

Evangelism – Facing Discouragement II Cor. 4:7-5:8

Thesis: To help us overcome discouragement, especially while we try and teach others.

Introduction:

There are some careers that are built on failures.

If a baseball player makes an out 70% of the time, he is considered a great hitter.

Most sales are made after the 5th call.

Sometimes, this can be true of evangelism.

No matter how hard we try or how much we pray, some will never obey the gospel.

It can be easy for us to become discouraged from time to time.

I. Paul understood what it meant to be discouraged while trying to spread the gospel (4:7-10).

A. Notice some of the persecutions that Paul was forced to endure.

1. Many of them are spoken of in II Corinthians.
 - a. **II Cor. 1:8** - For we do not want you to be ignorant, brethren, of our trouble which came to us in Asia: that we were burdened beyond measure, above strength, so that we despaired even of life.
 - b. **II Cor. 7:5** - For indeed, when we came to Macedonia, our flesh had no rest, but we were troubled on every side. Outside were conflicts, inside were fears.
 - c. **II Cor. 11:22-33** – Summary of Paul’s persecutions
2. We also notice some of these persecutions throughout the book of Acts.
 - a. **Acts 14:5-6** – Paul and Barnabas escape from Iconium.
 - b. **Acts 14:19-20** – Paul is stoned at Lystra.
 - c. **Acts 16:16-40** – Paul and Silas are in prison at Philippi.
 - d. Eventually, Paul is sent to Rome to face Caesar.

B. In each case, Paul faced discouragement because of his faithfulness to God; not because of ungodly living.

1. These persecutions were placed on him because he was preaching the gospel.
2. Paul continued, even while in prison, to preach the word of God.
 - a. He preached in his defenses.
 - b. **Phil. 4:22** - All the saints greet you, but especially those who are of Caesar's household.

Paul overcame his discouragement by focusing on two things:

II. Paul understood that he was suffering for the sake of Christ (4:11).

A. Paul knew from the beginning that persecutions would come.

1. Paul knew that he was going to suffer persecutions.
 - a. **Acts 9:15-16** - But the Lord said to him (Ananias), “Go, for he is a chosen vessel of Mine to bear My name before Gentiles, kings, and the children of Israel. {16} For I will show him how many things he must suffer for My name's sake.”
 - b. **Acts 20:22-23** (Paul speaking to the elders of the church at Ephesus) - And see, now I go bound in the spirit to Jerusalem, not knowing the things that will happen to me there, {23} except that the Holy Spirit testifies in every city, saying that chains and tribulations await me.
 - c. It was no surprise to him that he suffered.
2. We, also, must understand that we will face some persecutions.
 - a. **Mt. 5:10-11** - Blessed are those who are persecuted for righteousness' sake, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven. {11} Blessed are you when they revile and persecute you, and say all kinds of evil against you falsely for My sake.
 - b. **II Tim. 3:12** - Yes, and all who desire to live godly in Christ Jesus will suffer persecution.
 - c. **Ps. 34:19** - Many are the afflictions of the righteous, but the LORD delivers him out of them all.

B. Paul willingly faced these persecutions for the sake of Christ.

1. Paul understood the greater good that would come from these persecutions.
 - a. **Phil. 3:7** - But what things were gain to me, these I have counted loss for Christ.
2. Remember, Paul faced these persecutions for the sake of Christ.

III. Paul was also looking toward the resurrection (4:16-5:8).

A. Paul understood that there was a great reward that would be given to him upon his death (4:16-5:8).

B. We, today, can be confident that we will have this same reward if we endure to the end.

1. **Rev. 2:10b** - Be faithful until death, and I will give you the crown of life.
2. Christianity is a life-long effort.

Conclusion: