Anchored to Stand

**STUDIES IN SECOND CORINTHIANS**

**Lesson 6**

**II Corinthians 4**

***Stand With an Eternal Perspective***

***For the things which are seen are temporary, but the things which are not seen are eternal.***

**II Corinthians 4:18b**

So far, our study through the book of II Corinthians has revealed that we are the *fragrance of Christ,* bringing the sweet scent everywhere we go. We are *living epistles,* known and read by all men, demonstrating the transforming power of God. In II Corinthians chapter four, Paul will use a new illustration to help us to understand how valuable the Gospel message is. He says we are earthen vessels, or clay pots, that hold the treasure of God’s word. Have you ever thought of yourself as a clay pot? Perhaps you think that is not very glamorous or meaningful. As we study this portion of scripture we will begin to give thanks for this marvelous responsibility of being the container for God’s treasure.

**First Day Overview: Read II Corinthians Chapter 4**

1. Read II Corinthians 4:1-18. We have divided this chapter into three sections. Look at each of these sections and record a thought, phrase or verse that particularly captures your attention. Be sure to underline or highlight these verses in your Bible, too.

Verses 1-6

Verses 7-15

Verses 16-18

1. Paul repeats the phrase *we do not lose heart* two times in this chapter. The King James Version says *we faint not* in both instances. What do you think Paul is trying to emphasize for the reader?
2. Write the definition of *faith* as recorded in Hebrews 11:1.
	1. How is faith needed if we are to have an eternal perspective?
	2. Share a way you have seen this *evidence of things not seen in your own life*?
3. Paul’s belief or faith is what motivated him to preach the gospel in the midst of great affliction. Recall some of the promises of God that you said amen to.
	1. How does your belief in these promises affect your own willingness to endure?
	2. We all have a lapse in faith at times. Even the disciples acknowledged their need for more faith. According to Luke 17:5, what did they pray?

**Anchored In –** Journal your thoughts. *Faith is the substance of things hoped for the evidence of things not seen*. Just like the disciples, most of us need an increase of faith. Take some time to talk to the Lord about any area or situation where you are lacking faith. Then pray, Lord, increase my faith!

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***But without faith it is impossible to please Him,***

***for he who comes to God must believe that He is,***

***and that He is a rewarder of those who diligently seek Him***

**Hebrews 11:6**

**Second Day: Read II Corinthians 4:1-4**

1. The word “*therefore”* in II Corinthians 4:1a links this chapter with the previous chapter. Even though Paul experienced hardships and opposition in the ministry, he was confident God called him to minister the gospel. Think about this as you write Paul’s statement from II Corinthians 4:1:

* 1. What might cause a person to *lose heart* (faint or give up) in ministry?
	2. What does Paul say about this in the following verses?
		1. Galatians 6:9
		2. Hebrews 12:1-3
	3. How does considering all Jesus went through help us to not lose heart or not faint?
1. Read II Corinthians 4:2. Paul recognized both the privilege and responsibility of ministry.
	1. Record the three phrases from verse 2a that reveal the integrity of Paul’s ministry.
	2. One Bible commentary says of verse 2b: *We manifest the truth when we tell it out in a plain, understandable manner. But we also manifest it when we live it in our lives before others so they can see it by our example.*  With this in mind briefly explain the importance of having an honest ministry and living with a clear conscience before God and man.
	3. All believers have been called to share the gospel with others. How is Paul’s integrity an example for us to follow as we share the gospel of Jesus Christ?
2. II Corinthians 4:3-4 tells us the god of this age, Satan, is the ultimate source behind the veiling of the gospel.
	1. From II Corinthians 11:14 identify one of his methods of blinding people.
		1. Briefly share a present day example of this.
	2. Look at verse 4 once more. Why does the enemy want to keep the mind of the unbeliever blind?

1. Don’t miss the powerful declaration in II Corinthians 4:4c concerning Christ.
	1. How is Jesus described?
	2. How much of an exact likeness of God is Jesus? See John 12:45

**Anchored In** – Do you know someone who is perishing and blinded? Ask the Lord to bring a few of these family members, friends, or acquaintances to your mind. Spend some time asking the Lord to shine the *light of the gospel of the glory of Christ* into their hearts. Perhaps He wants to use YOU?

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***This little light of mine, I’m gonna let it shine!***

 

**THIRD DAY: Read 2 Corinthians 4:5-7**

***God’s light shines in us so that God’s light can shine out of us.* - Selected**

1. Rather than exalting himself over others as a minister, Paul described himself as their *bondservant.*
	1. What does it mean to be a *bondservant*?
	2. Have you considered whether you are a bondservant of Christ? Share your thoughts.

