



## BELIEVERS CHAPEL

6420 Churchill Way | Dallas, Texas | 75230 | t 972.239.5371 | believerschapeldallas.org

The Sermons of S. Lewis Johnson

“The Suffering and Glory of New Covenant Ministry”

2 Corinthians 4:7-15

TRANSCRIPT

Bad weather out of the 17 or 19 days that we were in the Netherlands, and about a week -- not quite a week in England, I think it rained every day but about two of the time. And it was cold. And for one of the few times, I think, I didn't take the right kind of clothes. Martha did, but I didn't so I suffered a bit from the cold. I took a yellow cashmere sweater, which I like, with me. And I think after about a little over two weeks I cut it off. But it was a very interesting time, and we enjoyed it. And I did enjoy exegeting the Greek text of the Epistle to the Romans again for a few students there in Tyndale Theological Seminary.

If you think about the ministry of the word of God in the Third World and also in Europe, you might remember that theological seminary. It needs the prayers of the saints. It's one of the schools of the greater Europe mission which has about fifteen to eighteen schools in Europe. Some of them are Bible institutes, and then they have some theological seminaries. They have about three -- this is the fourth, I believe, of the theological seminaries that they do have. Maybe it will be the fifth because they do have one in Scandinavia, one in Germany, one in France, and one in Belgium, which is very small as well. But they do need prayers of Christians, because it's not easy in Europe to have a theological institution that is not connected with the state in some way.

As you probably know, most of the theological schools are connected with churches which, in turn, are often state churches. Such as in Germany where the people support -- where they pay taxes that go to support the state church. The Anglican Lutheran Church and of course you are familiar with Britain and the way in which things are done there.

One of the things is good, however, is the fact that over there they don't feel threatened about mentioning the Christian faith. And that's something to be thankful for and quite a bit different from the United States.

Now, we have been expounding and about three weeks ago, we were expounding 2 Corinthians chapter 4, verse 3 through verse 6, and we are turning to 2 Corinthians 4, verse 7 through 15 for the ministry of the word today. So if you have your New Testaments, turn with me to the 7<sup>th</sup> verse of the 4<sup>th</sup> chapter of 2 Corinthians. We will read through verse 15.

The apostle has just said, "for God who said, light shall shine out of darkness is the one who has shone in our hearts to give the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Christ." And now Paul says,

"But we have this treasure in earthen vessels, that the surpassing greatness of the power may be of God and not from ourselves. *We are* afflicted in every way but not crushed; perplexed, but not despairing; persecuted, but not forsaken; struck down, but not destroyed -- always carrying about in the body the dying of Jesus, that the life of Jesus also may be manifested in our body. For we who live are constantly being delivered over to death for Jesus' sake, that the life of Jesus also may be manifested in our mortal flesh. So then, (Now, you will notice that the apostle, in this next line, moves a bit from just what he has said, which is the light of Jesus may be manifested in our mortal flesh. But now notice that the issue and consequence of his life is now the Corinthians) so death is working in us, but life in you. But having the same spirit of faith, according to

what is written, *‘I believed and therefore I spoke,’* we also believe therefore also we speak.’ (That text *“I believed and therefore I spoke,”* is taking from Psalm 116 written by David in the midst of trials and difficulties. And so the apostle has very nicely and aptly cited the sentiment of David who experienced the same kind of difficulties and trials that the apostles in their ministry did. And so *“I believed and therefore I spoke,”* is in their harmony with the sense and the disposition of King David. The 14th verse continues,) knowing that He who raised the Lord Jesus will also raise us also with Jesus, and will present *us* with you. For all things *are* for your sakes, that the grace, that is having spreading to more people, may cause giving of thanks to abound to the glory of God.”

You know one of the nicest things about 2 Corinthians is that the insight that it gives into the apostle’s mind and thought. In fact, if we were looking for sections of the New Testament to give us a spiritual insight into the life, thoughts, motivations, ambitions of the apostles and particularly of Paul, this is the book to which we would turn. It undoubtedly is the most personal of Paul’s letters and, for that reason, it’s very valuable for us because it gives us an insight into Paul that we do not find in many of his other letters.

We do find, of course, things that are said in them that are important for that purpose, but this epistle is one that I love because it particularly lets us know Paul’s thoughts, motivations, desires, and the things that governed him in his ministry for Jesus Christ. And it is not simply for individuals like Paul who were apostles but for all who ministered Christ and all Christians do that in one way or another. Some stand behind a pulpit quite a bit, but all of us who believed in Christ are ministers of Christ and, therefore, the things that the apostle speaks in his ministry are exceedingly applicable to every one of us. You businessmen, you housewives, or you career women or whatever may be your particular duty that you perform day after day, school. That is your

opportunity to minister for Christ. Therefore, Paul's words are applicable to us. Let's bow together in a moment of prayer.

