

WHY GOD USED THE APOSTLE PAUL?

TEXT: II CORINTHIANS 4:16-18

INTRODUCTION:

1. Many years ago, I read a little book written by evangelist R. A. Torrey, entitled, *Why God Used D. L. Moody*. Torrey was probably Moody's closest associate and friend, and a great evangelist in his own right.
2. It is a great book and I highly recommend it. Dr. Torrey talks about Moody's prayer life, his love for the Bible, his humility, his freedom from the love of money and covetousness, and his consuming passion for soulwinning.
3. Throughout the book, Dr. Torrey stresses that D. L. Moody was a man who was definitely endowed with power from on high.
4. Moody was certainly one of the greatest preachers of all times, but there was another preacher far greater – and that was the apostle Paul.
5. Paul's conversion on the road to Damascus is one of the most important events in the history of mankind (Acts 9).
6. Paul wrote more than half of the New Testament. He dominates more than half of the book of Acts.
7. He started churches all over the Roman Empire. The extent of his service, and the magnitude of his sufferings are without parallel in the history of Christianity.
8. In I Corinthians 11:1, Paul said, "Be ye followers of me, even as I also am of Christ."
9. And then in Philippians 3:17, Paul wrote, "Brethren, be followers together of me, and mark them which walk so as ye have us for an ensample."
10. Paul wrote to the church at Thessalonica, "And ye became followers of us, and of the Lord, having received the word in much affliction, with joy of the Holy Ghost. So that ye were ensamples to all that believe in Macedonia and Achaia" (I Thess. 1:6, 7).
11. We cannot go wrong if we follow the example of the great apostle Paul. My message this morning is entitled, "Why God Used the Apostle Paul."

I. PAUL ALWAYS KEPT HIS EYES ON ETERNAL THINGS (II COR. 4:16-18).

1. The apostle Paul lived in the light of eternity. As one preacher put it, "He evaluated everything by eternity's yardstick."

2. Today too many Christians are caught up in pop culture and rock music and Hollywood and all of this worldly nonsense.
3. Some worldly preachers get in the pulpit and talk about all of the movies and TV shows they watch. Can you imagine the apostle Paul doing that?
4. Paul said, “While we look not at the things which are seen, but at the things which are not seen: for the things which are seen are temporal...” (II Cor. 4:18).
5. Or, “Set your affection on things above, not on things on the earth” (Col. 3:2).
6. What about this obsession some people have with their appearance? I think it is important for Christians to take care of themselves but some people over-do it. Our bodies are important, but Paul said, “Bodily exercise profiteth little: but godliness is profitable unto all things” (I Timothy 4:8).
7. The Bible says, “the inward man” is far more important than the “outward man” (II Cor. 4:16).
8. Our bodies are important but they are perishing and passing. Like an old tent, it will eventually be taken down (II Cor. 5:1).
9. But someday we will have a brand new resurrection body – “a house not made with hands, eternal in the heavens” (II Cor. 5:1, 2).
10. While we walk through life, our afflictions often seem heavy. Certainly Paul’s afflictions were heavy – he was whipped, beaten, stoned, imprisoned, shipwrecked, robbed, and betrayed by false brethren.
11. But from the perspective of eternity, Paul could say that these sufferings and afflictions were “light” (II Cor. 4:17).
12. When we go through a trial it seems like a long time but God says it is only “for a moment” (4:17). Because in the light of eternity it is! What is a day or a year compared to eternity?
13. God is working in us and through us “a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory” (4:17b). What an unusual _expression!
14. The glory that awaits us in heaven is beyond our human comprehension. It staggers the imagination.
15. Note the word “eternal” (4:17, 18; 5:1). Paul always kept his eyes on things eternal.
16. I like that old song, “Hold to God’s Unchanging Hand.”
“Hold to God's unchanging hand
Build you hopes on things eternal
Hold to God's unchanging hand.”
17. I am using the great apostle Paul as our example this morning, but what about Abraham? Hebrews 11:10 says “he looked for a city which hath foundations, whose builder and maker is God.”

18. What about Moses? He refused to be called the son of Pharaoh's daughter. He chose to suffer affliction with the people of God, rather than enjoy the pleasures of sin for a season.
19. Moses had his eyes on eternal things (Hebrews 11:24-27).
20. Consider what our Lord said in Matthew 10:28. "And fear not them which kill the body, but are not able to kill the soul: but rather fear him which is able to destroy both soul and body in hell"
21. This body is temporary. Some day, God will give us a new body. But the soul is far more important than the body. People are so worried about this life but they give very little thought to eternity.
22. When I am around unsaved people I expect to hear a lot of small talk about worldly things: their homes, their furniture, shopping, clothing styles, fashions and jewelry, new hairdos, the latest TV show, sports, trivia, and so on.
23. But it grieves me when I am around people that claim to be born-again Christians and that is all they talk about! (Cf. II Cor. 4:18).
24. There are some so-called Christians who can tell you what is on TV tonight and who know all the baseball statistics and the Dow Jones average (etc.) but know precious little about the Bible!
25. And what about stewardship? People who are focused on eternal things want to invest their money in eternal things – they want God's church to advance and they want to see souls saved.
26. Sometimes it is difficult witnessing to religious people. Their priest or rabbi wears fancy costumes and performs elaborate rituals. Their church buildings or synagogues are very impressive. But we are looking at "things which are not seen" – things which "are eternal" (4:18).
27. Remember when our Lord's disciples showed Him the beautiful temple? He told them it would soon be thrown down (Matt. 24:1, 2).

