of the Lord. Our goal is not to attach anyone to ourselves but to Jesus. God will shine His light in all who hear and believe the Good News. Then He begins the work of drawing them ever more deeply into the knowledge of the Lord, that they may see His glory and live for His glory in every aspect of their lives.

The goal of all ministry is to connect people with Jesus. When they see Him in His beauty, majesty, goodness, might, and truth, they will be drawn to Him and transformed into His image. And God is pleased to give us a role in this exciting work.

Treasures Old and New: Matthew 13.52; Psalm 119.162.

"I am Your servant; give me understanding, that I may know Your testimonies" (Ps. 119.125).

We are "bondservants for Jesus' sake" (2 Cor. 4.5) to share His love and glory.

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And as His Kingdom workers, we rejoice to serve the King of kings and Lord of lords. Our God is an awesome God!

“For it is the God who commanded light to shine out of darkness, who has shone in our hearts to give the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ” (2 Cor. 4.6).

Light to shine out of darkness.
Light to disperse darkness.
Light to overcome darkness.
Light to change heart darkness.

“In Him was life, and the life was the light of men. And the light shines in the darkness, and the darkness did not overcome it” (Jn. 1.4, 5).

As His people, His servants, we share His truth, walk in His light, and rejoice to know Him.
“Blessed are the people who know the joyful sound!
They walk, O LORD, in the light of Your countenance.
“In Your Name they rejoice all day long...” (Ps. 89.15, 16).

We, as His servants, have been tasked to carry this joyful sound and light to others. For truly, “The goal of all ministry is to connect people with Jesus. When they see Him in His beauty, majesty, goodness, might, and truth, they will be drawn to Him and transformed into His image.”

“My mouth shall tell of Your righteousness and Your salvation all the day...” (Ps. 71.15).

For reflection

1. Whom will you seek to connect with Jesus today? How will you do that?
2. How do you connect with Jesus? How can you be more consistent in connecting with Him?
3. How does knowing your Personal Mission Field help you fulfill your calling as a servant?

I am a servant. I am but a minister of those who receive the gospel, transacting everything for Another, and for his glory doing what I do. John Chrysostom (344-407), *Homilies on the Epistles of Paul to the Corinthians 8.3*

Pray Psalm 71.17-24.

Pray that God will give you opportunities to minister His Word today. Praise and thank Him in advance for the grace you need to serve Him faithfully.

Sing Psalm 71.17-24.

(Solid Rock: *My Hope Is Built on Nothing Less*)

O LORD, I praise Your righteousness Who me from youth have taught and blessed.
Forsake me not when I am old, ‘til I Your mercies all have told!

Refrain v. 3

A Rock of habitation be; command Your Word to rescue me;
my Rock and Fortress ever be!

Your righteous deeds are great and true. O God, there is no one like You!

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Though many troubles I have seen, You will revive my soul again!

Refrain

Increase my greatness, comfort me, and unto You shall praises be.

Your truth I will exalt full well, O Holy One of Israel!

Refrain

My lips with joy and praises ring; to You, Redeemer, praise I bring!

I praise Your goodness all day long; LORD, humble all who do me wrong.

Refrain

3 Excellence and Power

Pray Psalm 8.1, 2.

O LORD, our Lord,
How excellent is Your name in all the earth,
Who have set Your glory above the heavens!
Out of the mouth of babes and nursing infants
You have ordained strength,
Because of Your enemies,
That You may silence the enemy and the avenger.

Sing Psalm 8.1, 2.

(Aurelia: *The Church's One Foundation*)

O LORD our Lord how great is Your Name in all the earth!
The heav'ns display Your glory, and tell Your wondrous worth!
From babes and nursing infants, LORD, let Your strength increase,
'til all Your foes surrender, and all their boasting cease.

Read 2 Corinthians 4.1-10; meditate on verses 7-10.