[Prayer] Father, we are exceedingly grateful for Thee for the privilege that is ours to turn again to the word of God, to listen to the apostle as he wrote the Corinthians and explained to them the things that were upon his heart and mind as he represented the Lord Jesus Christ as his apostle.

And we ask, Lord, that something of the same spirit that governed him may grip us as well in 1987. May the truths that he unfolds here be particularly significant to us. May it be said in least in measure that death works in us who are Christians that life may exist for others as well. We thank Thee for the privilege of the ministry word. We thank Thee for the Chapel and its elders and deacons and members and the friends who are here today. We pray Thy blessing on this particular attempt to represent the Lord Jesus Christ in all of its ministries, the written ministries, the radio, and other forms of outreach. May Thy blessing rest up them all of them for the glory of our Lord's name.

We pray particularly for those who have requested our prayers. And, Lord, we know that there are many who are suffering and have need of special ministries, the ministry that that Thou alone canst give. Lord, we pray that, by Thy grace, that Thou will manifest Thyself as the apostle has written. Manifest, Lord, the exceeding greatness of Thy power and the deliverance of the saints of God in the experiences of life. We know that ultimately we shall truly experience a life that is life eternal. In the meantime, we appeal to Thee, Lord, to particularly help those who are suffering in illness. And for other forms of need, we commit to Thee. We pray Thy blessing upon us as we sing and as we listen to the word of God today.

For Jesus' sake. Amen.

[Message] Had only sung that once as long as he can remembers. Now, he has been in the chapel a long time. And I think I was absent the day in which it was sung [laughter]. And I want you to know that I sang three different versions up here this morning. I think the third was the best of the three, but I'm not altogether sure. We need to sing it again, I guess, but the sentiment that lies behind it is very good and very appropriate because it is grounded in the fact that our Lord's finished work is the ground of our acceptance and also of our assurance before the Lord, and it's really very fitting for one of the things that the apostle is going to say here in this passage that we are looking at this morning.

Mrs. Ray is a remarkable church secretary. She -- I don't know if anybody's superior to her, and I know a lot of church secretaries in my day, but there's one weakness that we have found and that she is not a mind reader. It's unfortunate.

I left town, did not give her the Scripture nor the title for the message today. If you will notice in the bulletin, it's not listed. And the reason and the fault for it is entirely hers. She's not a mind reader. And so our passage is chapter 4, verse 7 thru verse 15, and the subject for today is "The Suffering and the Glory of New Covenant Ministry."

Now, if you will remember a few weeks ago, the last thing that the apostle stated in the immediately preceding section of chapter 4 of 2 Corinthians in the 6<sup>th</sup> verse was this, "For God who had said light shall shine put of darkness, is the one who has shone in our hearts to *give* the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Christ."

Now, that is the way Paul describes the content of the ministry that God had given to him, "The glory of God in the face of Christ." And now, of course, by virtue of the context that Paul has been speaking in, something that is not simply in the face of Christ but by the grace of God is found in the apostle's heart. The greatness of the message raises the question, "Why, Paul, if ministry is so glorious are its ministers so weak and contemptible in the worlds' eyes? Persecuted, hounded, scorned, hunted. Why is it if the ministry is so glorious do ministers live as they do?"

Now, the apostle knew this very well, perhaps better than any man in the new covenant days. In the 10<sup>th</sup> chapter in the 10<sup>th</sup> verse he says, giving words that people said about him they say, “For *his* letters *are* weighty and strong, but in personal presence well he’s unimpressive and in *his* speech contemptible.” So the apostle had to contend with the fact that the world was not very happy with him. As a matter of fact, true Christians, both in old covenant days, if we may speak of them in that way, and in new covenant days that had been the history of those who have responded to the gospel of Christ and have sought to proclaim him. One can trace the history of the Christian Church in the history of its martyrs.

There was John Chrystostom, the golden-tongued preacher who ultimately was in the cathedral in Constantinople, driven by unscrupulous enemies from his cathedral there, hunted like a beast through the inhospitable wastes of Armenia, until after enduring extreme torments of mind and body, he succumbed to the sufferings that were his experience of a testifier of the Lord Jesus Christ. On September 14<sup>th</sup> in the year 407, he was hunted for Christ’s sake yet as he died, rejoicing in the knowledge of not being forsaken, he said for his last words, “Glory to God for all things. Amen.”

