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Key Bible Passage: 2 Corinthians 4-5

4:18 So we fix our eyes not on what is seen, but on what is unseen, since what is seen is temporary, but what is unseen is eternal.

5:14 For Christ's love compels us, because we are convinced that one died for all, and therefore all died.
15And he died for all, that those who live should no longer live for themselves but
for him who died for them and was raised again.
16So from now on we regard no one from a worldly point of view. Though we once regarded
Christ in this way, we do so no longer. 17Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, the new creation
has come: a The old has gone, the new is here!
18All this is from God, who reconciled us to himself through Christ and gave us the ministry of
reconciliation: 19that God was reconciling the world to himself in Christ, not counting
people's sins against them. And he has committed to us the message of reconciliation.
20We are therefore Christ's ambassadors, as though God were making his appeal through us.
We implore you on Christ's behalf: Be reconciled to God. 21God made him who had no sin
to be sin b for us, so that in him we might become the righteousness of God.

Footnotes:

a 17 Or Christ, that person is a new creation.

b 21 Or be a sin offering

1. Greetings, with thanks

- from Japan (Tiffany and her team)
- Greetings, with thanks from Canadian Office (Rob, and our Board)
- Global Missions Report tomorrow night – Monday, in the Fireside Room, all welcome
    - hear and pray about
- Ukraine, Central Asia, Southeast Asia

2. Introduction

I am very grateful for the “sure (certain, firm, trustworthy) foundations”, may of which I ‘received’ (introduced to, established) right here in this church: Sunday School, Youth Programs, Youth Groups, then College and Career, later on staff as Pastor of Worship and Discipleship. Music,

Obstacles:

- Stressors; wearied by our journey in this world;
- wonderings, even anxieties about war, about the economy, about our kids, or our grandkids, or about AI
- losses

The Four Components of VUCA

- **Volatility (V):** The speed and magnitude of change in an industry, market, or the world. Changes happen rapidly and often without warning, making the environment unstable (e.g., sudden market crashes or wild price swings).
- **Uncertainty (U):** The inability to predict future events or outcomes due to a lack of basic information. Even if you know something is changing, you cannot tell how or when it will impact you.
- **Complexity (C):** The sheer number of interconnected, non-linear factors and variables at play. Problems are tangled, and a single action can trigger unpredictable secondary and tertiary effects across a global system.
- **Ambiguity (A):** A lack of clarity and the presence of multiple, conflicting interpretations of reality. Cause-and-effect relationships are unclear, and standard playbooks or past experiences no longer apply ("unknown unknowns"). [1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7, 8, 9, 10]

I would submit this morning that sometimes living a Christian life is something that will require a long range view. To walk with God, and serve Him faithfully day by day, week by week, and year by year is a monumental undertaking. (Some have said it’s not a 100m sprint, but a marathon.) And during this long-term project we face many challenges: like the renovation project there are: (see above bolding).

So what will help keep us going? What perspectives will help us stay faithful through these challenges to (hopefully) a God-honouring conclusion? Instead of seeing only the present, I would submit it is valuable for us to have what I've called this a "sure foundations".

What I'd like to do this morning is look together to the example of the Apostle Paul, one of the earliest, most determined, most faithful Christ followers. (What concept does Paul bring up in your mind? 2 Corinth study) He lived at least part of his life in a spirit of great self-LESS-ness. (Encouraging in some respects that it was only part of his life – there is still hope for all of us.) As Paul enjoyed incredible opportunity to serve God, he also faced enormously large challenges; he believes certain things as his 'sure foundations' – truths about God, and from God, that gave him staying power, enabling him to faithfully persevere.

If you're a regular church attender, there may not be anything "totally new" in this message –these are reminders for some of us – but I hope you'll find them stimulating.

Invite you to turn in God's Word to 2 Corinthians 4:

Some general comments/observations about 2 Corinthians:

Paul is writing a heartfelt letter to Christian believers in Corinth who he loves deeply; he longs to see them get over some of the problematic issues that plague their progress toward Christlikeness.

Some of the well-known passages in this letter

Chapter 1: Praise be to the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of compassion and the **God of all comfort.**

Chapter 4: When Paul speaks of the incredible gospel message, he writes: "But we have this treasure in **jars of clay** to show that this all-surpassing power is from God and not us."

Chapter 5: When he writes to God's great work of salvation, "Therefore, if anyone is Christ he is a **new creation**; the old has gone, the new has come!"

Chapter 8: For you know the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, that thought He was rich, yet for your sakes He became poor, so that you through His **poverty** might become **rich."**

Chapters (8) 9: When he writes to spur His Corinthian friends to engage in generosity, he writes, “Remember this: whoever sows sparingly also reaps sparingly, whoever sows generously also reaps generously. God loves a **cheerful giver.”**

Chapter 12: When he writes regarding the risk of pride, and the need of humility, regarding his thorn in his flesh, he writes, “Three times I pleaded with the Lord to take it away from me. But He said to me, ‘**My grace is sufficient** for you, for my power is made perfect in weakness.”