1. What do you learn from Paul’s example in II Corinthians 4:5 that you can apply to your life?
2. In verse 6, Paul is directly quoting the idea of Genesis 1:3: *Then God said, "Let there be light"; and there was light.*
	1. Paul used the creation event of commanding light to shine out of darkness as a prelude to describing what event in our hearts?

* 1. According to Matthew 5:16, what are we supposed to do with this *light* we have been given?
	2. Share a practical way you can be a light to point others to Jesus.
1. When on the Damascus Road Paul was introduced to and radically transformed by this Light. (Acts 9:1-29.) What change has the Light of Jesus made in your life?
2. In spite of our weaknesses and failures, inadequacies and inabilities, we have been chosen by God to contain His treasure. It’s important for us to remember that we are only *jars of clay*; it is the *treasure within us that gives us our value*.
	1. Why did God choose to place this treasure in earthen vessels? Answer from II Corinthians 4:7b
	2. In what way is the gospel like a treasure?
	3. What similarities do you see between our earthly bodies and earthen vessels? Read Genesis 3:19 and James 4:14
3. Share what it means to you that you are an earthen vessel containing the priceless treasure of the gospel of Christ

**Anchored In –** Warren Wiersbe said, “*The important thing about a vessel is that it be clean, empty, and available for service”.*  Let’s spend some time with Jesus expressing our desire to be clean vessels that are available for His use. Consider letting go of anything that might hinder you from letting your light shine.

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*We almost always are drawn to the thing that has the best packaging.*

*But the best gifts often have the most unlikely packaging.*

*God did not see a need to "package" Jesus when He came as a man to this earth. - David Guzik*

**Fourth Day – Read II Corinthians 4:8-14**

1. These fragile, earthen vessels are subject to the problems and sufferings common to man. The great difference for Christians is that we have help and hope. Observe Paul’s analysis of his circumstances by reading II Corinthians 4:8-9.
	1. Complete the following chart, using other versions if you desire:

|  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- |
| Verse  | We are | Verse  | We are not |
| 8a |  | 8a |  |
| 8b |  | 8b |  |
| 9a |  | 9a |  |
| 9a |  | 9b |  |

* 1. Look over this list once more. What comfort or encouragement do you receive from these verses?

1. II Corinthians 4:10-12 is Paul’s personal testimony. Most of us probably will never experience the extreme persecution he suffered. The constant giving up of his own life, always facing death, revealed the victorious, risen Savior to those who heard him. Today when a Christian suffers as a faithful servant of Christ because of persecution and opposition, how are others affected?

1. Read II Corinthians 4:10. Paul, like any Christian, wanted the life of Jesus evident in him. But Paul knew this could only happen if he also *carried about in the body the dying of the Lord Jesus.* There are some aspects of God's great work in our lives that only happen through trials and suffering.
	1. Read Paul’s words recorded in Philippians 3:10. What was Paul’s desire?
	2. Perhaps you have experienced the *fellowship of His sufferings*. In what way has suffering made you more like Jesus?
	3. G. Campbell Morgan tells the story of a great young preacher who was impressive early on in his ministry. Once he had the young man to speak at his church, and after the sermon Morgan asked his wife, "Wasn't that wonderful?" She quietly replied, "Yes, but it will be more wonderful when he has suffered.” Selah
2. Paul claimed that he preached because he had the same kind of faith that the psalmist had (verse 13). Paul was quoting from Psalm 116 when he wrote *I believed and therefore I spoke*. In this psalm we discover that the psalmist, like Paul, had been delivered from great trouble and sorrow.
	1. How has experiencing God’s deliverance in times of trouble increased your faith?
	2. What is to be the action that follows belief? (I believed and therefore I \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_).
	3. Read Romans 10:9. How does this verse parallel II Corinthians 4:13?
3. Read II Corinthians 4:14. KNOWING the truth concerning the resurrection is essential to our faith. What assurance does this truth give you no matter what your circumstances?

**Anchored In** – *I believed and therefore I spoke*. Personalize some of the things we believe and know to be true about the Lord. Let’s see if writing these things down increases our faith today. I bet it does!

Example: You will never leave me nor forsake me! You are able to commands light to shine in the darkness in my grandfather’s heart!