And William Tyndale, one of the loveliest of the characters of The Reformation, whose only crime was his determination to obey the call of God, to translate Holy Scripture into the English tongue in a way that the average Englishman might be able to understand the word of God, he was a man who was hounded into exile by fierce adversaries of the truth who came from within the Church, men such as Sir Thomas More and others who sought his life. He was hunted from place to place on the continent and finally, at a little place not far from Brussels, called Thetford, he was there strangled and burned to death.

Some years ago a friend of mine, who was a Christian man in Brussels took me out to that place. He said, “I want to show you what we think of Christians in Belgium.” And we went out and saw Tyndale’s grave, overgrown with weeds and things like this,

the little monument to William Tyndale, a man who was a great follower of Luther in the doctrine of justification by faith, in the days when there were very few who believed that. But nevertheless, gave his life that men may have a Bible that they could read and could potentially, at least, understand in the English language. He finished his course with joy as a martyr for the Lord Jesus Christ, and these two individuals are just an example of the thousands, literally probably millions, who have followed in the train of these who sought to proclaim the gospel of the Lord Jesus Christ.

Now, the common answer to the question, “Why, Paul, if the ministry is so glorious are its ministers so weak and condemnable in the world’s eyes?” is a justifiable one. It’s this: It’s the antagonism of a wicked world. And of course that’s true. John tells us, “The whole world lies there in the wicked one.” The Lord Jesus said with reference to the world in the Upper Room Discourse, speaking to the apostles concerning the Holy Spirit, “The world cannot receive the Holy Spirit.” Not, does not, but *cannot* receive the Holy Spirit.

In this very passage here in the 3<sup>rd</sup> and 4<sup>th</sup> verses the apostle says, “If our gospel is veiled, it’s veiled to those who are perishing, in whose case the God of this world has blinded the minds of the unbelieving that they might not see the light of the gospel of the glory of Christ, who is the image of God.”

So it’s perfectly justifiable for us to say the reason that the ministers of the new covenant, a glorious ministry, are scorned, hounded, persecuted, and contemptible in the world’s eyes is because the world is incapable of responding to the gospel, apart from divine sovereign grace. That’s certainly true. Paul’s answer, however, is not that precisely that here. His answer here is, “That the life of Jesus may be manifested in us, and God’s power exalted.” That’s strange, but we need to remember this in our day. In fact, that’s precisely what he says right here when he says, “But we have this treasure in earthen vessels that the surpassing greatness of the power may be of God and not from ourselves.”

In other words, the apostle states that one of the reasons things are as they are is that God’s supreme power may be manifested in his deliverance of the saints. In other words, only a sovereign God could pull this off. And the very fact that men such as Tyndale and Chrystostom and Lutheran and Calvin and all of the others who have given their lives for the testimony of the gospel of Christ, they are testifiers to the fact that God’s purposes are accomplished.

Now, I know what you’re thinking. Well, they lost their own lives. It’s not fun to be strangled and burned. Although to tell you the truth, if I’d been strangled, I don’t think I would care particularly about the burning. It wouldn’t bother me too much if I’d already been strangled. But, nevertheless, the facts are that we don’t look at this life as the end of everything. We look beyond this life. And as Paul will go on to say, “Christians are indestructible.” Oh, we can deter them along the way. We can cause them to lose their lives by being martyred for Christ’s sake, but they still are victories. And that will come out as we continue.

Now, the apostle then looks at it that way, and it’s something that we need to keep in mind, as well. The 7<sup>th</sup> verse begins, but. Unfortunately, the Authorized Version does not have this “but,” but it’s true to the Greek text and we should notice it because he’s drawing a contrast. He’s contrasting the splendor of the message with the fragile containers of the message the apostles and others like him. And he does it strikingly. For he says, “We have this treasure in earthen vessels,” very much like a person may have a tremendous amount of jewelry and precious stones and keep them in a cardboard box or something like that. So we have this treasure in earthen vessels. What is this treasure? Well, I suggest to you, to put it in the simplest language, it’s the knowledge of God.

Now, if it’s the knowledge of God, then, for men who are created by God, it is obviously the knowledge that we should most have, and it’s the knowledge that we least have in our society. In fact, everything in our society is opposed to the opportunity to

gain the knowledge of God, which is the one thing that we ought to have if we have nothing else, the knowledge of God.

