

9 Sermons on 2 Corinthians 1:12-24 Paul's Change of Plans

2 Corinthians 1:12-24 New International Version (NIV)

Paul's Change of Plans

¹² Now this is our boast: Our conscience testifies that we have conducted ourselves in the world, and especially in our relations with you, with integrity^[a] and godly sincerity. We have done so, relying not on worldly wisdom but on God's grace. ¹³ For we do not write you anything you cannot read or understand. And I hope that, ¹⁴ as you have understood us in part, you will come to understand fully that you can boast of us just as we will boast of you in the day of the Lord Jesus.

¹⁵ Because I was confident of this, I wanted to visit you first so that you might benefit twice. ¹⁶ I wanted to visit you on my way to Macedonia and to come back to you from Macedonia, and then to have you send me on my way to Judea. ¹⁷ Was I fickle when I intended to do this? Or do I make my plans in a worldly manner so that in the same breath I say both "Yes, yes" and "No, no"?

¹⁸ But as surely as God is faithful, our message to you is not "Yes" and "No." ¹⁹ For the Son of God, Jesus Christ, who was preached among you by us—by me and Silas^[b] and Timothy—was not "Yes" and "No," but in him it has always been "Yes." ²⁰ For no matter how many promises God has made, they are "Yes" in Christ. And so through him the "Amen" is spoken by us to the glory of God. ²¹ Now it is God who makes both us and you stand firm in Christ. He anointed us, ²² set his seal of ownership on us, and put his Spirit in our hearts as a deposit, guaranteeing what is to come.

²³ I call God as my witness—and I stake my life on it—that it was in order to spare you that I did not return to Corinth. ²⁴ Not that we lord it over your faith, but we work with you for your joy, because it is by faith you stand firm.

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Sermon 1

The transformation from sin to righteousness



Quote

Adaptability is about the powerful difference between adapting to cope and adapting to win.

Max Mckeown

Power Truth

Do not be conformed to this world,[a] but be transformed by the renewing of your minds, so that you may discern what is the will of God—what is good and acceptable and perfect.

Romans 12:2 NRSV

Trouble in the Text

Paul was a sinner. He used to be a persecutor of Christians. His journey of salvation is an encouragement to us. When Paul was traveling to Damascus, he was struck with blindness by a bright light. And that was his turning point. Ananias¹ was sent to him to take a message of hope. Paul received back his sight and was also filled with the Holy Spirit.

The Paul that we see from when he received back his sight and empowered with the Holy Spirit is a totally different person. He accepted the change. That change transformed him and more importantly, the work that he did after that.

Trouble in the World

The transformation by the Holy Spirit is a unique happening in our Christian journey. In the Book of Galatians,² the supremacy of the Holy Spirit is emphasized. When we welcome the Holy Spirit of God in our lives, it marks the start and survival of our new life in Christ. God forgives all the sins of a repentant heart.³ That is why the persecutor, Paul finds Christ. The Holy Spirit anointed Paul and empowered him to be a carrier of good news to many. He became blessed himself and blessed the lives of many others to whom he preached to and prayed for.

Grace in the Word

Accepting Jesus is accepting a new life. The changes in the life of Paul were unbelievable in human terms. But with God, all things are possible.⁴ When we live in sin and away from the Holy Spirit, people around us become accustomed to our sinful ways. They label us sinners, drunkards, thieves corrupt and so forth. But in the Kingdom of God, we are candidates to righteousness.

The changes that took place in the life of Paul were overwhelming. But he laid out his faith in God and the guidance of the Holy Spirit. He received empowerment that was beyond ordinary human capacity. That shows that Christ's transformation in our lives can take us to different directions in life

Look at Paul himself. Could he ever believe that he would be a preacher of Christ, a performer of miracles? The turnout of events in Paul's life took a new direction. Zaccheus⁵ the tax collector accepted Jesus too. Zaccheus, a short man, did the unimaginable. Look at an adult climbing up a tree, just to get a glimpse of Jesus. Jesus turned focus to him, asking him to climb down and together they went to his house. It was a turning point for Zaccheus, who confessed his transgressions and promised to repay back taxes collected fraudulently.

Grace in the World

As followers of Christ, we have a duty to support each other. Paul, besides preaching, kept intimate connections with the communities he established. He kept in touch through visits and most importantly, the letters he wrote back. For us, this is a call to serve, not for a day, but for all life. There is no turning back. When Lot's wife looked back against God's command, she turned into a rock⁶ of salt. Our focus is forward ever, in Christ.

Our role is to be good people and be our brother's keeper. We should take care of our interactions with each other. The responsibility is higher for the Church leaders. They are to be the good shepherd⁷ to the flock of Christ. So, when one of us gets lost into sin, let's be with them. Encourage them back into the ways of Christ. This teaches us that when others become important, we too become valuable in Jesus. Paul did a wonderful job to spread the gospel. That is our duty today. Let the Holy Spirit walk with us, we will benefit from his amazing presence in life. The life in Christ may not earn us glories of this world. But, in Jesus, we are the heirs of the Kingdom of God.

