



Service – 02/05/2017  
*2 Corinthians 11:16, 22-28*  
*2 Corinthians 12:7, 9*  
*2 Peter 5:6 – 7*  
*Philippians 4:6 – 7*  
*Psalms 56:8*  
*James 1:2 - 4*

I want you to slide where we are and that is in 2 Corinthians 11. He, we're going to look at two chapters today. Now the next Sunday we're going to go in detail in chapter 12 because I want to look at what is in there. It's a whole different section. But I want us to address 11 to 12 today.

Last week a young couple in another state, Christian couple, drove to a hospital to, they had made a, they had talked to a young lady who was in labor and they'd made an agreement to adopt her child. So a car seat in the car, they drive to the hospital, they get there, they walk in, and the young lady looked at them and said, "I just can't do this. I want to keep my child." Now you can't fault her at all. Because until you've had a child, you have no idea what that moment is like. It's an astounding moment of unconditional love. The only time we learn really what God's unconditional love is even remotely like is when we have a child. And so you can't fault her, but when they drive home, well they're shattered. They get home, they open up the back seat, there's the empty car seat. They go in and they struggle. They hurt. Now whether you don't believe in Jesus or do believe in Jesus, you're going to hurt as a result of that experience. But if you are a Christian you're going to hurt more. You say, "Well wait a minute." Now, let me, walk with me all the way through. OK. But you're going to hurt more because you're going to wrestle with something a lost person doesn't wrestle with. They come home and they just go, "Well it's bad karma. It's a bad day. Fate. Whatever it is. If you are a believer and you believe in a god whom the Bible says sees the sparrow when it falls, the hairs on your head are numbered. Back off. When you go through all that and you believe in a sovereign God who acts in the affairs of men now you wrestle with an extra detail which is, "Father, why did you in your sovereignty let us get all the way up here

thinking we had a child and now our hopes, our dreams, are dashed all the way home.” You wrestle with a harder thing. Now as Christians we wrestle with things in this world. And it is more difficult for us than for people that don’t believe in Jesus Christ. There are basically three dispensations really. There’s Adam and Eve’s time when everything’s perfect. There’s a time when Jesus comes back, when everything’s perfect. But in between is the time we live in and it is a world that doesn’t work well. And that even though we’re believers, we’re going to encounter some difficulties and we encounter more difficulties because we are believers.

Now number one you encounter the same things lost people do. That’s why Jesus made that statement in Matthew 5 when he said, “The rain falls on the just and the unjust and the sun shines on the just and the unjust.” If you have a cattle ranch and you are a believer in Central Texas and the guy next door whose fence you share is an Atheist and there’s a drought in Texas, you’re both going to be selling cattle at the same price. You’re both going to be looking at maybe one cut of grass. You’re both going to struggle. Not going to be a little rain clouds over the Christian home, and nothing over the Atheist home. Same thing’s true with rain. If it’s raining well and you get three cuts of hay, the Atheist gets three cuts of hay. There are things in this world that simply happen to both of us. That’s the general premise. In addition to that is what you find in 2 Corinthians. There are three other things that hit us hard.

Look in chapter 11 starting in 16, but we’ll go further down. Paul is still, these guys remember last week we talked about these guys coming into the church, right. Well these guys came into the church and they said look we have the truth and we’ve been persecuted for our truth and we’ve suffered for our truth so we’re really the super apostles. So Paul kind of goes off here. And he talks about all the things he suffered. Verse 16:

<sup>16</sup>I repeat, let no one think me foolish. Even if you do, accept me as a fool, so that I too may boast a little.

He’s trying to show that he’s gone through at least what they’ve gone through. And look down in 22.

<sup>22</sup>Are they Hebrews? So am I. Israelites? So am I. Offspring of Abraham? So am I. <sup>23</sup>Servants of Christ? I am a better one – I am talking like a madman – with far greater labors, far more imprisonments, countless beatings, often near death. <sup>24</sup>Five times I received at the hands of the Jews the forty lashes less one. <sup>25</sup>Three times I was beaten with rods. Once I was stoned. Three times I was shipwrecked; a night and a day I was adrift at sea; <sup>26</sup>frequent journeys, dangers from rivers, robbers, my own people, Gentiles, danger in the city, danger in the wilderness, danger at sea, danger from false brothers;

<sup>27</sup>in toil and hardship, through many a sleepless night, in hunger and thirst, often without food, in cold and exposure.

