

Why Aren't Followers of Jesus More Impressive?

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Preacher: Rev. George Sinclair

[0 : 00] Father, pour out your Holy Spirit upon us. Pour out your Holy Spirit upon us as we think about your word. Father, we thank you that every word that is written in 2 Corinthians 4, 7-18, that every word is a word that has ultimately come from you.

It is the word that you desire to speak to us. And Father, we acknowledge before you that it can be hard for us to listen to others and it can be really hard for us to listen to you. But we ask, Father, that you would gentle our minds and humble our minds and humble our hearts and grant us open ears that we might hear you speak.

And may you speak deep into our lives so that our lives, day by day, will bear much fruit that brings you glory. And all this we ask in the name of Jesus, your Son and our Savior. Amen.

Amen. Please be seated. So quite a few years ago, when I was in my early 20s, there wasn't any move-in movement.

But I lived with four other Christian guys in a house. And so we were five Christian young men, all single. And we met together regularly for prayer and Bible reading.

[1 : 17] And we also tried to do different types of things in the community. And one of the things that we often tried to do in the community, we felt fairly comfortable with this because we were five young men. And we'd often bring people in to live with us for a period of time because they needed some help.

And one of the guys, I'm going to call him Bob, often the people that we would have come and live with us had some type of mental illness. And this one time we had a guy, I'll call him Bob, he came to live with us and he was suffering from, I guess they'd call it now bipolar disorder.

They used to call it manic depression. And that's what he was suffering from and struggling with. And he came to live with us for a little period of time because he was homeless. And actually, I've made a mistake in saying that he was struggling with his bipolar disorder.

At the time that he was with us, he definitely wasn't struggling with it. And he was surfing it like he was just completely and utterly given over to his disorder. And it was July.

It was very, very hot as July can be in Ottawa. Very hot and humid. We were in a house that had no air conditioning. And basically, he would wake up in the morning and he would sit in this one couch, one chair in the living room all day.

[2 : 29] The only time he would get up was if he went to get something to eat or to go outside to smoke a cigarette. And this is what he did every day. And after he'd been doing this for a while, I mean, he hadn't showered, hadn't bathed.

He was beginning to get a ripe smell. And so I was picked by the group of five guys to have a conversation with him about his need to deal with he was beginning to smell quite ripe.

And so I actually had to literally stand at the other side of the room because he was getting quite ripe. And I begin to try to talk to him about this. And he interrupts me and says, George, if you knew who I really was, you would fall down right now and worship me.

And he said it with complete seriousness, you would fall down and worship me. I said, I think I said something like, Bob, I know who you are and you need a shower. But he said with complete and utter seriousness, if you knew who I was, you would fall down and worship me.

We Christians, if you're a guest here this morning and you're a seeker or maybe you've just been dragged here against your will, I don't know, and you're just trying to figure out the Christian faith, you're an anthropologist trying to figure out this weird tribe called followers of Jesus.

[3 : 45] Because, you know, we followers of Jesus, we have a very similar problem to Jim. Not that we go around telling people that they have to fall down and worship us, but we have a very, very similar problem.

And that is, if you think about it for a second, you know, in the Creed and the Bible, and we tell people and we know that, you know, what is it? That when we come to faith in Jesus, we've been made right with God.

When we come to faith in Jesus, Jesus lives in us and we live in Jesus. We're given the gift of the Holy Spirit, the very same Holy Spirit that caused the Bible to be written and the planets to be formed and raised Jesus from the dead.

That Holy Spirit lives within us. And we will go to be in the new heaven and the new earth. And if you think about all of these problems, here's our Jim problem. Why aren't you more impressive?

Like, why am I not more impressive? Why isn't this congregation more impressive? Like, you know, if you think about it, often one of the reasons that we don't actually want to say anything about our friends to our friends or our neighbors about the fact that we go to church or that we're followers of Jesus is because we don't feel very impressive.

[5 : 04] We say to ourselves, well, how on earth can I say something to them about Jesus? I mean, they're way better educated than me. You know, they're so much better at relationships.

They're way better behaved. You know, they speak more languages than me. You know, they're fitter. They're younger. They're prettier.

They're better looking. Like, we go through these things. And why do we go through these things? Because we sort of believe that we're not very impressive. And really, we should be impressive. And that's our Jim problem.

