

2 Corinthians

WEEK THREE

1

Weakness, Strength, & the Glory of God (4:1-6)

¹ Therefore, since through God's mercy we have this ministry, we do not lose heart. ² Rather, we have renounced secret and shameful ways; we do not use deception, nor do we distort the word of God. On the contrary, by setting forth the truth plainly we commend ourselves to everyone's conscience in the sight of God. ³ And even if our gospel is veiled, it is veiled to those who are perishing.

2

4 The god of this age has blinded the minds of unbelievers, so that they cannot see the light of the gospel that displays the glory of Christ, who is the image of God. 5 For what we preach is not ourselves, but Jesus Christ as Lord, and ourselves as your servants for Jesus' sake. 6 For God, who said, "Let light shine out of darkness," made his light shine in our hearts to give us the light of the knowledge of God's glory displayed in the face of Christ.

Commentary

Accusers continue to slander. They say Paul uses underhanded and deceptive methods that distort the gospel for his own self-interests.

Paul responds:

I don't preach about myself.

I preach plainly so everyone can understand.

I preach Jesus Christ as Lord. ("Don't look at me, look at Jesus.")

Those who refuse the gospel have been blinded by the god of this world because they chose it so. Satan is great at camouflaging.

Paul does not lose heart because he ...

- **Is commissioned by God.**
- **Is aware of the great task given to him.**
- **Remembers what God has done for him/Damascus Road experience.**
- **Never forgets the glory that awaits him.**

Our Weakness, God's Strength (4:7-9)

⁷ But we have this treasure in jars of clay to show that this all-surpassing power is from God and not from us.

⁸ We are hard pressed on every side, but not crushed; perplexed, but not in despair; ⁹ persecuted, but not abandoned; struck down, but not destroyed.

Commentary

- **Treasure:** The knowledge of the gospel of Good News.
- **Jars of clay:** Our human body so vulnerable to injury, disease, decay, and death.
- **Surpassing greatness of the power of God:** The One who raised Jesus from the dead specialises in demonstrating His strength in the midst of our weakness ... so we know that the power is from God and not of ourselves.

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Paul's Four Paradoxes

Weakness

Pressured on every side

At wits' end

Persecuted (hounded)

Struck down

Strength

but not crushed

but not in despair

but not abandoned

but not destroyed

When you pray, remember the “but nots”.

8

It is Well with My Soul

*“When peace like a river attendeth my way
When sorrows like sea billows roll
Whatever my lot, thou has taught me to say
It is well, it is well with my soul.”*

It is in the quiet crucible of your personal and private sufferings that your noblest dreams are born, and God’s greatest gifts are given.

Watch: [*It is Well with My Soul.*](#)

9

- We appreciate the greatness and power of God when we recognise the certainty of how weak we really are.
- **Human weakness presents no barriers to the purposes of God.** His power is made perfect in our weakness.

NOTE: For all their **talk about power**, the “Super Apostles” have nothing to say about the realities of life: suffering, sorrow, pain, heartache, sickness, death, and judgment (accountability).

10

An Eschatological Framework

This Age (Now) ... The Age to Come (Not Yet)
(4:10-5:10)

- **Death and Life (4:10-15)**
- **Outwardly wasting away; inwardly renewed (4:16)**
- **Light afflictions and temporary troubles cf. eternal glory that far outweighs them all (4:17-18)**

11

Death and Life (4:10-15)

¹⁰ always carrying about in the body the dying of Jesus, so that the life of Jesus may be manifested in our body.

¹¹ For we who live are constantly being delivered over to death for Jesus' sake, so that the life of Jesus also may be manifested in our mortal flesh. ¹² So death works in us, but life in you. ¹⁴ because we know that the one who raised the Lord Jesus from the dead will also raise us with Jesus and present us to himself.

¹⁵ All this is for your benefit, so that the grace that is reaching more and more people may cause thanksgiving to overflow to the glory of God.