To some of us, these are familiar phrases, written throughout this book we see Paul had a wonderful balance: a deep, genuine love and concern for his fellow believers which would not be shaken (in spite of their imperfections!), and a firm allegiance to God’s truth – with no compromise.

This morning, however, rather than looking at any single verse or section, we going to do this morning is observe and then reflect on three themes from 2 Corinthians. To do this I’m going to focus on chapters 4-5. This is a little different than my usual approach of just a few verses, but I’d like to consider these “macro-themes” that permeate Paul’s writing, and I’ve just chosen these chapters as a “medium sized snapshot”.

Matthew Henry wrote: This passage is about what kept Paul and his colleagues from sinking and fainting under their difficulties.

3. Message Notes

Theme One:

4:14 – like Jesus was (raised from the dead), we will be raised from the dead (coming resurrection)

4:17 – our light and momentary troubles are achieving for us an eternal glory (reward)

5:1 – if the earthly tent we live in is destroyed, we have a building from God, and eternal house in heaven, not built by human hands (echoes of John 14?)

5:5 - we have been given the Spirit as a deposit, guaranteeing what is to come (anticipation of that day when we will be DONE with sin!) (anyone else looking forward to that day?)

5:10 we must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ (humbly bowing, to offer our praise and thanks, in person!) Song: "I Can Only Imagine" (MercyMe)

4:18 So we fix our eyes not on what is seen, but on what is unseen. For what is seen is temporary, but what is unseen is eternal. 2 Cor. 4:18

a. Our sense of eternity:

As normal as it might sometimes seem to us day by day by day, this world we see around us is NOT all that exists. Part of Paul's mentality is that this physical world is not all that is! This permeates his thinking, and thus, his writing.

I think this point is so important, because we are so easily distracted from the reality of eternity! Our culture, our personal desires and interests, and our Enemy all combine to form a "supermagnet" that constantly draws our attention from eternity. iPhones or Android devices, World Cup, Grey Cup, Stanley Cup or the Currie Cup or other sports teams, business endeavours and kids' activities, ministry tasks, TV and Internet, boys (or girls!), credit cards and bills, and … it's a long list for each of us. I don't mean to suggest that these things are bad or unimportant – just that we need, as God's people, to see these things -**all** these things - in light of eternity.

Eternity is a reality not only for us, but for personal soul though all of history, including the 7 Billion people who now inhabit our planet.

a. our families

b. our neighbours

c. those around the world who have little/no opportunity to hear the Gospel

C.S. Lewis – "You've never met a mortal soul."

From time to time this idea of eternity seems particularly poignant. Our dear friend and pastor, Mike Wilkins, was diagnosed with a very serious illness, and is facing treatments and surgeries.

How does this relate to our "sure foundations'?

Resources: Money, Abilities, Time, Energy, Opportunities

Relationships: friendships, conflicts (especially between believers), unbelievers (Tyler, Karl, Steve)

Biggest questions: meaning of life, death

I submit that, like Paul, if we have a strong sense of eternity, it will help us with our long-range view. Things that were formerly important will fade, and other priorities will emerge. We will so much seek to escape present evils, and obtain present good, both of which are temporal and transitory, but to escape future evil and obtain future good things, which though unseen, are real, and certain, and eternal.

So let me ask you the first in a series of three reflective questions:

- to what degree is eternity part of my daily thinking? (our worldview"?)
- How often do you deliberately see your life, and the lives of those around you, through this lens? (skateboarders at the park, servers in the dining hall, lifeguards at the pool)
- What are you doing to deliberately cultivate this awareness? How are you growing in this?
    - Disciplines of the Christian life: Bible intake, prayer and fasting, service and worship – the list goes on – most of us will know the answers here – this is simply a reminder
- What are the things in your life that war against this awareness? How are you seeking to limit those factors?

A moment to reflect…

Before we move on, will you say it with me? Our sense of ETERNITY.

Theme Two:

5:17 If anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation – the old has gone, the new has come! (Some of us from Christian homes, some from broken backgrounds, some saved as adults or even seniors In Christ, we are new creations!)

5:19 That God was reconciling the world to Himself in Christ (notice whose initiative!) not counting men's sins against him.

5:21 God made Him who had no sin to be sin for us, that in Him we might become the righteousness of God.

v. 14-15 Christ's love compels us… and He died for all, that those who live should no longer live for themselves, but for Him who died for them and was raised again. 2 Cor.5:14-15

b. Our sense of God's love (the Lord's work on our behalf) -

2 Cor 5: 17, 19, 21; [14, 15]

I have heard it said that the great theologian Dr. Karl Barth's was approached by a student who asked, "What is the most profound thing you've ever thought about?" That Jesus loves me, this I know, for the Bible tells me so."

