

2 Corinthians 4

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The intro is pretty simple. I don't really do a polished intro on Wednesday night, but Paul is still defending himself against false teachers. Those false teachers were most likely what were known as Judaizers. They use that term for them because they were Jews who were telling gentile believers that unless they become Jews they cannot be saved, so they had to go through the rite of circumcision, they had to keep the dietary laws, they had to keep the Sabbath day. They basically were Judaizing Gentiles—they were making them become Jews in order to be saved or be Christians—so, of course, Paul had to stand up to this false teaching and deal with it in no uncertain terms.

As we're looking at the gospel on Sunday morning, I taught of Galatians 1 where Paul said, "But though we, or an angel from heaven, preach any other gospel"—so called—"unto you than that which we have preached unto you, let him be"—anáthema, which actually means cursed to the lowest hell. Paul was devoted to the gospel, the good news, and he stood up against false teachers.

They were not only attacking Paul doctrinally, but they were attacking him as far as his character is concerned. They were attacking his honesty, his integrity, his motive in ministry. Even Paul the apostle came under attack, which reminds me that if you say to God, "Here am I, use me," you're going to be attacked, you're going to be opposed, you're going to get opposition, you're going to face difficulty. You can't expect a standing ovation in hell when you say, "Here am I, God, use me." Satan's going to do all he can to oppose and attack you.

Paul is writing in 2 Corinthians 4, in light of what he just taught in chapter 3, that God has called him to a new covenant ministry, not the old covenant which is death through the law but the new covenant which is life through the Spirit. He was contrasting the old covenant with the new covenant. Now, he moves in chapter 4 into talking about his ministry in the sense of his character—honesty, integrity, and his consistency of preaching the true gospel—and contrasts himself with the false teachers as far as motive and character in ministry.

Begin with me in verse 1. Paul starts with, "Therefore seeing we have this ministry,"—there it is. This "ministry" is a reference to the new covenant ministry that we read about in chapter 3. If you turn back with me real quick one verse into chapter 3, verse 18, he closed it by saying, "But we all, with open face beholding as in a glass the glory of the Lord, are changed into the same image from glory to glory, even as by the Spirit"—so this is the new covenant ministry of the Holy Spirit whereby we're being transformed and changed into the image of Jesus Christ. He speaks here about the sanctifying work of the Holy Spirit in the life of the believer, not just the salvific work of saving us but the sanctifying work of Him making us more like Jesus Christ. The new covenant changes hearts. The new covenant gives new life. The new covenant is more glorious, it doesn't fade; and the new covenant brings freedom, not bondage and death.

Back to 2 Corinthians 4, Paul says, "Therefore"—so in light of all that he just said—"seeing we

have this ministry” In the Greek it would actually read “this kind of ministry.” Not only do we have a ministry, but we have this kind of ministry. What kind of ministry do we have? A new covenant ministry, the gospel of Jesus Christ. We’re preaching the good news of Jesus Christ and that they were saved by grace through faith, and that salvation is a gift of God. So, we have this kind of ministry and because of that, we’ve also, “ . . . received mercy,”—so because of that —“we faint not.”

What I want to do is first give you some of the reasons that Paul would not faint in ministry. What kept him going in the ministry? What kept him motored and going, preaching the gospel in light of all the opposition and persecution that he was facing? I would say the first thing that we see here in verse 1 is that he received his ministry by the grace and the mercy of God, so he says, “ . . . we have this ministry, as we have received mercy”—that’s what kept Paul going, kept Paul preaching, in spite of the persecution, the opposition from the false teachers; and because of that—“we have received mercy, we faint not.” I love the idea that God gives us a ministry.

For Paul, he was called to be an apostle. Obviously, we’re not called to be an apostle, but God does call us and God enables us and God strengthens us and equips us to do the ministry that He’s entrusted to us. Paul never got over the fact that God called him to the ministry and that he was a servant of Jesus Christ, and that he was receiving mercy from the Lord. He was always humbled by the grace and the mercy of God—that God would graciously, mercifully save him, call him to gospel ministry. So, he says, “I don’t want to faint. I don’t want to throw in the towel. I don’t want to give up,” and I love the thought that Paul does not want to give up.