What Now?

1. Who anointed Saul?
2. Why did Jesus visit the house belonging to Zaccheus the tax collector?
3. Why did Lot's wife turn into a rock salt?

Sermon 2

God has Good Plan for us



2. Quote

I cannot say whether things will get better if we change; what I can say is they must change if they are to get better.

Georg C. Lichtenberg

Power Truth

For surely I know the plans I have for you, says the Lord, plans for your welfare and not for harm, to give you a future with hope.

Jeremiah 29:11 NRSV

Trouble in the Text

The plans of God are faultless and for our own good. Our commitments to Christ are to be overflowing with trust, hope, and faith. Above all, love. In Proverbs,⁸ God declares that He knows all plans for us to be prosperous hopeful and have a future.

When Paul was saved, he rested all his trust upon the Lord. As we are aware, Paul became a wonderful apostle. His future became bright. He attained great milestones in transforming both himself, the early church and for us too. When changes occur towards our salvation, those are welcome moves. For our future has been secured in Jesus.

Trouble in the World

Most of us fear when it comes to salvation. What will our friends say? Will they still accept me? Salvation comes with changes. In his Gospel,⁹ Christ's prayer was that God may give us the desires of our hearts and make all our plans to excel.

As human beings, we have desires and plans. We should commit all of them to God's will at all times. We need his final word in everything. When we stay closest to God, all desires and plans that we make shall be for His kingdom. And if everything is done in love for God and man as one's self, God will make way for it.

Grace in the Word

The word of God is plenty in all virtues. When Paul renounced his evil plans, it was for the good of his soul. The Holy Spirit led him all through. When he let the Holy Spirit guide him, he became a vessel of God's best things. Through Paul's conversion, believers received healing, forgiveness, and restoration.

In whatever way, he did not lose in any way. The passion of Christ in him led him to travel far and wide. This time, it was not to kill Christians, but to call them to Jesus. His mission was to preach and call them to Salvation, to a new life.

The steps that Paul took were all in the good plans of God. He remained hopeful, trustworthy, and above all, he loved Christ's ways. Through the powers of the Holy Spirit, Paul¹⁰ was able to go beyond hunger, imprisonment, and fear.

God takes care of all our fears. God¹¹ tells us to take courage, for He is with us. We are to remain strong and He will uplift us by His righteous hand. We live in a world full of afflictions. We fall sick, fall victim to disasters and accidents. So many challenges befall us. Christ affirmed that it was not going to be easy. But Christ's presence is everlasting¹² among us. He promised to stay with us till the end of times.

Grace in the World

A Christian should have hope at all times. That hope is should be for oneself and others too. When we receive the good news, endeavor to share it with others and support them to come to Christ. The good news is for all of us. Everyone¹³ who is willing is welcome to follow Christ. Supporting others to know and live their lives in Jesus is our duty. We have to be selfless in that. Paul's life changed when the Holy Spirit guided him. For him, an unselfish desire connected him to his passion, seeing more people know and acknowledge Jesus as lord and savior. In our daily life, we should not resist change. Our prayer should be for Christ to give us the strength to keep the pursuit for his glory.

Jesus himself never lost hope in any way. He submitted¹⁴ to the will of God the Father. It was the will of God the Father that Christ would redeem mankind. God allowed His Son to suffer and die for the sake of our salvation. It was a humble submission of Christ. The apostle Paul accepted the will of God in him. God's plan was for Paul to transform, to proclaim Him as Lord and savior across nations. And, even after all that duty, Paul rested in peace under imprisonment, for the glory of Jesus Christ.

What Now

1. As Christians, why should we welcome change in God's ways?
2. To whom did Jesus answer that he was the way and the truth and the life?
3. As a Christian, should you still be fearful?

Sermon 3

Taking Pride in Jesus Christ



3. Quote

The price of doing the same old thing is far higher than the price of change.

Bill Clinton

Power Truth

and it is no longer I who live, but it is Christ who lives in me. And the life I now live in the flesh I live by faith in the Son of God, who loved me and gave himself for me.

Galatians 2:20 NRSV

Trouble in the Text

Every Christian should take pride in our faith in Jesus Christ. That pride is what we should not mistake for stubbornness of the heart. Paul heard the voice of God and hardened not his heart.¹⁵ A stubborn Paul was a persecutor of Christians. But when he accepted change, his heart softened. When he regained his sight, a new life had been set for him.

The new life of Paul resembles our life in Jesus. We live by the counsel of his helper, the Holy Spirit. When we are ourselves, we are fearful, revengeful, committing every act of sin without any regards. When we accept Christ, we have our life restored like Paul did. We become respectful, courageous, and trustworthy, and every virtue that comes with the guidance of the Holy Spirit.

