*DAILY DEVOTIONS*

April 27 – May 2

*Second Corinthians Chapters Four and Five*

**Monday, April 27 2 Corinthians 4:1-4**

*“We do not lose heart”*

Any of us who try to serve God in any way often have reasons for being discouraged. The awareness of our human limitations and imperfections take a toll on our self-confidence. Then, too, the indifference of people to whom we try to witness and share the gospel makes us wonder sometimes if it’s really such good news. It is easy to feel dejected when we see the aggressiveness of evil in our world. And the disunity and lack of love among so many Christians certainly takes the edge off of our witness.

But when we read the Scriptures and the story of the lives of the early Christians, we discover that it has always been this way. Paul experienced this and yet wrote to his friends that in spite of everything, “we do not lose heart.” First, he says that our ministry is from God who gives each of us a specific ministry – something we can do and that God wants done. Second, he points out that the gospel message we have to share with others is God’s Word of truth, and that it can be shared honestly without having to resort to trickery, distortion, or deception.

*I praise you, Lord, for you have opened my eyes to your spiritual truth. Amen.*

**Tuesday, April 28 2 Corinthians 4:5-10**

*“Clay jars”*

Paul continues to give reasons for why he is not discouraged by the negative responses of some to his ministry. First, Paul knew that the real treasure was Christ and that he, Paul, was merely the vessel that carried it. The fact that the perfect Christ has come to reside in imperfect me simply shows that whatever I may accomplish for Christ is not because of me but because of the One who is in me. The treasure we bear is not diminished by the vessel we are; rather, the vessel we are is made valuable by the treasure it contains.

Second, Paul was encouraged because life had not thrown more at him than he could handle. When we read verses 7-10 it is easy to concentrate on the bad things that had happened to him, but we also need to pick up on the other end of each phrase. Then, we will see that even though life had knocked him down, it had not knocked him out; he was still ministering for the Lord. As God’s people, we are a lot tougher than we sometimes think, and it’s encouraging for us to realize that we can cope with a great deal with the strength that Christ gives.

*The light of your Son, Lord, shines in our hearts so we can know you. Amen.*

**Wednesday, April 29 2 Corinthians 4:11-15**

*“We also believe and therefore speak”*

The first reason for Paul to persevere in his ministry of preaching the gospel and teaching those who have turned to Christ, in spite of and in the midst of the adversity that engulfs him, is his knowledge that the God who raised the Lord Jesus from the dead will also raise Paul with Jesus, together with all who will likewise stand resurrected in God’s presence. If the cross of Christ explains why Paul suffers rejection, it is the resurrection of Christ that gives him the confident hope needed to continue while being opposed.

The second reason for Paul to persevere in his ministry is his assurance of its present impact. He keeps on ministering, no matter what, because he knows that what he believes and speaks about is having an effect in the lives of others. He tells his readers that the purpose of his ministry is to display God’s glory through the thanksgiving that has increased among many as a result of his ministry. The more people who experience God’s grace, the greater the thanksgiving they offer to God for that grace.

*Your Spirit, Lord, empowers me to believe and to speak what I believe. Amen.*

*DAILY DEVOTIONS*

April 27 – May 2

*Second Corinthians Chapters Four and Five*

**Thursday, April 30 2 Corinthians 4:16-18**

*“We do not lose heart”*

Paul repeated what he stated in the first verse of the chapter: “We do not lose heart.” The reason he gave for this affirmation here in verse 16 was God’s ability to renew his spirit when circumstances got him down. Though he was confronted by both the aging process and the possibility of death, he could still affirm that while his body was dying, his spirit was being encouraged daily. This helped him to face life now and gave him hope even about death.

Paul also drew strength from setting what he was doing into the larger context of things. In verses 17 and 18 he put the “moment” in the context of “eternity” and the “visible” in the context of the “invisible.” Often when we get discouraged about what we are accomplishing, it helps to step back and look at it from a different point of view. We have become too spiritually nearsighted, and living in a world of “instant everything” has robbed us of the perspective of time. Eternity has a way of telling us what was valuable and what was permanent, and exposing that which was temporary and useless.

*When I feel discouraged, Lord, I turn to you and you restore me. Amen.*

**Friday, May 1 2 Corinthians 5:1-5**

*“We long to put on our heavenly bodies”*

Paul knows that whatever this life may bring in terms of suffering and destruction, the life that is to come will just as surely be filled with the glory of God. Paul’s confidence in God’s future provision causes him, like all believers, to “groan” in the midst of his present suffering. This groaning of anticipation is itself evidence that God has promised believers more to come than the moaning of suffering and death. If God had not planted this seed of hope in his heart, his current suffering would be all that he could expect.

Paul longs to be clothed with his heavenly body because he knows that when he dies he will not be found naked (like Adam and Eve after they had sinned), that is, that he will not be found guilty by God in the final judgment. In Christ, he has been justified (found “not guilty”), and in Christ he will be, like Christ, raised to new life. In this way, his mortal life which is housed in his mortal body will be swallowed up by immortal life which will be housed in an immortal body. How can he be sure of this? The Holy Spirit, God’s gift living in us, guarantees it.

*We live and eventually die in this world, Lord, but it is not our home. Amen.*

**Saturday, May 2 2 Corinthians 5:6-10**

*“We live by faith, not by sight”*

Paul, like all believers, lives by faith and not by sight. Paul’s lack of “sight” refers to what is now being experienced in this earthly life. In the present, it is impossible to see the fullness of the resurrection glory still to come. Nevertheless, he trusts in God’s promises as the ultimate reality and lives accordingly; he does not live as if his present sufferings were the sum of life. It is Paul’s confidence in God’s future that determines how he lives in the present. In other words, the apostle fixes his gaze on what cannot be seen - his inner glory, not his outer affliction; his inward renewal, not his external decay; the new age, not the old; resurrection life, not present dying; the weighty, not the trifling; the eternal, not the temporal; the heavenly, not the earthly.

Paul’s desire is to please his Lord, and he knows that he does so when he walks by faith and not by sight. Such desire requires living by the courage of one’s conviction of the resurrection *and* the confidence of one’s awareness of the universal judgment to come in which those who have walked by faith will join God forever in heaven.

*Dim the things of earth, Lord, as I turn my eyes upon you. Amen.*