

**The Village Church – Rancho Santa Fe**  
**Week #22 – Adult Bible Study**

**II Corinthians 4:1-15**

**March 11 & 12, 2025**

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**4:1-6**

1. Paul circles back to defending his ministry, ministry both to the Corinthians and, in a sense, his entire ministry
2. God had given the work of ministry to Paul
3. Paul had not sought it nor earned it: when Jesus appeared to Paul on the Damascus Road, that changed Paul's direction of life completely
4. Because God was merciful to Paul (forgiving him for persecuting him), Paul finds strength to keep going in his ministry (to not lose heart)
5. Paul has dedicated his life to sharing the Gospel, but now, the very people for whom he lives are turning on him, accusing him
6. Note the disappointment and dismay that Paul must have felt (and we all do) when people turned on him
7. Paul has not adjusted or watered down his message (though all preachers are tempted to do just that)
8. Apparently, some are saying that Paul's ministry is not effective enough: not everyone who hears him believes
9. Some do not believe the news about Jesus because they have been blinded by Satan (the god of this world)
10. Those who do not believe are the "perishing" ones – still in death because they have not seen and believed the light of the Gospel
11. Paul had seen the light when Jesus appeared to him as (blinding) light!
12. Paul also defends himself against the accusation that he speaks about himself too much. His only purpose is to speak about Jesus (and sometimes he does indeed speak of how he himself believes and follows Jesus)
13. Paul sees himself as a slave to Jesus and therefore also a slave to the Corinthians because in serving them he serves Jesus
14. All of this is because Paul saw the light: the same light mentioned in Genesis, light that reveals truth, light that reveals God, light that beamed from Jesus' face on the Damascus Road

**4:7-15**

15. Paul goes on to speak of "this treasure," referring *not* to an immortal soul or divine spark that lives within a mortal body (clay jars), but referring to:
  - a. The light of Christ & God
  - b. The ministry that results from the sharing of this light
16. This light – THE LIGHT! – shines forth not because of but in spite of the human being (Paul, and us) within which it is contained and from which it comes
17. The weakness of the container (clay jars, human life) only serves to magnify the strength of The Light himself
18. Paul enlarges this weak/strong dynamic with 4 couplets: afflicted/not crushed; perplexed/not despairing; persecuted/not forsaken; struck down/not destroyed
  - a. These can refer to the physical challenges he faced, such as shipwreck, beatings, imprisonment
  - b. And they can refer to the spiritual challenges, such as self-doubt, grief over the suffering of others, depression and despair when things do not go well and people do not accept the Gospel he has dedicated his life to sharing
19. Paul does not despair because God gives him strength, through God's grace
20. Next, Paul describes his physical and spiritual challenges as "carrying in the body the death of Jesus"
  - a. Jesus himself suffered the same challenges – in his earthly form and life – which only ends in death
21. But...this is so that "the life of Jesus" will shine through all the more strongly
  - a. In Paul, as it did in Jesus
  - b. This is God, alive and present in the human beings, Jesus and Paul
  - c. And in ALL who know and follow Jesus
22. All the trials and tribulations of life – especially those that come precisely because we follow the way of Jesus (and not the ways of the world) – serve only to magnify (glorify, manifest, show forth) the power and grace of God
23. And, finally, the "death" at work in Paul (his current suffering & challenges) serves to bring "life" to the Corinthians (they will see and know the power of Christ in their own lives, in the same way that Paul does)

## Questions for Your Life Today

- A. Since all Christians are meant to “minister” to others, it is important to identify the accusations and resistance that we ourselves face. In what ways have you needed to defend your ministry and life?
- B. Can we or should we always blame Satan when our evangelism falls flat, or are we ourselves sometimes to blame? How do we fail?
- C. Why would preachers and teachers of the Gospel modify their message?
- D. How can we point to ourselves as examples for others without becoming proud and self-centered?
- E. Christians are “slaves” to others for the sake of Jesus: What does that mean to you?
- F. In what ways have you been (or are currently) afflicted, perplexed, persecuted, and struck down?
- G. And, for you, how has God kept you going?

Notes by The Rev. Dr. Jack Baca, Senior Pastor, The Village Church, Rancho Santa Fe, California

### Resources:

- Interpretation Commentary on First Corinthians, Richard B. Hays, John Knox Press, Louisville, Kentucky, 1997
- Interpretation Commentary on Second Corinthians, Ernest Best, John Knox Press, Louisville, Kentucky, 1987
- The Bible Speaks Today: The Message of 1 Corinthians – Life in the Local Church, David Prior, InterVarsity Press, Downers Grove, Illinois, 1985
- The Bible Speaks Today: The Message of 2 Corinthians – Power in Weakness, Paul Barnett, InterVarsity Press, Downers Grove, Illinois, 1988
- The Communicator’s Commentary, 1, 2 Corinthians, Kenneth L. Chafin, Word Books, Waco, Texas, 1985