UPC Family Devotional

July – Week 2

Memory Verse of the Week:

“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.”

-2 Corinthians 4:18

July 11 Monday 2 Corinthians 3:1-11

Letters of recommendation were commonly used in the Greco-Roman world to certify a person’s ability to carry out a particular task. But Paul says he does not need this type of human recognition to prove his authority and competence to share the gospel; the Corinthian church itself is the evidence of the Spirit at work through him. Just like Paul’s opponents, some church communities today can become overly critical when their leaders do not measure up to their preference. We should wisely discern whose voice we allow to have spiritual influence in the church as well as recognize that worldly credentials are not as important as the God-glorifying fruit produced in the lives of believers.

What is your attitude toward your church leaders? How can we know if someone is truly called to ministry?

In describing the Mosaic Law as a “ministry of death,” Paul does not belittle the Old Testament. When Moses brought the Law to the Israelites, his face shone with the glory of God, showing that the old covenant was a transitory precursor to the ministry of the Spirit brought by Jesus Christ. Yet the Law ultimately brought condemnation because no one could live up to its demands. The new covenant, however, surpasses the Law of Moses in glory, for it fulfills all righteousness and extends complete forgiveness to those who trust in Christ. Let us never lose sight of the infinite value of the gospel. Rather, let us walk in its power and share it with others.

Why is the gospel valuable to you? How does your life reflect its worth?

July 12 Tuesday 2 Corinthians 3:12-18

The basis of Paul’s hope and boldness is his participation in the new covenant through faith in Jesus Christ. Although the Mosaic covenant was glorious, its glory was not permanent. Whenever Moses left the presence of God, he covered his face to prevent the people from seeing that the radiance faded with time. Additionally, the hearts of the people were veiled so that they could not understand the ways of God. But the new covenant in Christ is permanent and superior in splendor. Through Christ’s finished work, all obstacles between God and His people are removed so that we might enter into God’s presence and reflect His glory. May we cling to Christ, therefore, and place all our hope in Him.

In what ways is your faith in Christ a source of hope and boldness? How can you reflect the glory of God as you serve Him?

When we come to Christ we are given His Spirit, who frees us from the bondage of the law and the guilt of sin. We are now free to live for God. Our service is no longer a burden or an attempt to earn God’s favor but an act of gratitude for His saving grace. As the Holy Spirit works in and through us, He transforms our character so that we can reflect more of God’s glory, and continue to do so until we attain perfection when Christ returns. This motivates us to yield to the Holy Spirit so that He can renew us and more people can experience the saving freedom that God provides through His grace.

In what ways have you experienced freedom in Christ? What are some areas in your life where you need more of the Holy Spirit’s freeing work?

July 13 Wednesday 2 Corinthians 4:1-12

Our view of ministry influences how we serve. Paul has a high view of ministry, knowing that whatever he does is before God’ presence. There may be challenges along the way but Paul does not get discouraged. He has to preach to many whose spiritual eyes have been blinded by Satan, but he trusts that God will illuminate their hearts so that they will believe. He is also aware of the roles that structure his ministry: Christ is Lord, and Paul is the servant of His people. If we approach ministry with this kind of humility, we will not usurp God’s glory but be effective vessels through whom He can touch and transform lives.

What are some of the challenges you have encountered while serving God? What motivates you to keep going despite the hurdles?

Here, Paul captures the paradoxical nature of ministry: the glorious treasure of the gospel has been entrusted to ordinary and fragile creatures like us. Our bodies are like perishable jars of clay that carry the glorious power of God. Paul illustrates a further paradox: we are hard-pressed, perplexed, persecuted, and struck down, but in all these situations, we remain strong because of God’s grace. The paradox of ministry is that God reveals Himself as mighty and strong when we are at our weakest. This truth sustains us and gives us hope in the face of danger. And even as our bodies approach death, we experience ever-increasing life because of the victory that Christ has already won for us.

