

Dr. Ayo Adewuya, 2 Corinthians, Session 5, 2 Corinthians 4, Treasure in Jars of Clay

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This is Dr. Ayo Adewuya in his teaching on 2 Corinthians. This is session 5, 2 Corinthians 4, Treasure in Jars of Clay.

What keeps a Christian walker going in the midst of pressures and adversaries? You see, it is not uncommon for the Lord's people, for God's people and ministers, to experience opposition from Satan.

There come times of discouragement and pressures of need, but the question is, do these adversities give us sufficient reasons for quitting? There is a growing concern today among denominations and people about the number of people who are leaving the pastoral ministry. We call it due to burnout or whatever it is. Then you ask yourself what really accounts for this attrition of grassroots leadership.

We're looking at 2 Corinthians chapter 4, so I get into that chapter asking these questions because you want to ask yourself what makes Paul tick. What's the difference in Paul's life? What makes him as strong as he is? What makes him, what sustains him in spite of all the oppositions and difficulties that he faces? Part of what Paul describes in this passage is what we see as the means of sustenance. He begins again; he resumes the theme of chapter 3, verse 6. We're coming to chapter 4, verse 1, but Paul is going to resume his argument in chapter 3, verse 6, which is divine appointment and provision to be a minister of the covenant. So, in 2 Corinthians chapter 4, Paul continues to develop and defend his ministry in contrast to that of his opponents, and he does so, particularly by recourse to the gospel message.

He opens up by saying he has this ministry, and then he adds the qualification that sets him apart from his opponents, that his ministry is a result of God's mercy. In the last chapter, we say it's the ministry of grace, the ministry of the Spirit. Now he calls it the ministry of mercy.

So, the adversities that Paul faced in his ministry were not sufficient reasons for him to quit. You normally, we normally say that a winner never quits and a quitter never wins, and Paul was not going to quit. In spite of the difficult experiences he faced, he declared that he was not fainting and that he was not quitting, and then he continued to argue that as a minister of the new covenant, he had renounced all dishonesty and deceit, and instead, he continues to commend himself to every person's conscience by proclaiming the truth.

He denies that he falsifies the gospel message, and he has already stated that his opponents do. What you find here is Paul using images, figures of speech, and

paradoxes to make his point. Paul contends that his sufferings and weaknesses, rather than being proof of lack of apostolic calling, manifest a ministry that is derived from God, from the suffering Lord, and which has its ultimate purpose in God's glory.

So, in other words, actually, what Paul does is wear his suffering as a badge of honor or a badge of his discipleship, his apostleship. He says, look, I am not less an apostle because I'm suffering. Actually, these sufferings attest and affirm my apostolic calling.

So, let's go to the text and begin by looking at it, first of all, look at it from verse 1. Therefore, seeing we have this ministry, we have received mercy, we faint not. You see, God had given him a privilege. In fact, when you look at that passage, it says we do not lose heart.

We do not lose heart. That's what it says, and Paul is going to repeat the same thing in verse 16: we do not lose heart, we do not faint. So, he had no reason to lose heart, for God, in his mercy, had granted him a privilege that exceeded that of Moses.

Moses had a glorious ministry, but it had faded. But Paul says I have a ministry that is based upon the new covenant. He had been called now not to communicate the law but to dispense the grace of God.

A minister of the gospel has a higher calling than even the mediator of the law. So, Paul regards this divine commission to serve under the new covenant as more than compensating for all the trials he endured for being true to his calling. You know, he sees the trials being worth it.

Once in a while, we need to remind ourselves that the trials and difficulties we face in ministry are worth it. They're worth all the suffering. He said we do not lose heart, and then he says, when we receive the ministry, we do not lose heart.

To this thought of refusing to grow faint, Paul will return again in verse 16. So, you find in verse 2 that we have renounced the hidden things of dishonesty. Not working in craftiness, not handling the word of God deceitfully, but a manifestation of the truth, commending ourselves to every man's conscience in the sight of God.