II. PAUL WAS READY TO BE WITH THE LORD AT ANY MOMENT (II COR. 5:6-8).

1. So many people – even (especially?) religious people – are confused about where they will go when they leave this world. Paul was not confused (5:6-8).
2. Roman Catholics think they may have to go to some imaginary, make-believe fantasy world called "purgatory."
3. Seventh-Day Adventists teach a doctrine they call "soul sleep." The Bible uses sleep as a euphemism for death. The body is said to be "sleeping" but never the soul (II Cor. 5:8b).

4. The JW's teach something very similar to the SDA. They insist that hell is the grave.
5. Hindus believe they will be reincarnated and come back and try again.
6. Fanatical Muslims believe that if they blow up some innocent people they will go to paradise and be greeted by 72 virgins.
7. Humanists and atheists do not believe in an afterlife.
8. But the Christian who believes the Bible knows what happens when we leave this world. For the Christian, it is "absent from the body, and...present with the Lord" (II Cor. 5:8).
9. D. L. Moody used to say, "Some day you will pick up a paper and will read of D.L. Moody's death; don't believe a word of it, for I shall be more alive than I am right now."
10. When Moody died, his son-in-law, A. P. Fitt, sent out a telegram, which read: "Mr. Moody had a triumphant entry into Heaven at noon. As early as 8:00 A.M., he said: 'Earth is receding and Heaven is opening. God is calling me.'"

III. PAUL WAS READY TO GIVE AN ACCOUNT TO GOD (II COR. 5:9-11).

1. Each and every person will stand before God some day and give an account (5:9-11; cf. Romans 14:10, 12).
2. The unsaved will appear at God's great white throne judgment (Rev. 20:11-15).
3. But those of us who have trusted Christ must also give an account to God. Paul said, "For we must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ..." (II Cor. 5:10).
4. At this solemn judgment, we shall see ourselves the way God sees us! All of our religious pretense will be stripped away.
5. Remember: the Bible teaches we are saved by grace, but will be rewarded on the basis of works – "according to that he hath done" (II Cor. 5:10).
6. Some Christians think they are doing a wonderful work for God. But at the judgment seat of Christ they will discover that God sees what they have done as nothing but "wood, hay, and stubble" (cf. I Cor. 3:12-15).
7. We hear very little preaching on this serious subject. Many Christians think it will be all fun and games (like VBS or a SS picnic).
8. But notice the language used – "he shall suffer loss" (I Cor. 3:15); "Knowing therefore the terror of the Lord" (II Cor. 5:11).

9. Second John 8 says, “Look to yourselves, that we lose not those things which we have wrought, but that we receive a full reward.”
10. We are going to be held accountable for what we have done with our time and our talents and our treasure.
11. Have you considered the phrase, “the terror of the Lord” (5:10)? *Vine’s Expository Dictionary* says this means, “a reverential fear of God as a controlling motive of life...a wholesome dread of displeasing” God.
12. The apostle Paul had this reverential fear of God. Do you?
13. The apostle Paul had this wholesome dread of displeasing God. Do you?

CONCLUSION:

1. Dr. Maurice Rawlings was a highly credentialed cardiologist and a self-described atheist – until he realized that there really is an afterlife.
2. Dr. Rawlings worked at the Diagnostic Center in Chattanooga, Tennessee. Back in 1978, he wrote an interesting book entitled, *Beyond Death's Door*.
3. Dr. Rawlings was an atheist, but one day he had a dying patient who kept screaming, “I am in hell!” Dr. Rawlings wrote:

The patient began “coming to.” But whenever I would reach for instruments or otherwise interrupt my compression of his chest, the patient would again lose consciousness, roll his eyes upward, arch his back in mild convulsion, stop breathing, and die once more. Each time he regained heartbeat and respiration, the patient screamed, “I am in hell!” He was terrified and pleaded with me to help him. I was scared to death. In fact, the episode literally scared the hell out of me! It terrified me enough to write this book. . . .

He said, “Don't you understand? I am in hell. Each time you quit I go back to hell! Don't let me go back to hell! . . .” As a result, I started working feverishly and rapidly. By this time the patient had experienced three or four episodes of complete unconsciousness and clinical death from cessation of both heartbeat and breathing.

After several death episodes he finally asked me, “How do I stay out of hell?” I told him I guessed it was the same principle learned in Sunday school – that I guessed Jesus Christ would be the one whom you would ask to save you. Then he said, “I don't know how. Pray for me.” Pray for him! What nerve! I told him I was a doctor, not a preacher. “Pray for

me!” he repeated. I knew I had no choice: It was a dying man's request. So I had him repeat the words after me as we worked – right there on the floor. It was a very simple prayer because I did not know much about praying. It went something like this: Lord Jesus, I ask you to keep me out of hell. Forgive my sins. I turn my life over to you. If I die, I want to go to heaven. If I live, I'll live for you forever.

4. After this prayer, the man recovered and he got saved. And so did Dr. Maurice Rawlings.
5. What about you?