

Warning: The following content is an automated transcript and may not be correct.

Father, we thank you for this day that you've given us. We thank you for your goodness and your mercy and your blessings. Father, we thank you that we can be here today, that we can worship you and that we can hear your word. Father, we pray as we do so that you will conform us to your image, that you will help us to understand your word and your will. Father, I also pray for those not with us today who are sick and ill, and I pray, Lord, for their healing.

In Jesus name we pray. Amen. Good evening, everyone. And sorry for the issues of sound. I had a couple of buttons that were switched off from moving cables on the soundboard.

And before I begin, Shawnee, upstairs, can you turn the footage down just a little bit? Because I hear it and I'm getting feedback.

As we begin today, we're going to continue our study in the book of Second Corinthians and finish Corinthians. You know, as a whole, as we get through this, this just a reminder of where we were because it's critical to where we are today. We did chapters two and three together last time we met. And in chapters two and three, Paul was defending his ministry. He was defending the fact that, remember, he did not make it into Corinth like he had promised to do because of an issue.

And he was worried that some issues regarding himself with Corinth would lead to people questioning the gospel that he preached. So chapters two and three began to deal with that and to deal with the fact that the gospel itself remains the gospel itself, aside from Paul, is the gospel of Christ. So we're going to pick up, he's going to continue that. And remember, when we ended chapter three, he was comparing the New Testament, the new covenant of God to the old covenant of God and the glory of them, and even the difference from Moses to Christ. Therefore, in verse one of chapter four, we're going to go through seven.

So he begins this with therefore, right, because this is the conclusion to chapters two and three. He says, since we have this ministry because we were shown mercy, we do not give up. Instead, we have renounced secret and shameful things, not acting deceitfully or distorting the word of God, but commending ourselves before God to everyone's conscience by open display of the truth. But if our gospel is veiled, it is revealed to those who are perishing. In their case, the God of this age has blinded the minds of the unbelievers to keep them from seeing the light of the gospel of the glory of Christ who is the image of God.

For we are not proclaiming ourselves, but Jesus Christ as Lord and ourselves as your servants. For Jesus sake. For God who said life, for the God who said, let light shine out of darkness has shown in our hearts to give the light of the knowledge of God's glory in the face of Jesus Christ. Now we have this treasure in clay jars so that this extraordinary power may be from God, not from us. Okay, so he concludes his defense in chapters two and three.

And he says in verse one several things that are important. He says, since or because, right, we have this ministry because we were shown mercy, we do not give up. So a couple of things. He has a ministry, right? He's an apostolic minister.

He's like an evangelist. He goes from town to town, shares the gospel and establishes churches. But he tells us why he has this ministry. Because we were shown mercy. Now, specifically, Paul may be revealing to the mercy he himself was shown on the road to Damascus when he was blinded and literally came face to face with God in verse.

In verse 6, he talks about right, he says, he shone in our hearts to give light the knowledge of God's glory in the

face of Jesus Christ. Paul came face to face with him. But less specific to Paul, we can recognize something in ourselves as well. The ministry that we have are. The fact that I'm a pastor is due to the mercy of God that he has given me.

The fact that we have this church, this broadcast system, this anything that we have, not even related to ministry, but anything that we have is because we were shown mercy.

The important thing that Paul demonstrates to us, though, is to recognize the fact that we are shown mercy. So he says, since we have this ministry because we were shown mercy, we do not give up. So he expands upon this. The reason he does not give up. Why would he give up, right?

What could lead Paul to be so discouraged? And as we examine that, we come to several conclusions. The church in Corinth has severely harmed Paul. It has criticized him and ridiculed him. It has done horrific things such as incest.

Beyond that, he's been stoned. He's been snake bitten, he's been shipwrecked, he's been thrown off walls. He's been arrested and thrown in prison several times for the gospel. This is all something that would cause you to give up but he does not give up. And he says he does not give up because he was given mercy in this ministry.

If we allow life circumstances to dictate our will, we will give up. We need to allow God and His mercy and his grace to dictate. We also need to remember that Christ was persecuted, Christ was ridiculed. He of all people suffered and prophesied we would suffer like Him. It's not new and it's not a surprise.

Now he contrasts. So he says we do not give up. And in verse two he begins to contrast what they do instead of not giving up, but not only what they do instead of not giving up, but how they work in their ministry. He says, instead, we have renounced secret and shameful things, not acting deceitfully or distorting the word of God. So as we before I read the rest of this verse, we have not act deceitfully and done shameful things or distorted the word of God.

