

Christ Reformation Church

Tillamook, Oregon

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God's Word to a Hesitating Church

Since we have these promises, beloved, let us cleanse ourselves from every defilement of body and spirit, bringing holiness to completion in the fear of God. (7:1)

“An Eternal Weight of Glory – or an iPhone?”

Sept 21, 2014

Sermon Text: 2 Cor 4

Scripture Reading: Philippians 3

Introduction-

The New York Daily News reported Friday:

Hundreds of iPhone diehards — and scores of opportunists just out for a buck — were camped outside city Apple stores Thursday, a day

before the release of the snazzy new smartphones. The fast-growing lines of fans outside the SoHo Apple store already stretched halfway down Greene St. by 2 p.m.

“I’m here because I want to be on top of technology,” said Paul Grieg, 43, a consultant from Brooklyn.

Many of the people waiting to get their hands on the iPhone 6 and 6 Plus appeared to hail from other countries, where the latest Apple products can draw big bucks.

Isn't it amazing? Human beings are much more concerned with their cell phone than they are with their standing with God. It is more important to them to have the latest iPhone than to consider their eternal destiny. Apparently, being the first to get your hands on the new phone is to achieve real purpose and success in life. And so they wait. They camp on the street for days or weeks. Woe to the person who tries to cut in on them.

How quickly that will all change one day when they stand before the Lord without Christ. It will be too late then.

Having an eternal perspective and a biblical, true concept of success is vital for us. We must be able to see what has value and what is worthless. If we don't, as we have been learning here in 2 Corinthians, we will reject Christ's freedom and be enslaved by the false.

Luke 12:13-21 Someone in the crowd said to him, "Teacher, tell my brother to divide the inheritance with me." (14) But he said to him, "Man, who made me a judge or arbitrator over you?" (15) And he said to them, "Take care, and be on your guard against all covetousness, for one's life does not consist in the abundance of his possessions." (16) And he told them a parable, saying, "The land of a rich man produced plentifully, (17) and he thought to himself, 'What shall I do, for I have nowhere to store my crops?' (18) And he said, 'I will do this: I will tear down my barns and build larger ones, and there I will store all my grain and my goods. (19) And I will say to my soul, Soul, you have ample goods laid up for many years; relax, eat, drink, be merry.' (20) But God said to him, 'Fool! This night your soul is required of you, and the things you have prepared, whose

will they be?' (21) So is the one who lays up treasure for himself and is not rich toward God."

An Apostle of Christ

Paul, an apostle of Jesus Christ, has been describing his ministry and experience to us. It was no picnic and he was no superstar in this world:

2 Corinthians 1:8 For we do not want you to be ignorant, brothers, of the affliction we experienced in Asia. For we were so utterly burdened beyond our strength that we despaired of life itself.

2 Corinthians 2:15-17 For we are the aroma of Christ to God among those who are being saved and among those who are perishing, (16) to one a fragrance from death to death, to the other a fragrance from life to life. Who is sufficient for these things? (17) For we are not, like so many, peddlers of God's word, but as men of sincerity, as commissioned by God, in the sight of God we speak in Christ.

2 Corinthians 4:7-10 But we have this treasure in jars of clay, to show that the surpassing power belongs to God and not to us. (8) We are afflicted in every way, but not crushed; perplexed, but not driven to despair; (9) persecuted, but not

forsaken; struck down, but not destroyed; (10) always carrying in the body the death of Jesus, so that the life of Jesus may also be manifested in our bodies.

2 Corinthians 4:16-18 So we do not lose heart. Though our outer self is wasting away, our inner self is being renewed day by day. (17) For this light momentary affliction is preparing for us an eternal weight of glory beyond all comparison, (18) as we look not to the things that are seen but to the things that are unseen. For the things that are seen are transient, but the things that are unseen are eternal.

There you have it. The ministry and experience of a true apostle of Christ. The most vital thing in your life at this moment or any other moment while you are in this world is not what kind of phone you have, but what kind of righteousness you have – your own, or Christ's. That is to say, who are you listening to? Christ, or a false Christ?

Last week we considered a fundamental truth about God: *He always works through our weakness.* You remember we saw this:

2 Corinthians 4:7 But we have this treasure in jars of clay, to show that

the surpassing power belongs to God and not to us.

We will see this again before we leave 2 Corinthians:

2 Corinthians 12:7-10 So to keep me from becoming conceited because of the surpassing greatness of the revelations, a thorn was given me in the flesh, a messenger of Satan to harass me, to keep me from becoming conceited. (8) Three times I pleaded with the Lord about this, that it should leave me. (9) But he said to me, "My grace is sufficient for you, for my power is made perfect in weakness." Therefore I will boast all the more gladly of my weaknesses, so that the power of Christ may rest upon me. (10) For the sake of Christ, then, I am content with weaknesses, insults, hardships, persecutions, and calamities. For when I am weak, then I am strong.

I hope that you have all given this principle much thought this week, and that you continue to think about it. We must reject the world's notions of success and greatness and power, else we will not find Christ. Is it not plain from even these few verses (and certainly the entire Bible) that this is an inviolable principle: *God does not*

work through man's strength, but through our weakness. And He does so in order that all glory be given to Him, and so no man can boast.

And so we see this in Paul:

2 Corinthians 4:10 always carrying in the body the death of Jesus, so that the life of Jesus may also be manifested in our bodies.

What does this mean? By "the death of Jesus," Paul does not just mean the actual death of Christ on the cross, but rather the entirety of His suffering in His earthly ministry. As Paul and his company went about proclaiming Christ, they experienced the same things at the hands of the world as Jesus did. Their message, the gospel, revealed in real, lived-out and visible fashion, *Christ*. They were mocked, rejected, stoned, maligned...and in a few cases, *believed*. They were weak, yet they were strong because God was at work empowering the gospel so that it was *the power of God to salvation for all who believe*.

Where then do we find, today, the *life of Jesus? The living Christ? His truth and His Spirit and His people?* Well, be assured that we will not find Christ where man is exalted. Where man's strength is the thing, no matter how

much "Christian" outer appearance it may have.

Matthew 20:20-28 Then the mother of the sons of Zebedee came up to him with her sons, and kneeling before him she asked him for something. (21) And he said to her, "What do you want?" She said to him, "Say that these two sons of mine are to sit, one at your right hand and one at your left, in your kingdom." (22) Jesus answered, "You do not know what you are asking. Are you able to drink the cup that I am to drink?" They said to him, "We are able." (23) He said to them, "You will drink my cup, but to sit at my right hand and at my left is not mine to grant, but it is for those for whom it has been prepared by my Father."

(24) And when the ten heard it, they were indignant at the two brothers. (25) But Jesus called them to him and said, "You know that the rulers of the Gentiles lord it over them, and their great ones exercise authority over them. (26) It **shall not be so among you**. But whoever would be great among you must be your servant, (27) and whoever would be first among you must be your slave, (28) even as the Son of Man came not to be served but to serve, and to give his life as a ransom for many."

Where there is man's glory, God's glory will not shine. Man's glory is a fading glory, like the temporal glory of some beautiful vase. But where Christ is truly present in jars of clay, that glory will be increasing day by day and one Day it is going to burst out for all to see. Moses' face shone, but he knew there was something greater – something that doesn't fade:

Hebrews 11:24-27 By faith Moses, when he was grown up, refused to be called the son of Pharaoh's daughter, (25) choosing rather to be mistreated with the people of God than to enjoy the fleeting pleasures of sin. (26) **He considered the reproach of Christ greater wealth than the treasures of Egypt, for he was looking to the reward.** (27) By faith he left Egypt, not being afraid of the anger of the king, for he endured as seeing him who is invisible.

See it?

- Reproach of Christ
- Vs
- Treasures of Egypt

Paul is telling these Corinthians, and us, that we must reject “Egyptian” religion. For all of its popularity and

pomp, it is false. It is fleeting. It is wealthy, for now. Like Egypt it will hate those who refuse to be part of it. But we must look to that which is unseen, because that glory is the real, eternal reward seen by the eyes of faith.

Let's put it right out there:

If you are going to follow Christ, if you are going to enter His kingdom, then you must reject the glory of this world and of golden calf false Christianity, and choose to be mistreated with the people of God. You must carry about in your body the death of Jesus. You must be willing to suffer the reproach of Christ and embrace it as true wealth rather than cling to the 'treasures of Egypt.'

Jesus said it, right? –

Luke 9:22-26 saying, "The Son of Man must suffer many things and be rejected by the elders and chief priests and scribes, and be killed, and on the third day be raised." (23) And he said to all, "If anyone would come after me, let him deny himself and take up his cross daily and follow me. (24) For whoever would save his life will lose it, but whoever loses his life for my sake will save it. (25) For what does it

profit a man if he gains the whole world and loses or forfeits himself?
(26) For whoever is ashamed of me and of my words, of him will the Son of Man be ashamed when he comes in his glory and the glory of the Father and of the holy angels.

Many people today who claim the name of Jesus Christ are, in fact, *ashamed of Him*. Ashamed of His words. That's what these Corinthians were being tempted to do. Golden calf, false Christianity enables a person to call themselves a Christian, yet not have to die to himself and suffer as Christ did. One sure mark of a false Christ is a "gospel" and system that is seen as powerful and "great", impressive to the world. Big crowds. Big things. Big money. Big buildings. Big leaders. Big. Now look at Jesus Christ. Look at His Apostles. What do you see?

The reproach of Christ – "the expression of disapproval or disappointment. Dishonor. Disgrace. Scandal."

Many of you over the years have suffered this reproach. You have relatives who claim to be Christians, yet they disapprove of you. They express their disappointment in you. You are a dishonor and disgrace to

them. You have remained in this small, weak church. You reject the false teaching that abounds in churches today. Here is Christ's Word to you –

Matthew 5:10-12 "Blessed are those who are persecuted for righteousness' sake, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven. (11) "Blessed are you when others revile you and persecute you and utter all kinds of evil against you falsely on my account. (12) Rejoice and be glad, for your reward is great in heaven, **for so they persecuted the prophets who were before you.**

This is real glory. God's power in our weakness. Reproached but blessed. Looking to the reward with the eyes of faith.

Are you starting to get your thinking straight on these things?

Light Affliction, Weight of Glory

Let's also take a closer look at these last two verses of this chapter:

2 Corinthians 4:17-18 For this light momentary affliction is preparing for us an eternal weight of glory beyond all comparison, (18) as we look not to the things that are seen but to the things that are unseen.

For the things that are seen are transient, but the things that are unseen are eternal.

- Affliction – light
Momentary
- Glory – weighty
Eternal

A few pieces of silver or more than all the gold in Smaug's lair. Here Paul gives us an essential truth about the Christian's life: *an eternal perspective*. Or you might say:

- Right now is for a moment
- Our heavenly reward is forever

The Christian (and really all people) needs to see his life and experience, the good and the bad, *with eternity in view*. The things that are unseen. The invisible things – they are eternal. The things we see and feel and touch and hear – are transient. Temporary. Passing away.

1 John 2:15-17 Do not love the world or the things in the world. If anyone loves the world, the love of the Father is not in him. (16) For all that is in the world--the desires of the flesh and the desires of the eyes and pride in possessions--is not from the Father but is from the world. (17) And the world is passing away along with its desires,

but whoever does the will of God abides forever.

Paul, as we will see later in 2 Corinthians, had actually been permitted to see at least a glimpse of this coming glory that awaits us:

2 Corinthians 12:2-7 I know a man in Christ who fourteen years ago was caught up to the third heaven--whether in the body or out of the body I do not know, God knows. (3) And I know that this man was caught up into paradise--whether in the body or out of the body I do not know, God knows-- (4) **and he heard things that cannot be told, which man may not utter.** (5) On behalf of this man I will boast, but on my own behalf I will not boast, except of my weaknesses. (6) Though if I should wish to boast, I would not be a fool, for I would be speaking the truth. But I refrain from it, so that no one may think more of me than he sees in me or hears from me. (7) So to keep me from becoming conceited because of the surpassing greatness of the revelations, a thorn was given me in the flesh, a messenger of Satan to harass me, to keep me from becoming conceited.

I suspect what Paul means here in verse 4 is that human speech is

incapable of explaining and describing what he heard (and saw?) in paradise.

NOTE: This is one reason we can be sure that these people who write books about going to heaven and coming back again and then describing in detail who and what they saw are frauds.

The surpassing greatness of the revelations. Eternal weight of glory beyond all comparison. The closest we come to a description is most probably in Revelation, but people have regularly erred in applying John's description far too literally. John, I imagine, was grasping for words as he tried to describe what he saw.

Revelation 21:10-14 And he carried me away in the Spirit to a great, high mountain, and showed me the holy city Jerusalem coming down out of heaven from God, (11) having the glory of God, its radiance like a most rare jewel, like a jasper, clear as crystal. (12) It had a great, high wall, with twelve gates, and at the gates twelve angels, and on the gates the names of the twelve tribes of the sons of Israel were inscribed-- (13) on the east three gates, on the north three gates, on the south three gates, and on the west three gates. (14) And the wall of the city had twelve foundations, and on them were the

twelve names of the twelve apostles of the Lamb.

Revelation 22:1-5 Then the angel showed me the river of the water of life, bright as crystal, flowing from the throne of God and of the Lamb (2) through the middle of the street of the city; also, on either side of the river, the tree of life with its twelve kinds of fruit, yielding its fruit each month. The leaves of the tree were for the healing of the nations. (3) No longer will there be anything accursed, but the throne of God and of the Lamb will be in it, and his servants will worship him. (4) They will see his face, and his name will be on their foreheads. (5) And night will be no more. They will need no light of lamp or sun, for the Lord God will be their light, and they will reign forever and ever.