Preparation

1. How does Paul describe us?
2. Why has God made us like this?

Meditation

Treasure in earthen vessels. We are those earthen vessels—frail, unreliable, earthy, and yet, invested with heavenly excellence and glory. God knows our weaknesses, but He is undeterred in His purpose to make us agents of His grace because He does not trust in our weaknesses but in His own power. And if you are in the Kingdom of God, the power of God is available to you always (v. 7; cf. 1 Cor. 4.20; Acts 1.8).

Paul lived a tough life, especially after he became a Christian and a preacher (vv. 8, 9). We also can expect all kinds of afflictions, trials, temptations, struggles, disappointments, setbacks, and opposition. That's what living in this world involves. And these can be worse when, because of our faith in Jesus, those who hate and deny Him decide to take aim at us.

But afflictions and other trials need not prevent us from knowing the power of God and the excellence of His work in and through us. Even as earthly vessels, we can show the excellence and glory of God to the world in everything we do and say (v. 7; cf. 1 Cor. 10.31). And whenever that happens, we can know that it was God at work within us, willing and doing of His good pleasure (Phil. 2.13), so that we boast only in Him and not in ourselves (1 Cor. 4.7; 2 Cor. 10.14-17).

Our trials and afflictions identify us with Jesus in His suffering. But just as new life and Kingdom rule followed our Lord's suffering on the cross, so greater measures of life and more excellent expressions of His rule in and through us can succeed or be expressed amid all the trials of living in a fallen world (v. 10).

The excellence and power of God await us day by day. We will find them along the path of obedience.

Treasures Old and New: Matthew 13.52; Psalm 119.162

Paul was teaching what it means to be a Christian. He was passing along to his learners then, and to us now,

what to expect in our new walk of faith. Paul would have lasted approximately one week on his now erstwhile preaching cable TV show. His was not a message of health, wealth, popularity, success, and fame; but one of truth. Hear the truth, stay the course.

Imagine one of the smarmier of our current TV sensations giving this word to his adoring audience: “Get on board, little children, for the ride of your life! You are going to be hard-pressed with difficulties galore. Yes, and you will be perplexed and confused about many things. And in addition to that, you, my friends, will be persecuted in body and mind. And here’s something to contemplate, you will be struck down. Boom. Knocked right off your feet. Yes, and finally this, the coup de grace, you will always be sporting death in your body to be an example of the dying of Jesus.”

“But, my friends, there is an upside, so be sure and send your gifts to the address you see on your screen. OK, here it is: you won’t be crushed, you won’t despair, you won’t be forsaken, you won’t be destroyed, and the life of Jesus will also be manifested in your dying body.”

Well, at least his sermon was taken from Scripture (2 Cor. 4.8-10).

In truth, though, the kindest and most honest thing to do, when presenting the Good News of Jesus Christ, is to share the whole Gospel. Jesus did— “And whoever does not bear his cross and come after Me cannot be My disciple. For which of you, intending to build a tower, does not sit down first and count the cost...” (Lk. 14.27, 28). Yes, count the cost.

And Paul preached the whole gospel: “Who shall separate us from the love of Christ? Shall tribulation, or distress, or persecution, or famine, or nakedness, or peril, or sword? As it is written: ‘For Your sake we are killed all day long; we are accounted as sheep for the slaughter.’ Yet in all these things we are more than conquerors through Him who loved us” (Rom. 8.35-37). Troubled but conquering.

We are earthen vessels screaming the fact that it is by grace that we have been saved through faith. There are not enough good works on the planet to earn such a gift. It is all the gift of God. We cannot boast (Eph. 2.8, 9). This marvelous gift of salvation has been bestowed freely upon us “that the power may be of God and not of us” (2 Cor. 4.7). Obviously, His power, never ours.

And amazingly, in all this unworthiness and death, we have been given the opportunity to let the life of Christ be manifested in us and through us. Let us go forth, embracing this truth, as bearers of the love of God.