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Temporary Affliction and Eternal Glory (4:16-18)

16 Therefore we do not lose heart. Though outwardly we are wasting away, yet inwardly we are being renewed day by day.

17 For our light and momentary troubles are achieving for us an eternal glory that far outweighs them all.

18 So we fix our eyes not on what is seen, but on what is unseen, since what is seen is temporary, but what is unseen is eternal.

Commentary

Death to Life.

Life of Jesus manifested in the physical and emotional pain of missionary life: fourfold distress (4:8-9 and 6:3-10).

Thus, we share in the sufferings of Jesus, aka “The Cost of Discipleship”. Death is inevitable.

But our suffering is not for nothing (4:12-15).

Paul has his eye on the future. God’s resurrection power will finally deliver us from death!

A Note

In 1 Corinthians 15, Paul dealt with the question—**What happens to the body when we die?**—by focusing on the general resurrection of the body.

In these passages **(5:1-10)**, Paul deals with the question—**What happens to us if we die before the general resurrection?**

The most comprehensive statement in the Bible about death and the hereafter.

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Earthly Body, Heavenly Body, & Judgment (5:1-10)

Three Images: Tent, building, clothing (5:1-5)

¹ For we know that if the earthly tent we live in is destroyed, we have a building from God, an eternal house in heaven, not built by human hands.

² Meanwhile we groan, longing to be clothed instead with our heavenly dwelling,

³ because when we are clothed, we will not be found naked.

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***4 For while we are in this tent, we groan and are burdened, because we do not wish to be unclothed but to be clothed instead with our heavenly dwelling, so that what is mortal may be swallowed up by life.
5 Now the one who has fashioned us for this very purpose is God, who has given us the Spirit as a deposit, guaranteeing what is to come.***

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Commentary

- **Tent for our house.**
- **Building for our house not made with human hand (5:1). Our resurrected body.**
- **Clothed, Unclothed and Overcoated (5:2-4). Mortal to be swallowed up by life.**
- **But what if we die before the resurrection? Our earthly body is destroyed and we await our resurrected body. Do we “sleep” until the resurrection?**
- **God is preparing us for heaven by giving us the Holy Spirit as a deposit of guaranteed future (5:5).**

18

Earthly Body, Heavenly Body, & Judgment (5:1-10)(cont'd)

⁶ Therefore we are always confident and know that as long as we are at home in the body we are away from the Lord. ⁷ For we live by faith, not by sight.

⁸ We are confident, I say, and would prefer to be away from the body and at home with the Lord. ⁹ So we make it our goal to please him, whether we are at home in the body or away from it. ¹⁰ For we must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ, so that each of us may receive what is due to us for the things done while in the body, whether good or bad.

Commentary

- **At home in the body, away from the Lord.
Away from the body, at home with the Lord (5:6).**
- **Absent from the body, present with the Lord.**
- **While in the body, live to please the Lord (5:9).
Live by faith and not by sight (5:7).**
- **Because we will stand before the Lord on
the Day of Judgment to give account (5:10).**

The Judgment

For we must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ, so that each of us may receive what is due to us for the things done while in the body, whether good or bad. (5:10)

The Judgment Seat cf. Great White Throne Judgment.

- All believers
- Rewards not punishment
- Not about salvation or sin
- About what you have done for Jesus (good and bad)

The Ministry of Reconciliation (5:11-6:2)

11 Since, then, we know what it is to fear the Lord, we try to persuade others ...

14 For Christ's love compels us, because we are convinced that one died for all, and therefore all died.

15 And he died for all, that those who live should no longer live for themselves but for him who died for them and was raised again ...

17 Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, the new creation has come: the old has gone, the new is here!

18 All this is from God, who reconciled us to himself through Christ and gave us the ministry of reconciliation:

19 that God was reconciling the world to himself in Christ, not counting people's sins against them. And he has committed to us the message of reconciliation.

20 We are therefore Christ's ambassadors, as though God were making his appeal through us ... 21 God made him who had no sin to be sin for us, so that in him we might become the righteousness of God.

1 As God's fellow workers we urge you not to receive God's grace in vain. 2 For he says,

'In the time of my favour I heard you, and in the day of salvation I helped you.'

I tell you, now is the time of God's favour, now is the day of salvation.

