

**Intro:** I remember when I first joined a church staff over 30 years ago...Pastor Handed me a card...Go visit this family I had almost 8 years of training...and I was terrified! Heart Pound...Palms Sweat...Imagine the worst! After 30 years...I still get nervous sometimes...Not as badly for sure...but it happens (Doubt, Fear, Worry....) Look at this Graphic!

Many of us are very hesitant to have a spiritual conversation with someone...In fact, many don't!  
That responsibility: To Share Faith and Forgiveness is what Paul is talking about in our Passage of Scripture this morning  
2 Cor 2:12-3:4 Pg 817

Finding God's Strength In Our Weakness  
Strength To Share Faith and Forgiveness With Others

**1. Everyone Struggles To Share God's Grace and Forgiveness With Others!** 2:12-13

This will probably surprise you when Paul admits it...but he is very transparent and says...hey...I struggle too!  
Many...if not most people...struggle with the idea of sharing faith and forgiveness with others....HEART POUNDS  
*3 Struggles Paul Identifies*

- Internal Struggle: Peace of mind Vs 11-13 (Door Open) (No Peace) (Needed a Partner!) Jesus 2X2
- Temptation Struggle: Peddle for profit: Lit = Make it about me, not you! My advantage Vs 17
- Confidence Struggle: Imagine! Paul...Didn't feel adequate! 3:4-5
  - I am not competent: Lit = *to be able, sufficient, equipped or qualified!*  
"I don't have what it takes" OF COURSE NOT!!!

Applic: Paul understood, it really wasn't about him at all. It was all about God!

Promise of Jesus Luke 12:11-12 *do not worry about... what you will say, for the Holy Spirit will teach you at that time what you should say."*

**2. God Uses Our Faithfulness To Share Regardless of the Response.** 2:14-16

This is a VERY difficult passage to read once you understand what Paul is saying.

- Anytime we share it is a victory! Vs 14 "Through US spreads everywhere the fragrance"
  - Our victory is defined by our FAITHFULNESS....NOT the RESPONSE VS 15: We are To God the aroma of Christ!
  - The response varies...but God's purposes remain the same
- Illus: The Roman Triumph: Familiar to any Roman Citizen: Roman Empire spread on the boots of it's soldiers!  
When a Roman General 1. won a complete victory on foreign soil, 2. Spread Empire, 3. 5000 enemy killed  
Then he was entitled to the Triumph! Victory parade! "Tickertape" In NYC, Superbowl in Philly  
Crowd came out...Flowers, Spectacle, Incense, Golden Chariot for General. Soldiers & Captives Marched  
~To Soldiers: A Victory Parade: Family, Friends, Entire City turned out to celebrate...Holiday Games!  
~To Captives: A Funeral procession They were on display, End of Parade Circus: Their death

Paul is telling us: Our Job, our Responsibility, Our Call from God is to share...

And the RESPONSE of the individual that hears is the determination of the outcome

>Hear about the cross of Jesus...as we spread the message of love, grace and forgiveness: Accept: Life and Victory

>Hear about the cross of Jesus...as we spread the message of love, grace and forgiveness: Reject: Death and Defeat

Either way...God uses our Faithfulness

And, just to be clear Paul says: We don't water down ANYTHING! Vs 17: We don't "*peddle the Gospel*"

Word there is used to describe the wine merchants in the city that watered down their wares...

Paul says: Listen:

- We don't minimize the cost
- We don't water down the message
- We don't say what you want to hear
- We don't preach an "easy" whatever you want to believe kind of message!
- We preach the Cross of Jesus...The power of God to those that believe...a message of foolishness to those that don't

**3. Confidence We Have To Share Comes From God.** 3:4-6

Though we all share the same struggle, we can have the same confidence Paul had!

- 4 Comes through Jesus: Luke 12:11-12
- 5 Competence comes from God: Our ability comes from God! He calls, He Equips, He Empowers
- 6 He has made us competent: He has made us sufficient: God has used all kinds of things: Donkey!  
>How would you ever be so arrogant as to believe YOU are able to bring faith! (I can bring eternal life!!!!)  
>Reverse: How would you ever be so faithless as to believe God can't use YOU! (Uses anyone!!!!)  
>1 Cor 1:26-29: If THAT is what it takes..then I'm qualified!

Applic: Here is what I know:

The times I think I have done a great job...quite often NOTHING comes from it

The times I think I have done an awful job...God works in amazing ways (NOT ABOUT ME!)

#### 4. When We Share Faith and Forgiveness We See Amazing Results.

3:1-3

- Vs 1: Are you REALLY asking me for a letter of reference?  
>Don't need a letter of reference: YOU are our letter of reference!  
>Common in that time in church history for traveling missionaries, evangelists to have a letter, often fm Jerusalem  
>We see that a couple of times in Acts, and again a few places in Paul's letters  
>Paul is saying...Do you REALLY want me to bring a letter verifying my ministry among you from someone else?
- Vs 2: I already have a letter It is YOU!!!  
>My letter is not on paper..it is written on hearts  
>My letter is not with ink...it is with the spirit of God  
>My letter is not held in a hand and read by just a few...It is out there for everyone to see!
- Vs 3: My verification and authentication is transformed lives...YOURS!  
>That is what I have to offer as "proof" of my ministry!

**Applic:** You see, Paul is living out right before our eyes the struggle we all have with sharing faith and forgiveness  
He wasn't immune. He struggled too...just like we do!

1. He struggled within
2. And he struggled with others believing him! Even after he led them to Christ, Founded the Church, taught them to walk with Jesus, Helped them through all kinds of struggles...and problems ... and issues...Still doubted!
3. But, he KNEW it was worth it, because...when someone responded...lives were changed and transformed!

**CONCL:** Struggling to Find God's Strength To Share Faith And Forgiveness..  
That isn't new to you and I...it is as old as the NT itself  
But, When we lean on God...we can find the same strength that Paul did

Notice that everything Paul wrote so far today...Grew out of 2:4 *"I wrote you to let you know the depth of my love for you!"*  
When you love someone...you share God's love and forgiveness

**Penn and Teller: Magician:**

"I've always said that I don't respect people who don't proselytize. I don't respect that at all. If you believe that there's a heaven and a hell, and people could be going to hell or not getting eternal life, and you think that it's not really worth telling them this because it would make it socially awkward—and atheists who think people shouldn't proselytize and who say just leave me alone and keep your religion to yourself—how much do you have to hate somebody to *not* proselytize? How much do you have to hate somebody to believe everlasting life is possible and not tell them that? "I mean, if I believed, beyond the shadow of a doubt, that a truck was coming at you, and you didn't believe that truck was bearing down on you, there is a certain point where I tackle you. And this is *more* important than that."

Today, I want to Challenge you to start thinking about Who You can share faith and forgiveness with this Easter!

4 or 5 weeks away...

Sheet...Place for names on front

Guidelines on Back

As you look at the sheet...

1. Who do I love that doesn't know Jesus
2. Who do I know that NEEDS Faith and Forgiveness  
~ Not just "an addition" to their life  
~But a totally transformed life
3. Who do I know that needs Jesus...Not need church...
4. My Deal with you...If you will
  - a. Invite them
  - b. Pray them in
  - c. Bring them and be with them
  - d. I will bring a message that is as clear, simple and understandable as possible on Easter Sunday
5. Together we will pray for God to work in their life

As we sing this morning...remain seated...Prayerfully Fill out the sheet...and if you want..come to Altar and pray for them

That Card...was for Richard and Renee Peoples: Just out of Navy, our age, two little boys  
Became a SS teacher, Church Leaders, Deacon, Went to Seminary Became a Pastor