Why aren't we more impressive if these biblical things are true? The Bible text today actually has a lot of really important things to speak into this issue about our desire to be more impressive and how it messes up our lives.

Very powerful Bible text about this. So it would be a great help to me if you'd get your Bibles and you'd open them up to 2 Corinthians 4, verse 7. 2 Corinthians 4, verse 7.

[6 : 13] And it speaks directly into some of these issues. It's actually a really, really, really, there's two really, really, really beautiful Bible texts in here that many of you should want to memorize.

It's a good thing to memorize the Bible. And there's wonderful texts here for us to memorize and to be able to think about. And look how the text begins. 2 Corinthians 4, verse 7.

And if you're wondering why I begin at verse 7, if you're a guest here this morning, we do something which is very, very old-fashioned. In fact, I mean, if you go back and you read Augustine and you go back and you read St. John Chrysostom and you go back and you read Ambrose, they used to preach through books of the Bible.

And that's sort of a lost art. We're preaching through the book of 2 Corinthians. And that's why we're starting at verse 7 because we did up to verse 6, you know, 1 to 6 last week. And listen to what it says in 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. It's a very, very beautiful text, isn't it?

[7 : 18] But we have this treasure in jars of clay to show that the surpassing power belongs to God and not to us. Now, some of us might say, you know, that's a really beautiful text.

You know, my mom always told me that I was a treasure. And you know, at school they try to tell you that you're a treasure. And it's like it's a really nice text. I'll have to show my teacher this text or tell my mom about this text because it's very, very Canadian, right?

Everybody's a treasure. We all have this treasure within us. And so it can sound like it's a very Canadian text, but it's actually a text which is very problematic for Christians.

And in fact, I'm going to do something a bit dangerous with you now because at first you might say this is a really nice verse to share with your friend. But when I actually show you what it means, you might be terrified that your friend finds out about this text.

Because it's so profoundly un-Canadian. Notice in verse 7 it begins with but. And I'm sorry, I can't resist it. It's a big but. I love saying that.

[8 : 25] I don't know why. It's a big but. But we have this treasure in jars of clay. It means it's connected in a very particular way with what just goes on before it.

And so actually, Andrew, could you put that up on the screen? Could you say this all with me? It's a beautiful text, the two together. For God who said, let light shine out of darkness, has shone in our hearts to give the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ.

But we have this treasure in jars of clay to show that the surpassing power belongs to God and not to us. Isn't that a beautiful text when put together?

It's so beautiful. And last week we talked a little bit about verse 6 because I went through verses 1 to 6 of chapter 4. So there's a bit of a context about this language of for God who said, let light shine out of darkness.

You know, earlier on in 2 Corinthians it said how every human being is veiled or blindfolded. And it talks about almost as if every human being, on one hand, we're born with this blindfold.

[9 : 38] On the other hand, we like to hold it on. And the blindfold means that we don't actually get to see the reality the way it is. We don't see reality. We like to have blindfolds on. And it implies that in terms of understanding God or seeing God or understanding God that we have a blindfold on.

And that understanding ourselves in light of God, our hearts, the center of who we are. We can only understand who we are in light of who God is. And we have a blindfold on about it. And then just above this verse, it talks about on top of that, the devil blinds us.

On my drive in here this morning, it really struck me. This is a bit of an aside. I know I can have problems with asides. You know, Bob Dylan just got the Nobel Prize, right, for poetry.

He has a line in one of his songs. I was blinded by the devil, born already ruined. I wish I could say it the way he said it. Born already ruined, stone cold dead as I stepped out of the womb.

And by his grace, but by his grace, I have been touched. By his word, I have been healed. By his hand, I've been delivered. By his spirit, I've been healed. I've been saved. That's a Dylan song.

[10 : 47] Isn't that sort of cool that he just won the Nobel Prize for poetry? And that's some of his poetry. It comes right from 2 Corinthians chapter 4. I was blinded by the devil, born already ruined, stone cold dead as I stepped out of the womb.

And anyway, I think that's cool. I'm an old Dylan fan. So what's going on? Just before this text is up here, for God who said, let light shine out of darkness as shown in our hearts to give the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ.

But we have this treasure in jars of clay to show that the surpassing power belongs to God and not to us. What the text is saying here, it's very, very powerful.

The same God who created all things and who on the very first day of creation said, let there be light. And there's light scattering the darkness.

The very same God who has created all things is the same God that converts us. who sees that we as human beings are veiled and blinded.

[11 : 49] And earlier on in 2 Corinthians, it says that when we turn to the Lord, in other words, when we realize that unless God shows us mercy, we cannot fix ourselves or help ourselves or save ourselves.

And we call out to God to show mercy to us. And God, seeing that we are blinded and seeing that we are veiled, he bypasses both. And the very same God that created all things on the first day, began to create all things on the first day of creation, shines in our hearts, the center of who we are, the command center of our lives.

And he shines into that to create the new creation. The same God who creates is the same God who fits us for the new creation when we turn to Jesus in faith.

And that's what it's saying here in the text. And when it talks about the glory of God, for God who said, let light shine out of darkness as shown in our hearts to give the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ, the glory of God is not talking about a mystical vision.

It's not talking about the beatific vision. It's not just saying you have to have a mystical experience. No, it's not talking about that at all. We'll see it more later on in 2 Corinthians. But think back to the Gospel of John.

[13 : 07] In the Gospel of John, the glory of God is an important theme throughout the Gospel of John. And in John chapter 17, when Jesus is praying over his disciples, he knows that after this prayer, he's going to go to the Garden of Gethsemane.

He's going to eventually be captured by his enemies and that he's going to die on the cross. He knows all of that. And he says to his disciples, now you will see the glory of God revealed.

In other words, Jesus dying on the cross is the perfect revelation of the glory of God. And that's what it's talking about here in 2 Corinthians.

When it says to give the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ, that God shines in our hearts, it's giving a knowledge of what Jesus has done for us on the cross to be gripped by what Jesus has done for us on the cross.

And when it says the face of Jesus, it's to constantly reminding us that it's the person of Jesus who dies upon the cross for us, that we're to have a personal knowledge, that it's not just that some ritual happens to us or that God just does some, you know, it's as if he just shines a flashlight into us, but that he comes and shines beneath our veiled and blinded eyes into the very center of who we are to bring home to us the reality of who his son is and what his son has accomplished for us on the cross.

[14 : 36] And so the word knowledge is personal knowledge, not abstract knowledge, not the way we know 2 plus 2 equals 4, or that we know, you know, who won the Stanley Cup last year, anything like that.

It's not just abstract or mere information, it's personal knowledge of a person who has done this mighty act to save us, revealing the glory of God in saving jars of clay who are blinded and veiled.

Could you say this text with me again, please, one more time? For God who said, let light shine out of darkness, has shown in our hearts to give the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ.

But we have this treasure in jars of clay to show that the surpassing power belongs to God and not to us. This is why I've now done a dangerous thing to you.

Because you might have said verse 7 is so wonderful, I think I'll tell my teachers about that or my friends about it. They're always telling me, this text is saying that every human being is a jar of clay.

[15 : 46] It doesn't matter if it's the people who win the gold medals in the Olympics, it doesn't matter if it's the person who will win the MVP award in the NHL this year or the MVP award in the playoffs.

Every human being is a fragile jar of clay. But not every human being has that treasure within them. That's the bad news.

But the good news is every jar of clay that turns to Christ, God will turn no one away and he will shine and can shine and will shine into their hearts to bring the glory of God and the knowledge of Christ and all that wonderful stuff and they will have that treasure within them.

It is both very bad news, but it's also the best possible news that you could hear. All of us who struggle with being fragile. So here we need, just to be very honest, most of us, maybe all of us, like, you know, probably many of us in our minds at different times we're legends in our own minds.

And wouldn't, you know, if I, maybe I'm just way more wicked than the people here and way more pride. You know, it would actually be very proud for me to think I'm more wicked than all of you.

[17 : 17] That's a bit of a conundrum. I'm just averagely wicked. I don't know. Averagely proud. Oh, is that proud as well? Anyway, you can get, you can see the devil can really play us like an instrument.

I mean, he really can. But, you know, here's the thing. Many of us would be so, we'd all be so horrified if other people could just listen in to how we talk and think and imagine and daydream throughout the day.

Like, we'd spend time both howling with laughter at how preposterous we think we are and then we'd be horrified and then we'd be crying with pity because we're addicted to boasting.

All human beings are. That's one of the reasons I think why this image is so powerful to humble us to make us realize that we aren't the legends we believe in our own minds.