So here, Paul talks about his behavior. Remember, we said previously that Paul's letter is listening to one end of a telephone conversation. We hear Paul, and we don't hear the other side.

But we hear the other side through what Paul is saying. So, Paul, evidently, Paul must have been accused of deceitful behavior. He defended himself in chapter 2, verse 17, and he said, no, we are not peddlers of the word, and he emphatically rejects such characterization of his method and his message.

Paul says my tactics have never been secretive or deceptive, and I've never deceitfully or dishonestly manipulated the message of God entrusted to me. Paul says I have preached the word the way it is given to me. You see, he was not insisting on Gentile compliance with the Mosaic Law, which is probably one of the reasons that he was adulterating the gospel.

He said no. You see, in any self-commendation, in any self-defense, self-commendation plays a part, whether you like it or not. Once you are defending yourself, there will be a point you say, well, this is not who I am, but this is what I am.

And in saying this is not who I am, this is what I am, you are commending yourself, but his commendation is not by self-vindication at every point, but simply saying, I'm declaring the truth. His appeal was not directed to a partisan spirit, not at all, or prejudices or human prejudices, but to every man's conscience. His self-commendation was undertaken with God as an onlooker.

So, he knows that no matter what I say, God is watching me. So even in rebutting all the accusations against me, even in saying this is who I am, I'm aware of the presence of God. I'm aware of the presence of God in my life and in my ministry.

You see, so we have renounced the hidden things of dishonesty, working in craftiness. Again, what are we talking about? We're talking about integrity in ministry. As a matter of fact, if you want to look at Second Corinthians, you look at it in terms of integrity.

I mean, step by step, every chapter. As Paul rebuts the arguments of his opponents, he's talking about his integrity. That's the only thing he has.

The only thing Paul had to use to defend himself against his opponents was his integrity. Then he says, we do not work in craftiness or handle the word of God deceitfully, but by manifestation of truth. Now look at it there, working in craftiness.

Unfortunately, in the 24th century, we see a lot of craftiness in ministry, and they're handling the word of God deceitfully, and most of the time is for the purpose of financial gain. But Paul says, if our gospel is hidden, it is hidden to them that are lost in who the God of this world has blinded their minds, which believe not, lest the light of the glorious gospel of Christ, who is the image of God, should shine to them. Paul's gospel, as some claimed, was designed only for a spiritually minded elite.

That's what the Corinthians were arguing. What he said was obscure. Nobody understands him.

Just as what he did was underhanded. For the sake of argument, Paul concedes, oh yeah, okay, let's agree for the sake of argument, you are right. Even if his gospel is veiled, like you are saying, then it's veiled not of my own doing.

It's veiled because the God of this world has blinded their face. You see, the veiling, where it exists, is not because of Paul. Not at all.

Where it exists, it comes from the unbelief of those who are perishing, whose minds have been blinded by the God of the present age, who wishes to prevent them from seeing the gospel light that focuses on Christ's glory. And you understand, when Paul talks about the God of this age, he's not referring to God the Father, but to Satan, regarded as the prince of this world. In John chapter 12, verse 31, Jesus said the prince of this world is coming, and he has nothing in me.

He's called the God of this age. He's a usurper. You know, we sing the song, that song, this is my father's world.

Absolutely, it is my father's world as a Christian, but then the enemy, as you sobbed, ate and is the God of this age. The one to whom this age has made its God. An atheist was talking to somebody, and he said, I am my own God.

I don't believe in God. I am my own God. Okay.

And the Christian said, does your God give you happiness? He couldn't answer that. He's his own God, but he has no happiness. He says, no God, the God of this age.

And you know the God of this age and Satan. I mean, if dualism is to be found in Paul, it is an ethical and temporal dualism. He's a God of this age. He's not a material or metaphysical one.

Satan is not the God of the age to come. He's only the God of this age and is a usurper. And he said he had blinded their eyes.

And sometimes today, as a minister, you do all you can: you preach, you pray, you fast, you do all your best, and you are not getting results. You say, God, what is happening? Well, you know that it's warfare like we said at the beginning. It's not that he calls us to warfare, but rather, we are facing it.

