

Grace...

Is It Spreading?

2Cor 4:7-15 But we have this treasure in earthen vessels, so that the surpassing greatness of the power will be of God and not from ourselves; **8** we are afflicted in every way, but not crushed; perplexed, but not despairing; **9** persecuted, but not forsaken; struck down, but not destroyed; **10** always carrying about in the body the dying of Jesus, so that the life of Jesus also 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. **13** But having the same spirit of faith, according to what is written, "I BELIEVED, THEREFORE I SPOKE," we also believe, therefore we also speak, **14** knowing that He who raised the Lord Jesus will raise us also with Jesus and will present us with you. **15** For all things are for your sakes, so that the grace which is spreading to more and more people may cause the giving of thanks to abound to the glory of God.

- Paul is working to help Corinthians to understand what the end will look like, what the goal is
- Ultimate goal: That thanksgiving to God would abound!
- Such starts by recognizing the deposit that is on the inside; the real treasure in these earthen vessels. Such treasure, the reality of Christ in our hearts, living on the inside of us, is treasure beyond measure.
- Grace is manifested by virtue of his living on the inside, calling, gifting working their way out.
- Key is to get the treasure on the inside on the outside; only then can people around us be benefited by what is in us.

I. Treasure; vs. 7-12

A. Hidden In Flesh – the treasure is initially hidden that it might be revealed later. Its hidden in our hearts; in this earthen vessel.

- The longer people see us and are around us they should see the treasure shining out of our lives.
- The surpassing greatness of God's power is to be seen coming from our lives.

B. Revealed Through Trial – in helping people in their affliction, thru healing, thru discernment, as resurrection power – whenever there is supernatural power, God see the reality of the treasure.

- The only way such expression comes forth is a God brings it out.
- How God brings forth the hidden treasure is by affliction...“in every way”, but not crushed.
- Treasure comes forth when we go thru perplexity (but not leading to despair), thru persecution (but never abandoned).
 - 10% of Paul’s ministry life was in prison
 - When not in jail, he was often beaten, even stoned.
 - He understood persecution at a deep level
- Treasure is revealed when we are struck down (but he was not destroyed).
 - He never was beaten down so as not to get back up.

II. Talk; vs. 13-14

A. Faith Precedes Speech (verse 13 is quoted from Psalm 116 that speaks of Christ suffering. The Psalmist (maybe David) was dissatisfied with people and discouraged about his life. Still, he said, in verse 10, "I believed when I said, 'I am greatly afflicted.'" Though was despondent, his heart would not let his mouth speak un-faith-filled words. If faith does not inspire our speech in difficult time, then we had best not talk.)

- If you don’t believe, don’t open your mouth...complaint is not the speech of faith
- “I believe, therefore I spoke...” Without faith, we magnify the trial and undermine the treasure.
- This earthen vessel must be cracked open; circumstances allow the vessel to be broken open.
 - When God allows the difficulties of life, He is intending the treasure to be seen
 - But too often we speak only of the circumstances; neither must we deny the circumstances

- Rather, it is a matter of seeing God THRU the circumstances. When we speak, we speak of what we see of God thru the circumstances.
- "I believed, therefore I spoke." Believing allows our speech to transmit grace to someone else around us.
- We must understand the Word of God, allowing it to fill the vault of our heart so that we can bring up the promises of God's presence and allow the treasure to come forth.
 - We need passages in our hearts, the Word of God that allows treasure to come forth when the earthen vessel of our lives is cracked.
 - As with Gideon, when the pots the men carried were cracked, the light came forth and the enemy destroyed himself.
 - This proves that God can use "crack pots".
 - The goal is that when the pot is cracked, let the right thing come out. When Paul was broken, the right thing came out.
- When he experienced death, life worked in those around him. Paul allowed the life of Christ to show forth for life's sake in others.
- The residual benefit is that we might know better our own calling & gifting, but that life is extended to others.
- Grace spreads, is made contagious thru us when we handle our difficulties properly.
 - Does grace overflow to others when we are afflicted.

B. Speech Reveals Faith

III. Thanksgiving; vs. 15

- A. Endurance Of Trials, For Others** (we endure trials not only so we can mature, but so that through them the Gospel will be preached to others; not only the message of salvation from sin, but salvation through life) – the end product of redemption is thanksgiving.
 - The beginning and end is God – the result of what God has done is praise and thanksgiving to God.

- Only those who are redeemed can recognize and thank God for grace. Angels only peer into the wonder of thanksgiving offered by those who have experienced God's grace searching them out and redeeming them.
- We don't need another material blessing to give thanks.
- Forgiveness, pardon, restoration, calling, receiving the name of God, an inheritance in this life and beyond – all testify of an abundance of grace that calls forth thanksgiving.

B. ...That Grace Might Overflow... (the word "spread" that is used in the NASB is termed "abundant" in other translations. However it is translated, the inference was that the grace that was in Paul's life was better revealed through trials. Once displayed, it then multiplied to others, who then shared it with others)

B. ...So God Will Receive Gratitude... (the grace that spread resulted in God receiving thanksgiving for which there is no substitute in our worship)

- Paul endured all so that others would see the grace of God and, in turn, come to give thanks as recipients of all He has done.