

**Message #12****II Corinthians 4:7-12**

When the Lord Jesus Christ was hanging on the cross a bunch of people who were standing around Him said if you can save others, let's see you save yourself. If you truly are the King of the Jews and the Messiah, let's see you come down off that cross (Mt. 27:42; Mk. 15:30; Lk. 23:35-36). Now had Jesus done that, which He certainly had the right to do, none of us would be saved. That cross work of Jesus Christ is the whole basis for grace. Thank God Jesus did not come down from that cross, because our entire eternal destiny is at stake.

But that call to abandon the cross is a call still operative today. There are many religions that will tell people abandon the cross and trust us. There are many religious leaders who will tell people don't trust in that cross, trust in our works system or our denomination. There are many philosophical leaders who will tell you don't trust in that cross, trust in yourself.

But there is another call that is still operative today that is aimed straight at believers, which says get away from that cross and get down here in the world. Get away from your sacrificial commitment to Jesus Christ and join the rest of us who don't care about God or His Word.

**The Apostle Paul considered the grace message and grace ministry to be a treasure (4:7). In fact the word "treasure" (θησαυρος) means that Paul viewed the grace ministry as a treasury that had been stored with him (G. Abbott-Smith, *Greek Lexicon*, p. 207).**

You cannot honestly read II Corinthians without concluding that the doctrine and theology of the dispensation of grace was clearly entrusted to the Apostle Paul (II Cor. 3:6; 4:7). This was a brand new covenantal system, a "grace upon grace" system (John 1:16) that was entrusted to Paul to unravel. Jesus Christ had Personally chosen Paul and gave him this assignment. His job was to unfold the grace message and doctrine to the entire Gentile world (Acts 9:15).

Paul's new covenant of grace ministry and message was a life ministry. It gives a person abundant life, it gives a person eternal life, and it gives a person the Spirit of life. His message was a life message that the glory of the grace of God is found by looking at the face of Jesus Christ (II Cor. 4:6).

But Paul's new covenant grace ministry was a ministry that brought him deep despair and hardship. Most people of the world rejected Paul and his amazing ministry. It was anything but easy going. Paul was being criticized that everywhere he went he found himself in trouble. His new covenant grace ministry and message was explosive and he was often under a threat of death. Religious people wanted to literally kill Paul.

This passage is a passage in which Paul describes a bunch of negative things that hit him and hurt him. Paul wanted the Corinthians to realize there was real purpose to the negative things. All negative things were being used by God in Paul's world to spread the grace Gospel.

**THE REASON WHY GRACE PROMOTERS EXPERIENCE NEGATIVE THINGS IS SO THAT WE MAY FURTHER COMMUNICATE THE TRUTH AND THE HOPE OF THE GRACE OF GOD THAT WE HAVE THROUGH FAITH IN JESUS CHRIST.**

In this section, Paul presents a series of seven antithetic paradoxes which are in juxtaposition to each other for the purpose of communicating this point. **The truth is grace promoters often find themselves in difficult situations but there is purpose in it.**

Now all verbals in verses 7-9 are present tense, which means Paul is speaking of things that continually and habitually do and do not happen. These kinds of things were true all the time continually through the life and ministry of the Apostle Paul. We may expect if we truly grasp grace at a Pauline level, we too will experience some of these same kinds of things continually.

**ANTITHETIC PARADOX #1** – We have God's power, not our power. **4:7**

The message of the grace of God is a glorious, wonderful and powerful message, but the messenger who brings the message is just a man made of clay. **There is nothing glorious, or glamorous or wonderful or powerful about the minister, it is the message that is grand.**

The first thing Paul wanted these believers to realize is that the grace that we have received is a continual treasure. But the treasure that we continually have does not have anything to do with being great ourselves; the treasure is the surpassing greatness of the power of God that saved us.

We are nothing but “earthen vessels,” so the power of God’s grace is not our power, it is His power and His might. Paul’s point is this powerful grace message has been entrusted to clay pots, but the power of the message to save sinners and change lives belongs to God.

