



MONDAY 01 AUGUST 2016

SERIES: SECOND CORINTHAINS

Read: 2 Corinthians 11:1-2

Plug In...

In many cultures the father takes responsibility to make sure his daughter is a virgin when presented to a husband. Metaphorically, Paul desires to present the Corinthians to Christ in the same way. Paul Barnett helpfully shows that becoming a Christian is like being engaged. Christians in this life are waiting for the culminating wedding day in the future (when Jesus returns – i.e., the husband arrives).

Chew It Over...

Within our Church@5 congregations, excitingly, there are a number of couples engaged to marry! Our desire is that they maintain their devotion to their fiancée throughout the engagement period and persevering until the wedding day. Each time we think on these couples, let us remember this powerful metaphor. Likewise, we are engaged as the bride of Christ. Many desires, lusts, urgings can tempt us to wander. Keeping with the metaphor, 'virginity' is maintained by faith in Christ alone (even as we keep battling and succumbing to sin). Christ has cleansed us for all past, present, and future sin – but only if we maintain complete trust in him alone.

How can we, for one another, be like Paul and seek to present our Christian brother or sister pure to Christ? To encourage them to hang in there? To persevere?

Prayer Suggestion

Pray for yourself, your family, your growth group, your church – ask that we have a godly jealousy for one another whereby we go chase after the wander and fight for one another. Pray that we do not cheat on the Lord in our day to day life. Seek and trust in his purifying forgiveness.



The Lakes

TUESDAY 02 AUGUST 2016

SERIES: SECOND CORINTHIANS

Read: 2 Corinthians 11:3-4 & Galatians 3:10-16

Plug In...

Paul recalls a marriage that was destroyed and defiled at the instigation of Satan. Remember, the marriage of Adam and Eve was to image God (Genesis 1:27; *cf.* 2:18-24). Marriage in some way pointed to the intimate relationship between humanity and God. Just like the bride of Christ (the church of Corinth), Eve is wandering away from her first love – God. She listens to the words of Satan, not the words of God. Satan said the ‘good news’ she seeks comes from what he says, not what God says (Genesis 3:1-7).

Chew It Over...

Truth is deposited within words. We must always look closely at the words of our teaching and doctrine. So often words show up a drift and slip into self-justification. Notice where words show the basis for a spiritual standing with God is embedded in something we do. It is possible to have doctrine using the words ‘Jesus’ or ‘the Spirit’. In the mix can be words that sound ‘Christian’ but look closer to see if there are other words in statements that give away someone considers their position before God is based on Jesus plus something. If so, we have heard a different gospel. Paul says a gospel from the mouth of Satan (11:13-15). We must watch our own words carefully; watch other people’s words carefully.

This question is a helpful grid to see where your core understanding of the gospel is at:

Fill in the blank, *How do you know you will be in heaven with God? Because* _____

[Answer: must begin with Jesus. Should your sentence start with any other word it may betray a reliance on something/someone else].

Prayer Suggestion

Thank God for the complete righteousness given to us through Jesus. Ask for help in retaining clarity as we communicate with others the difference between gospel-grace (sole reliance on Jesus Christ) and religion (reliance on something within ourselves).



The Lakes

WEDNESDAY 03 AUGUST 2016

SERIES: SECOND CORINTHIANS

Read: 2 Corinthians 11:5-9 & Psalm 22

Plug In...

Verse 4 shows the Corinthians swallow false 'gospels' and a false 'Jesus' because they are caught up with the criteria of the world (*cf.* 10:7). Paul acknowledges that under certain criteria he does look "inferior". However, the credential he holds up is 'knowledge'. The knowledge is the content of the gospel and a life that flows out of apprehending that. Here, Paul taps into a theme running throughout the whole letter. That, the way of following Christ involves suffering and weakness so God's resurrection power is displayed. Shown as miniature resurrection-type outcomes in this life which point to something greater, shown in the ultimate resurrection to come (*cf.* 2 Corinthians 1:5; 8-11; 4:7). Paul shows a cross-and-resurrection paradigm informs his actions. He first adopts something of the false-teachers' way of seeing things (i.e., conceding that it looks like he's not much chop in not taking a fee in a world where fees are proof-positive of legitimacy), and agrees he's "lowered" himself (humility of the cross), but in order to "exalt" them (the glory of the resurrection).

Chew It Over...

Self-glorification and self-display was how the Corinthians measured themselves. Being a super-star was the ideal. Reality TV and Facebook in our culture reveals we still hooray the spectacular and the impressive. This shapes us to expect our spirituality needs to hit the same benchmarks. Paul reminds us the 'spiritually-spectacular' happens in the paradox of the cross. God's glory is spectacularly shown when something, which looks as-good-as-dead, rises from the ashes only by the power of God. This helps us understand something behind suffering when it hits us; it should also get us prepared in the midst of suffering for God to showcase something of the resurrection. A resurrection-type experience which happens in part now (whether revived from the jaws of death, like Paul's experience, or even the emergence of hope while bogged in the pits of despair) which points to the full reality later on). **Reflect again on 2 Corinthians 1:8-11 & 5:1-10.** Consider also how King David while in the midst of suffering spoke as though resurrected (e.g., Psalm 22, where the final part surprises us for David speaks as though already saved such is his confidence).

Prayer Suggestion

Praise God for the experience of the resurrection we have even now: the knowledge that we are included with Christ in heaven at God's right hand side; the relief from fearing future judgement; the Spirit which comforts; the new identity and new place to belong amongst Christians; the dynamic that we progressively reject sin and see our freedom emerging; the promise – seen objectively when Jesus himself rose bodily – that we *will* have a whole new body released from disease and death.



