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St. Paul's Lutheran Church
2100 16th Street SW
Austin, MN 55912-1749
Pastor Ted Barthels
Sermon preached on
June 13, 2021
3rd Sunday after Pentecost

Scripture Lessons: Genesis 3:8-15, Mark 3:20-35

Hymns: 239; 633; 370; 644

Grace be unto you and peace from God our Father and our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. Amen.

Sermon Text: 2 Corinthians 4:13-18

And since we have the same spirit of faith, according to what is written, "I believed and therefore I spoke," we also believe and therefore speak, ¹⁴ knowing that He who raised up the Lord Jesus will also raise us up with Jesus, and will present *us* with you. ¹⁵ For all things *are* for your sakes, that grace, having spread through the many, may cause thanksgiving to abound to the glory of God.

¹⁶ Therefore we do not lose heart. Even though our outward man is perishing, yet the inward *man* is being renewed day by day. ¹⁷ For our light affliction, which is but for a moment, is working for us a far more exceeding *and* eternal weight of glory, ¹⁸ while we do not look at the things which are seen, but at the things which are not seen. For the things which are seen *are* temporary, but the things which are not seen *are* eternal. (NKJV)

This is the Word of God.

Sanctify us, oh Lord, through Your truth. Your Word is truth. Amen.

In Christ Jesus, God our Savior, dear fellow Redeemed:

INTRO: Speaking up.

Sometimes we may find ourselves in situations where we are uncomfortable because of the conversation going on around us. We just can't agree with the assertions being made by others. People around us can tell just by the look on our faces that we don't like what we see or are hearing from others. The challenge may come, especially if the other people present know that we are confessing Christians, "*Have you got something to say?*" That question will not likely be thrown in our direction with a pleasant tone of voice, but rather with a challenging tone of voice, a tone of voice that is meant to silence us, a tone of voice that intends to get the answer back of a weak "No, not me."

We live in a hostile society, a society that is not hostile to people that just go along with the flow of society, but hostile, well to start with, hostile toward God and His gospel, and the truth of God's Word.

If we don't believe that our society is hostile to the truth, look at the reaction when you do start talking. Talk about the need for repentance. Say that people that just live together without first being married are sinning, and ought to repent, and find forgiveness in Jesus. Say that about the other sins in our society that are growing in popularity. Isn't most of society hostile to the idea that abortion is sinful, that it is murder? Even people that say they are "prolife" may hesitate to call abortion sinful. Speak up on behalf of those who cannot defend themselves. Speak up and say that homosexuality is not God pleasing love, but it is corrupt and sinful, and those who are practicing such a lifestyle need to repent and look to Jesus for forgiveness.

It is when we speak up, and not blend in with the world that Christians experience the hostility of society **against the Lord** and against those who believe in Him, and in His gospel truth.

This is what our text is talking about. The Apostle Paul was writing to the Corinthians about his wellbeing as well as the wellbeing of those accompanying Paul in his mission of preaching the gospel to a world of sinners. Yes, it was Paul's ministry in particular and the ministry of the gospel that was being addressed, but we are all included in the great commission with which Christ

sent **us** out into all the world to preach the gospel to every creature.
(Mark 16:15)

We live in a world that is hostile to the truth of God and His gospel, and so this world thinks that Christians have nothing to say that is worth hearing. The Lord Himself doesn't agree with that because He has given us something to say. Let's very briefly this morning consider just a bit of --

THEME: What Christians Have to Say:

First

I. About Faith itself.

In the first verse of our text Paul quotes a verse from the Psalms. He does so with the comment that the same Spirit of faith resides in his heart that was in the heart of the Psalmist. This is significant because the context the psalm verse Paul quotes is about affliction and persecution. The psalmist is living in a hostile society, hostile to the truth of God. and yet he speaks. Let's read a little larger portion of that psalm:

*“For You have delivered my soul from death, My eyes from tears, And my feet from falling. ⁹I will walk before the Lord In the land of the living. ¹⁰**I believed, therefore I spoke,** “I am greatly afflicted.” ¹¹I said in my haste, “All men are liars.” ¹²What shall I render to the Lord For all His benefits toward me? I will take up the cup of salvation, And call upon the name of the LORD.”*

(Psalm 116:8-13)

We need to note that the psalmist confesses that he was not perfect in all that he said. He did make a mistake, speaking in haste he lashed out verbally, instead of proceeding in quiet perseverance. However, the psalmist proceeded to turn to the Lord, and insist that he would respond to his critics by taking up the cup of salvation and calling upon the name of the Lord.

This is what Paul is alluding to as having the same Spirit of faith. Paul proceeds to remind the Corinthians about the heart of their faith and salvation. It is knowing that Jesus is the Christ Who came into the world to suffer and die, and the third day rise again from the dead that fills Paul with hope. He had something to say that the

world needed to hear, and Paul was not going to stop saying it. Paul had the same Spirit of faith.

I am taking that word Spirit as a reference to the Holy Spirit. He is the Spirit of faith that fills our hearts with the truth of God, with the truth of salvation. Even as Paul knew Jesus as his crucified and resurrected Lord, so we also know Jesus as our Redeemer who died for us and rose again, so that we have life in His name.