You know, having been a pastor for many years and being around a lot of other pastors, quite often every pastor that I know used to say that he wanted to resign every Monday morning after Sunday services—after trying to preach, after dealing with the issues in the church—that many times the minister goes home tired and discouraged. That’s one of the times that Satan loves to attack the pastor is right after Sunday services. You have this glorious experience at church preaching the Word, and then you go home and Satan shows up and attacks you many times with discouragement.

One of Satan’s number one tools, whether you be a pastor or just a lay servant of the Lord, is discouragement. He uses discouragement. He gets you to say, “It’s no use. I’m just going to throw in the towel. I’m not going to serve anymore.” So many people start serving the Lord and they don’t have the right motive or they’re not motivated by love, they’re not motivated by a sense of responsibility and calling from God. It’s not the need in front of you that keeps you going, it’s the call behind you that keeps you going. You need to see that God’s called you to that ministry, whatever it might be—maybe it’s being a wife or being a husband, maybe it’s teaching Sunday school, maybe it’s being an usher, maybe it’s leading worship. Whatever it might be, or teaching a Bible class, God has called you to that ministry by His mercy. He’s been merciful to you, so you ought to humbly be grateful and not just throw in the towel, not just faint, not give up. So, having a New Testament ministry that he knows he received by mercy, it kept him from quitting.

A man by the name of V. Raymond Edman once said, "It's always too soon to quit." I've always loved that statement, "It's always too soon to quit." When you remember that, guess what happens? You never quit because it's always too soon. You say, "It's time to quit. No, no, it's too soon." "It's time to quit. No, no, it's too soon." You keep kind of plotting along. You keep plotting along and doing what God's called you to do, even if there's opposition, even if there's persecution, even if there's trial and temptation. God's called you. He will be with you. He will not abandon you. He will help you. He will strengthen you. You need to trust the Lord and keep moving forward. Maybe tonight you're wanting to throw in the towel in some ministry that God has called you to. I hope and pray that God speaks to you and says, "Don't faint. Don't give up."

The second thing that kept Paul from giving up and fainting was in verses 2-4 the fact that he didn't want to handle the Word of God deceitfully. He was committed to rightfully dividing the Word of truth, so it kept him from deceiving people. Follow with me, verse 2. He says, "But have renounced the hidden things of dishonesty"—now, most likely Paul is using a description of the false teachers here who handled the Word of God deceitfully. The word "craftiness" in my King James Bible has the idea of a fish hook where you would deceive with a fish hook or lure to trap people. He says, ". . . nor handling the word of God deceitfully; but by manifestation of the truth commending ourselves to every man's conscience in the sight of God." He knew that God sees his heart, his motive. God sees why he preaches, and he said, "I'm doing it as before the Lord. He knows my heart."

Verse 3, "But if our gospel be hid, it is hid to them that are lost: 4 In whom the god of this world hath blinded the minds of them which believe not, lest the light of the glorious gospel of Christ, who is the image of God, should shine unto them." Paul, receiving this ministry, kept him from quitting, receiving this ministry kept him from deceiving. I love that statement, he says, "We do not handle the Word of God deceitfully." One of the most important part, if not the most important part, in ministry of a pastor, and others, too, is faithfulness to rightly handle the Word of God. If you come to church, you don't want the pastor twisting Scripture, do you? You don't want the pastor taking Scripture out of context. You don't want a pastor misinterpreting Scripture, so we need to read the Bible, explain the Bible, and apply the Bible.

What I see so commonly today are sermons that use a text for a pretext. They'll read the verse to get a thought or an idea, and they'll begin to preach that thought or idea many times without the greater context and without what would be what's called the author's intention, the authorial intent, and they impose into the text, it's called eisegesis—it's not taking out of the text, exegesis, it's putting into the text what they want it to say. People hear sermons like this all the time, and it amazes me. People say, "Oh, that was such a great sermon. Oh, that was so wonderful," because it had stories, it had jokes, it was dynamic, it was a great delivery. But as far as the content is concerned, it wasn't the message of the Bible. You can hear a sermon where a Bible verse is read, but if there's not exposition, if you're not expounding the text in light of its historical, grammatical, theological context, and you don't get to what's called the author's meaning of the text, then you're not really getting the Word of God. You might as well use a newspaper to preach from or Reader's Digest to preach from or just use some other...show a movie and preach from it. That's what they do.