These three things go hand in hand and also have some of their separate doing shameful things. Paul is more than likely in this context referring to the fact that other so called ministers or so called pastors or so called evangelists, they did shameful and deceitful things to get you to listen to them or attend their church or give them money or power or even sex, drugs, right? They did shameful and deceitful things. And that is not unique to that time either. That is, we see that today there are many churches and I'm not going to call any denomination here because within every single denomination there are churches and pastors or bishops or whatnot, who they do secret and shameful, deceitful things to lure you into what they are preaching.

Paul says we have renounced those things and not distorted the word of God. We see distortion of the word of God all the time. People ignore it except for when it's convenient or don't apply it to them until a situation arrives. And then somehow they have that one single verse out of context that they can use to throw at you, right? Punch you with the word of God.

To say the air quotes is not the word of God, but like punching you with the word of God, right? They distort it into what they want it to be or mean or to manipulate you. And that is not how the word of God is meant to be. Paul said we renounce that and instead commend ourselves before God to everyone's conscience by open display of the truth. Paul was an extremely open guy.

He was the literal definition of what we call transparent. If Paul had an issue with someone, the issue was known. There's recordings in the book of Acts from Paul having issues. If Paul made a mistake, the mistake

was known. Paul walked in complete transparency in what he did and what he taught. This is the summary and the reason why we can trust what we have heard from Paul or today read from Paul.

This is also a way we can gauge today's leaders and so called leaders is by whether or not they have renounced secret and shameful things, whether or not they distort the word of God and deceive you, or do they walk in open display of truth. Now, Paul says in verse three, he switches gears here. He walks in openness, right? Open display of truth. He does not hide the truth from anyone.

He loudly and boldly proclaims it. But he says this. If our gospel is veiled, it is veiled to those who are perishing. For the God of this age has blinded the minds of the unbelievers to keep them from seeing the light of the gospel of the glory of Christ, who is the image of God.

There's practical examples all around us. It's everywhere within our politics, within our education system, within our religions, within households, right? You can see it. There are people who outright either deny or are blinded to truth. I'm not even just talking the gospel, right?

Religion. Within every aspect of life, there are people who seem to live in their own world, depending on what the aspect is. And they outright deny truth, only live in what they have created in their head.

The fact that God exists is a truth that cannot be denied. The evidence. Romans 1 tells us about this evidence. There is visible evidence of God. The truth can't be denied.

There is evidence of the truth of the gospel, that Jesus lived and died. Those are historical facts that cannot be disputed. And no historian, whether atheist or Christian or Buddhist or whatever, no historian denies the truth that he lived and died, but it's also a truth and there's evidence that he rose from the grave. But there are people who will deny the truth, right? There are people who, no matter what you tell them, you can tell them exactly what they want to hear and then they'll ignore it because it came from you, right?

They, no matter what you do, they're blinded. So Paul says this. If somebody cannot grasp the truth, if they cannot receive it, if no matter what evidence you give them, their mind is made up that what you're saying is a lie, it is because they have been blinded by the God of this age. So first, it's not Your fault. Don't think, oh, what am I doing wrong?

I've shared the gospel 20 times this week and nobody's listened to me. No one's accepted Christ or is my method or what I'm sharing. You can even begin to doubt if what you're sharing is true. And don't do that. That because Paul says they've been blinded.

There's nothing you can do to show them the light. You can walk an open display of truth. But if it's veiled, it's veiled because they will not believe. Right now, the God of this age is Satan, right? Not that Satan's a God.

In fact, you'll notice in your Bible the word God of this age is lowercase. Because Paul is not calling Satan a God in the sense of being all powerful and all capable and all knowing and everywhere at once. But he is calling him a God in the sense of he does have power. He does have the ability to manipulate things. He has a lot of power.

It's referring to Satan. Now, it says that Christ is the image of God. We read in other scripture that Christ is the exact image of God, that he resembles and exemplifies everything that is the Father. And then Paul says the most important thing, I think in this passage right here. He says, we are not proclaiming ourselves, but Jesus Christ is the one.

They are not going around asking people, follow me, do what I do. Give me your money, give me your

attention. They're not putting themselves on a pedestal. And Paul absolutely refuses to allow others to put him on a pedestal. That's important.