Take our school system. We enter elementary school. And in elementary school the one thing -- the most important thing that we as human beings should come to know is forbidden us. We cannot know the knowledge of God. We cannot study the knowledge of God. So we advance through elementary school, and we come into high school, and the one thing that we do not learn is the knowledge of God. We are not allowed, in our society, to study the knowledge of God in schools of education, mind you, in education. And so we go on to the colleges and universities and, with the exception of a few Christian colleges, we still are prevented from knowing the one thing - - now, I shouldn’t put it that way because we’re not prevented, but we’re deterred from coming to understand the one thing that one ought to understand in human education, the knowledge of God. Paul says, “We have this treasure in earthen vessels.” You know the reason for that is not what people like to think it is. The reason for it is that the world feels threatened by the knowledge of God.

That’s one of the nice things about Britain, over there you can mention God. You can even study the Bible in schools. Now, of course, if you study British Theology you will know there’s not a whole lot of true knowledge of God being proclaimed there, just as in our country. But, nevertheless, they don’t feel threatened about it, and in the newspapers and in the schools you can gain knowledge of Scripture. You can take courses in Scripture. But over here things are a bit different.

Paul says, “We have this treasure in earthen vessels,” the knowledge of God. Now, he found it in the face of Christ. So if we are to understand the knowledge of God and what Paul means by this treasure, look at the face of Christ. That is, look at the ministry of Christ, look at the person, look at him historically. Born by supernatural conception by the Holy Spirit and then by the Virgin Mary. Tempted, baptized, that is brought into his Messianic ministry. Tempted, shown to be able to be exactly what he

would become, then carrying out his ministry. As Peter says, “He went about doing good, saying, repent for the kingdom of the heavens is at hand. Finally, in the later days of his ministry in the city of Jerusalem, offering up his life as an atoning sacrifice, buried, raised again the third day, now ascended to the right hand of the throne of God, there living to secure all of the blessings that he has accomplished by the blood that he shed in that atoning sacrifice on Calvary’s cross.” In other words, the ultimate issues of life bound up in the ministry of the Lord Jesus Christ. That is a treasure. That is a magnificent treasure. And the fact that this is not the provenience of our educational systems is one of the sad things of our society today.

Look at this theology. Look at Christ. Look at the blending of the divine attributes and the person of Christ. The majesty, the holiness, the justice and then, on the other hand, the mercy, the grace, the kindness, the goodness and see how they are perfectly blended in our Lord Jesus Christ. Mercy and peace have met together truly in him. And as he hangs on Calvary’s cross with the justice and holiness of God, meting out the divine judgment on him for those for whom he stands and at the same time manifesting the good and grace of God in providing us with just such a savior and think of the privilege of proclaiming that message. I think we can understand why Paul said, “This is truly a treasure. We have this treasure in earthen vessels.”

As far as experientially is concerned, we learn through the experiences of divine redemption that this comes by virtue of the sovereign grace of God. The apostle, in one of his letters to the Corinthians earlier said to them, “No man can call Jesus Lord except by the Holy Spirit.” In other words, the sovereign grace of God that opens a man’s heart to the knowledge of God in Christ is a work of God. It’s a work that displays the Excellency and the greatness of his power; the grandest of truths are found in this treasure and provide the most astonishing effects in men’s lives. Repentance, faith, forgiveness of sins, eternal life, eternal hope, for that matter, and all of the other blessings associated with it.

One of the nice things about traveling in Britain to me is to read their newspapers. Because, again, in the newspapers there are things we don’t see over here. I like to read, this isn’t because I’m an old man, although that may have something to do with it, because old men don’t understand themselves too well, and some young people don’t either, for that matter. But anyway, some young people don’t understand young people. But one of the nice things is to read the obituaries, because in the obituaries they go into much more detail than we do over here, particularly, if he’s a prominent man. It’s like *The New York Times*. *The New York Times* does it, too. I look at their obituaries all the time. I take *The New York Times* here, and one of the things I like to do is look back at that obituary column and read the things they say about an important man who’s died.

One of the men who died while we were over there was Gunner Myrdal, Swedish economist, social socialist as well as a very significant in the social affairs of this country. As a matter of fact, several of his works have had tremendous influence upon our economists and those who are interested in matters that have to do with our society. As you probably know, were very, very, significant in the decision of Brown vs. Education in the 1960s. That is 1954, was the time in the 1950s. Well, Gunner Myrdal, as you might expect, was not your outstanding follower if the Apostle Paul, because the things he wrote were obviously things that were not associated altogether with biblical thinking. But in the obituary on the nineteenth of this month, a few days back, *The Daily Telegraph* has this to say about him. He wrote that his thinking was (now quoting Gunner Myrdal) “was directly rooted in the philosophy of The Enlightenment which was fundamentally optimistic. Human beings were good and we could improve conditions through reforms.” Now, here is a man who lived to be eighty-eight years of age and began his life following that philosophy. And if you’ll read Gunner Myrdal’s life and see what he did, and he was an outstanding man in his day in many ways, you will discover that his life was really governed by these principles.

