# Session 5:

# Jesus is the Igniting Force Behind the Christian’s Faith

# 2 Corinthians 4:1-6, “*Therefore, since through God’s mercy we have this ministry, we do not lose heart. 2Rather, 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. 3And even if our gospel is veiled, it is veiled to those who are perishing. 4The 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. 5For what we preach is not ourselves, but Jesus Christ as Lord, and ourselves as your servants for Jesus’ sake. 6For 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.”*

In this passage Paul is directly or indirectly speaking about four (4) different people or groups of people (some by implication):

1. **Himself**—***stating that he never loses heart in the great task that has been given to him. He tells us why as he speaks his heart.***

**Two things keep him going:**

* There is the consciousness of a great task.

*The person who is conscious of a great task can do amazing things.*

*An example of this is the great work of Handel when he composed and wrote “the Messiah.” He did the whole work in 22 days. He scarcely ate or slept during those days.*

***A great task, with the help of the Lord, brings its own strength with it.***

* **There is the memory of receiving mercy…God’s great mercy.**

*Paul’s goal in life was to spend all his life giving his time and talents for the love which he knew redeemed him from hell.*

1. **His Opponents and Slanderers*—(by implication), echo of unhappy things. Same letter, referring back to the chapter 2:17... “Unlike so many, we do not peddle the word of God for profit….”***

**Paul’s enemies had leveled 3 charges against him:**

* *That Paul had used underhanded methods*
* *That he used unscrupulous cleverness to get his own way,*
* *That he adulterated the message of the gospel.*

Paul said he renounced secret and shameful ways…and that he does not try to deceive anyone, nor does he distort the word of God.

***Question: Have your motives been misinterpreted?***

 ***Have your actions been misconstrued?***

***Have others twisted your words to say something different than the real meaning?***

1. **Those Who Have Refused to Accept the Gospel**—***Paul insists that he has proclaimed the gospel in a way that any man with any kind of conscience at all would respond positively.***

However, in spite of that:

* *Some are deaf to its appeal and blind to its glory.*
* *The god of this world has blinded their minds so that they cannot believe.*
* *There is a power of evil…a prince of this world, a prince of the power of the air, the god of this world.*

**No wonder the Lord teaches us to pray…. “Deliver us from evil”… (Probably meaning to deliver us from the evil one in lieu of delivering us from doing evil.)**

1. **Jesus**—***the thought here is to drive home the truth that in Jesus Christ we have seen the Father (John 14:9).***

When Paul preached, he did not say, “Look at me!” He said, “Look at Jesus Christ”….and then you will see the glory of God come to earth in a form that a man can understand.

**2 Corinthians 4:7-15**, “*But we have this treasure in jars of clay to show that this all-surpassing power is from God and not from us. 8We are hard pressed on every side, but not crushed; perplexed, but not in despair; 9persecuted, but not abandoned; struck down, but not destroyed. 10We always carry around in our body the death of Jesus, so that the life of Jesus may also be revealed in our body. 11For we who are alive are always being given over to death for Jesus’ sake, so that his life may also be revealed in our mortal body. 12So then, death is at work in us, but life is at work in you. 13It is written: “I believed; therefore I have spoken.” Since we have that same spirit of[*[*c*](https://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=2+Corinthians+4+&version=NIV#fen-NIV-28873c)*] faith, we also believe and therefore speak, 14because we know that the one who raised the Lord Jesus from the dead will also raise us with Jesus and present us with you to himself. 15All 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.”*

What a treasure of words for the body of Christ! No….it is more than words, it is life!

***It would be easy to take pride in our treasure that we have in Jesus; the treasure we have laid up for us in glory.***

*It is easy for us to say… “We are more than conquerors.” Paul said it and we believe it.*

***However, Paul helps us also to look at the truth.***

***Our treasure is in this earthly vessel…which keeps us from being prideful!***

We know where we are going….and we know that we can have joy in our journey…

***But…..life is designed to keep a Christian from pride.***

However great our Christian glory we are:

* *Still mortal man;*
* *Still the victim of circumstances;*
* *Still subject to the chances and changes of human life;*
* *Still a mortal body with all that body’s weakness and pain.*

***Like a man with a precious treasure contained in a clay jar, which in itself is weak and worthless.***

We talk about the power of man and about the vast forces which he now controls. But…the real characteristic of man is not his power but his weakness.

*Life has surrounded us with infirmity, although Christ has surrounded us with glory….*

*We should remember…it is God’s glory that we see…not ours or man’s.*

***We must recognize our utter dependence on Jehovah God.***

Paul describes this Christian life…in which our infirmity (our weakness) is intermingled with God’s glory (a series of paradoxes).