Trouble in the World

Re-starting our life in Jesus is not an easy task. The promises of the Kingdom of God are sweet. The earth in which we live bears thorns for our suffering and pain.¹⁶ Every struggle we make counts. Paul takes salvation like a race. In a race, athletes strive to put in the effort to be the winner. Although an athlete is never sure to win, they put in the effort. In the end of many days of training, they get the glory they deserve.

So, Christianity is not a one-day affair. It's a life-long commitment to a rigorous life. Living away from temptations is the sure path to finding ultimate salvation in Jesus.

Grace in the Word

God's will is that we put all our trust in Him and allow His will in our lives. In Mathew,¹⁷ we have to weed the wilderness out of our souls. Taking time to read, meditate, and share encouragement within our community is a key element in being a Christian. The love of God manifests among us when we share together for His sake.

God left authority to man when He was done with creation. That is why the apostles and ministers of God have a critical role to play in our salvation. The ministers¹⁸ of God have been empowered to bind the evil forces and release the power of the Holy Spirit for the sake of God cause.

Each one of us who has received baptism and confessed Jesus is under a duty to assist in the ministry. Stand firm in the word of God. If something may not be very clear, always seek out the word from the priest. That's their duty, and more appropriately from the counsel of the Holy Spirit.

The congregation of God welcomes all support. Some of us may not be gifted in preaching out but you can support the evangelical missions of your church in any way you can. Give out your time. Go with them. If you can drive, offer to drive them all way. If you can't drive, maybe you can join the local church choir.

Grace in the World

Jesus is everything, the start and the end.¹⁹ Paul took it upon himself to live for Christ for once and all. His change was for the better. For his earlier life, killing was not a bother. In his new life in Christ, Paul now preaches against sin and welcomes many others to live in Jesus.

All of us have unique abilities and we can find full potential of that in one way or another. When we worship Christ in a church, all of us find a common place where we can serve. Each duty done for the sake of the Church is a plus for a Christian. The togetherness blends us into one harmony. We are able to do our best and even uplift those amongst us without certain abilities. The body of Christ that is the church needs all of us. Although we are not perfect, we strive to do our best. Jesus told us that all the temptations that invade us are ones that we can always overcome. Our first stop is prayer.²⁰ Prayer gives us the benefits of strength. That strength arises from the assurance that Jesus is with us.

We have the power to overcome all temptations. Our bodies are weak, and the soul's will is towards God. So, we must be careful with our bodies and how we use every organ.

What Now

1. Who allowed Saul to persecute Christians?
2. Why should one believe in being able to overcome temptations?
3. Why is Jesus referred to as the alpha and omega?

Sermon 4

Paul and the challenges the early church



4. Quote

Change is the law of life. And those who look only to the past or present are certain to miss the future.

John F. Kennedy

Power Truth

So if anyone is in Christ, there is a new creation: everything old has passed away; see everything has become new!

2 Corinthians 5:17 NRSV

Trouble in the Text

Paul had already done his part of preaching the good news. The remaining part was for the believers to live as per his instructions. But, the early church had some challenges in understanding the roles of the Holy Spirit. In his epistles, Paul, through the conviction of the Holy Spirit, wrote to them. His letters meant to elaborate things.

God's patience²¹ was timely. At the right moment, Paul was struck blind for his persecutions. But God also wanted him to find salvation. And Paul found salvation in a very unique way. The

changes that happened in his life are radically unbelievable. He found forgiveness for his persecutions; the restoration of his sight plays a pivotal role in the foundation of the first church.

Trouble in the World

In his letter to the Romans, Paul writes and makes it very clear that he and other apostles do not write of what they do not know. His writing addresses complex issues that must have taken time to respond conclusively. However, the Holy Spirit was with him in his missions. There is a time²² for everything here on earth. There were times for Paul to be a persecutor; there was a time for Paul to be blind. And there was an even more wonderful period for Paul to confess and preach Christ. It's never by accident that we confess Christ; he has a purpose for us, in life.

Grace in the Word

When we accept Christ through baptism, we receive anointing. The anointing we receive is in the form of a white cloth.²³ The white cloth is a pure heart, one that is free from jealousy, hypocrisy, deceit, fornication, and every other sin. Paul kept his heart clean by remaining close to Jesus at all times. He became a carrier of his mission far and wide. By working tirelessly for the sake of Christ, he acquired deep communion with God. The writings that he did were a manifestation of the faith hope and love God.

His anointing marked a turning point in his life. Getting cleansed meant that the Holy Spirit walked with him in all the missionary journeys that he made. Of utmost assurance was the gift of life everlasting.

God knows us by heart,²⁴ therefore we must not deceive ourselves. When we deceive others, we betray the truth in Christ. Our utmost goal must be to remain worthy of the Kingdom of God. That is whether we are watched by other people or God. It is our call to be courageous for our own sake. The gifts that spill over from righteousness edify all of us, just like Paul's passion for Christ is a blessing and encouragements for us to ditch sinful ways and come to a true life in Christ.