The God of this age has blinded their face that they may not believe the gospel, lest the light of the glorious gospel, which is the image of God, should shine on them. When Paul calls Christ the image of God, of course, he talks. He says Christ is the image of God. He's asserting that Christ is the visible and perfect representation of the invisible God.

That almost sounds like Hebrews chapter 1, verses 1 and 2, which is the precise expression of the unseen God. Thomas said, show us the Father. Jesus said, have you seen me, and you've not seen the Father? If you have seen me, we ask ourselves, oh I wish I could see God.

What is God like? Look at Jesus Christ. What does the love of God look like? Look at Jesus Christ. What does the power of God look like? Look at Jesus Christ.

It's the precise expression of the unseen God. He says it is the image of God. You talk about icons and images, which imply both personality and distinctiveness.

Personality and distinctiveness. So, you see Paul right there talking about the gospel. And then he now says in verse 5, for we preach not ourselves, but Christ Jesus the Lord, and ourselves your servants for Jesus' sake.

We preach, not ourselves. So, though Paul might have been forced to commend himself to every person's conscience, he never advertised or preached himself. The essence of the gospel is the proclamation of Jesus Christ the Lord.

You see, we live in a media-oriented society, where the preacher is pressured to use the pulpit to display his or her eloquence or oratorical skills and, of course, display some gymnastics. The congregation, in its appetite for entertainment and desire for amusement, adds to that pressure. So, the preacher has to demonstrate that he's eloquent and that he can deliver.

I mean, oratorical skill is important, and eloquence is important. You know, sometimes people don't care about the substance. They don't care about the substance; they care about the eloquence.

And Paul says, no, I did not come to you with the wisdom of words. We preach, not ourselves. Sometimes you listen to a message for 30 minutes, for one hour, then you ask yourself, what did he really say? What did he really say? You can't make anything out, because the message is just about self-promotion.

I remember several years ago, I was invited to a place, and I got there to a church, and the pastor started preaching, and he started saying, last night the Lord revealed to me, and there's someone that day was about what God told him the previous day, and I went to him later after the service, I said, hey brother, so-and-so, I really appreciate you, and I thank God for sharing your testimony, but I wonder whether that was meant for you, and the congregation should have been hearing something else. He never invited me back. That's alright.

That's what we're hankering for today. That is what society is looking for, but we're reading 2nd Corinthians. It says, for we preach not ourselves, but Christ Jesus the Lord.

We preach, not ourselves. I mean, you hear preachers, it's about what I did here, what I did here, when I went there, when I came here, and they mentioned about I, me, 400 times in a single sermon, and Jesus only once. Paul calls upon us to re-examine our messages, to re-examine our preachings, to re-examine, you know, the word we preach.

He said we preach not ourselves, but Christ Jesus the Lord. That reminds me of a story I heard a preacher tell several years ago that some people had this in front of their church as their billboard, for we preach not ourselves, but Christ Jesus the Lord, and at some point, some people in the congregation were not too happy. They feel that this is too archaic, it's too long, and all that, and so they said, well, why don't we make it short? So, they decided to make it short.

So, it became, we preach not ourselves, but Christ Jesus. So far, so good. And then, after this, sometime again, they came back and said, no, this is still long.

Can we change it a little bit? So, they changed it a little bit, and it became, for we preach not ourselves, and then, but Christ. They stopped us. Then, after some time, they came and said, we don't preach Christ every Sunday.

We preach about marriage, we preach about this, we preach about that. But eventually, it came to, they said, let's make it succinct, let's make it catchy, let's make it trendy, let's make it cool. So, they put it, we preach.

So, they brought it down until it became, we preach. How does that sound like many congregations today that we preach? But preach what? Preach who? Now listen to this. Paul does not say we preach some doctrines.

He said we preach not ourselves, but Christ Jesus the Lord. Jesus must be at the center. We preach Christ.

The gospel is about Jesus. It doesn't matter if you are talking about eschatology; you're talking about salvation, it doesn't matter. Jesus is at the center of the gospel.

We preach, not ourselves. Even when we preach giving, our giving has to be tied to Christ, who gave himself for us and who became poor so that we may be rich. That's the center of our giving.

So, it doesn't matter what we preach; it must be Christ who is at the center. He said, we preach not ourselves, but we preach Jesus the Lord. He explains the basic thrust of his preaching, Christ as our Lord.

And then he said, listen, we are your slaves. As a matter of fact, the words he uses there are slaves and doulos, not just sermons. We are your slaves.

We serve you, and that's what we do. We preach not ourselves but Christ Jesus and the Lord.

As faithful heralds of the gospel, Paul and his co-workers do not draw attention to themselves. Although his ministry was more glorious than that of Moses, it was not concerned with personal glorification. Listen, he never advertised or preached himself.

Years ago, I saw a minister's handbill. He mentioned his name. He said this is so-and-so who the whole world is running after.

Which world is running after? I mean, you preach the whole world. But it's interesting; many preachers say, well, I preach all around the world, in many nations in the world. No, that's not difficult.

If you go to a multi-ethnic church in New York, where you have Africans, Caribbeans, Indians, and everybody, and then in one setting, you have gone to all the world. We are advertising ourselves. He never advertised or preached himself.

He has already told the Corinthians, in 2 Corinthians chapter 2, that he did not come to them with 1 Corinthians, that he did not come with persuasive words. Moreover, he defined his role as that of a slave, as a servant. Although he could have commanded their obedience, he chose not to.

We come back to the same theme of humility again. Then, in verse 6, why does it say that? It says, for God who commanded the light to shine out of darkness has shined 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 earthen vessels, that the excellency of the power may be of God and not of us.

So, what do you find in verses 5 to 7? You find substance versus eloquence. Paul said, there's substance, there's just eloquence. He said, we have this treasure.

Is it interesting? Treasure in earthen vessels. You see, right from chapter 4, verse 7 to chapter 5, verse 10, you are going to be looking at the suffering and glory of the preaching of the cross. You see, no person was ever more aware of the paradoxical nature of Christianity than Paul.

He knew the paradoxical nature. And perhaps, none of his epistles contains as many paradoxes as you find in 2nd Corinthians, particularly from verse 7 through verse 12. And we're going to look at it.

It begins by saying, we have this treasure in earthen vessels, that the excellency of the power may be of God. Look at it—the first paradox.

The difference between the indescribable value of the gospel treasure and the apparent weakness and worthlessness of the gospel ministers. This is a weakness. The vessel is weak, yet the content is powerful.

This is power in weakness. He said, the treasure, we have this treasure in earthen vessels. And that treasure is great.

He said we have this treasure in earthen vessels that the excellency of the power may be of God and not of us. He talks about jars of clay in verse 6. It refers, in verse 6, it refers to the treasure in the jars of clay as the illumination that comes from the knowledge of God's glory. The lightning that comes from the knowledge of God's glory.

In describing those to whom the gospel is entrusted as earthen vessels, Paul is not disparaging the human body. Not at all. He's not simply saying the body is a receptacle for the soul.

Not at all. But he's contrasting the insignificance and unattractiveness of the bearers of the light with the beauty of the light itself. You see, look at it.

You have your shade. You have your shade, and the lamp is inside. And you have this beautiful light inside.

Paul is saying that behind this purpose, behind this contrast, there's a divine purpose that people may recognize, and that this all-surpassing power is God's alone. Because Paul and his fellow workers were suffering, they were going through sufferings, they were weak, and yet the Word of God that was coming out from them was powerful and life-transforming. It reminds me of the story of a preacher who himself was blind.

And yet God will use him and blind as we see. Now, I used to live in the same city with this preacher, so he's somebody I know. God will use him, miracles will be done, and he will have thousands of people attending his meeting. You see this man, the lame will walk, the blind will see, but he himself was blind.

That's a paradox. A blind man is preaching, and blind eyes are being opened. The story was told that this man, at some point, wanted to interview him on the radio, and they wanted to interview him.

And it came to a point, and the interviewer said, sir, may I ask you a question? I hope you don't mind. And the old man said, well, I probably know the question you are going to ask me. So, the reporter was shocked, and I probably know the question you want to ask me.

You probably want to ask me if these things are happening, if these miracles are happening, if blind eyes are seen, and if the lame are walking. You probably want to ask, why am I blind myself? He said that is to let you know that the power is not mine; it is God's. That is to let you know that I am not doing miracles, but God is walking through me. For we have this treasure in earthen vessels, that the excellency and the power may be of God.

Even though that brother was blind, it was an earthen vessel, but the power of God through the gospel was manifesting through him. Why? So that the glory may be God's alone. A blind man preaching, and the blind seeing, and the lame walking, and he died blind.

So, he said, that will tell you that I'm not the one doing it, that the power is not mine, and therefore the glory can be mine. The power is God's. That's the power of the gospel that the excellency of the power may be of God and not us.

Then, in verses 8 and 9, you see Paul going on verses 8 and 9 describing the antithesis for us, and you see the things he said there, 2 Corinthians now, beginning from chapter 4 from verse 8. We're troubled on every side, yet not distressed. We are perplexed but not in despair. Persecuted, but not forsaken.

Cast down, but not destroyed. Always bearing about the dying of the Lord Jesus in the body, the life of Jesus might be made manifest in our body. For we which live are always delivered unto death, for Jesus is sick, that the life of Jesus also might be made manifest in our mortal flesh.

So, then death walketh in us, and life in you. You see, in the rest of the section, beginning from 4, it says 4, from verse 6, then 7, verse 7 to chapter 5, verse 10, he contrasts his study, his body, and his sufferings with the heavenly bodies believers will receive at the resurrection. In the Old Testament, the image functioned to show the fragility of humans.

When we talk about jars of clay, I mean you read Jeremiah chapter 22, verse 28, and Psalm 30, verse 13. Specifically, the image of earthen vessels or jars is used in the

context of suffering as punishment for Israel's sins. For Paul, this suffering is that of apostolic service.

The point of contrast in the verse is the paradox between the inestimable value of the message and the suffering of the messenger. Behind Paul's statement is an allusion to the attack by his opponents, who are very weak, and he fails to show that he possesses divine power. Paul says, you got it wrong.

For Paul, divine power is God's possession alone, and paradoxically, it is present in his sufferings when he goes preaching as an apostle. Paul is interested in showing that his bodily weakness and sufferings do not constitute evidence or lack of apostolic commission, but rather, they manifest his apostleship. Apostleship that is derived from a suffering Lord and which has its ultimate purpose, the glory of God.

So, to develop his point further, Paul begins with what we call a catalog of hardships, which we see beginning from verse 8. You have four vivid antitheses. Look at verse 8. We're troubled on every side, yet not distressed. We're perplexed but not in despair.

Persecuted, but not forsaken. Cast down, but not destroyed. You see that in verses 8 and 9. Paul talks about his weakness and uses an illustration.

You see, each metaphor that you find here reflects a military combat or a gladiatorial combat. Look at it again. Troubled on every side, yet not distressed.

Perplexed but not in despair. Persecuted, but not forsaken. Cast down, but not destroyed.

In fact, you just have to take a look at those words in the Greek, and I would explain them in a bit. It just talks, we are hard-pressed. Each metaphor talks about military metaphor how difficult things are.

He was hard-pressed on every side. He said, but I am not cornered. I'm hard-pressed, but I'm not cornered.

I'm not without room for movement. I'm not driven to surrender. The New English Bible says, never at wit's end.

Bewildered, but never at wit's end. I mean, never at a loss, but never totally at a loss, but never totally at a loss. So, there's a play on what's there.

He was hounded by the foe but not left to the mercy of the foe. He's hounded, but he said, listen, known to the ground, but not permanently grounded. And that reminds me of when you read Acts of the Apostles, and Paul was preaching, and they had to put him in a basket, and put him on the other side, and one particular place,

he was lying down, and they supposed he was dead, and I'm sure like little children, maybe, this is just a guess, Paul was trying to see whether they were around, and open his eyes a little bit, open one corner until they were gone, and there he says, he stands up again, and he was gone.

Knocked down but not permanently grounded. And then, verses 10 and 11, always bearing about in the body the dying of the Lord Jesus, that the life also of Jesus might be made manifest in our body. You see, verse 10 summarizes those contrasts we see, those paradoxes we see in 8 and 9. We are always dying, yet we are not lifeless.

Always dying, but we are not lifeless. He said, bearing in our body the dying of the Lord Jesus, that the life of Jesus also might be made manifest in our body. So, Paul sums up the experience of being hard-pressed, perplexed, persecuted, and struck down during the course of his service to God.

On the other hand, he talks about the life of Jesus to express the Lord's saving him from being crushed, from despair, from abandonment, and from destruction, all of which prefigures the Christian's final deliverance from mortality when we rise up at resurrection. Comfort in the midst of affliction. But, the meaning of the arresting phrase, the dying of Jesus, is also explained by verse 11.

For we who live are always delivered unto death for the sake of Jesus. He faced perilous hazards that the life of Jesus might also manifest in our mortal flesh. These two verses are powerful, powerful, powerful.

Those two verses define the death of the life of Jesus as being simultaneously evident in the apostle's experience. It was not a matter of life after death, or even of life through death, but life in the midst of death. Paul says, in the midst of death, that's life.

The repeated deliverances from death evidenced the resurrection power. Remember, chapter 1 already talks about his despairing even of life and talks about God who delivered us, who we trust will deliver us, and he will deliver us in the future. So, you ask yourself, what makes Paul tick? What makes this man going? Because he knows what he has with a bold stroke in verse 12.

He says, so death worketh in us, but life in you. Here you find again the theme of life and death. You see, what we have just looked at is what we call a catalog of hardships.

Verse 11 clarifies the previous verse by repeating his thoughts in a slightly different language. Now, Paul is given up to death because of Jesus, which indicates his faith and willingness to conform himself to the pattern of existence that is found in Jesus. In other words, your mind quickly races to Philippians chapter 3, where he says that I

may know him and the power of his resurrection and the fellowship of his sufferings being made conformable to him, to his resurrection, to his death, to his life, to everything.

He was being made conformable that I may know him and the power of his resurrection. But that's where we stop today when we read that passage. What about the fellowship of his sufferings? Conformity to his death? There's an important lesson to learn here.

The Corinthians, like many Christians today, and especially Pentecostals, and I am one, believed that sufferings and adversities were inconsistent with the spirit-filled life. Now, not every Pentecostal feels that way, but there are these people who believe that, well, if you are right with God, there's no suffering. If you are suffering, I mean the so-called prosperity gospel.

If you are suffering, then it means something is wrong with you. Now, it means something must have been wrong with Paul. If anybody suffered for the gospel, Paul suffered for the gospel.

There are those who believe today that suffering and adversity are inconsistent with the spirit-filled life, let alone what is generally regarded as a victorious or successful Christian life. No, Paul understands it differently. It is his hardships that validate his ministry.

In Paul's day, and for many Christians around the world today, the life of the Christian is a life of suffering. In fact, in some places today, to become a Christian is to receive a sentence of death. So, for somebody to say that if you are suffering, it means you are not a good Christian, it's not a spirit-filled life, is not biblical, and Paul goes against it totally and completely.

So, we need to understand what Christian life means. Paul understood his sufferings in light of Christ. We always need to be able to put our sufferings in perspective.

In the perspective of Christ and in the perspective of eternity. Now, the question is, what enabled Paul to faithfully discharge his ministry? You are going to find an answer to that in verses 13 and 14. We have the same spirit of faith.

According as it is written, I believed and therefore have I spoken. We also believe and, therefore, speak. Knowing that he which raised up the Lord Jesus shall raise us up also by Jesus and shall present us with you.

What encouraged Paul? What enabled him to faithfully share and discharge his ministry? Well, the answer is simple. Paul shared the psalmist conviction that faith

cannot remain silent on his own and his own Christian conviction that Christ's resurrection guarantees the resurrection of believers. I've said two things.