We can see in many of his letters, in his actions, in the Book of Acts, the way he proclaims. We saw in First Corinthians, maybe we didn't. Maybe it's in second where he boldly proclaims he is proud that no one can say, I was baptized by Paul. He refuses to allow himself, whether by his own actions or others actions, to be placed on a pedestal. Contrast that to leaders we know today, or so called leaders.

Joel Osteen. I hate calling names out, but he's an obvious easy one. Joel Osteen places himself on a pedestal.

He does so of his own will, but he also allows others to lift him up. And there's a problem with that. Not just the pride, but what happens when you as a leader get. Get lifted up. Whether you do it yourself or allow others is you can fall, you can fall.

If you are not lifted up, you cannot fall off.

There's a tendency when you get lifted up that you people begin to distrust you when you mess up other people who do the same thing. Right? We you see this tendency. I am going to call out the LDS Church on this and I am going to clarify. I don't think that their president or past presidents necessarily lift themselves on pedestals.

From what I've seen in my time within that church and even out, they are typically humble. But while they're humble, you can see the way they allow the worldwide LDS Church to lift them up onto a pedestal.

If so, I'm going to say this plainly. If the people in my congregation are lifting me onto a pedestal, the focus is in the wrong place.

That is the big issue. The focus is in the wrong place. If I'm being lifted up, I am preaching myself to you or I'm doing things to allow you to focus on me. The telling issue or the telling sign on whether or not you can listen to what someone is saying here is who do they proclaim? Paul says, I proclaim not myself, but Jesus Christ as Lord.

Everything that Paul says, he always turns to Christ. Whether it's rebuke and correction, he turns it to Christ. Whether it's life and death, he turns it to Christ, salvation and damnation, he points to Christ. Paul consistently points to Christ in every matter and particularly even in his suffering. We'll see that in a minute.

It and then he said this, that the God who said let light shine out of darkness, he's referring to Genesis chapter one, the very first creative action that God did, he said let there be light and there was light. He says that God who said that has also shown in our hearts to give the light of the knowledge of God's glory in the face of Jesus Christ. He personally shines into our hearts. He's the one who has to turn that light on. And when he does that, you come to a personal knowledge of Jesus Christ.

And this is where atheists get confused. They think, hey, you believe in something you've never seen, you can't, you can't prove just because a book or your parents tell you so. But the reality is you come to a very personal knowledge. You don't just know God as well. The Bible says he created the heaven and the earth and he died for me and Rose.

And I believe that because it's written or. But you come to a personal knowledge, you have a relationship with him, you talk to him, he talks to you. Maybe not verbally, right? But there's that there is a two way relationship and you come to know him as a person not as words on the page. And he says that we have this treasure in clay jars so that this power may be from God and not from us.

Now, the clay jars he's referring to, this is in context of light. In ancient times, even 2,000 years ago, lanterns were often made in clay jars with oil and a wick. But the thing about these clay jars is they were fragile. If you dropped them, they could break. He is comparing clay jars to our body.

He says, we have this treasure. This treasure is the light of Christ, the knowledge of him and the Spirit living inside of us. Inside of clay jars, we are the clay jars. We are fragile, we are broken, we are clay. But the reason for that is so that it can be evident that this power is from God and not from us.

Let's read the last of this chapter, starting in verse eight. He says, we are afflicted in every way, but not crushed. We are perplexed, but not despair. We are persecuted, but not abandoned. We are struck down, but not destroyed.

We always carry the death of Jesus in our body so that the life of Jesus may also be displayed in our body. For we who live are always being given over to death for Jesus sake, so that Jesus life may also be displayed in our mortal flesh. So then death is at work in us, but life in you. And since we have the same spirit of faith in keeping with what is written, I believed, therefore I spoke. We also believe and therefore speak.

For we know that the one who raised the Lord Jesus will also raise us with Jesus and present us with you. Indeed, everything is for your benefit. So that as grace extends through more and more people and make us thanksgiving to increase the glory of God. Therefore we do not give up. Even though our outer person is being destroyed, our inner person is renewed day by day.

For our momentary light affliction is producing for us an absolutely incomparable eternal weight of glory. So we do not focus on what is seen, but on what is unseen. For what is seen is temporary, but what is unseen is eternal.

I'm going to interject a private thought here. I love this chapter.

Paul demonstrates to us truly what life looks like, what we see regularly and often judge as wrong or confusion. Because we don't understand, if we are following God, why these things happen. So he says that we are afflicted in every way. Now he's referring to him and his companions that go with him. He's not referring to everyone in general.