What we need so desperately in the church today is to get back to expositional or expository preaching which is preaching the meaning of the text and making the application consistent with the intent and the design of that verse. Whenever you hear anyone preach, and this would include myself, you should always ask yourself, “Is that in context? Is that what Paul really meant by that? Is that really the background? Is that what’s really going on? Is that really what the Bible says?” Read verses before it, read verses after it, always look for the context—context, context, context.

Paul told Timothy “. . . rightly dividing the word of truth”—which, by the way, means cutting it straight, “Cut it straight, rightly handle the Word of God.” Paul would not do that because God had given him a ministry and given him mercy so he wouldn’t faint, and he wouldn’t handle the Word of God deceitfully, he wouldn’t twist Scripture. In 2 Timothy 4:2, where Paul tells Timothy to, “Preach the word,”—he tells him why—“. . . they will not endure sound doctrine; but after their own lusts”—or desires—“shall they heap to themselves teachers, having itching ears; 4 And they shall turn away their ears from the truth, and shall be turned unto fables.”

That is exactly what’s happening so often today in so many churches. Pastors aren’t committed to expositional preaching and teaching, and many times they impose into the text what they want it to say and it’s not faithfulness to the Scriptures. A pastor is a steward. He’s given God’s Word to communicate it to the people. I don’t come up with my own topics. I don’t come up with my own ideas. I don’t come up with my own thoughts, they are to be derived right out of and from the Bible itself, and that’s what we need today so desperately.

Nor should we as believers twist Scripture or use it for selfish gain to get what we want out of it. The false teachers were doing that, but Paul would not do that. He said, “. . . but by manifestation of the truth commending ourselves to every man’s conscience”—and I love that phrase at the end of verse 2—“in the sight of God.” We do our ministry, we faithfully handle God’s Word, “. . . in the sight of God.” God sees, God knows, and we’re going to one day give an account to God. God’s going to say, “I gave you My Word, why didn’t you give it to the people? I entrusted you with My Word, why didn’t you faithfully dispense it to the household of God?” It’s going to be a day of reckoning for some.

Verse 3, “But if our gospel be hid,”—it’s hidden from these false teachers and from these unbelievers—“it is hid to them that are lost”—those that are unregenerate. They can’t understand the gospel.

Verse 4, “In whom the god of this world”—that’s a reference to Satan. Satan is called “. . . the prince of the power of the air, the spirit that now worketh in the children of disobedience.” He’s known as the god of this world. The Bible says the whole world lies in the lap of the evil one. Satan opposes the Word of God and the faithful preaching of the Word of God. Verse 4, “In whom the god of this world hath blinded the minds of them which believe not, lest the light of the glorious gospel of Christ,”—notice that phrase ‘the glorious gospel of Christ.’ That’s the new covenant ministry. That’s that gospel we read about in Romans 1:16-17, “For I am not ashamed of the gospel of Christ: for it is the power of God unto salvation to . . . the Jew first, and also to

the Greek.” So, it’s “ . . . the glorious gospel of Christ, who is the image of God, should shine unto them.”

Paul was kept from quitting. Paul was kept from deceiving. Thirdly, Paul was kept from promoting himself. A true gospel preacher and minister should not preach himself or promote himself. He says, verse 5, “For we preach not ourselves, but Christ Jesus the Lord,” —notice he uses all those titles, ‘Christ, Jesus, Lord.’—“and ourselves your servants for Jesus’ sake.” The Judaizers were not only twisting Scripture, interpreting it deceitfully, but they were promoting themselves. They were promoting not Christ, they were promoting themselves. So, he says, “We preach Christ. We preach the gospel,” “ . . . who is the image of God, should shine unto them.” So, verse 5, “For we preach not ourselves, but Christ Jesus the Lord; and ourselves your servants for Jesus’ sake. 6 For God, who commanded the light to shine out of the darkness, hath shined in our hearts, to give the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ.” He uses this imagery of Genesis 1 where there was darkness and that God said, “Let there be light,” so the new covenant ministry is light shining in the darkness. Paul was preaching Christ. He was a servant of Christ. He wanted to glorify Christ. He was not there to glorify or to magnify himself. So, it kept him from quitting, kept him from deceiving, kept him humble, and kept him from promoting himself. No minister should ever preach to promote himself but to lift up and exalt Jesus Christ.