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*God doesn’t promise us heaven on this sin-cursed earth. But when by faith we see the spiritual dimension – the power of God, the hand of God, the love of God – we gain strength to endure.* -Pastor Chuck

**Fifth Day – Read II Corinthians 4:15-18**

***I judge all things only by the price they shall gain in eternity*. - John Wesley**

1. With eternity in view Paul willingly suffered to share the gospel. Consider the results of his ministry as revealed in II Corinthians 4:15 NLT: *All of these things are for your benefit. And as God’s grace brings more and more people to Christ, there will be great thanksgiving, and God will receive more and more glory.* How might our attitude in serving be different if our goal for the glory or the attention is for God rather than ourselves?
2. In the midst of suffering and persecution Paul stated in 2 Corinthians 4:16 that he *did not lose heart*.
	1. What did he say was perishing?
	2. What did Job say about this in Job 19:26?
	3. Even though our bodies are becoming less and less efficient, we read that our *inward man is being renewed day by day*. How does this encourage you today?
3. Consider the comparisons and evaluations in II Corinthians 4:17-18. Write a few of them from the following verses:
	1. verse 17
	2. verse 18

1. For a glimpse of Paul’s afflictions scan II Corinthians 11:23-28. How do you think he could view these as light afflictions?
2. *So we fix our eyes not on what is seen, but on what is unseen. For what is seen is temporary, but what is unseen is eternal* (II Corinthians 4:18 NIV). Paul isn't saying that all afflictions automatically produce glory. Sometimes we allow suffering to destroy us, and let our affliction make us bitter, miserable, and self-focused. But if we will look to the things which are not seen, then our affliction will work in us an eternal weight of glory.
	1. Give a practical example of how to do this.
	2. Weigh today’s suffering and afflictions in the light of eternal glory. What affect does this have on your attitude and perspective?
	3. Jim Elliot was a missionary to the Auka Indians. He was famous for saying, he is no fool to give up what he cannot keep to gain what he cannot lose.” He was a man who understood how to live in the light of eternity. What’s your response to his statement?

Anchored in – Have you heard the expression, *it’s all gonna burn*? This is what we say when we speak of our material possessions or pursuits. This is a great attitude to have since we can’t take anything with us when we enter glory. The most valuable treasure we have is eternal; Christ in us, the hope of Heaven. Let’s live with an eternal perspective and loosen our grip of our *stuff* today. Journal your thoughts:

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*While the outer man is decaying, the inner man is being renewed every day.*

*I am receiving strength for the battle, strength to bear the affliction.*

*For this cause I never faint because day by day*

*I am finding an abundance of grace to meet my every need. –* Alan Redpath

**Sixth Day- STAND With an Eternal Perspective**

Wouldn’t it be wonderful to go through life day by day with an eternal perspective? What if every situation in our lives could be used for the glory of God? Have you ever known this kind of person? Their car breaks down and somehow the service man comes to know Christ. Or they have a health problem and the whole medical staff is witnessed to. Why? It is because they live with an eternal perspective. There is an old expression that says, “You’re too heavenly minded to be any earthly good.” Clever and catchy cliché, isn’t it? The only problem is that these words are unbiblical. Contrary to popular opinion, being heavenly minded always inspires us to be more earthly good. Read what C.S. Lewis said about this in his book *Mere Christianity*:

*“If you read history you will find that the Christians who did most for the present world were precisely those who thought most of the next. It is since Christians have largely ceased to think of the other world that they have become so ineffective in this. The Apostles themselves, who set on foot the conversion of the Roman Empire, the great men who built up the Middle Ages, the English Evangelicals who abolished the Slave Trade, all left their mark on Earth, precisely because their minds were occupied with Heaven”.*

1. Read Colossians 3:1-2. What does it say we are to do?
2. Philippians 3:17-21 shows a contrast of those who set their mind on earthly things vs. those who are heavenly minded.
	1. What do these verses say?
	2. How does this motivate you to be heavenly minded instead of earthly minded?
3. Let’s look ahead and see what the Bible tells us about eternity.
	1. Read Revelation 21: 4-7
		1. What does it say?
		2. Does this description make you long for eternity? Share your thoughts:
	2. Have you heard that Heaven has *pearly gates* and *streets of gold*? This is correct! Read Revelation 21:10-27 and see the glorious description recorded for us.
		1. What stands out to you the most?
		2. In our lesson this week, II Corinthians 4:4, we read about *the light of the gospel of the glory of Christ*. How does the description of Jesus recorded in Revelation 21:23 illuminate your understanding of His glory?
4. Have you heard Phil Wickham’s song entitled *Heaven Song*? If you have the opportunity to listen to this song today it would be an encouragement to you. Here is a sample of the lyrics:

*You wrote a letter and You signed Your name*

*I read every word of it page by page*

*You said that You'd be coming, coming for me soon*

*Oh my God I'll be ready for You*

* 1. Eternity is not far off for any of us. The key question that each of us have to answer is this, "Am I ready to meet my Maker?" Share your thoughts on this:

**Anchored In –***W*hen we *stand with an eternal perspective* we will live with an expectancy. Jesus could return at any moment. Let’s wait for Him on tip toe! Think of all the glorious things you read about eternity today and write your own heaven song here:

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*Only one life will soon be past, only what is done for Christ will last*