* ***WE ARE SORE PRESSED AT EVERY POINT…BUT NOT HEMMED IN.***

*There are all kinds of pressure on us, but we are never in so tight a corner that there is no way out.*

*It is the characteristic of the Christian that, even if his body be confined in some difficult environment or some narrow circumstance, there is always an escape route for his spirit to the spaciousness of God.*

*You see that in the 3rd world countries….the Christian’s body might be hemmed in a slum, but his/her soul reaches out into the spaciousness of communion with Christ.*

**Aren’t we spoiled? Aren’t we privileged?**

**Aren’t we going to be held more accountable for what we have done with Jesus…and the gospel….and giving to others than many of these in 3rd world countries?**

***Yes we will….and that is a fearful thought for ourselves and the church.***

* ***WE ARE PERSECUTED BY MEN BUT NEVER ABANDONED BY GOD.***

*One of the most notable things about the known martyrs is that it was amidst their sorest times that they had their sweetest times with Christ.*

*Joan of Arc…when her followers were afraid to stand by her in her darkest hour.*

*“It is better to be alone with God. His friendship will not fail me, nor His counsel, nor His love. In His strength, I will dare and dare and dare until I die.”*

*The Psalmist wrote, “When my father and mother forsake me, then the Lord will take me up.” (Psalm 27:10).*

Nothing can alter the loyalty of God…He is faithful to His promises.

* ***WE ARE AT OUR WIT’S END BUT NEVER AT OUR HOPE’S END.***

*There are times when the Christian does not know where life is going, but he never doubts that it is going somewhere.*

*There are times when the Christian does not know what is to be done, but even then he never doubts that something can be done.*

 *If he must stoop into the dark chasms of life, he knows that he will emerge.*

*There are times when a Christian has to learn the hardest lesson of all…the very lesson that Jesus came to grips with at Gethsemane…how to accept what he cannot understand and still say, “God, thou are love; I build my faith on that.”*

* ***WE ARE KNOCKED DOWN, BUT NOT KNOCKED OUT.***

*The supreme characteristic of the Christian is not that he does not fall….but that every time he falls he rises again.*

*It is not that he is never beaten, but he is never ultimately defeated.*

*He may lose a battle, but he knows that in the end…he will not lose the war.*

Paul goes on to give the secret of his own life….the reason why he was able to do and endure as he did.

* *He was well aware that if a man would share the life of Christ, he must share his risks….that if a man wished to live with Christ, he must be ready to die with him.*
* *He faced everything in the memory of the power of God who raised Jesus Christ from the dead….who disregarded personal safety because he believed that even if death took him, God could and would raise him up.*
* *He bore everything in the conviction that through his sufferings and trials others were being led into the light and love of God.*

# 2 Corinthians 4:16-18, “*Therefore we do not lose heart. Though outwardly we are wasting away, yet inwardly we are being renewed day by day. 17For our light and momentary troubles are achieving for us an eternal glory that far outweighs them all. 18So 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.”*

Paul gives to us the secret of endurance for the Christian life:

1. ***All through life it must happen that a man’s bodily strength fades away, but all through life it ought to happen that a man’s soul keeps growing.***

*“Let me grow lovely growing old!”*

***Man does not need to fear the years, for they bring him nearer, not to death, but to God.***

1. **Anything we have to suffer in this world will be as nothing compared with the glory he would enjoy in the next.**

*Jesus never foretold his death without foretelling his resurrection.*

1. **Man’s eyes must not be fixed on the things that are seen, but on the things that are unseen.**

*The things of this world have their day and cease to be; the things that are unseen, the things of heaven, last forever!*

 **“God, help us to be grateful, gracious, and thankful for a 2nd chance!”**

**Summary: Why should a Christian ever be discouraged or lose the desire to “keep on a truckin’?”**

**Paul says:**

*“Because we know that the one who raised Jesus from the dead will also raise us….we should not lose heart!*

*For even though this earthly body is wasting away, inwardly we are being renewed as each day goes by.” (Paraphrased).*

*You look in the mirror…and you see only things that are temporary…what you don’t see, but know in your heart that is absolute truth, that is eternal…and therefore we should rejoice.”*

**Why do you think the Lord Jesus stated to Thomas… “Oh, Thomas, you only believe because of what you have seen. The people that will really be blessed are those that have not seen, yet they believe.” (John 20:29).**

**2 Corinthians 5:1-10, *“****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. 2Meanwhile we groan, longing to be clothed instead with our heavenly dwelling, 3because when we are clothed, we will not be found naked. 4For 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. 5Now 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. 6Therefore we are always confident and know that as long as we are at home in the body we are away from the Lord. 7For we live by faith, not by sight. 8We are confident, I say, and would prefer to be away from the body and at home with the Lord. 9So we make it our goal to please him, whether we are at home in the body or away from it. 10For we must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ, so that each of us may receive what is due us for the things done while in the body, whether good or bad.”*