*It's never too late not to waste your life.
Regret is neither vision, goal, nor plan,
so press on, stay the course, endure the strife.*

*There's no use waiting for some drum and fife
to rally you to action. Be a man!
It's never too late not to waste your life.*

*So everything you've tried so far is rife
with disappointment—still, believe you can!
And press on, stay the course, endure the strife.*

*Does this rebuke cut deep, like some dull knife
sheathed in your ego? Take that blade in hand—
it's never too late not to waste your life—*

and carve a new direction, slice by slice.

You can't go backwards, and you must not stand still: press on, stay the course, endure the strife.

Look up, draw strength from that great unseen band; run, run each day to gain the promised land.

It's never too late not to waste your life; so press on, stay the course, endure the strife.

(Taken from *Bricks and Rungs*, by T.M. Moore, 2017)

Stay the course. We may be earthen, but we're still useable vessels.

For reflection

1. Yes, it costs to follow Jesus. How do you expect to be afflicted in His service?
2. Who encourages you in your walk with and work for the Lord? Whom do you encourage?
3. Would you say that seeking the Kingdom of God and His righteousness is the *defining* priority of your life? Explain.

Believers may be forsaken of their friends, as well as persecuted by enemies; but their God will never leave them nor forsake them. There may be fears within, as well as fightings without; yet we are not destroyed. The apostle speaks of their sufferings as a counterpart of the sufferings of Christ, that people might see the power of Christ's resurrection, and of grace in and from the living Jesus. Matthew Henry (1662-1714), Commentary on 2 Corinthians 4.8-12

Pray Psalm 8.3-9.

Give praise and thanks to God for His excellent beauty and glory all around. Call on Him to equip you with excellence and power to serve Him well today.

Sing Psalm 8.3-9.

(Aurelia: *The Church's One Foundation*)

When I regard the heavens, the work of Your own hand,
the moon and stars which all in their courses You command,
then what am I, O Savior, that You take thought of me,
or I should know Your favor and thus delivered be?

Yet we in Your own image with glory have been crowned,
to worship and to serve You throughout creation 'round.
These works that sing Your glory in our poor hands are placed,
that we may rule before You to magnify Your grace.

Let every beast and creature, in sky or sea or field,
in our hands bring You glory as we Your favor wield.
Let all things sing Your praises, let all declare Your worth!
O LORD our Lord how great is Your Name in all the earth!

4 Dying to Live

Pray Psalm 27.11-13.

Teach me Your way, O LORD,
And lead me in a smooth path, because of my enemies.
Do not deliver me to the will of my adversaries;
For false witnesses have risen against me,
And such as breathe out violence.
I would have lost heart, unless I had believed
That I would see the goodness of the LORD
In the land of the living.

Sing Psalm 27.11-13.

(St. Denio: *Immortal, Invisible God Only Wise*)
LORD, teach us; LORD, lead us because of our foes!
Hear, LORD, when we plead for release from their woes.
Had we not believed all Your goodness to see,
our heart sorely grieved and in turmoil would be.

Read 2 Corinthians 4.1-12; meditate on verses 11, 12.

Preparation

1. Why are we as believers “always dying”?
2. What does our dying like this do for others”?

Meditation

Foremost in Paul’s mind in these verses are the various trials and afflictions he and other preachers and apostles had been made to suffer so that others could hear the Gospel, believe, and be saved. Paul did not resent this; rather, he accepted it as normal, as much a part of his ministry as it was of Jesus’. He was willing to continue suffering and identifying with Jesus in his various afflictions so long as it meant others could know true life in Him.

But Paul also speaks of a truth that applies to every follower of Jesus: We can’t know more of the life we have in Jesus unless we die to the life we knew before Him. Jesus called us to take up our cross day by day, to crucify the remaining elements of sin in our lives that we might be born anew daily in Him. He said that, like a seed that is buried in the ground, we must die to our hardness so that we will be open to the rivers of living water His Spirit brings, that we may truly live.

And He also taught that we must not love our lives in this world more than we love Jesus. And because we love Him supremely, we, like Paul and the others, can expect that in this world we will have tribulation. But He has overcome the world for us and He can overcome the trials and afflictions we must endure so that others might see and hear the true life of Jesus in us.