The Lakes

THURSDAY 04 AUGUST 2016

SERIES: SECOND CORINTHIANS

Read: 2Corinthians 11:7-11 & Isaiah 44:6-20

Plug In...

The Corinthians were so enamoured with self-boasting. This must have been so heightened that Paul figures the only way to be persuasive is to for a moment enter their world of boasting, boast, but boast rightly (2 Corinthians 11:1). Yet, Paul's boasting is always qualified. It is a boast that moves away from himself and towards the power of God alone (2 Corinthians 10:17). In this chapter, and particularly this set of verses, Paul is saying something like: okay, if boasting is the name of the game, then this is my boast! I preached the gospel to you free of charge (2 Corinthians 11:7; 10).

Chew It Over...

Sometimes we find ourselves in conversation with a person where they never entertain seeing things from your perspective – even for a moment for the sake of understanding you. Sometimes, jumping in where they're at (for a moment) in order to run the logic of their worldview out so that they can see the absurd results. We might do this as loving way to give them a jolt in the arm with they hope they realise their own short-sightedness. [NB: This form of argument is called 'lifting the roof off' if you want to chase it down further.] Paul does something like *lifting the roof off* here. Paul says: okay, let's go with boasting for a moment. If I boast, then I can boast about the fact that I brought the gospel free of charge!

Therein lies the twist. The gospel is all about free grace. So, to boast in offering a grace which is free, and this message is free of charge, kind of smacks the alternative 'gospels' out of the park.

Next time you are in a conversation, don't be afraid to try and help someone see the logical outcome of their worldview. For many, they simply hold on to things never ever thinking about where it takes them logically. There are many stories of people whom, when lovingly (11:11) shown the absurd outcomes of their system turn and begin to trust in Jesus.

Prayer Suggestion

May the Lord make us confident enough to help people trace through the absurdity of some of the things they say and believe. May we do it with the love of Jesus because the reality of heaven and hell is before these people and as God is our witness we desire their inclusion with Christ.



The Lakes

FRIDAY 05 AUGUST 2016

SERIES: SECOND CORINTHIANS

Read: 2 Corinthians 11:12-15 & Romans 3:9-26

Plug In...

Paul gives strong statements here. Satan can transform so he looks like he's on about the good. [Paul's reminded us of that infamous first transformation Genesis 3 *cf.* 2 Corinthians 11:3.]. Given that, Paul says Satan's servants have the same ability to transform. Such people disguise themselves as "servants of righteousness" (11:15).

Chew It Over...

How do you spot an imposter if they look the same? For, both the imposter and the genuine servants are servants of righteousness. Superficially they both are preaching and teaching a life of righteousness. Some of the ethical behaviour being promoted may externally look the same. So what's the problem? It is the *means* by which the righteousness is achieved. The genuine servant promotes Christ alone knowing that this is truly the only way to attain righteousness (*cf.* Romans 3:9-26). The imposter seeks to shift sole reliance on Christ to some mix: Christ plus something. Most of us would say the irreligious usually do look behaviourally different to the genuine Christian. But, the religious can look quite similar. *Who's who? Would the real Christian please stand up!* The genuine is one solely relying on Christ's work alone.

Get sharp at spotting the difference – notice the words that are used, the subtle shifts. Not so as to harass people, but because it is a matter of false teachers and their listeners' fate; life and death stuff (11:15b).

Prayer Suggestion

Pray the Lord keeps us vigilant to what is taught. With the melting pot of *Christianity* ask the Lord for help in sorting out false gospels from the one true gospel. Pray that you can bring this clarity to friends and family in your life caught in "religion". Ask that as you do the relief of the good news will soothe their hearts and they can rest from their works, like peace and joy you too have found in Jesus Christ.



The Lakes

WEEKEND 06-07 AUGUST 2016

SERIES: SECOND CORINTHIANS

Read: Romans 3:21-28 (2 Corinthians 10:17)

Plug In...

Paul's big concern in chapters 10-11 of 2 Corinthians has been about a boasting that shifts from boasting in God to a self-boasting. It is most probable that the "false-teachers" in Corinth were Jewish (albeit claiming to be Christian) yet distorted the original intent of the Old Testament Law. They were saying the Old Testament said, do all these things to build up merit before God. Essentially, they were teaching that you have to earn God's acceptance.

Paul constantly battles this teaching. Romans is another example where the distortion is combated.

Chew It Over...

Again, reflect further on the removal of boasting from Romans 3:21-28. Should you have time, read Romans 4. There, Paul shows the Old Testament, when read on its own terms, always has the scheme of God brings salvation to the person who trusts in God while they were still sinners and godless (just like Abraham experienced). The laws given in the Old Testament were given to a people already saved by grace (think Israel saved first in Exodus, then given the gift of the Law). The Jews were called to trust that God had saved

them, and was taking them to a better existence. They were to believe that all the laws given were because God loved them and mercifully gave them the roadmap to the best way to life and prosper.

Therefore, any boasting where you claimed to be living a life by these rules whereby God now owed you was completely topsy-turvy. Crazy in fact, such a person effectively has said: don't need your grace God, I'll give you what I've got by way of a report card and you can pay me back. Crazy-talk! The Old Testament message is that while we were still sinners God showed us grace.

Little plug. Want to see this Old Testament dynamic for yourself. Sign up with Ian Mears for PTC which starts next week looking at the Old Testament.

Prayer Suggestion

Pray for The Lakes, in a world of confusion and a plethora of religious choices and the masquerading attractiveness of Satan's deceit, that God will protect and preserve our church. That the result of the gospel pulsating in our place will overflow so that others receive Jesus and inherit the hope of heaven to come too (2 Corinthians 9:12).