Beginning in verse 7, down to the end of the chapter, Paul is going to talk about his suffering in ministry. Again, he keeps coming back to this one theme and topic all the way through 2 Corinthians as evidence of the fact that he’s a genuine, authentic servant of the Lord and that he endured suffering for Christ’s sake. He says, “But we have this treasure”—notice the break in thought or new direction—“But we have this treasure in earthen vessels, that the excellency of the power may be of God, and not of us.” This gospel “treasure,” this gospel message, this glorious truth about Jesus Christ who is the image of God and the light that is shining from the gospel preaching, he says, “ . . . we have . . . in earthen vessels,”—the reason being is—“that the excellency of the power may be of God, and not of us.”

When Paul speaks about “earthen vessels,” he’s talking about our bodies of humiliation—our humble, earthly, temporal bodies. Our bodies that get old and wear out. He says they’re like a piece of pottery. They’re like a clay pot. In our case, they are cracked pots. Many times in the ancient world they would use pottery to put gold in, to put jewelry in. They stash it in their pots, so the valuable thing was the gold or the jewelry or the money put in the pot, not the pot. So, in the preaching of the gospel, the valuable thing is not the preacher, it’s the message he preaches. Too many times the focus shifts from the content of the preacher’s message to the preacher’s personality and dynamic delivery and what an amazing person he is, and then they start kind of marketing the pastor and they have a brand. They use it to make money, and they use it to attract people. Rather than pointing them to Christ, they’re pointing them to themselves or to this special pastor.

Paul says, “Look, we’re just earthen vessels.” Paul likened himself and the other apostles and the preachers of the gospel to just earthen vessels. When you have this earthen vessel, you

realize that the treasure is not the pottery, that it's the gospel message inside the vessel. " . . . that the excellency of the power may be of God, and not of us." Someone said, "Don't make the vessel more important than the treasure in the vessel."

Have you ever noticed when you go to look at jewelry they put it on a black velvet background or dark, plain background so that the diamond or the jewels pop off the background of that. So, when we're preaching, we want Jesus to be seen. We want to take a back seat, we want to take the background. We want Christ to be glorified. We want to hide behind the cross of Jesus Christ. We want to exalt Christ, lift up Christ. We're just cracked pots. For He " . . . hath chosen the foolish things of the world to confound the wise" The glory and the excellency is the gospel, which is the power of God. Again, this so ties in with our study, our message Sunday morning, on Romans 1 where Paul again said, " . . . the gospel . . . is the power"—*dýnamis*—"of God unto salvation"—that it brings God's power to save souls, and it's a marvelous, glorious gospel. Here Paul says, " . . . the power may be of God, and not of us." We should always be humble in our suffering for the Lord and point people to Jesus not to ourselves. Don't make the vessel more important than the treasure in the vessel.

Verse 8, Paul begins to speak again of his ministry and pictures it as warfare out on the battlefield, "We are troubled on every side, yet not distressed: we are perplexed, but not in despair; 9 Persecuted, but not forsaken; cast down, but not destroyed." One modern translation has, "We're knocked down, but we're not knocked out." Again, this is a picture of being out on the battlefield, of being surrounded by the enemy, so he contrasts being " . . . troubled on every side, yet not distressed; we are perplexed, but not in despair; 9 Persecuted, but not forsaken; cast down, but not destroyed." That is Paul describing the ministry.

If you're going to serve the Lord, if you're going to follow the Lord and you want to share the good news and serve the Lord, you're going to be persecuted. You're going to have trouble, you're going to be perplexed, you're going to be persecuted. There's times where you'll be cast down, but you won't have to be distressed. You don't have to be in despair. You're not going to be forsaken; you will not be destroyed. Verse 10, "Always bearing about in the body the dying of the Lord Jesus, that the life also of Jesus might be made manifest in our body." Physically we suffer. We're beaten, we're battered, we're bruised, but we're carrying about in our body Jesus who will be manifested and glorified through our weakness.

The principle that Paul is giving us and that's going to be seen all the way through the epistle is the idea that God is glorified in our weakness, that God gets glory in our infirmities, that God gets glory through our shortcomings. It doesn't mean we go out and intentionally sin in order to glorify God. We don't do that. But in our weaknesses, in our frailties, in our inabilities, God will prove Himself strong and God will be glorified. Amen?