We only know the true life of Jesus by dying to the old life of self. And as we do, we can show the real life of Jesus to the people around us, who observe and experience us dying to live every day.

Treasures Old and New: Matthew 13.52; Psalm 119.162

We have been called out of death into life; yet our old sinful nature needs to be put down on a regular basis. It is rabid and must not be toyed with. Don’t pet or feed it for it will come back to bite you.

“Therefore I will judge you, O house of Israel, every one according to his ways,’ says the Lord GOD. ‘Repent, and turn from all your transgressions, so that iniquity will not be your ruin. Cast away from you all the transgressions which you have committed, and get yourselves a new heart and a new spirit. For why should you die, O house of Israel? For I have no pleasure in the death of one who dies,’ says the Lord GOD. ‘Therefore turn and live!’” (Ez. 18.30-32).

God has planned a better way for us. Yes, death is included; but death to sin and life for righteousness. Death to our old nature, and life abundant in the new (Jn. 10.10).

“We can’t know more of the life we have in Jesus unless we die to the life we knew before Him.”

“Most assuredly, I say to you, he who hears My word and believes in Him who sent Me has everlasting life, and shall not come into judgment, but has passed from death into life” (Jn. 5.24).

We who live are always delivered to death for Jesus’ sake, but only so that the life of Jesus may be manifested in our bodies—death working itself out into life (2 Cor. 4.11, 12). A metamorphosis of the soul.

Why, when offered the fresh life-giving breath of God and the cool wind of the Holy Spirit, would we ever put back on the suffocating and blinding veil that once smothered us?

Dying to live? Yes indeed.

“Thus says the LORD...Seek Me and live...” (Amos 5.4).

For reflection

1. How do you experience dying to your old sinful ways?
2. How do you experience growing in new life in Jesus?
3. Whom will you encourage today to die to self and live to Jesus?

Here is the best antidote to adversity — that as Christ's death is the gate of life, so we know that a blessed resurrection will be to us the termination of all miseries, inasmuch as Christ has associated us with himself on this condition, that we shall be partakers of his life, if in this world we submit to die with him. John Calvin (1509-1564), *Commentary on 2 Corinthians 4.11, 12*

Pray Psalm 27.1-10.

Pray that the Lord will help you die to yourself that His light may shine in you and through you for a richer and fuller life in Jesus.

Sing Psalm 27.1-10.

(St. Denio: *Immortal, Invisible God Only Wise*)

LORD, You are our Light and our Savior most dear!
You guard us with might; therefore, whom shall we fear?
Though evil surround us, our enemies fall;
no harm shall confound us when on You we call.

One thing we request but to dwell with You, LORD.
Your beauty to test and to think on Your Word.
In trouble You hide us secure in Your grace;
no foe may o’erride us: We sing of Your praise.

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Hear, LORD, when we cry and be gracious, we pray!
LORD, do not deny us Your favor this day!
Our help, our salvation, though others may fall,
preserve our good station when on You we call.

5 Grace Spreaders

Pray Psalm 96.1-4.

Oh, sing to the LORD a new song!
Sing to the LORD, all the earth.
Sing to the LORD, bless His name;
Proclaim the good news of His salvation from day to day.
Declare His glory among the nations,
His wonders among all peoples.
For the LORD *is* great and greatly to be praised;
He *is* to be feared above all gods.

Sing Psalm 96.1-4.

(Mit Freuden Zart: *All Praise to God Who Reigns Above*)

Sing to the LORD! O, bless His Name! All nations tell His glory!
Salvation's tidings loud proclaim; let earth rehearse His story!
For God is greatly to be praised; His throne above all gods is raised!
Fear Him and sing His glory!

Read 2 Corinthians 4.1-15; meditate on verses 13-15.