**The analogy is critical. We who know the Lord are nothing but clay pots. We are frail, fragile, finite people. But the treasure we have in us, the grace of God, is the power of God. We are walking through life with a treasure that actually lives in us.**

That is why Paul did not preach himself, he preached Christ (II Cor. 4:5). This is very important for us to realize; we have a powerful treasure in the message of grace that is found in Jesus Christ and when we present that message, God’s power is unleashed.

The “power” (δυναμις) and the might and the strength and the ability is from God, not out of us and when we present the treasured message of grace that by believing on Jesus Christ you may have a relationship with God, you are forever saved.

I want us to think about this truth—when you leave here today, you are carrying a great treasure with you. The treasure you are carrying is the Gospel of the grace of God. So you leave here as a weak vessel, in a weak flesh body and you are carrying with you the power of God in the treasure of grace.

**ANTITHETIC PARADOX #2** – We are afflicted but not crushed . **4:8a**

Any true grace teacher has the power of God, but he will also discover he has trouble and affliction. The treasured grace message is not one that is popular. J. Vernon McGee said he knew an old Bible teacher who used to say “I measure a man by the enemies he has.” If he has the right kind of enemies, he is the right kind of man of God.

The Greek word “afflicted” (θλιβω) means to be compressed, narrowly boxed in and under great distress (Smith, p. 207). The participle is present passive, which means the person who truly grasps and communicates the treasure of grace will discover that there will be continual and habitual afflictions that will hit. A true grace minister will be the recipient of many different kinds of distressful situations.

However, God will never permit His people to be crushed. The word “crushed” (στενοχωρεω) is one that refers to be anxious because one lacks space (*Ibid.*, p. 417). This participle is also present passive, which means God will never continually permit His people to be crushed. We may get boxed in, but we will always have some breathing room.

I understand the Greek to mean that if we truly understand grace, there will be many times in our Christian life when we will be under great pressure; but God will see to it that we always continually have some breathing room. Merrill Tenney said it well when he said we may be squeezed, but we will never be squashed.

**ANTITHETIC PARADOX #3** – We are perplexed but not despairing . **4:8b**

Any true grace teacher will also discover there will be situations that will occur that will leave you totally and completely perplexed. The word “perplexed” (απορεω) means that we may find ourselves at a loss as to what to think or do. The participle is a present tense, middle voice participle which means there will be many continual and habitual times when, in and of ourselves, we will find ourselves at a loss.

It is perplexing to see people that want works or law and not grace. It is very perplexing to see people who have been exposed to Bible exposition who would walk away and go to some shallow religious operation where they can be entertained. There are perplexing things that happen.

However, God will never permit His people to be in a state of despair. The word “despair” (εξαπορεω) means in utter despair and loss with the perspective we will never get out of it (*Ibid.*, p. 159). This participle is also present middle, which means God will never allow his grace ministers to be in a continual state of despair, in and of themselves. God will see that they do not remain in this condition. He will send His encouragement and blessings.

Dr. Merrill Tenney said we may be bewildered but we will not be befuddled. David Lowry said there are times we are despairing, but not totally despairing.

No matter how perplexed we may be, we will never be in a situation in which God's power will leave us helpless and hopeless.

**ANTITHETIC PARADOX #4** – We are persecuted but not forsaken . **4:9a**

Any grace treasure minister will discover there will be times when they are put to flight. The Greek word “persecuted” (διώκω) means to be persecuted in the sense of being put to flight. The present passive participle indicates this will continually happen and the grace teacher will be the continual recipient of the action. In other words, if you grasp the treasure of the grace Gospel and communicate it, there will be times you will find yourself in trouble, with many people against you and your message.

If ever there were a man who understood this, it was Paul. Paul was persecuted everywhere he went, all of the time. That was the story of his life.

But Paul learned a great truth in that God would not forsake him. In fact, the word “forsaken” (εγκαταλειπω) means to be totally and completely deserted or abandoned (*Ibid.*, p. 128). The present passive participle indicates that Paul had been the recipient of the continual non-forsaking work of God.