With Paul it was the message of Jesus' resurrection that brought him a lot of grief and ridicule, first from among the Jewish party of the Sadducees, but also from the gentiles. The gentile world knew all about death. They were sure of themselves when they maintained their faith that the dead do not rise. *"But now Christ is risen from the dead, and has become the firstfruits of those who have fallen asleep. ²¹ For since by man came death, by Man also came the resurrection of the dead."* (1 Corinthians 15:20-21)

We know the truth of resurrection in our hearts. We know that to the very core of our being. We know that because we have the same Spirit of faith. The Holy Spirit has convinced us of this truth of our salvation. We too along with the psalmist and the Apostle Paul will *"take up the cup of salvation and call upon the name of the Lord."* (Psalm 116:13) We have something to say about faith. We know the only true God and Jesus Christ Whom He has sent. We know that all the gods of this world are in fact not gods. All the false religions and philosophies of this world are focused on carnal pleasures and the ego of man. People will swallow the biggest lies and regard the most preposterous ideas as being viable as long as it feeds their pride. The world challenges, *"Who knows? You can't think you have a monopoly on the truth, can you?"*

We answer because we know the truth. We have something to say. We believe, and therefore we speak. We don't believe like the world uses the word "believe," that maybe this is something that might be true, but you should take it with a good dose of skepticism. We possess the full assurance of faith! We have the Spirit of faith, and therefore we believe, and we speak to the world about Jesus who died for us and rose again. We know that in Jesus' resurrection we also possess the hope of resurrection.

We have the same Spirit as filled the heart of the Apostle Paul. We have something to say about faith in the one true God, and since we have something to say, and people do hear, we are confident that the same Spirit will work faith in the hearts of others. The result of that is these new believers will join with the assembly of believers in praising the God of our salvation. The Lord will be praised. And so, we sang with the hymnwriter:

*“Oh, may the sweet, the blissful theme Fill every heart and tongue
Till strangers love Thy charming name, And join the sacred song!”*
(The Lutheran Hymnal 363:5)

This faith we hold in our hearts is a wonder of grace. There is still more that the Christian has to say, and it is --

II. About Facing Adversity.

Paul starts the second point of our text with the words, *“Therefore we do not lose heart.”* (v. 13) You can understand the Apostle Paul talking this way, after all Paul was privileged to bring the gospel to so many people, starting so many congregations, seeing so many people come to faith. Of course, *he* would say:

“Therefore we do not lose heart. Even though our outward man is perishing, yet the inward man is being renewed day by day. ¹⁷For our light affliction, which is but for a moment, is working for us a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory, ¹⁸while we do not look at the things which are seen, but at the things which are not seen. For the things which are seen are temporary, but the things which are not seen are eternal.” (2 Corinthians 4:16-18)

Don't make Paul into some kind of a spiritual superhero. He was a man, a man who suffered from bodily infirmities that were more than a little troublesome. We know that he suffered a great deal on account of the gospel. He was stoned, more than once, and left for dead. He was beaten, more than once. He was jailed and imprisoned, more than once. He and some of his associates became ill, at times seriously ill. They suffered a great deal of hardship. And all for the opportunity to speak of Jesus to people that sometimes wanted nothing to do with this blessed message of God's love and forgiveness. In that context Paul says, *“we do not*

lose heart.” (v.16) In the midst of adversity and affliction they did not lose heart.

Paul could say this because by faith he looked beyond the “here and now,” and into an eternity in the glories of heaven. Paul stayed focused on the facts: the afflictions of this life are temporary, the glories of heaven which Christ has won for us, which Christ has reserved for us personally, those glories are forever. They are eternal.

As a pastor I have had many conversations with Christians who are suffering a great deal, sometimes because of illness, sometimes because of their faith, sometimes because they are victims of this world’s evil and meanness. I come to them to encourage them with the gospel, but often found that they had something to say to me! What they had to say was how important it was to have this faith in Jesus as we face the afflictions of life. It is our sure and certain knowledge of the truth, that there is heaven before us, that lifts the spirits in the face of pain or loss. They did not lose heart. They had the conviction of faith that these things we experience now, the things that we see and which press upon our consciousness, they are all temporary, while the life reserved for us in heaven, a life of bliss and glory with the Lord, that is eternal.

More than this we are also assured of the truth that what awaits us is far greater than any and all things we know now in this life, including pain, depression, or loss. Paul wrote to the Romans: *“For I consider that the sufferings of this present time are not worthy to be compared with the glory which shall be revealed in us.”*

(Romans 8:18)

As Christians we face the same diseases as the rest of this world which has been corrupted by sin. We know that we also face temporal death. Along the way we face all sorts of discouragements in life and in Christian ministry. However, we know in our hearts that resurrection lies before us! Therefore, we say, *“We do not lose heart,”* because of the glory Jesus has reserved for us. We **do** have something to say! We say:

*“My hope is built on nothing less
Than Jesus' blood and righteousness ...*

*When darkness veils His lovely face,
I rest on His unchanging grace;
In ev'ry high and stormy gale
My anchor holds within the veil.
On Christ, the solid Rock, I stand;
All other ground is sinking sand.*" (The Lutheran Hymnal 370:1,2)

Because we have the same Spirit of faith as filled the heart of the psalmist, that filled the heart of Paul, that fills the hearts of our fellow believers, **we have something to say**, something wonderful to share with the world; it is the hope of life in Jesus our crucified and resurrected Lord! **Therefore, we do not lose heart!**

AMEN.

“Now may the God of hope fill you with all joy and peace in believing, that you may abound in hope by the power of the Holy Spirit.” Amen. (Romans15:13)