Number one, he shared the psalmist's conviction that faith cannot remain silent, and of course, he has the conviction that Christ's resurrection guarantees the resurrection of believers because here Paul was quoting Psalm 116 verse 10. Now, the exact meaning of the Hebrew text is not certain, but in his quotation, Paul follows the Septuagint exactly where he says, I believed therefore have I spoken. A translation of the Hebrew is in accord with the spirit of the psalm, though not in his precise words.

So, Paul does not quote the precise words in Hebrew, but if we remember that the Septuagint was Paul's Bible, he quoted from the Septuagint. You see, when you look at the context in the Psalms, the psalmist recounts a divine deliverance from a desperate illness, and it's a complete despondency, and then he considers how he might most fittingly render his devotion to the Lord. That's Psalm 116.

So, in a real sense, the psalmist's expression of thanksgiving arose from his vindicated trust in God. I held firm to my faith; I was vindicated; therefore, I have spoken. Paul, for his part, then could not remain silent about the gospel he believed.

That's why he could say woe be to me if I do not preach the gospel. Another reason Paul proclaimed the good news with the utmost confidence was his firm conviction of his personal resurrection, which is being presented along with all believers before the presence of God or before the presence of Christ. He is going to be raised up with Christ.

So, he says verse 15, verse 16, verses 15 and 16. Let's 14, let's back up and go to 14. Knowing that he which raised up the Lord Jesus shall raise us also by Jesus and shall present us with you for all things are for your sakes.

So, Paul explains in verse 15 why he continues to speak, turning to the ultimate reason why he should act as an apostle and submit himself to the sufferings that he went through. His suffering and his message are for the sake of the Corinthians and for the purpose of reaching out to more Corinthians. Paul speaks boldly because his faith reveals to him that beyond the earthly tribulation lies the assurance of resurrection.

You know that's the hope we have as believers, and that hope should form an anchor for us to know that this is not the end of everything. Paul's faith is not just a subjective attitude. It's a faith which is a commitment.

It has an objective content. It consists of the knowledge that God has raised Jesus from the dead, that he will raise him up at the end of time to be with Jesus, and

implicitly that he will raise up the Corinthians as well. So, this is not just a fuzzy feeling when Paul talks about I believe.

It's not just a subjective feeling, fuzzy. No, no, no, no, no. It's faith that has an object.

When Paul uses that word it means commitment. It means trust. It means more than just feeling.

So, in verse 15, Paul concludes that his ultimate goal as Christ's apostle is to bring glory to God. It is to bring glory to God. The basis of all his actions was his conversion and not his desire to increase his own stature.

His aim is that God's grace may spread to more people as the gospel is preached. Therefore, Paul restates again in verse 16 that we do not lose heart. We do not faint.

What he already said in verse 1 is repeated in verse 16. So, he summarizes the preceding sections and then picks up the theme of verse 1. Then he proceeds to draw a distinction between the outward and inner person. The outward person is a whole person as seen by other people or that aspect of one's humanity that is subject to various assaults and hardships that he has listed.

The inner person is the unseen personality known only to God as well as to self. The Corinthians need to understand that despite Paul's bodily weakness, his inner person is being transformed daily. He then turns to the contrast between the present and the return of Christ.

This life and the life to come. For Paul's opponents, the present is a time of glory, but for Paul, it's a time of suffering. So, from verse 16 to 18 Paul runs up the chapter by talking about glory through suffering.

Verse 16, therefore, we do not lose heart. It took pain in strides. Why does it not lose heart? You see it right there, verses 17 and 18.

From 17 and 18 for a light affliction which is but for a moment worketh for us a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory. Verse 16, for which cause we do not lose heart, we do not faint, but though our outward person perishes, the inward person is redeemed day by day. You know, when I read verse 17, I just can't figure it out.

When he says our light affliction. Beaten five times, light affliction. Jailed, light affliction.

Beaten with rods, light affliction. I mean you just have to look at the catalog of hardships that Paul went through. I mean beating in chapter one you see is suffering,

and Paul says all that put together what you read in 1st Corinthians what you read in 2 Corinthians all that he sums up, and he calls it light affliction.

Now, what if it is a great affliction? What would it be? I don't know. But he says light affliction. Now, brother and sister, be encouraged.

I want you to be encouraged. Listen to what Paul says and listen again. He said light affliction but for a moment.

You know, sometimes you think a moment is a day. No, it's not a day. He calls it for a moment.

I mean, think about it: by the time Paul was writing Philippians, it was already about 30 years after his conversion, and he's been suffering this suffering from day one. So by the time he's writing Corinthians, you know that it's been so many years, and he sums everything up, all the sufferings together. He said for a moment.

A moment means 30 years or more. Wow. He said our light affliction is but for a moment.

That helps us. I mean, brother, sister, you watching this, you listening to this. I want you to know that your affliction is heavy. Yes, I know it's heavy on your side, but compared with what lies ahead, it is but for a moment. He said working is more than an eternal weight for us.

Can you see that one is light and the other one is weighty? Light affliction weighty glory eternal weight. One is momentary, while the other one is eternal.

The affliction is light, and the glory is weighty. The affliction is for a moment, and the glory is eternal. Wow.

Surpassing gift. At present, the present momentary suffering will be followed by eternal glory. So, Paul shows us why he doesn't lose heart.

He doesn't look hard. Now listen, why does he not lose heart? Number one is the divine commission as a minister of a new and superior covenant. He knew who called him.

Number two is the prospect of sharing Christ's triumphant resurrection from the dead. And number three is the immediate task of reaching out to the Corinthians and promoting their spiritual welfare and the glory of God. So, for those three reasons, we can see that he does not lose heart.

He has now supplied us with those reasons. His commission as a minister of the new covenant. The prospect of Christ's triumphant resurrection from the dead of sharing that.

And number three is the immediate task of building up the Corinthians. But Paul did not deny reality. And we should not deny reality.

It was realistic enough to recognize that the toil and the pains were taking it all on him physically. So yes, there was splendid compensation but he knows that the outward person is perished. It's like saying yes, I know it was physically weak.

He knows that. Then, verse 17 is a surprising definition of daily spiritual renewal. Constant production of solid, lasting glory far outweighs any light problems.

It's interesting that Paul speaks of glory as though it was a substantial entity that could be progressively added to. In a similar way, he says in Colossians 1:5 that our inheritance is stored in heaven. But listen, as it comes to verse 18, Paul shows us something this glory is not by any means automatic.

We look not at the things that are seen but at the things that are not seen. The things which are seen are temporal, but the things which are not seen are eternal. In that verse, Paul makes us understand that this glory does not just come automatically.

It is only as we keep our attention focused on what was unseen. That suffering led to glory. What is seen and what is unseen.

This is a tension between the already and not yet in Paul. The contrast between what is now seen by mortals and what is yet hidden from mortal gaze. That's what Paul is saying is very, very important. The preoccupation with the realm where is seated at the right hand of God. It was not the result of Paul's arbitrary choice.

It was an informed decision. Paul was profoundly aware that the present age is transient, whereas the age to come is eternal in the sense of being destined to last forever. As we conclude chapter 4 we remember the song turn your face upon Jesus look full in his wonderful face and the things of earth will grow strangely dim in the light of his glory and grace.

When you are discouraged, when the going is hard, when ministry is tough, remember these things. Number one, your commission as a minister of the gospel. Number two, remember the prospect of you sharing the triumphant resurrection of Christ from the dead.

And number three, remember the joy that you bring into the lives of the people you minister to. And then don't forget, as we always say it and it came to pass it doesn't come to stay. That's why the light the affliction is light and is for a moment.

And at some point, you'll be able to say it has come to pass. From it shall come to pass it will come it came to pass.

This is Dr. Ayo Adewuya in his teaching on 2 Corinthians. This is session 5, 2 Corinthians 4, Treasure in Jars of Clay.