However, we can apply this to everyone in general. We are afflicted in every way. But he says he's not crushed. Look at that. Though he's afflicted, he's not crushed.

People without God, when they are afflicted, they feel the weight of that and they get crushed, right? They give up, they no longer want to live, or they feel like they are worthless. They get right, they feel crushed. But even though Paul is afflicted, he is able, right? His clay jar, his body, his will, he is able to continue without the weight of it.

Because Christ carries the burn. He says, we're perplexed, but we're not in despair.

Though he is at a loss, right? That's what perplexed means. Though he's at a loss, he's not in despair. Whether he's at financial loss or material loss, loss in relationships, he's not in despair, right? He's not absolutely worried and torn and scratching himself at the thought of what tomorrow will bring, because God carries the burden.

He says, we are persecuted but not abandoned, right? Though the church or the synagogue may persecute them, the Romans might persecute them, the Corinthians might persecute them, the Greeks persecute them. Though they are persecuted, though it seems the world is against them, they're not abandoned because Jesus

Christ is still with them. He has promised. He says, I will never leave or forsake you.

So though family, friends, work, neighbors or nation, the church, whatever, might abandon you, you are not totally abandoned. You have a constant companion in the spirit of Jesus Christ. He says, though we are struck down, we're not destroyed, right? We may have a mishap and fall, we may get thrown off a wall or stoned, but we are not destroyed, even if it's physical life, right? Paul says this.

I believe in Philippians, and now I'm doubting myself. He says, for me, to die is gain, but to live is Christ. He says, for it is no longer I who live, but Christ who lives in me, right? Paul's mentality is that he's already dead and he lives for Christ. So though they may be struck down, they are not destroyed.

For even if you destroy this, this clay jar, then I get to go to be with Christ. I live on. I will resurrect. I am not destroyed. He says, so I always carry the death of Jesus in my body so that the life of Jesus might be displayed in my body.

So he says, by living as a dead person and fully turning my life over to Jesus, then his life can be displaced.

We can't display the love of Jesus, the light of Jesus, the gospel of Jesus, until We have fully committed to dying to ourselves, right to be reborn in Jesus and living for him.

And then he says this in verse 13. This is encouraging. He says, we have the same spirit of faith in keeping with what is written. I believed, therefore I speak. He says, therefore we believe and speak.

So I want to. I'm going to quickly read to you where that comes from. It is from the Psalms.

I'm just turning there real quick. It's 1:16, chapter 10. For anyone who's going to turn with me, me, I'm actually going to read everything leading up to it so you can see what he means by the spirit of faith. He says, I love the Lord because he has heard my appeal for mercy. Because he has turned his ear to me, I will call out to him as long as I live.

The ropes of death, death were wrapped around me and the torments of Sheol overcame me. I encountered trouble and sorrow. Then I called on the name of the Lord. Lord, save me. The Lord is gracious and righteous.

Our God is compassionate. The Lord guards the inexperienced. I was helpless and he saved me. Return to your rest, my soul, for the Lord has been good to you. For you, Lord rescued me from death, my eyes from tears, my feet from stumbling.

I will walk before the Lord in the land of the living. I believed even when I said, I am severely oppressed.

What's going on here? This psalmist paints a picture of hope in despair. It says, death has wrapped its ropes around him. He was tormented, he was troubled, he was sorrowful, helpless and inexperienced. And even in that, he believed as he was severely oppressed.

He believed and he called out to God, lord, save me.

As we read, the Lord saved him in that right, he says, you rescue me from death, you rescue me from tears. So in all of that despair, he believed and called out. So Paul says here it's slightly different in his usage, but he says, in that same spirit, we believe, therefore we call out. And what he is saying is, we believe that Jesus rose from the dead. We believe that he is Lord, and we believe that salvation is through him and him alone.

And this hope causes us to call out to you. So his usage is different. It's not exactly the same as in Psalms, but he references Psalms to show what he is doing. Because we believe that there is this hope in Jesus through

the persecution, through the affliction, through the perplexion, through being struck down, we still call out to you so that you will have that same hope. Guys, what an example that sets for us that in our trials, in Our tribulations or persecutions, our perplexions, right?

Our despair that we can believe and call out to God as the psalmist did. And even through all of that, we can with confidence believe, to call out to our family, our friends, our neighbors, our co workers, because we have that hope. He says, therefore we don't give up. Up, right? We believe, so we don't give up.