Grace in the World

The graces of God for us shall never change. Jesus promised²⁵ salvation to the apostles, the first church, and us too. The same Christ that Paul preached about when he did accept him is same all through. All his promises belong to us. However, it's our duty to lay firm claims to them.

Jesus never promised an easy life. But he promised us sufficient graces to overcome all tribulations. Our life is a journey from Sin craving towards righteousness. Each day rises with us with new promises²⁶ before us are tribulations laid all the way. Courage and hope will take us through the tough phases. For it's through the tribulations that we become cleansed and created anew.

We must be aware that tribulation will follow us all along. Fear not, stand firm in faith and hope. When Jesus was already crucified, one of the criminals²⁷ had an opportunity to smartly mock him. Jesus was nearing the very end of his mission, but the criminal added to his insults. The criminal adopted a path that we must not follow.

Jesus knew that his time had come. He had every power to take himself off the cross. But Christ remained humble up to the last minute. Christ's suffering led to exaltation. After three days, Jesus rose up from the dead, and God allowed him to sit in His right hand.

What Now

1. What are some of the problems that faced the early church in Corinth according to Paul?
2. Why should we accept sufferings as Christians and why?
3. Can a Christian receive salvation a minute before death?

Sermon 5

God Loves Human kind unconditionally



5. Quote

You never change things by fighting the existing reality. To change something, build a new model that makes the existing model obsolete.

Buckminster Fuller

Power Truth

I appeal to you therefore, brothers and sisters, by the mercies of God, to present your bodies as a living sacrifice, holy and acceptable to God, which is your spiritual worship.

Romans 12:1 NRSV

Trouble in the Text

Accepting change is one of the most amazing points in the history of the Lord's apostle, Paul. He accepted change and lived by it, all the days of his life. As Christians, simply love one another as one's own self and love God.²⁸

Complications are little in Christ's message. Every willing follower is to attain that minimum. God has always loved humankind. That is why all the way from the sin by Adam and Eve, God's plan is to save man from the perils of sin.

Trouble in the World

One of the biggest challenges facing us is that of cleanliness of our bodies and minds. There is no shortcut to this for us.²⁹ God Himself is holy, so must we. The earth is our foot path to heaven, and it's occupied with many tribulations. The temptations rage like a wild bushfire in a windy summer. Hold on, focus on your holiness. That's what God wants of us. Those who have been ahead of us have lived well and made it. Jesus went ahead of us, followed by the apostles. We are to follow suit.

Grace in the Word

Salvation is change. The change transforms our ways of living. We can no longer live in a sinful past. One has to be very wise to survive in the world and find salvation. It's our Christian duty³⁰ to grow in faith with time. If one learns the tricks of the wicked one, you can navigate past them.

For us to grow and also mentor others, we must be in the know. So, Christians must always seek for knowledge and wisdom. The way to faith is a process of discerning intricate connections of things. We cannot attain this by relying on human powers. This is where the guidance of the Holy Spirit comes in. Whatever we cannot discern, let's pray for it and seek the indulgence of the Holy presence.

The Holy Spirit led to the transformation of Paul. Even beyond his presence, he found wise counsel to write intricate notes to keep the church intact. The letters done by Paul exceptionally explained things to do with the church at deep and complex topics. He was able to simplify everything so that even every lay person can understand.

One of his letters was to the Christian community in Corinth. Paul did this at a time of great discord in that church. He was able to carefully tell what Christ intended in the foundation of the Church community. That was one body worshiping God the Father in communion with the Holy Spirit. Of utmost emphasis was for every worshipper to be clean and worthy of communion³¹ with the Holy Spirit.

Grace in the World

Our sinful natures are complex. God understands this, and His fountains of mercy are never ending.³² The Christian journey is rigorous. The righteousness of those who have gone ahead of us is evident with that. One most amazing scenario was a last-minute conversation with Christ.³³ Christ saved one of the criminals crucified with him from hell for simply consoling Christ and making a humble request. His humility saved him. "Jesus, remember me when you come in your Kingdom." Jesus replied, "Surely, today you will be with me in the right hand of God."³⁴

Human arguments will never cease. Jesus' reward for us is that of life everlasting. The time of our salvation does not matter, the gift is life everlasting.³⁵ Some may be hurt as human beings, to

have served Christ all their lives yet be rewarded the same as one with a last-minute confession. However, Christ's call to us is that of Love. We should welcome those who find last minute salvations. That's the only love we can show. For all of us are equal before God.

Christ is our only way to life everlasting.³⁶ For us to get to God the Father, we have to meet the commands set out by Jesus himself. The presence of the Holy Spirit stands for that of God. The Holy Spirit rests in holy places like Christ, too.

What Now

1. God has unending love for humankind. Is that true or false?
2. Can we commune with God the Father and never through Jesus Christ?
3. What is the measure of God's glory?

