

“... very **bold** ...”

Messengers that smell like Marmite (1:1-3:6)

“We go way back...”

cf. Acts 18:1-17, 1 Corinthians

Using the verses below, how do Paul & the Corinthians feel about each other?
What clues do we get about why they feel that way?

1:13-15
3:2
7:4-7
7:14-16
8:7
9:1-2

1:23-2:1
10:2
11:3-4
12:15-21
13:2
13:10

Acts 19:10 ⇒ Acts 20:2 – what happened?

The painful visit
& the letter of tears



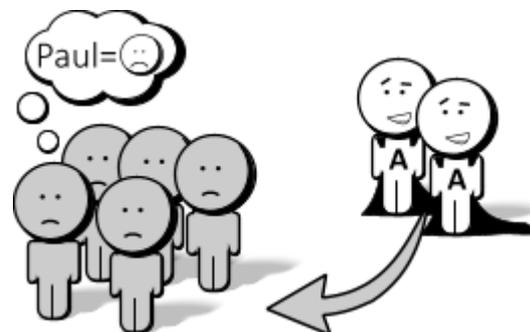
The trouble-makers

11:4-22 (cf. 10:7-10, 12:16-18)

What were they doing?

- Calling themselves ...
- Teaching...
- Servants of...

Accusing Paul of...



How do you smell?

2:14-17

Odorous messengers

- From death to death
- From life to life



Marmite

How do you feel about bold ministry?

What makes it hard to listen to?

A letter for them ... and us

A letter worth listening to

3:1-6 (cf. 12:19)

Questions to ponder:

- How 'bold' do you expect ministry to look?
- Which bits of the gospel and its implications do you find hardest to hear?
- If someone says something that seems harsh, how do you feel? What difference does it make if they are saying those things *for your benefit*? How does that difference help us to hear the hardest bits of the gospel?

Messengers that shine like the Son (3:7-4:6)

Gutsy messengers

What a difference a way makes... (3:7-18)

Compare and contrast:

The ministry of death

The ministry of the Spirit

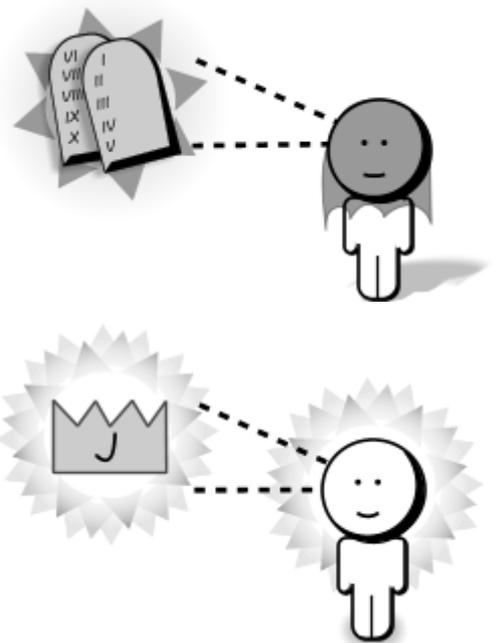
The ministry of death was glorious



The ministry of the Spirit is far more glorious



...and this time the glory is on show
cf. Exodus 34:29-35



"Since we have such a hope, we are very bold..." (3:12)

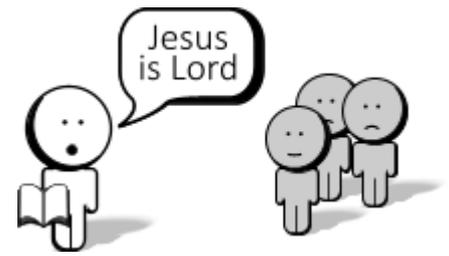
What might cause Paul to 'lose heart' (4v1)?

Given what we have seen so far, what stops him losing heart?

How similar is our thinking to Paul's?

So why does glorious ministry 'fail'? (4:1-6)

Apparent failure
Open statement of the truth



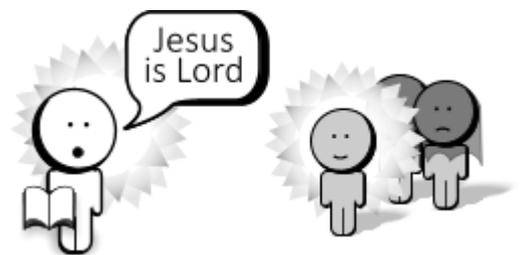
Reality
Another god at work



A new Creation miracle

*For God,
who said, "Let light shine out of darkness,"
has shone in our hearts to give the light
of the knowledge of the glory of God
in the face of Jesus Christ.*

(v6)



“And on the new Fourth Day He made the sons...”