Paul was always chased by someone, hounded by someone. Someone was always out to get him. Paul always lived with the theological mindset that God was always with him and would never forsake or desert or abandon him.

That point is good to know when you are under attack.

**ANTITHETIC PARADOX #5** – We are struck down but not destroyed . **4:9b**

There are times when God's best servants will get hit with negative things that will strike them down. The enemy will knock them right off their feet. The present tense means throughout life there will be continual things that will hit.

The word “struck down” (καταβαλλω) means to be literally put down, lying prostrate on the ground (*Ibid.*, p. 232). There were times when Paul had been physically knocked down to the ground for preaching grace. Paul was sick, he was beaten, he was stoned and he was weak.

But in the process of that he learned that God never allowed him to be continually destroyed. The word “destroy” (απολλυμι) means to be at an utter and total destructive loss (*Ibid.*, p. 52).

When you grasp the treasure of God's grace, you will not be immune to hardship. There may be times you find yourself in a hospital or at home sick in bed. There may be times when you will find yourself weak. This doesn't mean you lack faith or grace. In fact, it may be due to the fact that you grasp grace. But what you will always discover is that God will not allow His grace agents to be destroyed. He will always take care of His own.

Perhaps you have been knocked down recently. Some flesh issue has got the better of you. Get your mind focused on your treasure, the grace of God, and He will lift you up.

**ANTITHETIC PARADOX #6** – We carry Christ’s death to manifest Christ’s life.  
**4:10-11**

Paul could literally say I have marks on my body due to my ministry of presenting God’s grace. Paul had literal, physical scars on his body because of his commitment to Jesus Christ. He had been imprisoned, beaten, stoned, whipped and shipwrecked. In fact, three times he was actually beaten with rods (II Cor. 10:23-25). Those kinds of things had taken a physical toll on Paul’s body. The present tense of the participle “carrying” means Paul continually had these marks on his body and they did not go away. He could literally take the shirt off his back and show you marks on his body that were all due to the grace message he proclaimed concerning the death of Jesus Christ.

The “for” that begins **verse 11** further explains what Paul means. He constantly was in danger of losing his life because he was proclaiming the life message that faith alone in Christ alone could save a sinner. But Paul saw this as carrying around a testimony for Jesus Christ. His sufferings were due to Jesus Christ and God used those sufferings for him to manifest Jesus Christ. The verb “manifest” is aorist tense and what this means is that there was one point to all of the hassles Paul experienced and the punctiliar point was to manifest the truth that life is found in Jesus Christ.

**ANTITHETIC PARADOX #7** – We have death in us so you may have life in you. **4:12**

Now Paul puts this right in the Corinthian’s world. He said I suffer the hassles to bring you grace truth. I live with the threat of death to bring you the Gospel of God’s grace found in Jesus Christ.

There is a Charismatic movement that will tell you that you are not supposed to suffer or hurt. You are not supposed to be sick or have setbacks. This movement is false because there is a purpose for the pain. Paul believed that even the negative things that happened to him, including his own death, happened for the furtherance of the treasure of the grace Gospel. The reason why Paul went through these problems and hassles was so that he could present the grace message of life to the Gentile world.

If we truly grasp the treasure of the grace message there will be times when we will suffer some loss. We will hurt some and have our share of setbacks and hardships. But the truth is it will never be on the scale of the Apostle Paul. This text is very humbling to see if we see it properly. We will leave church today and get in our nice cars and go to our nice homes. If we run low on food, we will go to a nice grocery store. If we get sick, we will go to a nice, clean hospital run by medical professionals.

But here is what you and I need to realize; no matter what hardship we face, we have the potential to manifest the power of God. The reason we have the hassles is because we grasp grace. To Paul, the idea of suffering was not let's just "grin and bear it," it is that we need to manifest the treasure of God's grace.

Many will say get away from the negatives and get away from the sacrifices and enjoy your life and Paul says no, we will manifest the treasure of God's grace no matter what the difficulty. May God help us to have that same attitude.