Now, this is what he said near the end of his life. He said near the end of his life, though, it seemed that the world was quote, (now these are really his words), “The world was going to hell in every possible way,” unquote. Now, here’s a man who has traveled a long way, but not to Christianity. He’s traveled from optimism, and we can do anything that we want to do if we make the proper reforms and also institute the proper social devices by which to accomplish them, who at the end of his days acknowledges that we are going to hell in almost every possible way. He’s learned a great truth. He hasn’t learned Christianity, but he’s learned a great truth.

When the apostle speaks of the treasure in earthen vessels, that really is a treasure, a magnificent treasure. Something we shouldn’t ever forget. Now why? Paul, if the ministry is so glorious, why are its ministers so weak and contemptible in the world’s eyes? “We have this treasure in earthen vessels,” Paul says, “that the light” -- let me turn this around -- “that the surpassing greatness of the power may be of God and not of ourselves.”

In other words, things are as they are, that men might come to understand the surpassing greatness of the power of God and that it is the power of God and not our power. The infinite committed to the finite that men might come to know the infinite. That’s why. Weakness is a challenge to power and to render conspicuous his sufficiency out of the total insufficiency of human beings is one of the purposes of our human existence. If we lose that, we have lost something that is truly significant. We do not know the treasure if we don’t understand why the apostles were the men that they were. Well, we can see this all through the Scriptures of course, if we read the Bible, but we don’t read the Bible anymore. If we read the Bible, we would discover that that was one of the great things of Scripture.

God is the only totally holy, just, righteous, good being in this universe. For him to suggest that he ought to be modest in his power is to sin and he cannot sin, for he is what he says that he is through his work. He is the only good, the only supreme being,

the only merciful, the only gracious person. And for him to present himself in any other way is to falsify his existence. Therefore, he is the only person who can glorify himself and not sin. In fact, if he doesn’t glorify himself, he has sinned.

So now, what must he do? Demonstrate his greatness, demonstrate his goodness, demonstrate that all of the treasure of the knowledge of truth lies in him. And all through Scripture, that’s what we see.

What about Gideon? Well, now Gideon had an interesting experience. Gideon found himself, as one of the Israelites, found himself with 130,000 Midianites opposing him, and he with an army of 32,000. He looked out and he said, “It four to one.” What we need are some Exocet missiles. And even though they are out of date, they can still sink American frigates, but, nevertheless, we need some Exocets, four to one, how can they win a war like that? And the Lord said, “Gideon, you’re thinking is not very good. You’ve got too many, not too little. Get your army together and say all of you that want to fight over here and those of you that don’t want to fight, you can go home.”

Twenty-two thousand of his thirty-two thousand left and now the odds, thirteen to one. And Gideon, no doubt, is thinking, well, things have really gotten bad now. We really need some firepower. And the Lord said, “Gideon, there’s still too many. We’ll propose a little test. We’ll have them all go down to the river and over on the other side of the Midianites and we’ll watch and we’ll see how they drink their water. And so those that go down there and get down on their knees and drink the water and take their eyes off the enemy, put them in one pile over here. And those who keep their eyes on the enemy and are vigilant, put them over here.” And Gideon was astonished, no doubt despairing, to see, if he understood what was transpiring, that ninety-seven hundred of the ten thousand got down on their knees, forgot all about the Midianites and satisfied themselves of the water. And three hundred fellows got over there, kept their eye on the enemy, vigilant. And God said, “With the three hundred, we’ll win the war.” Now the odds, if my mathematics is correct, is about four hundred and fifty to one.

So you cannot say when Gideon wins the victory, it was won by some superior firepower. As a matter of fact, the Lord’s not even going to use any guns at all. He said, “Gideon, what we are going to fight with is something that is stronger than Exocets, power of God. Now, Gideon, what I want you to do is to get a trumpet. Get a trumpet and get some torches and get some vessels. In fact, I think Paul probably had that passage in mind, some vessels. And so put the torches in the vessels and the trumpets and then at the proper time shout.