And most of us, if we're honest, when we daydream and when we think, it's always around becoming more powerful and more impressive. And this text is saying, you know, when you come to Jesus and God shines his heart, his light into our hearts and we have this unbelievable treasure but he leaves us his jars of clay.

[18 : 33] He doesn't make us superheroes. We don't get the bodies of Wolverine, the wealth of Bill Gates, the intelligence of Stephen Hawking and the niceness of Mother Teresa.

We stay jars of clay. And this is part of God's good plan for us because he knows how addicted we are to boasting and he wants to work in us in such a way, what does the text say?

To show that the surpassing power belongs to God and not to us. Now, just as a bit of a time out here, this text, if this was the only text in the Bible that talked about this, we'd have a bit of a problem because it could almost sound as if it means that, you know, when I'm thinking about my sermon for the coming week, I should plan to do as crappy a job as possible so that God will be glorified.

It's not how it works. You know, it could be that you dress as bad as you can and you bathe as often as Bob so that God, that's not, if this was the only text, maybe you could think that.

I mean, the fact of the matter is that there's lots of Bible texts that really tell us that if we want to bring God glory, why wouldn't we do the best we absolutely can do for him? But at the same time that this text is, that the Bible is encouraging us that once we follow Jesus as our Lord, that we are to try to give our absolute best for him, at the same time, it's powerfully reminding us that we are always jars of clay and that the surpassing power comes from God and never from us and the praise for his surpassing power must go to him and never to us.

[20 : 16] And so one of the things you could do just as a time out, like for us, for those of us who are praying for our kids, those of us who are parents, just here's the thing, remember that you are a jar of clay.

Remember you are a jar of clay and you're dealing with your kids who are jars of clay as well. You know, I think it's so powerful, jars of clay are fragile. One of the fruits of the Holy Spirit is gentleness.

Nowhere in the Bible does it commend us to be a bull in a china shop. But the virtue of gentleness is constantly encouraged upon us and we are to pray that we can be gentle in how we handle people and to pray to be gentle with our kids and husbands to be, you know, gentle with your spouse and spouse to be gentle with your husband and to remember that we're jars of clay and that we have to pray that God's surpassing power will work through the fact that we will always be imperfect parents.

And one of the things you can pray for us as a church is that when the council meets that we remember that we're jars of clay and that we don't say we can't do that or we can't do this, God can't be leading us there because we're not impressive and powerful enough that area, but to remember that we're jars of clay.

And maybe God is going to lead, maybe God will always lead us into areas where we are only jars of clay and the surpassing power has to come from God and we have to say only God.

[21 : 49] And if you're in work and you're afraid of your neighbors and you're afraid to share the gospel or even tell people that you know that you go to church on a Sunday morning because you say to yourself, you know what, I don't get the best job review.

You know, maybe I'm in the bottom part of the office in terms of job review. Well, you know, pray to God that you can do better in your job but remember that God uses jars of clay.

to bear witness to others. Now, some of you might say, George, you know, you asked us to have this Bible and while you were talking, that was very, you know, good, George. But, George, I think that some of the things that happened after this, like that was very helpful, George, but, you know, you've just been talking about one verse, verse seven, and the stuff that comes afterwards, I don't know if the Bible's true, George.

Like, George, why is it so hard to be a Christian often? Like, you know, George, later on it's going to say about, you know, you face despair and you're broken but not, you know, crushed but not, you know, and all that stuff but it's all this other victory stuff but, George, I don't know, I've been in a really long season of despair and I don't know what to do and, you know, you know, a lot of the praise songs in churches, it's all about got the victory and Jesus and I'm dancing but, you know, inside I don't feel like I have victory and I don't feel like I'm dancing.

George, I have a heavy heart and I've been in a long season and I don't know if it's true, George, or maybe, does that mean I'm not a Christian because it just seems like it's so hard?

[23 : 34] It's so hard. Well, there's two things about this and the first thing is, well, let's look at verses eight to 15 and I'll talk about the first thing and I'll tell you the second thing about that for those of us who aren't sure if the Bible's true and they're finding it really, really, really, really hard and they're wondering, you're wondering, we're wondering if our brokenness is something that's going to be the story of our lives.

Look at verses eight to 15. One of the problems we have with it, I'll see in a moment because it's a very simple way to understand it is it's very powerful poetic imagery to communicate a simple truth but let's read, we are afflicted in every way but not crushed.

