

“Don’t Lose Heart,” - 2 Corinthians 4:1-18 – September 18th, 2016

- I’ve titled today’s teaching, “Don’t Lose Heart.”
- Woven into the fabric of this chapter are specific reasons why the Apostle Paul had never lost heart in spite of his difficult trials.
- As such, Paul’s example rises from the pages of scripture in order to show us how and why we don’t need to ever lose heart.

1. We know it’s all by God’s mercy and grace (Verse 1)

- v1 Paul says that it’s because of God’s mercy that they have this ministry and do not lose heart.
- The Apostle Paul knew, without question, that his ministry was all because of both the grace and mercy of God in his own life.
- The point being is if we lose sight of God’s grace and mercy, then it’s really only a matter of time before we lose heart as well.

2. We have a clear conscience before God (Verse 2)

- v2 Paul says that they’re sufferings were not because of a guilty conscience in the sight of God, as some had accused them of.
- In other words, Paul walked in integrity before God by virtue of how he didn’t distort the word of God so as to benefit himself.
- I would suggest that the guilty conscience of willful sin and disobedience always leads us to lose heart, giving way to despair.

3. We don’t take rejection to the gospel personally (Verses 3-4)

- v3 Paul tells them that even if their gospel is veiled, he realizes it’s only because it’s veiled to those who are perishing.
- v4 He says the reason is that the god of this age has blinded the minds and eyes of the unbelievers so they can’t see the light.
- To me, this is the main reason that Christian’s lose heart and don’t share the gospel, in that they give up when they’re rejected.

G. Campbell Morgan of being rejected by unbelievers wrote, “The god of this world is able only to blind the minds of the unbelieving ... Refusal to believe is the secret and reason of the blindness that happens to men.”

4. We make it all about Jesus and not our self (Verse 5)

- v5 Paul says that what they preach is not about self, rather, it’s Jesus Christ, and that they are their slaves for Jesus’ sake.
- At first read one might question how preaching Christ and not self, can protect oneself from being discouraged and losing heart.
- However, we need look no further than to one of the main causes of depression being that of a self-absorbed life living for self.

5. We know why God breaks the vessel (Verse 6-11)

- v6-7 Paul says light shines out of darkness because we have treasure in jars of clay, showing all-surpassing power from God.
- v8-9 They were pressed but not crushed perplexed but not in despair persecuted not abandoned struck down but not destroyed.
- v10-11 He says they always carry around the death of Jesus so the life of Jesus may be revealed in and through their suffering.

- If you were to ask me what I thought was one of the greatest difficulties in the Christian life, it would be misunderstanding God.
- More specifically, not understanding why it is that God will choose to use vessels that He Himself will often times need to break.
- I think of Gideon’s army of 300 defeating the Midianites army of 135,000 by the blowing of trumpets and breaking of vessels.

- It’s interesting to note that the sound of 300 vessels breaking would have meant that the Israelites had at least 300,000 men.
- This because, the military strategy of that day was such that each trumpet and each clay pitcher represented 1,000 warriors.
- In other words, for them to hear the sound of 300 would mean that there were 300,000 men, against their army of 135,000 men.

- They became so afraid they turned on each other and slaughtered one another in their blinding fear and darkness of the night.
- The lesson here becomes quite clear in the sense that victory comes when the loud trumpet sound of God’s word is heard.
- Not only is it when the Word of God is heard, it’s when the vessel chosen by God is broken, and the light is able to shine forth.

As one commentator noted it was piano craftsman Theodore Steinway who said it’s the forty thousand pounds of pressure exerted on the two hundred forty-five strings of a piano that creates beautiful harmony. Sometimes, it is only the pressure, the persecution we undergo that causes a song to resonate in the hearts of those with whom we share. Paul knew this. That is why he could say, “Good things are happening even in our tribulation and difficulty, for through our hard times, Jesus shines brighter.”

6. We have heaven to look forward to (Verses 12-14)

- v12 Paul tells them that while death is at work in him, it’s life that’s at work in them.
- v13 Paul quotes Psalm 116 saying that he speaks that which he believes since they have the same spirit of faith.
- v14 He knows the one who raised Jesus from the dead also raises us with Jesus and presents him with them to Jesus Himself.

- What Paul says here is interesting for a number of reasons, chief of which is that he wants them to look forward to heaven.
- He’s saying if we truly believe and practice what we preach, we’ll live our lives knowing that we have heaven to look forward to.
- I’m learning in my walk with Jesus that it’s easier to get through what I’m going through knowing what I have to look forward to.

7. We know eternal glory outweighs all (Verses 15-18)

- v15-16 Paul says it’s all for their benefit and God’s glory, and that they don’t lose heart because their inwardly renewed daily.
- v17-18 He says our light momentary troubles achieve an eternal glory outweighing them all as we fix our eyes on the eternal.
- I would like to close with the specific light and momentary affliction that Paul experienced in chapter 11 to put it in perspective.