I can't wait until we get to 2 Corinthians 12, my favorite section of this book, where Paul says, " . . . there was given to me a thorn in the flesh, the messenger of Satan to buffet me, lest I should be exalted above measure." He said, "God humbled me by giving me this thorn in my flesh, a messenger of Satan, to buffet me." He said, "I asked God three times to take it away,

and God said, 'No, but My grace will be sufficient for you.'" Here's the principle, "My strength will be made perfect in your weakness." So, Paul says, "Most gladly therefore will I rather glory in my infirmities, that the power of Christ may rest upon me . . . for when I am weak, then am I strong." You need to let your weaknesses drive you to the feet of Jesus to rely upon His strength and His grace in your ministries.

Paul says, "Always bearing about in the body the dying of the Lord Jesus, that the life also of Jesus might be made manifest in our body." So, we're dying in our service to Jesus physically, but our bodies are magnifying and glorifying Christ.

Verse 11, "For we which live are alway delivered unto death,"—again, he's describing ministry—"of the Lord Jesus,"—so, we're facing opposition as Jesus said we would—"that the life also of Jesus might be made manifest in our mortal flesh." So, He shines through us in our brokenness. Remember when Gideon had his mighty men break the pots and the torch lights shined through? That's what God does. He breaks us so that the light of Christ will shine through us. If God's going to use us mightily, He will break us completely. Verse 12, "So then death worketh in us, but life in you."

Beginning in verse 13, to the end of the chapter, Paul talks about the ministry of this new covenant that God had entrusted to him by mercy, that he fulfilled it by walking and living in faith. He talks about suffering in light of living by faith. In verse 13 he says, "We having the same spirit of faith, according as it is written,"—he's alluding to Psalm 116:10, he says—"I believed, and therefore have I spoken; we also believe, and therefore speak,"—Paul's living by faith, verse 13, kept him going and speaking and preaching and teaching the gospel of Jesus Christ, by faith gave him the strength to keep speaking out and preaching the gospel. So he says, "I believed, and therefore have I spoken; we also believe, and therefore speak." The "speaking" here is in the context referring to the preaching of the gospel.

Again, you talk about twisting Scripture and misinterpreting it and taking it out of the context and misapplying it, the Word-Faith, health and wealth prosperity preachers use this verse to claim that we speak out by faith to get what we want, "I believed, and therefore have I spoken," that's why they say you should always make a positive confession, "I'm not sick. I'm not weak. I'm healed. I'm not poor. I'm not broke. I'm rich." I heard one preacher on the television say, "Take your wallet out and speak to it." I kid you not, "Speak to your wallet prosperity," of course, and then he says, "And then give your money to me." I'm thinking, Just talk to your own wallet, buckaroo. Why do you need me to talk to my wallet? Why can't you talk to your own wallet and put into practice what you're preaching?

That is not what this verse is about. It's about the gospel of Jesus Christ because we believe it, and this is cool, Paul could endure problems, suffering, tribulation, imprisonments, and all the shipwrecks and all the suffering and keep going and keep preaching because Paul believed the gospel had power to change lives. He believed in the power of the gospel, the truth of the gospel. We're going to see he believed in the resurrection of Jesus Christ, so it motored him and motivated him to keep going. So, faith gave him speech. What we believe determines how

we behave, and if you truly believe the gospel, you preach the gospel, which is good news not good views, good news about Jesus Christ who died, buried, rose from the dead, and through faith in Him we can be forgiven of our sins.

Then, verse 14, “Knowing that he which raised up the Lord Jesus shall raise up us also by Jesus, and shall present us with you.” The first thing was that Paul’s faith gave him ability to keep speaking the gospel, verse 13. The second thing was faith gave him assurance that there would be a future resurrection and a reward for faithful service by the Lord in heaven. That was something that motivated him. Verse 14, he said, “Knowing that he which raised up the Lord Jesus shall raise up us also by Jesus, and shall present us with you.” Paul was saying he believed in the resurrection of Jesus Christ and he believed that we would be resurrected and that one day he would be with them in heaven; and, of course, that would be the great reward of his labor—seeing them in heaven—and the rewards and the blessings that would be theirs as they come to heaven even as the Lord will present the Church, a glorious bride, “. . . not having spot, or wrinkle, or any such thing”—in heaven, in glory.