That's the part some of us don't believe. I'm afflicted and crushed, George. We're perplexed but not driven to despair. George, I'm struggling with despair. Persecuted but not forsaken.

I feel forsaken, George. Struck down but not destroyed. George, I feel destroyed. Always carrying in the body the death of Jesus so that the life of Jesus may also be manifested in our bodies.

For we who live are always being given over to death for Jesus' sake so that the life of Jesus also may be manifested in our mortal flesh. So death is at work in us but life in you.

[24 : 59] Since we have the same spirit of faith and just pause here the word spirit could be capitalized, probably should be capitalized. it's the Holy Spirit.

So it's actually saying that the same Holy Spirit that caused the Bible to be written is the Holy Spirit that Christians have. Since we have the same spirit of faith according to what has been written, I believed and so I spoke, we also believe and so we also speak knowing that he who raised the Lord Jesus will raise us also with Jesus and bring us with you into his presence for it is all for your sake so that his grace extends to more and more people it may increase thanksgiving to the glory of God.

Here in a very simple way, this is a very, very rich text filled with powerful poetic imagery but in a very simple way, here's the first thing that the text is saying in answer to why is it that the Christian life seems so hard and what's it talking about all this being broken and death and all of that stuff.

It's Luke chapter 6 verse 40. Luke chapter 6 verse 40. Can you put it up Andrew? We're not going to have us say it but I'm just going to read it. What does Jesus say? A disciple is not above his teacher but everyone when he is fully trained will be like his teacher.

A disciple is not above his teacher but everyone when he is fully trained will be like his teacher. There's a four or five places in the Gospels where Jesus says a variation of the same thing.

[26 : 38] Jesus' death upon the cross is the lamb of his dying is the lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world. That's what his death is. On one hand, his death is a sacrifice for sin that makes human beings right with God and that's completely and utterly unique to Jesus.

We don't do anything like that to save people but Jesus consistently tells us in the Gospel that we are to be like him and Jesus made himself nothing.

Jesus was tempted by the devil in the wilderness. Jesus got tired. Jesus served others and was misunderstood. His family thought he was insane.

If you go back and read the Gospels, they thought he was insane and he was whipped and he was beaten and the Bible text here in 2 Corinthians is telling us this very, very hard truth but it's an important truth to remember that all Christian ministry and all Christians have a ministry is cruciform.

It's in the shape of the cross. Jesus says, pick up your cross and follow me. And Paul here is talking about that in very, very powerful poetic imagery.

[27 : 52] Some of us, the imagery of death and of life, it's a better way to get into our consciousness and into our hearts than just this mere thing that if we follow Jesus we'll be like him.

But that's what Paul is saying here. It's a very, very powerful thing. But some of us might say, George, okay, you said there's a second thing.

You know, I'm going to be really honest with you. So, you know, I struggle with any type of self-worth or purpose. And, you know, I don't know when to say no to people.

And, you know, in my head, I carry around what my dad said about not respecting me or I'll never amount to much or what my coach or my teacher said.

And I carry that around in me, George. and I, I mean, I want to follow Jesus and I, and I'm willing to pick up the cross and follow him, but, oh, I still don't know if all those things about, you know, being broken, you know, but not finally and all, I don't, I don't know if it's true, George.

[29 : 07] I don't know, George. It just, it just seems hard. Well, just look at verse 14 again.

What does it say in verse 14? Knowing that he who raised the Lord Jesus will raise us also with Jesus and bring us with you into his presence. For it is all for your sake, so that his grace extends to more and more people it may increase thanksgiving to the glory of God.

And then these wonderful verses at the end, verses 16 to 18, more verses to memorize. Could you put it up on the screen and could you, could you folks say it with me out loud? So we do not lose heart.

Though our outer self is wasting away, our inner self is being renewed day by day. For this light, momentary affliction is preparing for us an eternal weight of glory beyond all comparison.

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.

[30 : 20] I mean, here's the thing about this Bible text about us being jars of clay. The fact of the matter is, is jars of clay is a very, very accurate way to describe us. I know we have some doctors here and some people who are in med school.

Tiny, tiny, microscopic things cause us to die. And I mean, this week I know it's a shock to politicians, Jim Prentice dying.

And we are very fragile. And we don't really want to acknowledge it. And this whole text, when it tells us about us being jars of clay and being very fragile, and when it tells us that if we don't have Jesus, that treasure's not within us, that in fact is telling us that our situation is vastly worse than we normally are comfortable of thinking about.