Commentary

As followers of Jesus, we are all responsible for the message of reconciliation.

Christ's love compels us because (5:14a) ...
we are convinced the gospel message is true ...
“one died for all, and therefore all died. And he died for all, that those who live should no longer live for themselves but for him who died for them ...”
(5:14b-15)

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Therefore, anyone *“in Christ”* is a new creature (creation), *“reconciled to God”* (5:17).
Anyone *“in Christ”* (reconciled) is given the ministry of reconciliation (5:19).

Therefore, we are Christ's ambassadors (5:20).

So don't receive God's grace and then do nothing.
Now is the day of salvation. Get to work! (6:1-2).

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Transformation, divine indicative, and divine imperative.

The Great Commission

The Great Commandment

- **Share your faith**
- **What would God have of me?**

“What does the Lord require of you?

To act justly and to love mercy and to walk humbly with your God.” (Micah 6:8)

The power of the Holy Spirit.

William Booth to Rudyard Kipling:

“If I thought I could win one more soul for Christ by standing on my hands and beating a tambourine with my feet, I would learn to do it.”

Ministers of Reconciliation (6:3-10)

³ We put no stumbling block in anyone's path, so that our ministry will not be discredited. ⁴ Rather, as servants of God we commend ourselves in every way: in great endurance; in troubles, hardships and distresses; ⁵ in beatings, imprisonments and riots; in hard work, sleepless nights and hunger; ⁶ in purity, understanding, patience and kindness; in the Holy Spirit and in sincere love;

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⁷ in truthful speech and in the power of God; with weapons of righteousness in the right hand and in the left; ⁸ through glory and dishonour, bad report and good report; genuine, yet regarded as impostors; ⁹ known, yet regarded as unknown; dying, and yet we live on; beaten, and yet not killed; ¹⁰ sorrowful, yet always rejoicing; poor, yet making many rich; having nothing, and yet possessing everything.

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Commentary

Ministry can never be about pride or self-serving.
Sacrifice and service are at the heart of the gospel.

- **Hardships:** troubles, conflicts, distress, anxiety, sleepless nights, pains of life, and hard work.
- **Qualities:** Purity, patience, kindness, and love.
- **God equips:** Truth, the Holy Spirit, power of God, and the weapons of righteousness.

Dying yet alive; sorrowful yet rejoicing; poor yet rich.

Conforming to the Image of Christ

PUT ON/PUT OFF

Romans 13:11-14	Darkness/Light
Ephesians 4:20-32	Old Self/New Self
Colossians 3:1-17	Old Self/New Self
Galatians 5:19-25	In the Flesh/In the Spirit

Romans 13:11-14 Darkness/Light

Put off the works of darkness

- Carousing
- Drunkenness
- Sexual promiscuity
- Sensuality
- Strife
- Jealousy

Put on the armour of light

- The Lord Jesus Christ

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Ephesians 4:20-32 Old Self/New Self

Put off the old self

- Falsehood (v25)
- Sinful anger (v26)
- Stealing (v28)
- Evil talk (v29)

Put away

- Bitterness, wrath, anger, clamor, slander, malice (v31)

Put on the new self

- Truthfulness (v25)
- Self control (v27)
- Honest work, sharing (v28)
- Edifying speech (v29)

Be

- Kind, tenderhearted, forgiving (v32)

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Colossians 3:1-17 Old Self/New Self

Put off the old self (vices of the old nature)

- Fornication, impurity
- Passion, evil desire (v5)
- Anger, wrath
- Malice
- Slander, abusive
speech (v8)
- Lying (v9)

Put on new self (virtues) which is being renewed in the image of Christ

- Compassion, kindness
- Humility, gentleness
- Patience (v12)
- Forbearing, forgiveness (v13)
- Love (v14)
- No distinction among you
(v11)

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Galatians 5:19-25 In the Flesh/In the Spirit

In the Flesh

In the Spirit/Fruits of the Spirit

- Love
- Joy
- Peace
- Patience
- Kindness
- Goodness
- Faithfulness
- Gentleness
- Self-control

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