

Getting the Most Out of Life

(2 Corinthians 4:13-18)

God designed our world to be made up of threes. We have three dimensions + time: length, width, and height. Atoms are made up of protons, neutrons, and electrons. The human ear has three different sections; the outer ear, middle ear, and the inner ear. Also, God is a triunity, or trinity, in that He is Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. Plus, we are created in His image as a trinity. Therefore, as human beings, we are a trichotomy - we have three parts. What are they (1 Thessalonians 5:23b)?

The spirit and soul (PSYCHE, soo-kay,' or mind) cannot be separated, but they can be differentiated. There are also three parts in time: past, present, and future. If you live in the past, you will go nowhere in the present. If you live exclusively in the present, you will lose what is eternal. Therefore, to get the most out of life, live in the present with eternity in mind. To do this you must first ...

Be emphatic (4:13-14).

"Emphatic" means bold or forceful. Paul's deep desire for converts did not cause him to compromise the Gospel. He writes, *we have the same spirit of faith according to what has been written* (4:13a). Paul is emphatically saying he and his associates believe the same thing as *what has been written* in the Bible. Then, quoting Psalm 116:10, he writes, *"I believed, and so I spoke"* (4:13b). That is Paul's response to those who question his authority, as well as his bold, forceful preaching and teaching.

Like the psalmist, Paul and his associates have complete faith in the written Word of God. They *believe* and *speak* the pure Gospel (4:13c). What has Paul previously written to the believers at Corinth in 1 Corinthians 9:16c?

It is impossible to truly believe the Gospel and have no desire to share it. True faith in God's Word sparks a fire of boldness in our hearts.

One great example of this is Martin Luther, who was an Augustinian monk, a German priest, and a seminary professor. He successfully defied the Roman Catholic Church that had ruled the world for a thousand years. In 1521, by command of the pope, Martin Luther stood trial for his life before a Diet (an assembly of nobility and clergy) at Worms, Germany. He was commanded to recant all of his writings, which included salvation by grace through faith alone.

Luther's writings also contained his claim that forgiveness of sin cannot be purchased with money, as the Roman church taught could be done through indulgences. He also taught the Bible, not the pope, is the only source of divine authority. He defiantly answers the Diet's demand to recant, facing certain death:

" Unless I can be instructed and convinced with evidence from the Holy Scriptures or with open, clear, and distinct grounds and reasoning-and my conscience is captive to the Word of God-then I cannot and will not recant, because it is neither safe nor wise to act against conscience. Here I stand. I can do no other. God help me! Amen." (James M. Keittelson, *Luther the Reformer*, page 161).

Because of his emphatic faith in the Word of God, Martin Luther did more to end the Dark Ages than anyone else. His boldness changed the world, and it has never been the same.

If you truly believe the Bible, you will not recant or retreat from its teachings. Many denominations today are distancing themselves from the truth of God's Word because they want to fit in with a deteriorating culture. Peter tells us all people are like grass and their beauty like a flower in the field. The grass withers, and the flower wilts and falls (1 Pet. 1:24). Then, what does he write in 1 Peter 1:25a?

Next, Paul gives the reason for his boldness even in the face of death. He writes, *knowing that he who raised the Lord Jesus will raise us also with Jesus and bring us with you into his presence* (4:14). As we discovered in the last lesson, people tried to kill Paul because of his preaching. However, he is not frightened by death, because he knows what promise in Psalm 23:4a-b?

In the Bible, death for a believer is compared to a *shadow*. A shadow cannot hurt you. The *shadow* of a knife will not cut you. The *shadow* of a moving car cannot hurt you. Death has no harm for a child of God. Also, there must be light to produce a *shadow*. When I die, I *will walk through the valley of the shadow of death* into the light of God's glorious presence. That's because *he who raised the Lord Jesus will raise me* and take me there (4:14).

To get the most out of life, **be emphatic** and ...

Be evangelistic (4:15-16).

Concerning all his suffering and problems, Paul writes: *For it is all for your sake* (4:15a). Paul suffered for the sake of the Corinthians and for you and me as well. Many bold believers have suffered and died so we could have God's pure Word to study, proclaim, and share.

Paul adds that his suffering was *so that as grace extends to more and more people it may increase thanksgiving, to the glory of God* (4:15b). That means as God's *grace*, as found in the Gospel, reaches *more and more people*, He will receive more and more *glory*. God's plan is to use common, replaceable *jars of clay* (4:7) like you and me to win more and more people to Christ. God is very pleased when we do everything, we can to win others. How does Daniel 12:3 express this truth?

If you want to shine like stars in heaven, *turn many to righteousness*, which means be evangelistic. Paul continues, *So we do not lose heart. Though our outer self is wasting away, our inner self is being renewed day by day* (4:16b-c). This means our bodies are dying a little each day, but our spirits are *being renewed* every day. Every day I get a little older, a little weaker, and have more wrinkles. However, my *inner self* - my spirit - *is being renewed* every day. But how does God renew our spirits? How does Colossians 3:10 answer that question?

The daily renewing of our *inner self*, or spirit, is the result of *knowledge*. *Knowledge* renews both our spirits and our minds. This renewing continues as our personal knowledge of Jesus Christ grows through studying the Bible and listening to the teaching and preaching of God's Word.

To get the most out of life, **be emphatic, be evangelistic**, and ...

Be eternity-minded (4:17-18).

Paul explains it like this: *For this light momentary affliction is preparing for us an eternal weight of glory beyond all comparison* (4:17). As we have seen several times, the word translated *affliction* (THLIPSIS, thlip'-sis) can also be translated "tribulation." Paul describes all his tremendous suffering with two words. First is *light*. The Greek word translated light (ELAPHROS, el-af-ros') means "easy to bear." This word is found only one other time in the Greek New Testament. It comes from the lips of our Lord, who makes what promise in Matthew 11:30?

The second word Paul uses to describe his affliction is *momentary*. Compared to eternity, how long is this life? Not even a nanosecond! How long is a nanosecond? One billionth of a second. That's why Paul writes that our future *glory* is *beyond all comparison*.

Paul could endure anything because he was eternity minded. He looked *not to the things that are seen but to the things that are unseen* (4:18a). In other words, Paul is not focusing on his troubles that are seen now, but on things that cannot be seen in this life. That's what faith is all about. How does Hebrews 11:1 describe faith?

Next, Paul states the reason we should be eternity-minded: *For the things that are seen are transient, but the things that are un- seen are eternal* (4:18b). The physical things we see now appear to be permanent. However, they are *transient*, or "temporal," which means passing away. To be eternity-minded, we must focus on *the things that are unseen*. Being eternity-minded requires obeying what command in Colossians 3:2?

To get the most out of life, **be emphatic, be evangelistic, and be eternity-minded.**