That it's vastly worse, that we are in far more danger and far more trouble than we want to usually think about apart from Jesus. But the text is also telling us that we are so much more loved than we can possibly imagine.

That once we put our faith and trust in Jesus and we have that treasure within us, that doesn't just touch us at the moment that we realize that we've given our lives to Jesus.

- [31 : 39] Because some people it's a very conscious thing and some people it's something that they come to realize with greater and greater clarity from the time they were young children. Or maybe it's something for some people that over a period of six months or a year they make this transition from not being trusting in Jesus to trusting in Jesus.

They don't know the moment it happened. It doesn't matter if you know the moment. But that when it has, it touches the entire length of our lives. It goes right back to us. Us being a jar of clay goes from the moment of our conception to the future which is the moment of our death and everything in between.

And that we're a jar of clay for that entire time. And the treasure, the shining of the light of the gospel of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ that comes and that takes up the whole length and depth of our lives with nothing left over.

And so it means that whether we were aware of it or not there is no time in our life that we have not been profoundly, sacrificially, gloriously, deeply loved by God even if we feel completely and utterly alone and we are suffering and feeling and afraid of despair, there has never been a time that we have been not been deeply loved.

And then this text is telling us that it's impossible for us to imagine that an ever-increasing glory, an ever-increasing weight of glory will be the final word about us in Jesus.

- [33 : 02] And this is not me telling you this in humanism, this is God telling us in his word. I have no authority to tell you this because we're jars of clay. But the Bible says, for this light momentary affliction is preparing for us an eternal weight of glory beyond all comparison.

Jesus, when he died upon the cross, he took upon himself my doom and yours.

and as he dies upon the cross, he offers you and me his destiny. That's what he does for us on the cross.

Some of you might say, George, this can't be for me. Come on, George, look at this. Looking to the things that are not seen and unseen and higher things.

George, I'm an ordinary guy. I'm going to be honest with you. You know what I'm looking forward to doing this afternoon? Can a bud and the TV on. You know, and maybe some others are saying, you know what I'm looking forward towards this afternoon, George?

- [34 : 17] I'm just looking forward to a cup of coffee and Netflix. I don't want to have to think about higher things and whoa. Does that mean I have to listen to CBC and opera and stuff like that and highfalutin stuff when I'm just an ordinary guy or gal?

It's not what the text means at all. Can you read this text with me again? So we do not lose heart. Though our outer self is wasting away, our inner self is being renewed day by day.

For this light momentary affliction is preparing for us an eternal weight of glory beyond all comparison. 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. What Paul is talking about here, what the Bible is talking about here is not a distinction between high things and low things.

He's not talking about high culture versus low culture. He's not talking about having a hipster burger that cost \$27 and a burger at McDonald's that cost \$1.49.

- [35 : 26] He's not talking about those types of distinctions. And he's not talking about the soul versus the body. He's not talking about inner things versus outer things.

He's not talking about that. To use a big word, he's making an eschatological distinction. I know, I'm sorry, it's a big word and I have problems spelling it. An eschatological difference.

What he's reminding us is this, that when Jesus died upon the cross and after he died upon the cross as the Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world and he descends into death and he tastes all there is to taste of death, he bears our sin and he tastes all there is to taste of hell and on the third day he rises triumphant and he's defeated sin, he's defeated death, he's defeated hell and all hostile spiritual powers.

The beginning of the end of the age has come and he will surely return and when he returns, this age, this created order will come to an end and he will usher in and bring the new heaven and the new earth where we will live with resurrected and new bodies for all eternity in the presence of God in a new heaven and a new earth and what Paul is saying here is he's making the distinction between two different ways of looking at us as human beings.