[Summaries of biblical doctrine come in all sizes. If you happen to have the ESV study bible, there is an excellent 30 pages summary. If you'd like to take a step up, you might consider Wayne Grudem's Systematic Theology, which comes in about 1200 pages. Or you could take on Karl Barth's summary, which fill not just on book, or two, but 14 volumes! He used over 9,200 pages to articulate his understanding of God and truth.]

I think that in these days, people are looking to be loved. We hear it on the radio. We see it in movies, and, if we look closely, I think we see it in people's lives around us. They are looking to be valued, to be loved.

So here are two important thoughts this presses us toward:

Can you imagine what our lives would be like without God's love?

Can you imagine what their lives might be like if they knew God's love?

And God has said to us that we are loved.

And what we learn is that, if they will look in the right places, they ARE loved.

JN 3:16, 17 "For God so loved the world that he gave his one and only Son, n that whoever believes in him shall not perish but have eternal life. For God did not send his Son into the world to condemn the world, but to save the world through him.

Romans 5:8 - But God demonstrates his own love for us in this: While we were still sinners, Christ died for us.

Chosen: Colossians 3:12f

Paul is so enthralled with what God has done for him, so confident in God's love for him and for others – it affected him!! His life becomes an responsive expression of thanksgiving and honour to His Lord and King.

So here's the second reflective question:

- How often in my daily thinking do I remember God's great love for me?
- …and all He's done for us?
- Does God's love for you take your breath away?
- Do you rejoice that you have been given life, and brought from the kingdom of darkness into the kingdom of the son?
- Do you remember the great price that has been paid for your salvation?
- Do we pray that others realize/remember this as well? (Eph 3: 14-19)

A moment to reflect…

Before we move on, will you say it with me? Our sense of ETERNITY. Our sense of GOD'S LOVE.

Theme Three:

4:1 Therefore, since through God's mercy we have this ministry, we do not lose heart. (we have been appointed to this task)

4:5 For we do not preach ourselves, but Jesus Christ as Lord, and ourselves as your servants for Jesus' sake.

4: 7 But we have this treasure in jars of clay to show that this all-surpassing power is from God and not from us.

5:18 All this is from God, who reconciled us to Himself in Christ, and GAVE US the ministry of reconciliation.

5:19 ...He has committed to us the ministry of reconciliation.

5: 20 We are therefore Christ's ambassadors, as though God were making His appeal through us.

c. 3. Our sense of "ambassadorship"

4:1; 4:5; 4:7; 5:18; 19, 5:20

We can't say why exactly, but in His mysterious and wonderful ways, and in concert with His authority and sovereignty, God determined that the church, (that is "us") is the main vehicle through which He is communicating the Good News of the Gospel to the world.

We are Christ's ambassadors, as though God were making His appeal through us! WE have been entrusted with this wonderful, good news – will we not go to great lengths to share it, or see it shared, with others?

My wife Kathleen grew up in Ottawa, so as a young man I was compelled during the summers to move East and find a job there. You see, we had met at Briercrest, but I was finished and studying at the University of Alberta, and she was continuing her studies at Briercrest. As many of you know, it would not be a wise thing to leave a pretty, smart, godly girls "alone" at Briercrest for her senior years of study…

Anyway, at her church in Ottawa there would from time to time be guests from the political or diplomatic parts of the government. On one occasion, a gentleman spoke as an ambassador from an Asian country. He explained that his responsibility and privilege as an ambassador was to come to Canada and represent his King. Sometimes such messages and policies were happily received. Other times it was not a welcome message. Nevertheless, he was to deliver the messages as they were given, regardless of the reaction. As the representative of his government, the ambassador was the primary recipient of whatever reaction came. What the ambassador did NOT have, however, was the ability, right, authority to change the message.

Do you see the parallels for us today?

You can already anticipate the **final reflective questions** I have for us:

- To what degree am I aware of my "ambassadorship"?
- How often do you consciously remember that you have been entrusted with the very message of eternal life?
- How often do you ready are you to share the Good News, even if you had the opportunity?
- How effectively are we fulfilling our responsibilities to be goers, and prayers, and givers, and senders?
- How consistently do we reflect with reverence and honour on the character of the King who has sent us out!

A moment to reflect…

So in summary: here are these ideas that permeate Paul's letter to his Corinthian friends: eternity, love, ambassadorship. As close, let's say them again together: Our sense of ETERNITY. Our sense of GOD'S LOVE. Our sense of AMBASSADORSHIP.

We're going to sing together – worship team, would you please come and lead us? I'd like to pray together, and ask the Lord to soften our hearts to receive these things.

d. Closing Comment

When we finish our Christ walk, our reward will be the delight of our heavenly father.

So whatever the season you're in, or whatever project you've undertaken, may our Lord, who has called you to His road, and to His service, give you much grace and perspective for a long view of the days ahead.

May the Lord be with you.