

INTRODUCTION.

- A. Scripture text: **2Corinthians 4:7-12**.
But we have this treasure in earthen vessels, that the surpassing greatness of the power may be of God and not from ourselves; **8** *we are* afflicted in every way, but not crushed; perplexed, but not despairing; **9** persecuted, but not forsaken; struck down, but not destroyed; **10** always carrying about in the body the dying of Jesus, that the life of Jesus also may be manifested in our body. **11** For we who live are constantly being delivered over to death for Jesus' sake, that the life of Jesus also may be manifested in our mortal flesh. **12** So death works in us, but life in you.
- B. There are some dangers in serving. But there are also some great rewards!
- C. First, we look at some of the misconceptions and problems that servants encounter.
- D. Then, we look at the wonderful influence of a servant in today's sin-sick world.

I. THE PERILS OF SERVING.

- A. Serving is hard work; there is nothing easy about it. Serving is a learned response as we become more like X.
- B. Three misconceptions about servants:
- Servants have special powers.**
Some might think those who serve well possess some mystical, divine unction or angelic "mantle" that causes them to have heaven-sent power. NOT! Servants are filled with weaknesses and are potential failures!
THE POINT: Servants must learn to trust in God (2Cor. 13:5).
Test yourselves to see if you are in the faith; examine yourselves! Or do you not recognize this about yourselves, that Jesus Christ is in you-- unless indeed you fail the test?
 - Servants don't have any problems.**
Some think those who serve do so because they don't have to deal with the everyday problems that the rest of us seem to have. NOT! Servants live with shortcomings just like everyone else.
 - Servants will be afflicted... treated with hostility.
 - Servants will be perplexed... confused or "at a loss."
 - Servants will be persecuted... painfully attacked.
 - Servants will be struck down... thrown aside and rejected.THE POINT: Servants will face problems in their serving (2Cor. 4:8-9).
we are afflicted in every way, but not crushed; perplexed, but not despairing; 9 persecuted, but not forsaken; struck down, but not destroyed;
 - Servants don't have to face temptation.**
Some might think those who are good servants don't struggle with the temptations of sin like other Xians. NOT! The true servant is always vulnerable and transparent. He/she deals with temptation just like others.
THE POINT: Servants are tempted to do wrong while serving (2Cor. 4:10-11).
always carrying about in the body the dying of Jesus, that the life of Jesus also may be manifested in our body. 11 For we who live are constantly being delivered over to death for Jesus' sake, that the life of Jesus also may be manifested in our mortal flesh.
- C. Every Xian must wrestle with three important truths about serving:
- No servant is completely safe.**
Those who sacrifice and give are increasingly vulnerable. You will be ripped off, cheated, used, and unappreciated. Get mentally ready now... because it will happen.
 - Most deeds will be initially unrewarded!**
If you are the type who needs a lot of strokes from people, who must be appreciated before you can continue for very long, you had better forget about being a servant. The rewards are rare. Get ready mentally now... because it might, but probably won't happen.

3. Your motives must be continually and honestly searched.

Before accepting and recognition or gifts of gratitude, probe into your reason for serving. Are serving to promote self or X? Get ready mentally to give God all the glory in what you do.

II. **THE INFLUENCE OF A SERVANT.**

A. We live in a very sinful, selfish world. It can be described in 3 words; difficult, depraved, and deceived (2Tim. 3:1-7; 8-9,13).

(2Tim 3:1-9) But realize this, that in the last days difficult times will come. **2** For men will be lovers of self, lovers of money, boastful, arrogant, revilers, disobedient to parents, ungrateful, unholy, **3** unloving, irreconcilable, malicious gossips, without self-control, brutal, haters of good, **4** treacherous, reckless, conceited, lovers of pleasure rather than lovers of God; **5** holding to a form of godliness, although they have denied its power; and avoid such men as these. **6** For among them are those who enter into households and captivate weak women weighed down with sins, led on by various impulses, **7** always learning and never able to come to the knowledge of the truth.

(2Tim 3:8-9,13) And just as Jannes and Jambres opposed Moses, so these *men* also oppose the truth, men of depraved mind, rejected as regards the faith. **9** But they will not make further progress; for their folly will be obvious to all, as also that of those *two* came to be... **13** But evil men and impostors will proceed *from bad* to worse, deceiving and being deceived.

B. Servants of X will always be in the minority in the world. We may wonder if our presence will do any good in our society. Jesus says, "Yes!" Xians are salt and light.

C. In Mt. 5:13-16, Jesus says that Xians are to be SALT and LIGHT. A society characterized by difficulties, depravity and deception will deteriorate and self-destruct without salt and light.

"You are the salt of the earth; but if the salt has become tasteless, how will it be made salty *again*? It is good for nothing anymore, except to be thrown out and trampled under foot by men. **14** "You are the light of the world. A city set on a hill cannot be hidden. **15** "Nor do *men* light a lamp, and put it under the peck-measure, but on the lampstand; and it gives light to all who are in the house. **16** "Let your light shine before men in such a way that they may see your good works, and glorify your Father who is in heaven.

D. "You are THE SALT OF THE EARTH."

1. Our very presence halts corruption. We become a "healing agent. A creator of thirst; adding flavor/taste to everything we touch.

2. Salt is to be sprinkled, not poured.

Xians are to spread out in the world rather than always staying close together. Too much salt in one place ruins food!

3. Salt adds flavor... but it's obscure.

No one ever says, "This is good salt." But hopefully one will say, "This is tasty food." Servants add zest to life, a flavor impossible without them.

4. Salt is unlike any other seasoning.

It can't be duplicated, and it must be applied before it is useful. If it is left in the shaker, it doesn't help anyone. Get out of yourself and allow X to help you serve/salt the earth.

E. "You are the LIGHT OF THE WORLD."

1. Darkness cannot remain when a light is present. It makes no difference how thick the darkness is, light overcomes darkness. Xians pose a weird phenomenon to those in darkness--they cannot figure us out.

2. Light is silent.

No noise, no big splashes, no banners--light simply shines. It shines and illuminates everything.

3. Light gives direction.

No words, no sermons. Jesus says that others "see" our actions--nothing is said of their hearing.

4. Light attracts attention.

You don't have to ask people to look at you when you turn a light on in a dark room. It happens automatically. Don't attempt to show off how bright your light is, just shine!

CONCLUSION AND INVITATION.

- A. Remember, salt must not lose its saltiness, and a light must not be hidden. Three things to remember amidst the perils and influence of serving others.
 - 1. “I am **different**.”
The greatest tragedy of Xianity is when Xians become more like the world than like X. Servants are to be different.
 - 2. “I am **responsible**.”
I must be sure that my salt doesn’t lose its bite, and my light continues to shine. Servants are to be more than talk--they must season, and illuminate.
 - 3. “I am **influential**.”
Don’t kid, yourself--you march to the drum beat of X, and that gives you an influence in society. You are influencing others even when not, trying to act “religious.”
- B. Do you want a throne or a towel?
- C. Plan of salvation for non-Xians, erring Xians.