

Sermon Notes
Weds, June 2 & Sun June 6, 2021
“Believing, Speaking, and Thanking God”
(2 Corinthians 4:13-5:1)

Introduction to the Gospel of Mark and to the New Testament “Epistles”

An Introduction to Paul’s Second Letter to the Corinthians by Eugene Peterson:

“The Corinthian Christians gave their founding pastor, Paul, more trouble than all his other churches put together. No sooner did Paul get one problem straightened out in Corinth than three more appeared.

For anyone operating under the naïve presumption that joining a Christian church is a good way to meet all the best people and cultivate smooth social relations, a reading of Paul’s Corinthian correspondence is the prescribed cure. But however much trouble the Corinthians were to each other and to Paul, they prove to be a cornucopia of blessings to us, for they triggered some of Paul’s most profound and vigorous writing.

The provocation for Paul’s second letter to the Christians in Corinth was an attack on his leadership. In his first letter ... he wrote with the confident authority of a pastor who understands the ways God’s salvation works and the kind of community that comes into being as a result. At least some of what he wrote to them was hard to hear and hard to take.

So they bucked his authority – accused him of inconsistencies, impugned his motives, questioned his credentials. They didn’t argue with what he had written; they simply denied his right to tell them what to do.

And so Paul was forced to defend his leadership ... He confronted the challenge, and in the process probed the very nature of leadership in a community of believers. Because leadership is necessarily an exercise in *authority*, it easily shifts into an exercise of *power*. But the minute it does that, it begins to inflict damage on both the leader and the led ...

Paul wasn’t the kind of guy who impressed men and dazzled women. He was brainy and intense. He talked well, but tradition has it that he was short and bald. He lacked the celebrity glamour the Corinthians saw in other teachers ... *When he finished talking, people admired Jesus, not Paul, and the Corinthians mistook that for a flaw.*

Even among the Greeks, who knew how to party, the Corinthians had a reputation. Greeks had the expression ‘to Corinthianize,’ which meant to be incredibly promiscuous. They were used to religions that offered wild rites ... but they didn’t expect to cultivate humility or give their hard-earned cash to the poor. They liked teachers with feel-good messages and religions that served the consumer. Paul was a shock.”

(The Message Remix, p. 1690)

Setting the Stage: 2 Corinthians 4:1-2, 5-7 (from *The Message*)

¹⁻² Since God has so generously let us in on what he is doing, we're not about to throw up our hands and walk off the job just because we run into occasional hard times. We refuse to wear masks and play games. We don't maneuver and manipulate behind the scenes. And we don't twist God's Word to suit ourselves. Rather, we keep everything we do and say out in the open, the whole truth on display, so that those who want to can see and judge for themselves in the presence of God.

⁵⁻⁷ Remember, our Message is not about ourselves; we're proclaiming Jesus Christ, the Master. All we are is messengers, errand runners from Jesus for you. It started when God said, "Light up the darkness!" and our lives filled up with light as we saw and understood God in the face of Christ, all bright and beautiful. If you only look at *us*, you might well miss the brightness. We carry this precious Message around in the unadorned clay pots of our ordinary lives. That's to prevent anyone from confusing God's incomparable power with us.

A Simple Summary of Christian Life and Ministry (based on 2 Corinthians 4:13-15)

Believing

Resurrection-focused faith

Future-focused faith

Speaking

Jeremiah 20:9 – I can't hold God's Word inside!

Psalm 107:2 – "Let the redeemed of the Lord say so!"

1 Peter 3:15 – Be ready to share the *hope* that is in you.

John 6:66-69 – Speak Jesus' "words of eternal life."

Thanking God

Give thanks for God's grace toward you and me!

Give thanks that God's grace extends to more and more people!

Conclusion: Psalm 116:12-14, 17

¹² What shall I render to the Lord for all his benefits to me?

¹³ I will lift up the cup of salvation and call on the name of the Lord,

¹⁴ I will pay my vows to the Lord in the presence of all his people.

¹⁷ I will offer to you the sacrifice of thanksgiving and call on the name of the Lord.