Our present afflictions in this life and in following Christ are real. Paul has listed them out here as he writes. His other letters describe his suffering as well, yet his sights are set on this eternal, weighty, glory:

Philippians 3:20-21 But our citizenship is in heaven, and from it we await a Savior, the Lord Jesus Christ, (21) who will transform our lowly body to be like his

glorious body, by the power that enables him even to subject all things to himself.

is due for what he has done in the body, whether good or evil.

Which brings us to chapter 5 –

2 Corinthians 5:1-10 For we know that if the tent that is our earthly home is destroyed, we have a building from God, a house not made with hands, eternal in the heavens. (2) For in this tent we groan, longing to put on our heavenly dwelling, (3) if indeed by putting it on we may not be found naked. (4) For while we are still in this tent, we groan, being burdened--not that we would be unclothed, but that we would be further clothed, so that what is mortal may be swallowed up by life. (5) He who has prepared us for this very thing is God, who has given us the Spirit as a guarantee. (6) So we are always of good courage. We know that while we are at home in the body we are away from the Lord, (7) for we walk by faith, not by sight. (8) Yes, we are of good courage, and we would rather be away from the body and at home with the Lord. (9) So whether we are at home or away, we make it our aim to please him. (10) For we must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ, so that each one may receive what

We will want to look at this chapter in detail in the coming weeks, but by way of introducing it, notice the first few verses again. Paul is continuing with this matter of an eternal perspective of this present life:

2 Corinthians 5:1-10 For we know that if the tent that is our earthly home is destroyed, we have a building from God, a house not made with hands, eternal in the heavens. (2) For in this tent we groan, longing to put on our heavenly dwelling,

Let's just briefly for now consider the many important contrasts here in regard to the Christian. Which is to say, in regard to YOUR life if you are a Christian:

This Life	Glory (N.C.)
Tent	Building
Temporal	Eternal
Earth	Heaven (N.C.)
Groaning	Real Life
Away	At Home

You see the thing lived out in Abraham:

Hebrews 11:8-10 By faith Abraham obeyed when he was called to go out to a place that he was to receive as an inheritance. And he went out, not knowing where he was going. (9) By faith he went to live in the land of promise, as in a foreign land, living in tents with Isaac and Jacob, heirs with him of the same promise. (10) For he was looking forward to the city that has foundations, whose designer and builder is God.

The Corinthians, like us, were prone to seeing things through an earthly lens. That is why they were in such trouble. They evaluated Paul with the wrong filter. *They were thinking and living as if THIS present life were the end goal!* So when they saw Paul suffering, in weakness, not enjoying a huge following and so on, they distanced themselves from him.

Which brings us to our own thinking, does it not? Your body is wearing out. Take care of it the best you can, dress it with the best clothes, eat the healthiest food, use the right medicines, style your hair and use just the right cosmetics, the fact remains – your body is wearing out. The body that you have right now is what the Bible calls “corruptible.” Given to corruption. That is, decay.

Deterioration. Your body is – mortal. Temporal. *It is a tent.*

Tents don’t last all that long. Take the best care of them you want, they tear and they are given to mildewing. They have a rather short term purpose – to camp out in. That is what this life is for the Christian. We are camped out in this present fallen creation. Abraham knew it. He saw the new creation with the eyes of faith so he didn’t put down foundations here as if the land he walked on in his earthly life was the reward and inheritance promised him. No. He knew his reward was on the new earth in the new creation.

In Christ you have a building created by God that is eternal. It is not on this present earth. I think Paul is specifically referring here to your resurrection body, though I suspect he also has the new earth in view as well.

Your tent is decaying, wearing out, and in the case of many Christians – it is destroyed (as Paul’s most likely was via execution). So in this body, we groan. We desire to put on our permanent home at the resurrection. Christians grow increasingly homesick in other words. Less and less attached to this present world and life. We increase in the conviction that this world and this life are passing away,

and we would much rather be absent from here and at home with the Lord. In many ways this is really a test of whether a person truly is in Christ or not. Where is their heart's real affection? This world and their new iPhone, or our home with Christ?

And so, we do not grieve like worldlings in the face of death.

1 Thessalonians 4:13-18 (13) But we do not want you to be uninformed, brothers, about those who are asleep, that you may not grieve as others do who have no hope. (14) For since we believe that Jesus died and rose again, even so, through Jesus, God will bring with him those who have fallen asleep. (15) For this we declare to you by a word from the Lord, that we who are alive, who are left until the coming of the Lord, will not precede those who have fallen asleep. (16) For the Lord himself will descend from heaven with a cry of command, with the voice of an archangel, and with the sound of the trumpet of God. And the dead in Christ will rise first. (17) Then we who are alive, who are left, will be caught up together with them in the clouds to meet the Lord in the air, and so we will always be with the Lord. (18) Therefore encourage one another with these words.