

June 6, 2021

2 Corinthians 4:16-18:

“Dancing the Dipsy-Doodle”

- I. “Do Not Lose Heart.”
- II. Understanding Our Affliction.
- III. Fix Our Eyes.

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Dear Friends in Christ,

Maybe you're wondering how I ever came up with the theme for the sermon. Well, it came to mind after thinking on these statements from our text: "...our outer self is wasting away...affliction is preparing for us...look not to the things that are seen...things that are seen are transient..." If our predominant focus of life is this world then those statements speak negatively to a lot of what the flesh values. Listen, again: "our outer self is wasting away" *versus* preserving our flesh "affliction is preparing for us" *versus* avoiding affliction at all costs - "look not to the things that are seen" *versus* focusing on the visible, touchable stuff of this world - "things that are seen are transient" *versus* ignoring the fact that we're still going to die.

Anyway, I could not get the word out of my mind: *dipsy-doodle*. Here are a couple of definitions. First, as a noun dipsy-doodle can refer to "a quick dipping motion, such as that made by football players to avoid a tackle." Second, as a verb, it can mean to "follow a zigzagging course." The definitions apply to what we need to evaluate in our journey with the Lord through this world . . .

DANCING THE DIPSY-DOODLE

I. "Do Not Lose Heart."

The sixteenth verse of our text reads, "So we do not lose heart. Though our outer self is wasting away, our inner self is being renewed day by day." I would not disagree with the thinking that, if possible, it is important to maintain quality to life. Besides, our bodies are the temples of God.

It is equally important to understand that sooner or later, one way or another, something is going to change the course of life and bring each of us to the last moment. You can dance the dipsy-doodle - try to avoid the tackle of reality or try to zig zag around it - but the last moment will keep its appointment. And it is important to understand that age is irrelevant. The problem for many who claim Christ is their lack of working knowledge of God's Word. They don't study the Word. They don't want to. They don't know the Word. Maybe they spend too much time reading the fantasies of positive or possibility thinking, from a worldly point of view. Mark well these familiar words from Job:

"Man who is born of woman is few days and full of trouble. He comes out like a flower and withers; he flees like a shadow and continues not.... Since his days are determined (and you'll want to commit those words to your memory) and the number of his months is with you, and you have appointed his limits that he cannot pass, look away from him and leave him alone (don't keep track of the time you've set)..." (Job 14:1-2; 5-6a)

And how often have you heard the words the Holy Spirit gave to David: "...in your book were written, every one of them, all the days that were formed for me, when as yet there was none of them"? (Ps. 139:16) Though we are terminal to this world, the Spirit says, "the inner self is being renewed day by day." That's the new person in Christ; that part of us that has been awakened to the fact that we have eternal life in Christ.

II. Understanding Our Affliction.

With that in mind, the Holy Spirit had Paul write, "For this light momentary affliction is preparing for us an eternal weight of glory beyond all comparison..." (v. 17) We might ask, "What is *this light momentary affliction*?" It's this: Life in this world; this moment - this moment - this moment....and so on. Listen, the seemingly happiest of people have underlying issues, fears and concerns.

Light momentary affliction is most specifically directed to these words of Jesus: "'The world cannot hate you, but it hates me because I testify about it that its works are evil.'" (Jn. 7:7) And later Jesus gave further clarity to what needs to be very clear with us: "If the world hates you, know that it has hated me

before it hated you. If you were of the world, the world would love you as its own; but because you are not of the world therefore the world hates you." (Jn. 15:18-19) That reality of Jesus' words doesn't set well with much, if not most, of the church in this country.

The Apostle Paul writes, "Therefore, since we have been justified by faith (declared 'not guilty' of our sin), we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ." (Rom 5:1) God no longer sees us as enemies, though we still struggle with sin, but loves us and claims us as His. Paul then states, "Through him (Jesus) we have also obtained access by faith to this grace in which we stand, and we rejoice in hope of the glory of God." Well, we rejoice in the love, forgiveness and eternal life God gives us in Christ, but then come the words we don't want to hear:

Not only that, but we rejoice in our sufferings, knowing that suffering produces endurance (bearing up under adversity), and endurance produces character (reliability, dependability), and character produces hope (trust), and hope does not put us to shame, because God's love has been poured into our hearts through the Holy Spirit who has been given to us. (Rom 5:3-5)

The bottom line? We can't dance the dipsy-doodle with the troubles, the decay and death of this world. We can't avoid them. We can't zig zag around all the this and that and whatever of life. As a result Paul goes on to say . . .

III. Fix Our Eyes.

...as we look not to the things that are seen but to the things that are unseen. For the things that are seen are transient, but the things that are unseen are eternal. (v. 18)

Our text for this morning started with the words, "So we do not lose heart." Paul's warning to not lose heart is in the context of suffering for the sake of the Gospel. Our loss of heart is often the result of suffering from the want of, or the loss of, or being denied worldly things!

In his Epistle to the Romans, Paul says, "For I consider the sufferings of this present time not worth comparing with the glory that is to be revealed to us." (Rom. 8:18) People fight like fury to avoid decay and death, right? Look at what we go through just to look presentable each day. The older you get the greater the challenge! And we still look old...and sometimes silly!

Let's keep this in front of us:

If then you have been raised with Christ, seek the things that are above, where Christ is seated at the right hand of God. Set your minds (your thinking) on things that are above, not on things that are on earth. For you have died, and your life (everything you will be in eternity) is hidden with Christ in God. When Christ who is your life appears, then you will appear with him in glory. (Col. 3:1-4)

The Holy Spirit has Paul set forth this powerful and uplifting truth:

But our citizenship is in heaven, and from it we await a Savior, the Lord Jesus Christ (await His return), who will transform our lowly body to be like his glorious body, by the power that enables him even to subject all things to himself. (Phil. 4:20, 21)

Maybe, sometimes, we get too caught up in this world, hoping and praying that things will get better and we can have a happy, comfortable life here. All that is dancing the dipsy-doodle. By now, you know the words of Jesus as well as any pastor:

“...many will fall away...And because lawlessness will be increased, the love of many will grow cold. But the one who endures to the end will be saved. And the gospel of the kingdom will be proclaimed throughout the whole world as a testimony to all nations (as it has been), and then the end will come (not the guarantee that all, or even that many, will believe as we come to the end).” (Matt, 24:10, 12-14)

With that in mind, I recalled the words of a child who wrote this in a letter to God. “Dear God, what is it like when you die? Nobody will tell me. I just want to know. I don’t want to do it.” And every now and then I recall the words of the 19th century Presbyterian theologian, Charles Hodge, “It is important that when we come to die we have nothing to do but to die.”

Our flesh will have its moments of trembling at the reality of death, and this is intensified if our hopes and dreams are focused on this world. But, if we are dancing with everything Christ has won for us, as our text says, “this light momentary affliction is preparing for us an eternal weight of glory beyond all comparison.” It is important that when we come to die we have the love of God in Christ right in front of us! Every day!

Amen.

Pastor Bill Abbott