Sermon 6

Being Ready as a Christian



6. Quote

Your life does not get better by chance, it gets better by change.

Jim Rohn

Power Truth

If we confess our sins, he who is faithful and just will forgive us our sins and cleanse us from all unrighteousness.

1 John 1:9 NRSV

Trouble in the Text

When time came for the forgiveness of Paul, nothing prevented it. We must not take any chances as faithful Christians. Our duty is to forever remain ready to be with Christ. Jesus talked of the coming of the Son of Man.³⁷ It shall happen like lightning, as fast as it flashes. So, we have no room for chances with that. A cleansed heart is the only way to remain assured of the coming of Jesus for the second time. It is not worth it, to remain anxious of the Coming. If we are ever ready, we have no fear. And when he shall come, our ready hearts will welcome him.

Trouble in the World

The living of a Christian is not a worldly affair. Things of this world are material and encourage sin. John³⁸ reminds us to be wary of the earthly things. Those who have confessed Christ have been transformed and know each other from the way they speak.

The wisdom in Matthew³⁹ reminds us to keep our precious treasures in heaven, where we belong. Fighting for more than enough of earthly needs adds no value to us. So, our most precious relationship is that with Jesus Christ and the Holy Spirit's communion.

Grace in the Word

When we live humbly in the Holy Spirit, we will find it easier to seek forgiveness for all our transgressions. As human beings, we are prone to sin, but we have an open door from Christ to always make confessions. As a precondition to forgiveness,⁴⁰ Jesus taught us to cleanse ourselves first. When we confess, then God will be ready to forgive and listen to all other requests. The baseline here is to give others what we would deserve. If we forgive others, then God is ready to forgive us too.

When we pardon others, we create a way for them to deserve before man and God.⁴¹ Forgiveness to our brothers or sisters favors the love of Christ among us. None of us is more deserving than the other. And forgiveness does not mark us as weak. It edifies our faith in the course of God's kingdom. The journey to forgiveness starts with self, and then the forgiveness we offer others can reflect back to us, from God.

The art of forgiveness also boils down to God's command to love. If we love others, we seek their forgiveness. And, if we love God, we seek for His forgiveness for all our transgressions. It is mutually beneficial to forgive, for one can then find favor in the eyes of God and Man.

Grace in the World

As Christians, it is our duty to share the good news with others, more specifically, those who may not have heard of Christ and salvation. For most of us, confessing and saying it out is just overwhelming. What we need to do is invite the power of the Holy Spirit. When Paul was new to salvation, he was weak, but the servant of God, Ananias, invited the Holy Spirit to strengthen Paul. What we see after the Holy Spirit strengthened Paul is a new person. It was very different for his former past. It was very different for his former past. Paul became passionate of the Gospel unwearied, fearless, and became a carrier of the good news from Jerusalem into Asia and right into Rome.⁴²

For Paul, it was a scenario that many could have failed to believe in. How come a persecutor was now preaching Christ? How come Paul became so powerful in spreading the Gospel? The Roman authorities must have wondered how things turned around.

In total, Paul accomplished a total of five missionary journeys for the sake of Christ. Paul loved, believed, and more critically, wrote about Christ.

The overall change in Paul is a wonderful story. We can learn from his experiences to rise from sin to righteousness. And all this started with one simple act- accepting Jesus in your life. The way to that is to accept the call and live for it.

In the final end, Paul⁴³ attained a life that was worthy of the Kingdom of God. His life was never short of the promises of Christ, in the way he lived, preached, and overcame obstacles.

What Now

1. Whose role is it to preach good news?
2. How many missionary journeys did Paul make?
3. Why did Paul never get weary in his five evangelical missions?

Sermon 7

Living and getting to Christ each Day in life



7. Quote

**If you always do what you've always done,
you'll always get what you've always got.**

Henry Ford

Power Truth

And regard the patience of our Lord as salvation. So also our beloved brother Paul wrote to you according to the wisdom given him, 16 speaking of this as he does in all his letters. There are some things in them hard to understand, which the ignorant and unstable twist to their own destruction, as they do the other scriptures.

2 Peter 3:15-16 NRSV

Trouble in the Text

The Lord's Apostle, Paul, lived with one goal. It was to be at Christ's service. Paul changed his life into a consistent focus. He made himself used to the ways of Jesus. In John,⁴⁴ we follow Christ and get to know him deeply. When he calls, we can hear and when we call, he listens. Constant communication takes us to deep communion with Jesus.

We too have an opportunity to move closer to Christ every day. We will get to know him and his ways and will for us.

Trouble in the World

Our world has many distractions that make us not to pay a critical focus to Christ. It's our duty to discern the ways of the evil one and circumvent those tricky ways. When we overcome, we shall be worthy of his Kingdom. Our focus should be towards the teachings and ways of life that Christ wished.⁴⁵ Our focus should not be in money and the earthly pleasures. They divert us from the ways to the truth and life everlasting in Jesus Christ. So, Christians must seek the wisdom to enable people to sail through the stormy ocean of sin.