Preparation

1. To what does believing in Jesus lead, according to Paul?
2. How are thanks and praise to God increased?

Meditation

We are saved by the grace of God. Grace brings with it the gift of faith, of believing in Jesus (Eph. 2.8, 9), which is born into our soul by the Spirit of God as He comes to indwell us (v. 13). One of the fruits of faith is that we speak, testifying to the resurrection of Jesus and our resurrection in Him (v. 14).

Paul next offers important insights concerning the grace of God. First, grace comes to us from God through many sources, primarily His Word and Spirit (2 Cor. 3.12-18). But it also comes through “all things”. The world is charged with the grace of God, like static electricity, waiting to be enlivened by the touch. Because God is in and through all things, and His glory is in all His works, grace may come to us, warming us with His favor and empowering us for good works, at every moment and through anything.

Second, grace comes to us not merely to be known and enjoyed, but to be spread by word and deed. It overflows from us like rivers of living water to refresh and renew everything and everyone in our life (Jn. 7.37-39). We are grace spreaders, agents of God's grace to the world and especially to the people around us.

Third, grace is empowering, beginning by moving those who receive it to thanksgiving, then issuing in good works that spread the grace of God to others.

Finally, as grace accomplishes this work in us, it transforms us increasingly into the image of Jesus Christ, bringing glory to God and making us fitter vessels to receive more grace and spread it about in our world.

Treasures Old and New: Matthew 13.52; Psalm 119.162.

It started as a little dot on the abdomen of one, and then within a few days all four of our children were covered with chickenpox. It started small, and spread contagiously, rampantly, and completely.

Grace Spreaders: 2 Corinthians 4

What if grace spread that virulently? That quickly? Encompassing and covering everyone in our path?
And that grace, instead of pox, resulted in abundant and abounding thanksgiving to God?
And then that thanksgiving resulted in the spread of glory to God? (2 Cor. 4.15)
And we were all covered in, not painful sores, but thanksgiving, praise, and glory to God?
What if?

“Then the word of God spread, and the number of the disciples multiplied greatly in Jerusalem, and a great many of the priests were obedient to the faith” (Acts 6.7).

There are many things that are communicable and carry a bad connotation.

But what if our goal, as we are going, is to infect everyone around us with God’s glorious grace?

“The LORD our God, the LORD is one!
You shall love the LORD your God with all your heart,
with all your soul, and with all your strength.
And these words which I command you today shall be in your heart.
You shall teach them diligently to your children, |
and shall talk of them
when you sit in your house,
when you walk by the way,
when you lie down,
and when you rise up.
You shall bind them as a sign on your hand,
and they shall be as frontlets between your eyes.
You shall write them on the doorposts of your house
and on your gates” (Deut. 6.5-9).

As you are going, spread Him and His grace everywhere, all the time!
Ubiquitous grace, thanksgiving, and glory...covering the whole earth.

“For the earth will be filled with the knowledge of the glory of the LORD,
as the waters cover the sea” (Hab. 2.14).

Contagious Grace Spreaders.

For reflection

1. How have you seen the grace of God overflowing and spreading out from you?
2. To whom will you bring the refreshment of God’s grace today? How?
3. Whom will you encourage to be a grace-spreader today?

*This grace, he says, overflows. By this he means, that it was not confined to himself personally, so that he alone enjoys it, but it extends itself farther — namely, to the Corinthians, to whom it was of great advantage. John Calvin (1509-1564),
Commentary on 2 Corinthians 4.13-15*

Pray Psalm 96.5-13.

Commit your day to being a grace-spreader. Ask the Lord to fill you with His Spirit so that His grace overflows from you like rivers of living water (Jn. 7.37-39). Commit each specific activity of your day to Him as a vessel for His grace.

Sing Psalm 96.5-13.

(Mit Freuden Zart: *All Praise to God Who Reigns Above*)

All other gods are idols vain; the LORD created heaven.
Splendor and strength with Him obtain; to Him be glory given!
All fam'lies, praise this mighty LORD! Give strength and glory to His Word;
exalt the LORD of heaven!