That is the best selling point for Christianity. No. Because none of those things would happen to him if he'd stayed a Jew. He meets Jesus on the Damascus Road and when he does he, and Jesus told him, "You're going to preach the gospel before Kings, but it's really going to be a tough life for you." These are the things that he encountered because of who he was in Christ. Now you have to understand you stand for Jesus Christ and you really stand. You go to work tomorrow, don't tell them you went to church, you tell them, somebody says "What did you do yesterday?" You say, "You know before we watched the Super Bowl we went to church and heard about Jesus and I think He's the only way to God." See what that gets you in the morning. The world doesn't like us. Across this world for the last two years the number one religious group most persecuted are Christians. We're the ones being killed. We're the ones being beaten. We're the ones being martyred. We are being slaughtered. And if you come to a country like this where they can't do that, we're still despised. You look at the riots at Berkeley, you look at the riots in New York City, two opposite sides of the country and yet both sides despise who and what we stand for in this room. It always amazed me the people that scream the most about tolerance are the most intolerant people in America. That is what we face though. We are not going to be beloved by people that do not know our Savior. That is the given point and it is becoming more and more pronounced. You ask any academic, if you take an academic, a Christian academic, and he says that he believes there is design in the universe, doesn't say "I'm looking for a Creator. I'm looking to find Jesus." He just says, "There is design in the universe." He will be run out of town on a rail as an academic. Even Baylor ran out one of the smartest men in the world because he started a think tank to look for design in the universe. We are simply a culture that no matter what we say and no matter what school we're a part of, they don't like who and what we are. Persecution is our lot. We have been fortunate in America that we live in a country that was founded on this, but that's moving away. We're going to have to deal with this. Persecution is the second thing we face as believers that lost people do not.

Thirdly, look at verse 28.

<sup>28</sup>And, apart from other things, there is the daily pressure on me of my anxiety for all the churches. <sup>29</sup>Who is weak, and I am not weak? Who is made to fall, and I am not indignant?

Here's the second thing you face. If you're a believer in Christ you will be pressured that Christ be formed, that He's formed in your family, among your friends, and in any ministry you've got. Lost people don't face that. My favorite journalist in sports is Peter King. He writes for Sports Illustrated; great articles, great writer, always good stuff, Monday Morning Quarterback, MMQB is the best article he's got every

Monday morning. His daughter, now he's married to a lady. His daughter is married to another lady that she calls her husband. And they're in a same sex relationship. Now he has addressed this in his articles and basically said, "Look this is a great thing. Proud of my daughter." They've adopted a child. He's now a grandparent. Absolutely no problem for him because as long as she's happy it doesn't matter what she does as long as she doesn't hurt anybody and she's happy then it doesn't matter what she chooses or doesn't choose. Even though I'm not going to choose it, it's OK. See as a child of God that's not going to be your perspective. Your child comes into you and says to you, "You know I'm going to marry this boy, he's not a Christian, but I really want to marry him." Or if your daughter comes to you and says, "I'm going to marry a lady." When these things hit you and they are hitting us right and left, as a Godly parent you don't just ignore that. You feel the pressure of Christ being formed in your home. You go to bed with that, you get up with that, you walk through the day with that, and you struggle and you ache, which you would not do if you didn't care about whether or not Jesus comes out in people's lives. But you do care and so you face that extra pressure the lost person does not face.

And then you deal with chapter 12. Look in verse 7.

<sup>7</sup>So to keep me from becoming conceited because of the surpassing greatness of the revelations, a thorn was given me in the flesh, a messenger of Satan to harass me, to keep me from being conceited.

Here's the third thing you face a lost world does not. You are disciplined by God. You and I are going to step the wrong way and God is going to bring discipline in our life when we refuse to yield to the Holy Spirit. He doesn't discipline lost people. He disciplines us. So here's what we face. We live in the same world lost people live and we're going to have some same things they face. We're going to be hated by people that don't believe in what we believe. We will feel the pressure of our faith being formed inside our home particularly. And when we don't do things right, Hebrews 12 says if you're not disciplined, you're not a child of God. We are going to face discipline from the Father. You say, "Well preacher if you're trying to sell me on Christianity you really stink."

Let me be clear. Your life in many respects will be easier here if you refuse Christ in a certain way. Because you will face extra dimensions of difficulties. That is a reality. You say, "Then why in the world would I embrace Jesus? Why in the world would I take him?" Because number 1: when I exit this world and I get here I'm done with this. There's a true statement that is horrific really when you think about it. For me as a believer the only hell I will ever endure is here. But for an unbeliever, for someone who says, "I don't believe in Jesus, don't want Him." The only heaven they will ever endure is here. I can't even imagine this is the best of my life, here, I want the best of my life to be with Jesus Christ. So that's number one. You say,

"Well that's fine preacher, but that's down the road. What about now?" Now I'm going to fly. 1 Peter, chapter 5, listen to what he says:

<sup>6</sup>Humble yourselves, therefore, under the mighty hand of God so that at the proper time he may exalt you, <sup>7</sup>casting all your anxieties on him, because he cares for you.

You have an anxiety, you're struggling, you're troubled, you're like this couple, you've driven home and you looked in the back and the car seat's empty, and you're destitute. Listen. You cast your care upon Christ and the Bible says He will exalt you in due time. He's not done. God is never done with you. I don't care what kind of hurt you have. He still cares. He still watches. He still acts in His time.