Grace in the Word

The Pharisees during the time of Christ were arrogant and ignorant.⁴⁶ The focus on cleaning the inside of our hearts is of more importance. For a Christian, it makes no sense to put on an expensive and prestigious suit, while rotting in adultery, fornication, theft, and every act that is ungodly.

The emphasis of Jesus was on taking teachings seriously. Taking the teachings with seriousness will yield the wisdom required to make it to salvation.⁴⁷ Those who fear the Lord will always seek His counsel and guidance in the joys and sorrows in life.

Paul, as an apostle of the Lord and savior Jesus Christ, gathered deep knowledge and wisdom about Christ himself and his teachings. The deep understanding of Paul arises from the epistles that he wrote and sent out to the church communities he established.

In the way of truth,⁴⁸ Christ did not lie to us that our life will get any easier. In that way, the Kingdom of God is a prized gift that only those who meet the rigorous conditions get. Although our life is tough,⁴⁹ Christ welcomes us to lay down our burdens. The burdens of anger, deceit, fornication, lust, theft, hypocrisy are avenues that strangle our hopes in the life in Christ. From the onset, we have to get it correct that this will not be easy for the human heart. With the love and assistance of the Holy Spirit, we get to have our burdens eased. We receive the comfort that's adequate for us to make it to the Kingdom of God.

Grace in the World

God has always been rewarding to those who deserve it. Our only path to that is to strive for righteousness all through our lives. God exalted those who believed in Him. Paul received graces sufficient to see him evangelize far and wide. He performed miracles that truly attested to the presence of Jesus and the Holy Spirit as he preached. The miracles Paul performed were in the mighty power of the Holy Spirit.

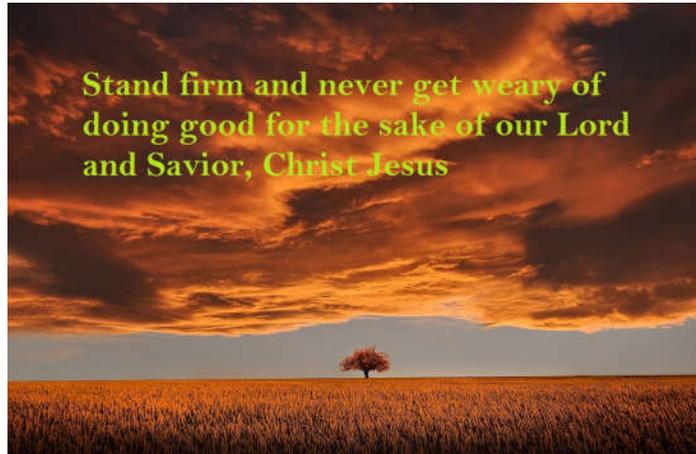
The Spirit of God cherishes the righteousness in the life of His people. When God's prophet Elijah had accomplished his missions, God took him in a chariot of fire and horses into the heavens.⁵⁰ The fire represented God's presence in Elijah.

In the kingdom, the reward for righteousness is life everlasting. It's a life away from sins and pains of the world. When we accomplish our duties diligently, we too shall be taken up into heaven to be with the good Lord. Jesus too rose up into the heavens⁵¹ after his worldly mission of salvation. At Bethany, he went and left the Holy Spirit in charge of the Church. Some of the wonderful achievements of the Holy Spirit were the works and wonders achieved by Paul, the Lord's apostle.

What Now

1. How is a Christian rewarded for the good services one offers at no pay?
2. Besides the Lord's prophet Elijah, who else never tasted the pain of death in the Old Testament?
3. As a Christian, our lives should be very easy, with no trouble at all. Is true or false?

Sermon 8 Everything to Preach out Christ



Stand firm and never get weary of
doing good for the sake of our Lord
and Savior, Christ Jesus

8. Quote

When in doubt, choose change.

Lily Leung

Power Truth

For it is better to suffer for doing good, if suffering should be God's will, than to suffer for doing evil.

1 Peter 3:17 NRSV

Trouble in the Text

The changes that we meet on the course of our Christian faith are inevitable. We have to accept change. Paul accepted the transformation from a persecutor to a new being, in Christ. The new Paul is a healer, preacher, and a wonderfully wise counselor of the church all throughout its history. Paul did much with the strength of God. After being anointed, Paul took on huge tasks of evangelization. If he were to rely on human powers, most probably he wouldn't have gone too far. But with God, he achieved much as a person and for the entire church for the sake of Christ.

Trouble in the World

A Christian should be very careful when approaching sufferings in life. As Jesus laid for us his ultimate example, it was not easy but he persevered. We need to be resilient. In Psalms⁵², God is closest to the suffering. When tribulations hit, let us offer prayers, thanksgiving, and fasting.⁵³ Let the world remain alien to our ways with God. If you remain close to God in prayer, the evil one doesn't discern your moves, lest you shout loudest in your prayers.