Bring off'rings sweet to Him, our LORD, in holy garments praise Him!
Tremble before Him, all the earth; among the nations raise Him!
The earth is fixed, it will not move; the peoples will His justice prove.
Exalt the LORD and praise Him!

Let heaven sing with lusty voice; let earth and sea sing sweetly!
Let fields and trees in Him rejoice, for He is coming swiftly
to judge the world in righteousness, the peoples in His faithfulness.
He comes; exalt Him greatly!

6 Where to Look

Pray Psalm 17.15.

As for me, I will see Your face in righteousness;
I shall be satisfied when I awake in Your likeness.

Sing Psalm 17.15.

(Park Street: *All You That Fear Jehovab's Name*)

But as for me, LORD, save and bless! Let me behold Your righteousness.
Your face in glory I would see, and thus forever blessed be,
and thus forever blessed be.

Read 2 Corinthians 4.1-18; meditate on verses 16-18.

Prepare

1. What is happening to our outward person?
2. How can we be renewed in our inward person?

Meditation

Paul endured a great deal of hardship throughout his ministry. He was never without affliction. How was he able to bear up under these and persevere? He tells us: By not focusing on his circumstances and the afflictions that were always present with him, but by “looking” to unseen things, setting his mind on things above, where Christ is seated in heavenly places (Col. 3.1-3).

Paul regarded his various afflictions as portending an eternal weight of glory, and he strove to enter that glory by focusing the eye of his heart on the blessed vision of Christ exalted in glory (Eph. 1.15-23). I think we can assume at least three things concerning this matter of “looking” on unseen things.

First, we must gain some sense of what those unseen things are, what their role is in the divine economy, and how they relate to us. For this, we will need to search the Scriptures; but we may also learn about such mysteries from the works of those who have glimpsed them and recorded their observations and experience. The more familiar we become with the landscape of unseen things, the more sustaining power we will derive from our times of looking upon them.

Second, we will need to devote some time for this discipline of “looking”. As this landscape is wondrously varied and infinitely beautiful, this should be an aspect of our spiritual disciplines to which we regularly submit, perhaps through study, meditation, solitude, singing, and the like.

Finally, we must carry this vision of unseen things as the backdrop or framework within which we live and move and have our being—the spiritual “screen saver” for our souls. Let everything we see and do each day cue us to consider the glory of God and of the unseen realm (Prov. 25.2). Let us be ready to give thanks and praise for every glimmer or ray of the unseen realm that falls across our path—in the beauty of creation, the kindness of a friend, the genius of some aspect of culture, and the manifold everyday blessings of the Lord.

Let songs of glory be in our hearts and on our lips. Let us encourage one another with testimonies and reports from our “visits” within the unseen realm. And let us refer every situation or task to the throne of Christ, always making a conscious effort to live “under the heavens” and not merely “under the sun”.

We need renewal and restoration every day, and the renewing of our souls occurs according to the pattern and template of the landscape of unseen things.

Treasures Old and New: Matthew 13.52; Psalm 119.162.

We do not *lose* heart,

We *gain* determination.

Our outward person—our body—is *perishing*,

Our inward person—our spirit—is *renewed* daily.

Our momentary *light* affliction—troubles and sorrows—work for us

To usher in an eternal *weight* of glory—here and now and there and then.

This is exceedingly abundantly more than we could ever ask or think.

It is a gift of grace from the *eternal, permanent, unseen* God.

So we do not look or dwell on these *temporary* perishing things—the *seen*, but

We choose to look and dwell on those *permanent* things—the *unseen* eternal.

(2 Cor. 4.16-18)

“Though the fig tree may not blossom,

nor fruit be on the vines;

though the labor of the olive may fail,

and the fields yield no food;

though the flock may be cut off from the fold,

and there be no herd in the stalls—yet I will rejoice in the LORD,

I will joy in the God of my salvation” (Hab. 3.17, 18). Habakkuk did not lose heart.