Now, when I went to Europe, one of the things that I always do is because I’m going to have a little time. I teach in the morning for about three or four hours. And since I had taken over forty students, over forty classes with students through the exegesis of the Greek text of the epistle to the Romans, I was fairly well prepared. So in the afternoon, I could do some reading. So I read two or three Agatha Christies, some heavy literature, you understand. And then I carried over a couple of who-done-its in my bag. Left them over there, finished them as well. But in the course of my reading, I also -- Martha brought, took over -- she’s a great lover of Stonewall Jackson, of course, you understand. But she took over a little book by Henry Kyd Douglas called *I Rode with Stonewall*. Even the Yankees liked that book, so it must be a pretty good book.

Well, *I Rode with Stonewall* is very interesting. One of the things that interested me about Stonewall Jackson -- as I’ve told you many times, Jackson was a Christian man, a very strong Christian man and, in fact, a believer, a strong believer in sovereign grace. And so in one particular incident, Jackson said, “We are going to put the men this way, put them over here and we are going to do this and doing that and then when we attack, holler.” That’s precisely what he said. Then holler. I guess that’s were the rebel yells came involved. But anyway, he said, “Holler.”

Well, that’s precisely the way Gideon overcame the Midianites. He had a trumpet, and they had these vessels. And at nighttime, at the proper time, they blew the horns and broke the vessels and the lights were there. And the Midianites looked out on the hills

round about them, and they are shouting out for the Lord, for Jehovah and for the sword of Gideon and for Jehovah. And they looked and thought it was a giant army, and they began to kill themselves. The result was a hundred and thirty-two thousand were slaughtered by three hundred. But who won? It was God who won. It was God who won the victory.

Do you think they came back into camp and they said, "Boy, we really slaughtered those Midianites, didn't we? We really do have an army." You know, there are a lot of people who think that the reason people win wars is like that. When Israel managed to beat the Arabs, there were lots of people who were saying, "After all, you put ten Israelis over here and a hundred Arabs over there, you know who is going to win -- The Israelis, because they're intelligent, smart. They've got proper equipment. They are going to win it. Furthermore, their generals have patches over their eyes." It was in the United States, after the war in '67, a lot of recommendations, put patches over the eyes of our generals maybe we'd stand a chance. No, God was working then, too. You see, when God works; you don't really need any weapons, except a shout. Break a vessel and the surprise of the exceeding greatness of the power of God.

So when they got through that battle, you know, I can just imagine Gideon and the rest of the men getting around and saying, "Jehovah is really a great God." Think of that, think of the strategy of that. Think of it. One of the principles, look at it. "We are afflicted," Paul says. All these, incidentally, are present tenses. That's what Paul is experiencing right as he writes this.

If we had time, we'd go back and look at the Book of Acts and look right at what was happening in Troas before Paul came over here and wrote this apostle. This is what he was experiencing. Afflicted in every way, not trashed; perplexed, not despairing; persecuted, not forsaken; struck down, not destroyed. You see the excellency of the power of God. He continually pulls it off and ultimately we are indestructible. That's what Paul believed, and that's the ministry he carried out. In the midst of every

discomfort that they were experiencing, all of the scorning, all of the hunting, all of the persecution, he knew God was working. And, further, even when he lost his life, as most of these men did, he knew that they would ultimately overcome for the simple reason stated in the context of the 14<sup>th</sup> verse, “knowing that He who raised up the Lord Jesus will raise us also with Jesus and will present *us* with Him.” In other words, the Christian is an indestructible person. He doesn’t look just for the present when he might lose his life, might be strangled, might be burned at the stake, might suffer a little bit of scorn and ridicule, even in Dallas. You know, might have some friends that say, “He’s kind of queer, a fanatic.” He knows that ultimately as he serves the Lord Jesus Christ and follows the word of God, he will truly overcome in Christ.

Now, Paul goes on to speak in verses 10 through 12 of apostolic life and its purposes. He says, “Always carrying about in the body the dying of the Lord Jesus, that the life of Jesus also may be manifested in our body. For we who live are continually being delivered over to death for Jesus’ sake, that the life of Jesus also may be manifested in our mortal flesh.” Constant dying, three times, the apostle mentioned. He looks at physical life as being a life in which he suffers to the point of death and even perhaps, to death.