Grace in the Word

One spice we must enrich our faith with is joy. The joy is a perpetual knowledge that Christ is Emanuel, God with us.⁵⁴ We redeem that joy when we offer our prayers and thanks to God. When we believe, it doesn't mean life will be simpler. Let us not lie to our hearts that life will get easier. But the assurance from Jesus keeps us sailing, even in the hardest of storms.

Paul took over numerous challenges as a carrier of good news. He walked and sailed to extreme distances for the sake of shredding the good news. Paul preached from experience, from forgiveness, healing, imprisonment, and greater disasters which he survived with God's precious graces.

In Paul, God found a ready heart in faith and wonderful instructions. Paul was a treasure that God admired and protected in course of his missions. Paul lived at God's providence in all his missions. That reminds us to make our requests⁵⁵ in communion with God. The kingdom of God is full of His graces and in His wisdom, let us not expose ourselves. Jesus counseled that all our fasting should be joyful⁵⁶ and not gloomy. God in silence knows the desires of our hearts. If we wear gloomy faces, we shout to others silently. When we keep it a secret, God will be exalted in the joys we radiate in the glory from that silence.

Grace in the World

One keen establishment that Paul was passionate about was a firm church. The true worship of Christ is only through a harmonious church. In Paul, that desire was to fulfill and earn respect for Christ. The church is a holy place, and in special ways we congregate there for the glory of God. So, the holy places and people commissioned to be there are to be held with esteem. The church and the ministers offer a linkage to God through the Holy Spirit.

In 2 Kings,⁵⁷ when Elijah had just been taken up to heaven, a group of boys jeered at Elisha for he had a bald head, and he was not happy with that. In any case, it's lack of respect for young people to mock older people. Elisha called out a curse and beasts mauled the boys. That shows the vengeance with which God protects His ministers. Their office is high, both at the church and even in God's award of responsibilities.

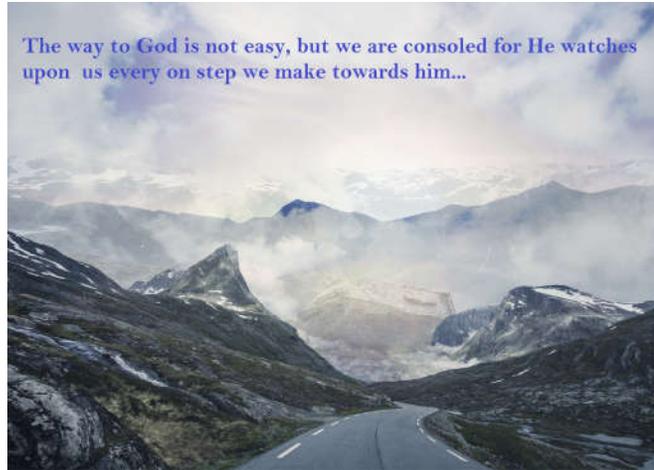
In a special way, Paul cautioned against discord in the church.⁵⁸ A perfect unity of minds and thoughts is a key component in the worship of Christ. For Christ acknowledged that whenever two or more gather in his name, there amongst them he is. But above all that was a call to walk in light and pureness.⁵⁹ When we live in truth, we are bound with each other as true followers of Jesus who offers purification through forgiveness of our sins.

What Now

1. Why did Jesus hold on to suffering after being crucified until death?
2. Which is the best way to worship God? Is it as a church or as a separate group within a church?
3. Why did Christ acknowledge that whenever two or three people congregate in his name, he is there?

Sermon 9

Christ struggled and Died for Our Salvation



9. Quote

Change is inevitable. Change is constant.

Benjamin Disraeli

Power Truth

For to this you have been called, because Christ also suffered for you, leaving you an example, so that you should follow in his steps.

1 Peter 2:21 NRSV

Trouble in the Text

In our life, nothing comes easy. We have to put in the efforts to achieve the best. For us to change from sin to finding favor in Gods eyes is a struggle with sin. We must have that faith in God. Christ himself had to struggle to earn salvation for us. He encourages us by way of a leading example⁶⁰ here on earth, we will find tribulations but we must remain steadfast in faith through those storms. He overcame the world and we must not fall short of that too.

Trouble in the World

One rule that emerges in Christian living is that of caring and minding for others. There are very many avenues to remain with fellow Christians. We can contribute money or material things. But of critical importance too we can offer counsel and prayer. Philippians 2:4 encourages our indulgence into the care of others. While Galatians⁶¹ binds us to bear the burdens of others in the fulfillment of Christ's laws. When we take the burdens of others, we assist them to find the face of Christ in life. Such acts glorify Christ and that strengthens our communion with him. When we take care of others in hunger, thirst and nakedness, we take care of Christ⁶² through that.