“Though He slay me, yet will I trust Him” (Job 13.15). Job was determined to trust Him.

“For I am persuaded that neither death nor life, nor angels nor principalities nor powers,

nor things present nor things to come, nor height nor depth, nor any other created thing,

shall be able to separate us from the love of God which is in Christ Jesus our Lord” (Rom. 8.38, 39).

Paul did not dwell on the temporary, only the eternal.

“Now to Him who is able to do exceedingly abundantly above all that we ask or think,

according to the power that works in us, to Him be glory in the church by Christ Jesus

to all generations, forever and ever. Amen” (Eph. 3.20). We know the power and weight of His glory.

Look to the unseen—

unburdened of the weightless temporary we take on the magnitude of the eternal—

to experience the significance of His permanent, eternal, and one day, seen glory.

For reflection

1. How do you see yourself looking on the unseen things? What are you doing when you do?

2. How does looking on unseen things help us amid our various afflictions?

3. Whom will you encourage today to look on unseen things?

There are unseen things, as well as things that are seen. And there is this vast difference between them; unseen things are eternal, seen things but temporal, or temporary only. Let us then look off from the things which are seen; let us cease to seek for worldly advantages, or to fear present distresses. Let us give diligence to make our future happiness sure. Matthew Henry (1662-1714), Commentary on 2 Corinthians 4.13-18

Pray Psalm 17.4-9.

Meditate on Jesus, exalted in glory. Claim the promise that this same Jesus is with you always. Ask the Lord to help you be continually mindful of Jesus today.

Sing Psalm 17.4-9.

(Park Street: *All You That Fear Jehonab's Name*)

As for the deeds of sinful men, I will not walk those paths again.
My feet hold firm from first to last: Help me to walk Your righteous path,
help me to walk Your righteous path!

When I have called, You answered me, LORD; hear now my fervent, seeking word!
Let kindness flow by Your command. Keep and preserve me by Your Right Hand,
keep and preserve me by Your Right Hand.

Treasure me in Your holy eye; shelter me from a troubling sky.
Around me all my enemies eagerly would despoil me,
eagerly would despoil me.

7 Living Within the Veil

Pray Psalm 27.4-6.

One *thing* I have desired of the LORD,
That will I seek:
That I may dwell in the house of the LORD
All the days of my life,
To behold the beauty of the LORD,
And to inquire in His temple.
For in the time of trouble
He shall hide me in His pavilion;
In the secret place of His tabernacle
He shall hide me;
He shall set me high upon a rock.
And now my head shall be lifted up above my enemies all around me;
Therefore I will offer sacrifices of joy in His tabernacle;
I will sing, yes, I will sing praises to the LORD.

Sing Psalm 27.4-6.

(St. Denio: *Immortal, Invisible God Only Wise*)
One thing we request but to dwell with You, LORD.
Your beauty to test and to think on Your Word.
In trouble You hide us secure in Your grace;
no foe may o'erride us: We sing of Your praise.

Review 2 Corinthians 4.1-18; meditate on verses vv. 3-6.

Preparation

1. To whom is the Gospel veiled?
2. Where can we know the glory of God?

Meditation

When Moses came down from being with God on Mt. Sinai, he had to cover his face with a veil. For the glory of God was in him and shining through him with such radiant splendor that it struck fear into the hearts of those who saw it.

What must that have been like? I mean, for Moses? There on the glory side of the veil where all was warmth and brightness and power to affect others?

Well, we should know. Because now that we have come to faith in Jesus the veil that separates us from the glory of God has been torn asunder, and we have free and abundant admission into the radiant Presence and before the glory-filled face of Jesus. Living on the other side of the veil is transforming (2 Cor. 3.12-18). It's also a little disconcerting, that is, for those who have not yet come through the veil. Those who worship the god of this age and its fleeting pleasures do not know God's glory; they live for themselves, not for the glory of God. They choose to blind themselves, putting a veil of wrong belief over their faces, so they don't have to know the Lord in the ways He daily reveals Himself to them (Rom. 1.18-21).