**Paul gives us his insight into what life is all about:**

1. **It will be a day of joy when he is done with this human body.**
* *Paul says it is only a tent, a temporary dwelling place…in which we journey in until it is dissolved. Then we enter into the real place for our soul and spirit.*
* *Paul was not looking for Nirvana…a place where there is no care, no responsibilities, everything done for you.*
* *Paul was looking and waiting for the day when God will give him a new body, a spiritual body, in which he will be able, even in the heavenly places, to serve and to adore God.*
* *Paul saw eternity not as release into permanent inaction, but as the entry into a body in which service could be complete.*
1. **Even though we yearn for the life to come, we should never despise this life.**

**Why?**

* **Because even here and now we possess the Holy Spirit of God, which is the first installment of the life to come.**

*Paul states that we can enjoy the “foretaste of glory divine….for we are an “heir of salvation…purchased of God; born of His Spirit, washed in His blood.” Wow!! Paul knew it … and so did Fanny Crosby. She was blind, but boy could she see!*

* **We are a citizen of two worlds:**

*The result is…that we should never despise this world, but look for the reflection, as in a mirror, of the greater glory to come.*

1. **We are on our way to glory…but understand…that when we get there, we will be judged!**

**We must all appear before the Judgment Seat of Christ!**

##### Greek word for judgment seat… “Bema”

***Christians will be judged for our works…in which we will or will not receive crowns.***

***The non-Christian will appear before the Great White Throne Judgment.***

**Judged for sin that had not been forgiven….atoned for, yes, but a decision by each person to say, “I love my sin more than what I desire to ask forgiveness. I don’t want to accept something that I know I love too much to quit.”**

*Actually, these are people that in their hearts they prayed, “I pray that the Bible is not true and the preacher and the sermons are just a way of manipulating people to stop what I enjoy doing.”*

**2 Corinthians 5:11-19, “***Since, then, we know what it is to fear the Lord, we try to persuade others. What we are is plain to God, and I hope it is also plain to your conscience. 12We are not trying to commend ourselves to you again, but are giving you an opportunity to take pride in us, so that you can answer those who take pride in what is seen rather than in what is in the heart. 13If we are “out of our mind,” as some say, it is for God; if we are in our right mind, it is for you. 14For Christ’s love compels us, because we are convinced that one died for all, and therefore all died. 15And 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. 16So from now on we regard no one from a worldly point of view. Though we once regarded Christ in this way, we do so no longer. 17Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, the new creation has come:The old has gone, the new is here! 18All this is from God, who reconciled us to himself through Christ and gave us the ministry of reconciliation: 19that 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.”*

**Because of our knowledge of knowing we will be judged, we fear God only because He is the one who knows us through and through:**

**Yes…God loves us. Yes….God cares for us. Yes….God is always looking out for His children. Yes….He protects us. But….He cannot tolerate sin. He will not tolerate sin. And when we decide to do our own thing and not stay under the umbrella of protection, we will not be beneficiaries of the gifts.**

**It is not a “string attached”…it is an arm waiting for you to run into.**

 **There is a fear of the Lord that is:**

* *Wisdom (Job 28:28)*
* *Knowledge (Proverbs 1:7: 9:10)*
* *Avoiding Evil (Proverbs 16:6)*
* *Cleansing (Psalms 19:9)*

***And…the definition of Fearing God is Proverbs 8:13***

 ***“To Fear God is to hate evil.”***

***Do you hate evil? Hate what evil is doing to your loved ones…hate evil enough to run from it….or take authority over it…and say, “I will have nothing to do with you….I hate you, Satan. I hate evil!***

***What is evil?***

***Name evil….shun it…hate it!***

***Fearing God…. is not something that the Christian is dreading…or a trembling fear of a dreaded enemy.***

*It is that which keeps a thoughtless man from desecrating a holy place.*

*It is that which keeps a man from doing things which would break the heart of someone whom he loves.*

***Behind all Paul’s conduct and actions there has been one motive only—to serve God and help the Corinthians understand the love that God had and has for them by offering them Jesus.***

***Many thought Paul as being crazy (out of his mind)…so they did with Jesus.***

***Paul ends the chapter or paragraph by declaring that Christ Jesus died for all.***

***Paul says…that if we believe that Christ died for all (us) we are new creatures. Our old habits, our old ways of life are gone.***

***Christ has reconciled us to God….through the blood that cleanses, washes, and makes us new to stand until the day when we shall be like him.***

***Paul said that at one time he judged by the standards of the world…but now, he has acquired a new set of standards. He judges by Christ’s standards.***

***Are you washed in the blood? Are you a new creature created by God to be reconciled to Him?***

***Does your DNA match His?***