Number two. Look in Philippians chapter 4, verse 6:

<sup>6</sup>do not be anxious about anything, but in everything by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your requests be made known to God. <sup>7</sup>And the peace of God, which surpasses all understanding, now listen, will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus.

Does that peace of God take away our pain? Absolutely not. What it does do though, His presence in your life takes your pain and prevents it from overruling your head and your heart. In the 30's when everybody put their money in the stock market and it busted, men were jumping out of windows in New York City because not only had they lost everything, they'd lost everybody else's everything. And the pain overwhelmed the logic of their head and their heart. But when you know Jesus Christ, I don't care how hard it is, His peace will come into your life and take that pain and prevent it from wrecking who and what you are.

Number three. Look in Psalm 56 verse 8. Psalms 56, verse 8. One of my top five favorite verses in the entire word of God. I have leaned on this I don't know how many times. Listen to what David wrote. He's in the middle of horror in Gath. He's stuck with the Philistines. He's struggling with them. Here's what he says:

<sup>8</sup>You have kept count of my tossings; (that is, my troubles) you put my tears in your bottle. Are they not in your book?

Now there are only two reasons God keeps our tears. And if you go to Israel, go anywhere in the Middle East, they do have tear bottles. In the old days, you wept, you'd put a tear in the bottle to remind you of what you faced. God takes my tears and puts them in his bottle. And then he records them in his book. Why does he do that? Because he loves watching me hurt? Did he enjoy when that young couple that loves him and they open that back door and took out that car seat that's now empty, did He look at that and go, "Wow, great." No. Do you know why He keeps

your tears? So when you get here he pours them out and rewards you for every single tear you ever shed because there's not a tear you shed he doesn't keep a record of. Every single tear.

James chapter 1. James 1 right after the book of Hebrews. Listen to this.

<sup>2</sup>Count if all joy, my brothers, when you meet trials of various kinds, <sup>3</sup>for you know that the testing of your faith produces steadfastness. <sup>4</sup>And let steadfastness have its full effect, that you may be perfect and complete, lacking in nothing.

You know what trials do? You know what those pains do? You know what happens when you stand firm? God takes you and He matures you into what He wants you to be. You can, no man or woman has ever reached maturity in Christ that didn't shed tears. Nobody. He takes those tears and He matures you. Here's what he basically does. We all struggle with this. We all struggle with the knowledge we have here moving to here. It's pain and hurt and trial and difficulty that moves this to here. He matures you in Christ as a result of the difficulty. And then the very last thing ; 2 Corinthians 12 he talks about the fact that in, as a result of his discipline, listen to what he says in verse 9. He asks God three times to take this thing away but God said "No."

<sup>9</sup>But he said to me, "My grace is sufficient for you, for my power is made perfect in weakness." Therefore I will boast all the more gladly of my weaknesses, so that the power of Christ may rest upon me.

You can never experience his power until you experience pain. Do we face more as Christians? Absolutely. We face what normal people face. We face persecution. We face pressure. We face disappointment. Is it harder for us? Yes. But it's easier. I have more problems, but I have a God they don't have who is active in my life.

Back in Chicago years ago, there was a very successful attorney. And he had a lot of property. He was doing really well and then the Chicago fire of 1871 came and it burned away all his holdings, it was in real estate on the North side of Chicago by the lake. Everything lost. Right before that he had a son that died. So he's had a tough life. But there was a famous evangelist in that day, Dwight Moody, who had a worship guy with him, Ira Sankey, and they were travelling over to Europe and he knew Dwight, knew Sankey, and he said, "I'll meet y'all over there and assist you in your crusade." So he and his wife and their four daughters were headed over there. Some sort of business thing pulled him back, he had to stay in Chicago, in that day the only trans-Atlantic travel was by boat. So he put his wife and four daughters on the boat, they got there, and as they were heading across the Atlantic another ship hit them. Their ship sank in 12 minutes. And when the ship that came to rescue them got there mom was alive but all four daughters were gone. So she gets to

England, she cables him back and she says, "Saved alone." So he gets on a boat as quickly as he can to meet her in England. When they get to a certain spot in the Atlantic, the captain came to him and said, "Just wanted you to know this is where your daughters went down." You know you don't expect to lose your kids. But to lose a son and your business and four daughters is Job like. Well he wrote a song based on that moment that we're going to sing. That song came out of his sorrow. Now you may not be able to sing that song today because you don't know Jesus. And if you don't know Him, you can't. You may today be struggling to sing this song that we're about to sing because you are going through one of the things we talked about today. And you may be struggling. If you are, staff and I are going to be here at the front and we will pray with you in your struggling. If you can sing the song with us and you want to join with us in singing to the Brazos Valley, then we want you to do that. So I'm going to have you real quietly, real reverently, stand, real quietly. Steve's going to lead us in the song. And, again, if you can't sing it, staff and I are here at the front. If you can and you want to join with us then we want you to do that.

Father thank you for the day, the time, just honor these in this room that love you and trust you even in the dark times. In Jesus name. Amen.