Grace in the Word

Christ laid for us an ultimate example in life in crucifixion, death, and resurrection. He bore on to the suffering even though as a Son of God he did not deserve it. Christ offered his blood as a sacrifice for our sins. This was unique as he laid out his very own life. Our role is to follow closely to the path set out by Christ. We are not first in that path, for he went ahead of us to follow and find salvation in his ways.

In Matthew,⁶³ Jesus put forth a way of choice for his disciples to follow him upon will. Any one following Christ must be ready to take up their cross and walk with him. Paul was a good follower. He transformed from a sinner, carried his cross and followed Christ's will to have him evangelize across nations. At deep connections with Christ, we can discern his will for us, through the Holy Spirit. Discerning his will is key factor. As Paul did, he attained great milestones when he walked in the path of Gods will for him.

Jesus is the teacher and Lord⁶⁴. Christ wore many hats at a go, so we must too. Christ was a healer, counselor, comforter, and caregiver. So, the duty to Christ's call is a huge task, lightened by the Holy Spirit.

Grace in the World

Our earthly life has times for all occasions.⁶⁵ All these occasions are within Gods calendar of events. There are times to be born and depart from this world. It is wise for a Christian to be aware of this calendar and explore it for the best of our relations with Christ. When Christ passed on, he attained a new existence at the right hand of God the Father. At our own individual times we too will transition and follow in his path, to life in Gods Kingdom. For us we can only forever remain ready for transition to the Kingdom. The fear of death for Christians has no foundation⁶⁶. Paul finds no loss in death and in life, for Christ had blessed his works and found his glory through the work of Paul.

Paul is full of courage in his new life in Christ. He speaks fearlessly even in the face of death as a human being. He knew it very well that his crown of life everlasting was ready for him⁶⁷. The reward accorded to Paul is so precious that Jesus referred to them as things that cannot be taken from both Him and God the Father alike.

God fulfills his promises for the willing. The willingness comes in the change of life like Paul did. Paul did not care what the Romans would say or do to him. What mattered was his new call to serve his Lord and savior Jesus Christ. The challenging transition for Paul⁶⁸ made one turning point and he never looked back at his sinful past. If there was something that consummated Paul from then was his wish to visit, counsel and comfort his converts across the nations. Although he did not have much, at least he wrote to the Churches in Corinth, Ephesus, Galatia, Rome, and Philippi, amongst others.

What Now

1. Why is salvation never an easy path?
2. Paul was a persecutor, a murderer. Why did Christ forgive him?
3. Why was the Lord's apostle Paul a fearless preacher?

¹ Acts 9:17
² Galatians 3: 1-18
³ Mark 3:28-30
⁴ Matthew 19:26
⁵ Luke 19:1-10
⁶ Genesis 19
⁷ Mathew 9:36
⁸ Proverbs 16:3
⁹ Luke 14:28
¹⁰ Acts:23 10-11
¹¹ Isaiah 41:10
¹² Mathew 28:10
¹³ 1Tomothy 2 -4
¹⁴ Mathew 26:39
¹⁵ Hebrews 3:15
¹⁶ Genesis 3:17-18
¹⁷ Mathew 3:3
¹⁸ Matthew 18:18
¹⁹ Revelation 1:8
²⁰ Luke 22:40
²¹ 2 Peter 3:9
²² Ecclesiastes 3:1
²³ Ecclesiastes 9:8
²⁴ Luke 16:15
²⁵ Hebrews 13:8
²⁶ Isaiah 43:19
²⁷ Luke 23:39-43
²⁸ John 13:34
²⁹ 1 Peter 1:16
³⁰ 2 Timothy 3:7
³¹ 1 Corinthians 6:19-20
³² Exodus 34.6-7
³³ Luke 23:43
³⁴ Luke 23:39-43
³⁵ Matthew 20:9
³⁶ John 14:6
³⁷ Mathew 24:26-27
³⁸ 1 John 4:5
³⁹ Matthew 6:19-21
⁴⁰ Matthew 6:19-21
⁴¹ Matthew 18:21–35
⁴² Acts 1:8
⁴³ 2 Timothy 4:7
⁴⁴ John 10:27
⁴⁵ 1Timothy 6:10
⁴⁶ Matthew 23:25
⁴⁷ Proverbs 9:10
⁴⁸ Matthew 7:13
⁴⁹ Matthew 11:28-30
⁵⁰ 2 Kings 2:11
⁵¹ Luke 24:50-53
⁵² Psalms 34:18
⁵³ Mathew 4:23-25

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- 54 Matthew 1:22-23
 - 55 Mathew 6: 5-6
 - 56 Mathew 6:26
 - 57 2 Kings 2:23-24
 - 58 1 Corinthians 1:10
 - 59 1 John 1:7
 - 60 John16:33
 - 61 Galatians 6:2
 - 62 Matthew 25:35-40
 - 63 Matthew 16:24
 - 64 John 13:13-13
 - 65 Ecclesiastes 3 1-15
 - 66 Philippians 1:21
 - 67 John 10:28-30
 - 68 Acts 9:4