

Sunday Sermon: June 10, 2018

Sermon Text: 2 Corinthians 4:13-18

Sermon Theme: This is for your benefit

1. To build you up in faith
2. To build you up to speak

<sup>13</sup> It is written: “I believed; therefore I have spoken.” With that same spirit of faith we also believe and therefore speak, <sup>14</sup> because we know that the one who raised the Lord Jesus from the dead will also raise us with Jesus and present us with you in his presence. <sup>15</sup> All this is for your benefit, so that the grace that is reaching more and more people may cause thanksgiving to overflow to the glory of God.

<sup>16</sup> Therefore we do not lose heart. Though outwardly we are wasting away, yet inwardly we are being renewed day by day. <sup>17</sup> For our light and momentary troubles are achieving for us an eternal glory that far outweighs them all. <sup>18</sup> So we fix our eyes not on what is seen, but on what is unseen. For what is seen is temporary, but what is unseen is eternal.

Many decisions we make in life come down to a simple question, “How will this benefit me?” This is true for the big questions as well as the small ones. As a teenager we had to decide which summer job to apply for and then to take. We had to pick out colleges based on the same question. When we graduated and looked for a job, that question was right in the front of our minds.

*How will this benefit me?* can be a very practical question. But what happens if we wouldn't make decisions that benefit us? What if all the decisions we made were made to benefit someone else? How would you feel after making that decision? How would your thoughts or actions be different?

In our lessons for today, we see God doing things differently than the way that we do. He doesn't do things that benefit him, he does them to benefit us. As we look at our sermon text from 2 Corinthians we will see that all God did from creation to judgment is for our benefit to build us up in our faith and to build us up to share that faith with others.

The Corinthian congregation could be considered a “normal” congregation. They had things that Paul praised them for doing and they had things that he rebuked them for. There were times that Paul had to rebuke them with words they did not want to hear and other times when he praised them for doing what was God-pleasing.

In everything, Christ was the center of this congregation and of Paul's preaching and teaching. He was always bringing the people back to their Savior as the reason for their salvation and their motivation for Christian living.

Our sermon text for this morning is an example of this focus on Christ. 2 Corinthians 4 is the jars of clay chapter of the Bible. Paul reminds us that faith in Jesus is a great gift of the Lord, one that we carry around in these imperfect bodies, these jars of clay. After showing us what Jesus has done for us, he follows it up with a call to action. Our gift of faith is one that we are to use and to share with others.

Paul reminds us that all this God has done through Christ, he has done for our benefit.

**<sup>13</sup> It is written: “I believed; therefore I have spoken.” With that same spirit of faith we also believe and therefore speak, <sup>14</sup> because we know that the one who raised the Lord Jesus from the dead will also raise us with Jesus and present us with you in his presence. <sup>15</sup> All this is for your benefit, so that the grace that is reaching more and more people may cause thanksgiving to overflow to the glory of God.**

Was there ever a time that God blessed you even though you don't deserve it? Don't think too hard because the answer is yes. If God were a god like other gods, we would never be able to expect anything from him. This is because we're sinners, we don't meet God's standard of goodness or perfection. We should not expect that he would do anything for us.

Yet, people are tempted to think that we deserve things from other people, because of who we are. We selfishly think that what other people should do things for us that benefit us. Many times we don't care if this inconveniences someone else, or hurts them. We want what we want when we want it.

The same is true when we think about God. We think that God should bless us because of who we are. We think that God should reward us for being us. This is made clear in studies that have been done with any

group of people, but especially those who don't even identify themselves as religious. Even these people think that if there is a god, he will reward them for their life and give them life after death.

Because of sin, we are so far away from deserving anything from a pure, holy and perfect God. Yet, in our reading, we still hear something comforting, **All this**, that God does, **is for your benefit**.

Nowhere is this clearer than in our first reading. God had created the world to benefit people. He had created Eve to benefit Adam and had brought them together so that they could have a loving household. He had given them a beautiful garden of perfection to live in. We could go on, but who did all this benefit? It benefitted Adam and Eve.

They showed their thanks in a bad way. They sinned. They questioned God's goodness and love and ate from the tree. In their shame, they hid from God now realizing that they were sinful.

