

Sermon Notes on II Cor. 4:7-14, Trinity XVI

1. Our text divides itself into two parts: Vss. 7-12 and vss. 13-15. The first part is summarized in vs. 12: "Therefore death is at work in us, but life is at work in you." As Jesus' ministers labor and suffer for His sake, Christians see the very life of Jesus at work. The second part could be summarized by the quotation from Ps. 116: "I believed and therefore I spoke." Jesus' ministers are surrounded by death, persecution and decay. But they believe. This faith is caused by the fact that God Who raised Jesus from the dead will raise also all His believers to life everlasting. He closes in vs. 15 by saying that all these things happen to Jesus' ministers so that the grace of God which is at work in many people will cause thanksgiving to the glory of God.
2. As just mentioned "to the glory of God" are the final words of our text. At Jn. 11:25 Jesus says to us: "He who believes in me, **THOUGH HE DIE**, shall live." Faith in Jesus Christ does not make us immune to death. God warned Adam and Eve that if they would eat of the forbidden fruit they would die. After they sinned He gave them the Gospel, but they still had to die. Paul says at Rom. 6:23 "The wages of sin is death." That is true even though Paul adds "But the gift of God is eternal life through Jesus Christ our Lord." In this life Christians are always dying, but always living. And, finally, all is to the glory of God Whom we must thank even for our afflictions and adversities.
3. Paul makes a statement in vs. 7 which is explained in vss. 8-12. "We have this treasure (the Gospel) in clay jars so that we see that the Gospel's extraordinary power comes from God, not from us." We are very frail and fragile. But God puts His wonderful Gospel in us and thus God is glorified in fragile people. Vss. 8-9 explain vs. 7. We are hard pressed but God sees to it that we are not crushed. We are in doubt but God sees to it that we do not despair. We are hunted like wild animals but God does not forsake us. We are knocked down like wrestlers but God sees to it that we are not destroyed. In vs. 10 the first part explains the four difficulties of vss. 8-9 and the second part explains the four deliverances of vss. 8-9. "We are always carrying this dying of Jesus in our body so that the life of Jesus is shown in our mortal body." The world sees only the dying. The faith of the Christian sees the life of Jesus. He summarizes this section in vs. 12.
4. Vss. 13-15 spell the real difference between unbelievers and believers. Read Ps. 116 from which the quotation in vs. 13 is taken. The Psalmist was surrounded by death, grief, affliction and trouble. But his faith made the difference. "I believed, therefore I spoke." And Paul adds: "We believe, therefore also we speak." And vs. 14 tells us what this faith is based on. Christ's resurrection is my resurrection. He said: "Because I live you too will live."
5. In vs. 15 Paul says: "All of these things which I've mentioned happen for your sake." What things? They see the wonderful power of the Gospel working in Christian ministers who are only fragile clay pots. They see them hard pressed but not crushed. They see them in doubt but they do not despair. They see them hunted but not forsaken. They see them knocked down but not destroyed.
6. Jesus said (Jn. 15:20): "A servant is not greater than his master; if they have persecuted me, they will also persecute you." He went through it all for us. Through His death came life. And through our dying each day life comes to other Christians. All this happens so that we might praise and glorify God. We are always dying but always living. It won't take long before we pass from this life to eternal life. There death will be no more. All glory to God alone!

Sermon Outline on II Cor. 4:7-14, Trinity XVI

Theme: THE GOSPEL, PREACHED BY FRAIL MEN, GLORIFIES GOD

Introduction: God is glorified through the life of his children on earth. Mt. 5:16 tells us that the works of a Christian glorify our heavenly Father. And our text for today makes the point that the message of the Gospel, entrusted to fragile people, gives life to mankind dead in its trespasses and sins. Our text begins with the words "We have this treasure (the Gospel)" and ends with the words "to God's glory." Our text shows how this is worked out.

I-We Are Always Dying But Always Living Vss. 7-12

A-God puts His extraordinary power in clay jars. Vs. 7. Clay jars break very easily. We are careful as to what we put in them lest it be lost. Paul compares us to clay jars. We don't last long. We break easily. But God puts His treasure, His extraordinary power in us. The Gospel is the power of God unto salvation. Rom. 1:16. It is the still, small voice which preserves the 7000 among the many heathen. I Kings 19:9-18. It has the power to cause rebirth in a sinner. I Pet. 1:23. This extraordinary power preserves the clay jars so that they can do their work.

B-Death is working in us but life is working in you. Vs. 12

1-We are hard pressed but not crushed. Read the book of Acts. Peter, Stephen, Paul and others suffered constantly for the sake of the preaching of the Gospel. They were hard pressed but not crushed. For example in Philippi; Paul and Silas were imprisoned but it led to the jailor's conversion and Paul's release.

2-We are in doubt but not in despair. Think of Paul when he returned to Jerusalem for the last time. The Jewish Christians there accepted him. But his enemies among the Jews spread stories about Paul. He was mobbed and had to be rescued. He was in doubt but did not despair.

3-We are hunted but not forsaken. Here we have the picture of hunters hunting wild animals. When the animal is caught it is truly forsaken. But the Christian is not forsaken when he is hunted. In the Garden of Gethsemane, when Jesus' enemies were hunting Him, all forsook Jesus and fled. But God did not forsake Him.

4-We are struck down but not destroyed. Here we have the wrestler who is knocked down. Christians are knocked down but not destroyed. Vss. 10-11 of our text read: "We are in our bodies always being killed with Jesus so that you can see in our bodies the life of Jesus. While we're living, we're always being given up to die for Jesus so that you can see in our dying bodies the life of Jesus."

II-We Believe. Therefore we speak. Vs. 13

A-This is the source of the Christian's endurance and survival. Paul quotes from Ps. 116. Like David, Paul's faith in his Lord gave him the strength to speak. He was a fragile and frail earthen jar but he had the very power of God which caused him to speak to his friends, his enemies, kings and governors. We are like Paul in this respect.

B-This is all based on the resurrection of Jesus Christ. The world is a morgue. It is filled not only with dead corpses but also with people who are spiritually dead. But Christ arose from the dead and assures us that we too shall rise from the dead. We shall all appear before Him on judgment day.

C-All of this causes people to praise and glorify God. Vs. 15. Man is weak and frail but is the vehicle of God's voice in the world. Man is weak and frail but God has given him faith in His Word and therefore man speaks what God wants spoken. This causes people to praise and glorify God. We are always dying but always living.