What life paradoxes have you experienced as a follower of Christ? In what ways have you experienced God’s power when all seems lost?

July 14 Thursday 2 Corinthians 4:13-18

Christian faith is objectively grounded in who God is and what Jesus has accomplished on the cross. Regardless of what happens around us, we can be confident that we will be victorious because God will help us. Paul refers to a Davidic Psalm to illustrate the kind of attitude believers ought to have in the midst of difficult situations: our words and lifestyle must flow out of a heart of faith. We do not only trust God when everything is going well; we have to believe Him in the midst of darkness. If He raised Jesus from the dead, He will certainly help us in our afflictions. Let us, therefore, remain focused on our assignment of making Christ known among those who do not know Him.

How do you demonstrate your faith in God? When have you found it difficult to trust Him?

Paul contrasts the inner self with the outward self. Our bodies can be weak and fragile, but our spirits are renewed and enabled to grow by the power of the Holy Spirit in the word of God. Our physical limitations and infirmities are limited to this side of eternity. Our morality is not the end of our story but since we have believed in the immoral God. We have tremendous hope beyond the grave! The troubles of this world have an expiration date, but the joy that awaits us is eternal. This is the driving source of our inner resilience. We trust God to use the troubles we encounter in this life to reveal His power and glory in His time.

When have you been tempted to lose heart? How does the gospel change your perspective on life?

July 15 Friday 2 Corinthians 5:1-10

Paul compares our present physical bodies to a tent- temporary and weak structure not meant as a permanent residence. On the day of resurrection, God will give us glorified bodies, which Paul compares to an internal home, free from corruption, pain, disability, sickness and death. This is not mere wishful thinking but a firm promise from God. He has given us His spirit as a guarantee. Therefore, even though we should treat our earthly bodies with honor and respect, we should look forward to the day when Christ returns and gives us perfect bodies without the limitations and pains we now endure. We will be clothed in God’s glory and beaming with His splendor.

Why must we take care of our temporary, moral bodies? In what ways does the Holy Spirit help you keep an eternal perspective on earthly matters?

Life on earth is not all there is. Since we know that our souls continue to exist even after our mortal bodies have perished, we must choose to live differently, making it our goal to please God in every way by trusting Him and living in obedience to His word. This is what it means to live by faith. We also know that our God will judge our deeds according to His word and reward those who have faithfully lived for Him. Our present daily actions, therefore, have eternal consequences, and we should be careful how we live. Having an internal perspective should motivate us to invest all our lives in the service of our God.

How are you involved in God's work? How does the reality of final judgment and reward affect your priorities now?

July 16 Saturday 2 Corinthians 5:11-21

Paul's motivation for telling others of God's reconciling love through Jesus comes from the truth He shared previously: all people will one day be judged. Paul is confident in the fact that God knows his motives, and he hopes that the Corinthians will also recognize his integrity. Whereas his critics focus on outward appearances, Paul focuses on the inward condition of the heart. Thus, the driving force of his life and ministry is not the approval of others but the compelling love of Christ, displayed in his death and resurrection. Likewise, the final judgment and the redeeming love of Christ should motivate us to share the gospel with others. Regardless of what people think or say about us, let us faithfully persuade others to come to Christ.

What motivates you to tell others about Christ? How do you respond when people oppose or criticize you on account of your faith?

Paul reminds the Corinthians that, as God’s people, they are a new creation, called to be ambassadors for God's Kingdom regardless of their outward circumstances. God has restored His image in them in order that they might reflect His rule throughout all the earth. They are called to appeal to others who are in need of the joy and peace that comes from the forgiveness and righteousness received through Christ. Let us remember that who we truly are has nothing to do with how the world views us. Our identity is rooted in the new life God has given us so that our faith and transformed lifestyle can be a testimony that brings many others into His Kingdom.

In what ways has God renewed you? How does your life reflect your calling as an ambassador for Christ?