Notice what God did after that. God comes to find them when they are hiding. He calls out to them to bring them to repentance. He continues to lead them to repentance even though they throw excuse after excuse at him. Finally, he promises them a Savior from sin and death. Who does this benefit? It certainly benefitted Adam and Eve not God.

When God says all this is for your benefit, he is talking about his plan of salvation from the first promise in Genesis 3:15 to the completion of Judgment Day when he will bring all those who believe to himself. All that Jesus did for us, all that the Holy Spirit continues to do to bring us to faith and keep us in that faith, is for our benefit that we might be built up in faith and believe.

Are we really any different from Adam and Eve? Not really. Adam and Eve were living their lives of faith, but they were not looking out for temptation. They were not ready when that temptation came. Isn't the same true for us? We can be living our life of faith, but we begin to take God's Word for granted. Maybe we aren't guarding our words as well as we should. Maybe we allow jealousy to creep into our minds and darken our thoughts towards another person. Maybe we listened to that bit of gossip instead of turning it away before it was said. Maybe we didn't guard against angry thoughts like we should. All too quickly the devil tempts us to place ourself before God and to do what God says is not right to do. We eat of the sinful fruit of lust, anger, jealousy, gossip, vanity or any of the others sins and find ourselves walking in our own way and not God's way.

What do we do when we realize we have eaten of this sinful fruit? Don't we often do what Adam and Eve did? We try to hide the sin from God thinking maybe he won't see. We try to rationalize our sin, thinking the other person made me do it. We try to justify it thinking the other person deserved it for what they did to me. We do the opposite of what benefits us when we run from God and hide.

But God doesn't let us hide from him. He reminds us that a sin is a sin. We cannot rationalize or justify, a sin is a sin whether we have an excuse for it or not. God calls us to repent of any and all of our sins.

Here is where we see the blessing of God. God forgave Adam and Eve and promised them a Savior. He has fulfilled that promise to Adam and Eve that brings forgiveness to us and benefits us eternally. Jesus has suffered and died that our sins would be washed away. In the suffering and death of our Savior, he has given to us the gifts of faith, forgiveness, life and salvation. These are great gifts to us because through this Savior, our faith is strengthened and we are assured that because Jesus is risen from dead, we will also rise. All that God has done for us, he has done to bring us to faith and keep us in that faith. He has called out of the darkness of sin. He has given us the Holy Spirit who works through the Gospel to build in us this saving faith. He calls us to repentance when we sin to remind us of his great love and mercy that is shown, not in punishment when we sin, but in forgiveness.

All this God has done to benefit us that we might have a faith which is overflowing with joy and thanksgiving. God does this to benefit us so that we can benefit others,

Paul begins our text by saying, **"I believed, therefore I have spoken. With that same spirit of faith we also believe and therefore speak,"** Paul had preached and taught that the people would be built up in faith, so that they in turn would also have the same spirit and spread the Gospel themselves. Paul shows us the blessings and benefits that come when we preach the Gospel. **the grace that is reaching more and more people may cause thanksgiving to overflow to the glory of God.** By the Holy Spirit, people will hear and believe in Jesus.

We benefit from the Gospel being shared with us through pastors and teachers who faithfully and tirelessly work with God's Word to bring it to us in its truth. The Holy Spirit builds us up in faith through this Gospel. Others benefit when we individually and collectively share the Gospel with them.

When we invite our neighbors, friends, or even family members to come to church to experience the love of Jesus that we have experienced, this is a benefit to them to hear the amazing news of a Savior who loves them enough to save them.

Others may benefit when we are missionaries in our neighborhood or workplace, when we are reaching out as missionaries to the neighborhood or city we live in, when we aid in paying for a missionary to go around the world to share the message of Jesus, or even when we participate in helping to pay for the next generation of pastors and teachers to be educated to take the Word out on our behalf.

We benefit from all that our Savior has done for us. All that God has done from Creation to Judgment Day is so that we will live with him forever in heaven through Jesus. While we're here on earth, God tells us to be a benefit to others that the grace of God might reach their ears as well and that they too might rejoice in the news of the Savior.

May God grow in us a faith which benefits from Jesus, that is ready and willing to be a benefit to others.