

MEMORY VERSE: “We are hard-pressed on every side, yet not crushed; we are perplexed, but not in despair; persecuted, but not forsaken; struck down, but not destroyed—always carrying about in the body the dying of the Lord Jesus, that the life of Jesus also may be manifested in our body.”

2 Corinthians 4:8-10, NKJV

LESSON STUDY INTRO

“This week, we will look into 2 Corinthians 3–7,...” Qtly, Sab, last par

1. The evidence of ministry is changed lives (Sun, Mon)

- Paul cites the transformed lives of the Corinthians as his “referral letter” ministered “by the Spirit” (2 Cor. 3:1-3).
 - “Letters of recommendation were common in the Greco-Roman world. However, Paul did not bear such letters. The Spirit’s transformative power in the lives of the Corinthians was proof of his authentic ministry.” Qtly, Sun, par 1

The conversion of sinners and their sanctification through the truth is the strongest proof a minister can have that God has called him to the ministry. The evidence of his apostleship is written upon the hearts of those converted, and is witnessed to by their renewed lives. AA 328.1 (Qtly, Sab, last par)

- The Spirit’s transformation will finally result in our fully reflecting the glory, or character, of Christ (2 Cor. 3:18).
 - This transformation is the ground of our hope (Rom. 5:3-5).
 - The “earnest” of the Spirit (2 Cor. 5:5; Eph. 1:14, KJV).
 - It is this hope that enables us to face all hardships and not lose heart (2 Cor. 4:16-18).

We miss very much because we do not grasp the blessings that may be ours in our afflictions.... All experiences and circumstances are God’s workmen whereby good is brought to us. Let us look at the light behind the cloud. ML 185.4

2. Now is the day of salvation (Tue)

- “We must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ... knowing therefore the terror of the Lord, we persuade men” (2 Cor. 5:9-11).
 - Paul sees the judgment as imminent, and our time probationary, and therefore the time to “persuade men” to “seek the Lord while He may be found” (Is. 55:6).

- As we have been reconciled to God and made “a new creation” in Christ, so we are called as Christ’s ambassadors to urge others to “be reconciled to God” (vs. 14-21).
 - “For the love of Christ compels us...” (v. 14)

God could have proclaimed His truth through sinless angels, but this is not His plan. He chooses human beings, men compassed with infirmity, as instruments in the working out of His designs. The priceless treasure is placed in earthen vessels. Through men His blessings are to be conveyed to the world. Through them His glory is to shine forth into the darkness of sin. In loving ministry they are to meet the sinful and the needy, and lead them to the cross. AA 330.2

- As a ministers of reconciliation, Paul and his companions were careful to avoid needlessly offending others (2 Cor. 6:3-10).
 - They endured hardship (vs. 4, 5)
 - They were careful to live out their faith (vs. 6, 7)
 - They maintained a hopeful outlook (vs. 8-10)

3. Truth is a two-edged sword (Wed, Thu)

- The initial reaction to the truth is often sorrow or contention, while the ultimate response may be salvation.
 - The Corinthians were first “made sorry” by Paul’s first letter (2 Cor. 7:8, 9); however, it was a “godly sorrow” that led them to repentance and gave them a renewed zeal in their Christian experience (vs. 9-11).
 - Sometimes people have to be made *mad* or *sad* before they can be made *glad*.
- Truth can only have that ultimate positive effect when spoken in self-sacrificing love.
 - Paul makes it clear to the Corinthians that his main purpose in writing was “that our care for you in the sight of God might appear to you” (2 Cor. 7:12; cf. 2:4). His love for them was as a parent for a child (2 Cor. 6:13; 1 Cor. 4:15). In this He revealed the paternal character of our Heavenly Father.

CONCLUSION

In the contemplation of Christ we linger on the shore of a love that is measureless. We endeavor to tell of this love, and language fails us. We consider His life on earth, His sacrifice for us, His work in heaven as our advocate, and the mansions He is preparing for those who love Him, and we can only exclaim, O the height and depth of the love of Christ!... In every true disciple this love, like sacred fire, burns on the altar of the heart. It was on the earth that the love of God was revealed through Christ. It is on the earth that His children are to reflect this love through blameless lives. Thus sinners will be led to the cross to behold the Lamb of God. AA 334.1