On one hand, you can look at us as human beings and in fact, the word is actually literally in the Greek the outer man and on one hand, you can look at it from the outer man's point of view, it's what the Supreme Court of Canada sees, it's what Apple sees, it sees George the Consumer, it sees how much money George has and the types of preferences he has and it's the outer thing and that's part of this age which is going to come to an end but then all of a sudden there's a slightly different perspective by which you can look at things and you can look at things and see that George already has the light of the knowledge of the glory of God and the face of Jesus Christ within him and that means that he is already part of the age to come, that he is already God's, he's already Christ, that nothing can stop that, that nothing can take that away and that is unseen by the Supreme Court of Canada, it is unseen by the Parliament and the Senate, it is unseen by the CBC and the University of Ottawa and the University of Toronto, it is unseen by the Globe of Mail and Hollywood and it is unseen by Bay Street and it is unseen by all the principalities and powers of this world but what is this other thing that characterizes George is what is unseen by the world is that when Jesus died upon the cross, it was the death of death in the death of Christ that what is unseen was the defeat of death and sin and hell and all hostile spiritual powers, it is the coming of God himself who will bring all things to a completed end and those are the unseen things that we are to be gripped with, not opera and high poetry,

[38 : 39] I am not against those, if you like them that is great, if you like country and western that is great, it is irrelevant in the Bible, the unseen things are what happens on the cross, that there is a father who loves us, that this is his created order, that he hears our prayers, that he wants to hear our prayers, that Jesus will come again, that there will be, those are the unseen things made manifest in his word, the true invisible realities made visible by God.

That's what's to grip us. That's what's to grip us. And so from that perspective, I'm not diminishing, I don't want to diminish at all, I've had long seasons where it's felt very, very dark, maybe not as long as yours.

You know, here's the thing, here's the Christian claim. We want to be able to boast and believe that somehow our faith is so strong and so impressive and our ability to manage life is so strong and so impressive that at the end of the day it's always about our ability to hold on to the hand of Jesus.

And this text is reminding us that the fact of the matter is Jesus loves us when we squeeze his hand and he really does. But the Christian life is not about how successful I am at holding on to the hand of Jesus.

This text is reminding me that there are so many times in my life that my hand's like this, that in fact my hand's like this, that my hand's like this and I'm like this. And what the text is saying, Jesus' hand is strong and it never lets go of you.

[40 : 35] It never lets go of you. And yet, sometimes and for some of us, life is really, really hard. And the text here has a very, very particular progress.

If you look at it, you know, verse 17, for this light momentary affliction is preparing for us an eternal weight of glory beyond comparison. Not that somehow momentary afflictions just do it by itself.

As we look, not to the things that are seen, but the things that are unseen. It's calling us in the middle of our afflictions, even if all we do is crying out to God out of a heart of despair and tiredness and anxiety and just saying, Father, help me to be gripped by what Jesus did for me on the cross.

And it's as we're gripped by these unseen things that we start to have some type of sense, even if it doesn't change our emotion or our pain, that from the perspective of eternity, our pain and our darkness is not the final word about us, but the final word about you and me in Christ is an eternal weight of glory beyond our ability to imagine.

And when we put our faith and trust in Jesus, that is final and unshakable. And while it may be hard now, in eternity, we will realize that our troubles really were just momentary.

[42 : 04] Please stand. If you're here this morning and you have a sense that either you have not really done work with Jesus to give your life to him that he hasn't shown in your heart, you know, I'm not going to tell you there's no magic words of prayer.

You know what you should just say? You should just take your Bible and look at verses 6 and 7 and say, God, make that mine.

Make that mine. Or those words that were just up on the screen, maybe put up, yeah, put verse 6 and 7 up on the screen, Andrew, if you could do that. Just say to God, make that mine.

For those of us who are having a hard time in prayer, just look at the final verses, 16 to 18, and just say, Lord, make that me. Lord, make that me. I can hardly even say it.

I'm so broken, but Lord, make that me. And God hears, and God will do it. And if you've done it for the first time after the service, just tell somebody that you've done it for the first time.

[43 : 14] Devil will tell you to be silent. Tell the devil to shut up and tell somebody. Let's just pray. Father, we thank you so much that we are jars of clay.

And yet, even though we are jars of clay, you loved us so much, seeing our deep need that you sent your son to take upon himself a jar of clay and live amongst us fully and completely as a jar of clay, to die for jars of clay, so that when we put our faith and trust in you, the glory of salvation and Jesus will live within us and never leave and fit and prepare us for the new heaven and the new earth.

Father, we thank you for this great promise and this great victory of your son and this great love for us that you have and this great glory you have promised us beyond our comparison.

Help us, Father, to begin to be comfortable with being jars of clay and being weak and call out to you and walk and follow you in faith so that your great power may be displayed in the world in a way that brings no glory to us but only to you.

Make us disciples of Jesus gripped by the gospel living for your glory. In Jesus' name we pray. Amen.