But our calling is to show the world what life within the veil is like. The warmth of Jesus' love, the radiance and brilliance of His truth, the fellowship of loving brethren, the loving transformations His glory achieves.

We live within the veil to help those whose faces are still veiled learn the truth that is in Jesus. We are earthen vessels of grace to our world, and we live and pray for the grace of God to spread to all the people we know, that they may join us within the veil to gaze on unseen glories and give thanks and praise to God.

Treasures Old and New: Matthew 13.52; Psalm 119.162

We can learn something very important from Moses: he sought out God's Presence.

The glow that shone through him was not an accidental sprinkling of fairy dust courtesy of Tinker Bell. No, it was the radiating glory of God, Whom Moses sought out, shining through him. Moses' request was intentional and his desire sincere.

Moses said to God, "If I have found grace in Your sight, show me now Your way, that I may know You and that I may find grace in Your sight...please, show me Your glory" (Ex. 33.13, 18).

And we have been told by Jesus, "If you then being evil, know how to give good gifts to your children, how much more will your heavenly Father give the Holy Spirit to those who ask Him!" (Lk. 11.13)

We must ask Him: Show us Your glory. Give us the Holy Spirit. Radiate through us.

And He will do it.

"For it is the God who commanded

light to shine out of darkness,

who has shone in our hearts

to give the light

of the knowledge

of the glory of God

in the face of Jesus Christ...

Who is the image of God" (2 Cor. 4.6, 4).

"Unto the upright there arises light in the darkness..." (Ps. 112.4).

In "...earthen vessels...that the excellence of the power may be of God and not of us" (2 Cor. 4.7).

Until we are joined face to face with God in heaven, we are content to reflect His glory while here on earth; but we must be filled with His glory, His Holy Spirit, to "shine ever brighter unto the perfect day" (Prov. 4.18).

To live within the veil, we must do as Moses did, seeking God's way and His glory.

And then be prepared to glow, knowing that some will find it disconcerting; yet others will find comfort in "the warmth of Jesus' love, the radiance and brilliance of His truth, the fellowship of loving brethren, and the loving transformations His glory achieves."

For reflection

1. What has been your approach to seeking the glory of God?
2. In what ways have you known the glory of God? How has His glory shone in your life?
3. Whom will you encourage today to seek the face of Jesus and the glory of God to be known there?

Their hearts were humbled and softened to receive this impression, by the new-creating power of the Holy Spirit. He ascribes all the glory to God. And remember, as our whole dependence is upon the Lord, so the whole glory belongs to him alone. Matthew Henry (1662-1714), Commentary on 2 Corinthians 3.1-11

Pray Psalm 27.7-14.

Seek the radiant face of our Lord Jesus Christ and call on Him to help live in and for His glory today.

Sing Psalm 27.7-14.

(St. Denio: *Immortal, Invisible God Only Wise*)

Hear, LORD, when we cry and be gracious, we pray!

LORD, do not deny us Your favor this day!

Our help, our salvation, though others may fall,
preserve our good station when on You we call.

LORD, teach us; LORD, lead us because of our foes!

Hear, LORD, when we plead for release from their woes.

Had we not believed all Your goodness to see,
our heart sorely grieved and in turmoil would be.

Wait, wait on the LORD; persevere in His grace.

Hold fast to His Word; seek His radiant face.

Be strong, set your heart to abide in His Word;

His grace He imparts; therefore, wait on the LORD.

Grace Spreaders: 2 Corinthians 4

Questions for Reflection or Discussion

1. What does it mean to live “within the veil”?
2. What is “the god of this age” and what forms or expressions does this god take?
3. How can we overcome and grow through the trials and afflictions we must face as we live within the veil?
4. Jesus is the primary “unseen thing” on which we gaze with longing. What do you see as you set your mind to look on Him?
5. What’s the most important lesson you’ve learned from this part of our study of 1 and 2 Corinthians?

For prayer:

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