Now, it’s important for us to keep a couple of truths in our minds here. They need constant emphasis. We don’t have time to talk about them now, but they need to be kept in our mind. One is our death with Christ. That’s a positional thing. Romans 6 states it very fully, “We identified with our representative. When he died, we died. When he was buried, we were buried. When he was raised, we were raised. As he ascending to the right hand of the throne of God, we have ascended there and live with him in heavenly places.” And that’s why we shall overcome. It’s in Christ. That’s the positional side of things. But that which is our position in Christ finds expression in our daily life, always. Our dying by Christ, what Paul calls “being made conformable unto his death, “in

Philippines 3, verse 10. That’s ethical. That’s experiential. Men ought to see the cross in our lives.

I was, as I say, reading one of Agatha Christie’s books. This one was called, *The Mysterious Mr. Quinn*. Ms. Christie had a nice way of expressing things. In fact, I check every now and then, that’s something that’s useable in either preaching or writing. Here is a description of a man that she gave. It’s so true to our life today that I clipped it -- well, I wrote it up on my computer, actually and which I had taken with me. This is the way she describes the individual, “A very ordinary life, an average income, a little soldiering.” All Britishers in the early part if this century had a little soldiering somewhere. “A little soldiering, a good deal of sport whenever sport offered,” and visions of the Cowboys came across my mind as I read that line. “Plenty of friends, plenty of pleasant things to do, a sufficiency of women. The kind of life,” Ms. Christie says, “that practically inhibits thought of any description and substitutes sensation.” Oh, how true that is of our society. And we sit in front of the television, and we look, and we don’t think. Even if we did think, we don’t have time to think.

Martha and I would go out in the afternoons, walk over by Hoverdorf, outside of Amsterdam, and you can look into the living rooms. And what do you see? House after house after house of people sitting in front of the TV. Looking at TV. And what’s even worse, American programs. Sitting there. No thinking . No books. So far as I remember, only one family had some books. I’m sure they had books, but you can see what takes place in their lives. That’s the kind of life.

Now, Ms. Christie put the capstone on it. She said, “The kind of life that practically inhibits thought of any descriptions and substitutes sensation.” How we feel, to speak frankly, an animal’s life. An animal’s life. That’s our society. Don’t think that Christians are not like that either. They really live an animal’s life to a large extent. The things that they feel, the experiences that they have are the things that are really important for them.

So Paul, for him, for Christians, for those who really serve the Lord, that kind of life. Dying with Christ, carrying about, in our bodies, the dying of our Lord. We don’t even know what that means, unfortunately.

But why? Listen to what he says. In verse 10 he says, “always carrying about in the body the dying of the Jesus, that the life of Jesus also may be manifested in our body. For we who are constantly being -- for we who live are constantly being delivered to death for Jesus’ sake, that the life of Jesus also may be manifested in our mortal flesh. So then,” to give the consequence, “death works in us, but not life in us, but life in you.” Because it’s not simply life in us, it’s life in them as well. And Paul says, in other words, my experiences are not simply for me, they are for you Corinthians.

Being Christians exposes us to the constant risk of being no longer among the living. But if we are no longer among the living and if we have died as a result of faithfulness to Christ, then blessed we are truly. When I was in Amsterdam, this time, we had a man in the seminary there. He’s between sixty-five and seventy. He reached the end of his academic career as a professor in a college, a university out west. As a Christian man, he heard somehow about Tyndale Theological Seminary starting up and an opportunity came to him to be of service there. So he picked up with his wife, doesn’t have a big income, I presume just the average income of a man who lived out his life as an academic. He went over to Europe. The first thing I remember about him was that he had a Mercedes automobile. There have been very few fellows that I have known in theological seminary that drove around in Mercedes. I could have almost have said, now he didn’t grow up in Christian work.

Well, that was one year he had this Mercedes. It was a second-hand car actually. He didn’t spend all that great amount of money for it. The next year we came over, and I looked and I said, “Where’s your Mercedes, Howard?” He said, “Well, after we got over here, we felt that it wasn’t really proper for us to have a Mercedes down there because most of the students have to walk wherever they’re going.” And so he sold that and

bought another car, which wasn't nearly as comfortable. I wish he'd kept the Mercedes. But anyway, it wasn't nearly as comfortable, but this time something of a tragedy of personal experience happened. He'd been troubled with what he thought was gallstones, and he went to the hospital while we were there, and they diagnosed it as incurable cancer.

He wrote some interesting things. He -- first he wrote about a page and a half about how I feel. And one of the things that impressed me greatly -- it was a marvelous little thing. I wish I had a copy of it. It was a marvelous little account of why everything is wonderful. He said, "To think I had to live sixty-five years before I had the experience of being a missionary for Jesus Christ." Marvelous testimony. And it impressed me so much that I sat down by, as I say, down by my computer which I had, and wrote out a letter to him because I was studying this passage about two weeks ago, "So death works in us but life in you." I sought to encourage him a little bit by saying that in his experiences he was ministering, as perhaps he never had, to others. That's what it is to be a Christian. He was putting into practical experience, what it is to be a Christian man. In the midst of trials, smile on his face, encouraging. It was a blessing to me, and I know to Martha too.