Even if our outer person is being destroyed, right? Even if my body is being destroyed, it could be stoned, burned alive, beheaded, things that go on in the Middle East.

Even though it's being destroyed. He says, my inner person, my soul, my. My being is renewed day by day. We are conform to the image of Christ day by day. And we cannot be totally destroyed by this world, right?

Our enemies cannot destroy us. They might be able to take our. Our clay jar away from us, but they can't destroy us. And he says our momentary light affliction is producing for us an absolutely incomparable eternal weight of glory. I love the way he says this because no one more than Paul, other than Christ, Christ can understand this.

But Paul, more than anyone, he understands persecution, he understands affliction, he understands opposition at every turn. He understands what affliction is a lot more than we do. I would say a whole lot more. And look at what he says about it. He says affliction is light, right?

All of these burdens, they are light, but they don't seem light to us, right? We often feel that burden. It's heavy, it weighs on us.

So when Paul says it's light, we have to understand what he says, what he's referring to when he says it's light. And what he is referring to is it is light in comparison to one, the eternal glory that we will have, and two, it is light in comparison to hell, right? Life in hell is going to be a whole lot more tormentous than any affliction that we have here. I often tell people, for those who are perishing, this life with all of its sorrow and its joy, is the absolute closest to heaven they will ever get.

The flip side, the hopeful side, is that for those of us who believe in Christ and follow him, this life with all of its sorrows and tribulations and joys, the absolute closest to hell you can ever get. That's it. Once we leave here, we shed all of the tears, the pain, the sorrow for those of us who are perishing and we receive, look what he says, an absolutely incomparable eternal weight of glory. He uses all of these words to describe what we will get. We can't compare it to this.

It's not possible. It's eternal. It'll last forever. And it's glory.

So we don't give up because we believe. We don't give up because this light affliction, it's momentary, it's temporary, cannot be compared to the glory we will get. Therefore, he says, what we see here, we don't focus on. Everything we see here is temporary. Everything that is produced here, the sorrows, the tribulations, is temporary.

But we focus on that. What we cannot see, on God, on Christ, on his Spirit. For that which is unseen, it is eternal. It will never go away. It will never perish.

The absolutely incomparable eternal weight of glory is eternal. As we end tonight, I call out to two groups of people. First, to those of us who know Christ, I call out and I encourage to not be discouraged. I encourage to be renewed, to not give up, to not be crushed even though you are afflicted, and not be in despair even when

you're perplexed, to not feel abandoned even when you were persecuted. But because you believe, to call out, because we have that hope of that absolutely incomparable eternal weight of glory.

But I also call out to those of you who don't know Jesus yet. There is pain and sorrow and suffering here, but it is temporary and it can be light.

You can trade the despair and the abandonedness and the crushed feelings for love and mercy and grace. But to do so, we need to admit that we are sinners. We have to admit we violate the law of God, which does exist. If you deny that you are being blinded by the God of this time, by Satan. We have to believe that Jesus is the God, man, creator of heavens and earth, who died but was risen from the grave.

We have to believe that if he was not risen from the grave, there is no hope and no salvation. And you have to confess him as your Lord and your God, not just your Savior. That's the easy part to do and say, okay, you save me, you pull me out. But the hard part is saying, you are my Lord and I'll do what you say.

And Paul says, if we will confess that he is Lord and believe in our heart he was risen from the grave, we will be saved. You will have that eternal weight of glory. You'll have that love of God, and you'll trade what you know here for true joy and happiness. If you're ready to do that, if you believe these things and you're ready to tell Jesus he's Your Lord in our closing prayer, I will invite you to confess that to him with me. Immediately after service, we'll partake of the Lord's Supper and then we'll meet here again next week on Wednesday at 6:30 to continue our study through the book of Luke.

Let's pray. Father, I admit that I am a sinner, a violator of your law and cannot save myself. And I believe, Lord Jesus, that you are the God man, that you rose from the dead. And I confess you as my God, my King and Savior, to remove my crown and submit to yours. And I ask you for this gift, for this exchange that you offer me.

And I thank you for it. Father, I pray that anyone who is feeling afflicted that you will remove that weight, that they will not feel crushed. Anyone who is perplexed. Father, I ask that you give us comfort and encouragement that we will not be despaired. And for those of us who are persecuted all around this world, I ask, Father, that you will let us know that we are not abandoned.

I ask that we will be conformed day by day into your image and that your son will be glorified and that you will be glorified. In Jesus name we pray. Amen.