So, verse 13, faith gave him speech; verse 14, faith gave him assurance; and again, Paul believed in the resurrection of Jesus Christ, and he believed in the resurrection of the dead in Christ at the rapture of the Church, 1 Thessalonians 4, “. . . and the dead in Christ shall rise first:”—and the Lord comes back— 17 Then we which are alive and remain shall be caught up together with them in the clouds, to meet the Lord in the air: and so shall we ever be with the Lord.” Again, that motivated Paul to keep preaching the gospel—the future resurrection and the hope of heaven.

In verse 15, faith gave Paul endurance. He says, “For all things are for your sakes,”—again, the focus by Paul in his ministry was others, not himself, not selfish gain, but doing it for others and for the glory of Christ. It’s “. . . for your sakes, that the abundant grace might through the thanksgiving of many redound to the glory of God.” Faith gave him endurance to keep going, and he was motored or motivated by the glory of God, verse 15. All true ministry must be motivated for the glory of God.

Verse 16, Faith gave him strength. I love it. “For which cause,”—and here he comes back to the statement—“we faint not.” In verse 1, “. . . we faint not,”—now, again, after he’s covered all these topics, “. . . we faint not,”—we don’t lose heart, we don’t give up—“but though our outward man perish, yet the inward man is renewed day by day. 17 For our light affliction, which is but for a moment, worketh for us a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory; 18 While we look not at the things which are seen, but at the things which are not seen: for the things which are seen are temporal; but the things which are not seen are eternal.” What a great closing to this chapter. Go back with me to verse 16. Faith gave Paul strength not to faint. “And let us not be weary in well doing: for in due season we shall reap, if we faint not.” It’s always too soon to quit. Faith gives us the strength to endure and to keep going.

Verse 17, faith gave Paul vision. He said, “For our light affliction, which is but for a moment, worketh for us a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory,”—so he’s looking at the

troubles and the affliction that he's going through, he calls them "light." You can read about them in the later chapters of 2 Corinthians, chapter 11 especially, where Paul describes all the times he was shipwrecked, stoned, beaten, thrown in prison, all that he endured, and how does he describe it? "Light affliction." I wouldn't have called it "light affliction," but he called it "light affliction" because he's looking at it by faith in light of eternal things. So, ". . . light affliction, which is but for a moment,"—it's only temporary. This life is like a vapor of smoke that appears for a time and then vanishes away, and it works for us, check it out, "For our light affliction"—are light compared to—" . . . eternal weight of glory,"—they're only for a moment, short-lived in light of eternity, and they—" . . . worketh for us"—not against us—"a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory."

So, faith gave Paul vision to live for eternity. He lived for eternity. He lives for the eternal value. He looked to heaven to motivate him on earth. It is important that we keep our eyes on the prize and not forget that we're going to heaven. We're going to see Jesus face to face. He kept motivating himself by this idea that these are just light afflictions. They're only for a moment. They ". . . worketh for us"—not against me—"a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory."

Notice, in closing, verse 18, "While we look not at the things which are seen,"—which in context here would be the sufferings, the trials, the opposition, the false teachers, all the hardships that he's dealing with; not just the material world around us, but the spiritual battles that he had to endure, "but at the things which are not seen"—this is so difficult if we don't live by faith. We start looking at the way people treat us, the things people do to us, the opposition they bring to us, and we want to give up, faint, and quit. Paul says, "While we look not at the things which are seen . . . for the things which are seen are temporal; but the things which are not seen are eternal." Everything that is seen is temporal. Everything that you see right here, right now, will one day be gone. The only thing that's eternal is that which is not seen, the spiritual, so don't live for the temporal. Don't live for the now, lift your eyes to heaven and live for that which will endure to everlasting life. Get your focus on the Lord.

Colossians says, "Set your affection on things above, not on things on the earth. 3 For ye are dead, and your life is hid with Christ in God." Amen? What are you living for? What are you motivated for? The glory of God? Sharing the gospel of Jesus Christ, seeing one day Jesus face to face, keeping your focus on heaven? Sometimes Christians are not of any earthly good because they're not heavenly-minded. You need to "Set your affection on things above" Look for the eternal. Amen?