



Sermon Series: Belonging, Part 4

Sermon Title: Embracing Christ In Suffering

Date: 1/29/2023

Saul was a man who persecuted Christians until he encountered Jesus. After the moment when he met Jesus on the road to Damascus, Paul would now belong to a way of life that not only involved spreading the gospel but also one that involved suffering. 2 Corinthians 4:10

Like Paul, we will also go through periods of suffering in our lifetime. If we know that we will suffer through this process, how can we belong to Christ and share the gospel effectively?

Big idea: Embrace belonging to Christ by sharing the gospel within you.

We will see three encouragements

1. You are the vessel of God's divine treasure

2 Corinthians 4:7-9

2 Corinthians 4:6 tells us what the treasure is that Paul is speaking of. The jars of clay that Paul mentions describe you and me. God chose to put this great treasure, the light, and glory into Clay jars. Clay jars were containers that could be used daily, but they weren't very durable.

If anyone knew suffering while trying to spread the treasure within him, it was Paul. When Paul was in Lystra to spread the gospel, he was stoned and dragged outside of the city, leaving him dead. His enemies struck him down, but they couldn't destroy him. He carried an all-surpassing power to keep him going despite his sufferings.

2. You can share the gospel through your suffering

2 Corinthians 4:10-15

Paul is writing statements that further amplify and draw attention to what he had said in verses 7-9. In verses 10-12, he repeats that truth. Paul's constant suffering is an echo of the suffering that Christ had gone through for him (**John 15:20**). Paul wanted Christ, he didn't want himself

(Philippians 3:10). We are talking about personal relationship and realizing that because of the power of the resurrection, we are given new life when we trust in Jesus for salvation.

Paul's suffering made for a more effective, life-giving ministry. We must remember the importance of the gospel and that we are broken people in need of a savior. The second you forget your brokenness is the second you devalue the gospel and elevate yourself.

The purpose of denying ourselves, taking up the cross, following Christ, and spreading the good news is found in verse 15. God is glorified when we share the gospel and our testimony, despite our suffering. Our suffering serves as an opportunity to share the gospel.

3. Your momentary suffering is nothing in the scope of eternity **2 Corinthians 4: 16-18**

This is where it leads! Paul leads with, "We do not lose heart." We discussed Paul having a more effective, life-giving ministry to the Corinthians because of the trials that he experienced. Because God was renewing him, Paul did not lose heart.

Paul's message remains the same; even though on the outside we are suffering and hurting, on the inside, God is a blessing and renewing us. Paul then explains that our troubles are "**light and momentary**," and they are achieving for us "**an eternal glory that far outweighs them all**." Our suffering, even the worst of it, is brief in the measure of eternity.

Paul says that our affliction is light because of what God accomplishes through our affliction! When viewed through the lens of eternity, we have something to look forward to that is much greater than what we can experience here on earth. Romans 8:18.

As followers of Christ, we may face opposition and abuse during our ministries and disciple-making. During these times, we can follow Paul's example. He was a man who persecuted the church, who approved of the stoning of Christians and rejected Jesus as the Messiah. However, once he received Christ, he now belonged to a different way of living: one where he realized that he was a vessel for God's divine treasure. He spread that treasure through his suffering and realized his suffering was momentary in the scope of eternity.

Discussion Questions:

- What about the sermon stuck with you this week? What part challenged your thinking?
- Why does God allow His followers to suffer?
- Describe how suffering has allowed you to be a more effective witness for the gospel
- How does eternity shape your view of suffering in this world?
- How do you start a conversation when you share the gospel with someone who is suffering?
- How do you share the gospel with someone who claims they have everything they've ever wanted