The cross is not a power of sentiment. It's not an ornament that we wear on our lapels. The cross is a picture of our lives. And everything in our society contributes to the same sentiment that was thrown to the Lord Jesus Christ. "Come down from the cross." Everything in Christianity today. "Come down from the cross." Do not be the kind of Christian that will live for the glory of God and Jesus Christ. Do not be the kind of Christian that suffers persecution, scorn, ridicule, gives up what we have for the sake of the glory of the Son of God. Do not live like that. That's the world's advice.

So the apostle says, "Death works in us but not life in you." Well, he concludes by saying, "but having the same spirit of faith." In other words, in such circumstances, is it worthwhile to continue as an apostle? If being an apostle exposes one to ridicule to all

of this type of thing, is worth being an apostle? Listen to what Paul says, “It’s not apostle. It’s being a Christian.” And David in Psalm 116, the sentiment of the King of Israel, in the midst of his trials and difficulties, read Psalm 116, and you will see David was experiencing the same kind of thing and in the midst of it he said, “I believed therefore, I spoke.”

So Paul finds solace in the Scriptures and in the commitment to the things in the word of God. And David’s faith, the faith of the psalmist, animates the apostle, too. He, like David, cannot keep silent in his afflictions. He proclaims the fidelity and the goodness of God in the midst of the experiences of life. And one of the ancient Christians wrote this, “By believing they lay hold of life and by speaking they found death. A death by which a corruptible body is sown and in corruption is harvested.” How truth that is. The Christian’s destiny is to be with Christ because a union with him. That’s the ground of our confidence. Resurrection.

So Paul says, “Knowing that he will raise the Lord Jesus will raise us also with Jesus and present us with you. For all things are for your sakes that the grace which is spreading to more and more people may cause the giving of thanks to abound to the glory of God.” In other words, afflictions for us, more grace for many, more thanksgiving therefore, as they see the mighty power of God in the experiences of the saints of God and thus, more glory to God. That’s why we are here, the knowledge of God. That’s the knowledge of God. That’s what we are here to learn, to learn of him the knowledge of God.

So, to sum it up, what can we Christians expect with apostles? Sufferings, troubles, distress, perplexity. What can we expect? Dying of Jesus, delivery unto death for Jesus’ sake. Death in us, but life in others. We may be broken like the alabaster box of ointment, but the odor of the fragrance will fill the house. What shall we expect? The glorious presence of the living Lord now and forever after. That’s why it’s so marvelous to be a Christian. That’s why it’s so marvelous to have the knowledge of God.

One of the nicest things, I think, ever said, Joseph Conrad reports in *The Mirror of the Sea*. He quotes from a letter from of Sir Robert Stockford. He commanded one of the ships, with which Nelson chases to the West Indies an enemy fleet nearly double in number. Describing the desperate hardships of their daring adventures, Stockford wrote, “We are half-starved. Otherwise inconvenienced by being so long out of port, but our reward is we are with Nelson.”

Christians, well, we are inconvenienced. We are a long time out of port. We are heading toward a heavenly home. We certainly are inconvenienced. We are scorned. We are ridiculed. If we have any testimony at all, we are scorned, we’re ridiculed, we’re persecuted, even in countries like the United State of America. That may go on and over the face of this globe. But our reward is we are with Christ. And we shall be forever with him. And we have the joy of looking forward to being with him. We are indestructible in Christ through the saving work that he has accomplished. May God in his marvelous grace -- if you are outside of him, bring it to him and to that hope. Christ has offered the saving sacrifice for sinners. Come to him, receive forgiveness of sins, and have the hope in which the apostle speaks here. Let’s stand for the benediction.

[Prayer] Father, we are thankful for all that the apostle has unfolded for us. How right it is that the name of the Triune God should be glorified. All power is Thine. All grace, all true grace, is Thine. All true mercy is Thine. We praise Thee for the life of the apostle and for these principles by which he has unveiled his heart to us. And, Lord, by Thy grace, enabled us to follow in his steps and ultimately in the steps of our Lord himself. If there are some here, Lord, who have never believed in Christ, give them no rest or peace until they rest in him.

For Jesus’ sake. Amen.