Questions to ponder:

- How ‘glorious’ do you think ministry is?
- Would you rather be involved in something that was more outwardly, visibly impressive? Why / why not?
- What does Paul say is happening when the gospel is proclaimed? How significant do you personally think that is?

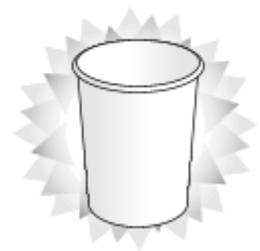
Messengers that look like death (4:7-5:10)

Packaging matters

Only “plastic cups” will do (4:7-15)

“Weakness” shows where the power lies

4:7-9



“Weakness” models the gospel

4:10-11 cf. 1:9-10



It's not about Paul, anyway

4:12-15

➔ **Suffering ministers**

What makes impressive ministers appealing?

What would we lose if we had impressive ministers?

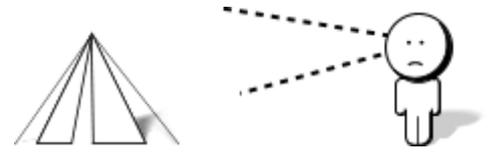
The gospel pattern: “Plastic cups” now, glory later (4:16-5:8)

What does the passage say about life ‘now’ vs. ‘in the future’?

Now

Future

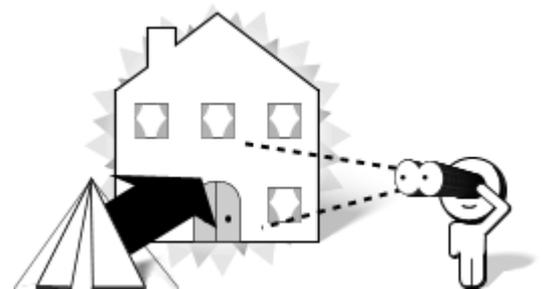
Seeing the unseen



Affliction ⇨ Glory (4:16-17)

Transient ⇨ Eternal (4:18)

Tent ⇨ House (5:1-5)



Where would you rather be?

5:6-8, cf. 4:14

We make it our aim to please Him (5:9-10)

...we walk by faith, not by sight

(v7)

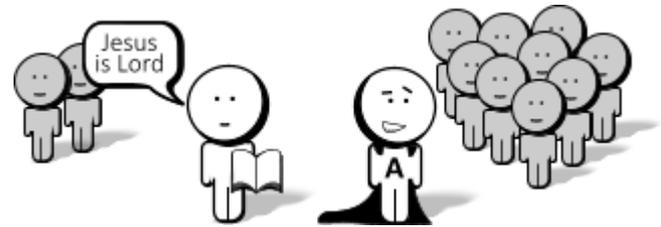
Questions to ponder:

- If you had a blank canvas, how could you personally best serve Jesus and the advance of His gospel?
- What difference does the future make to your life now? What difference could it make?
- How much do you currently expect to face suffering in this life?
- Which of the promises for the future do you find most exciting?
- How willing would you be to follow ministry that 'looks like death' if it involves this kind of suffering? How could the eternal perspective of these verses help?

Messengers that speak for Christ (5:11-7:1)

Outward appearance v The heart

5:11-13



Christ's ministry

5:14-6:2

Christ's attitude: love

Christ's message: reconciliation

cf. 5:11

Paul's audacity

cf. 13:3

Paul's urgency

Why do you think Paul appeals to the Corinthians 'not to receive the grace of God in vain' (6:1)?

How do these verses help to explain what was going on?

2:3-4

11:3-4

6:11-13

12:19-21

7:9

13:2-3, 5



“Be reconciled to God”: Applied

6:14-7:1

Three amazing promises

I will make my dwelling among them, and walk among them, and I will be their God, and they shall be my people...

Leviticus 26:11-12 (cf. 26:3)

“I will make my dwelling among you, and my soul shall not abhor you. And I will walk among you and will be your God, and you shall be my people.”

Ezekiel 37:27 (cf. 36:27)

“My dwelling place shall be with them, and I will be their God, and they shall be my people.”

...Therefore go out from their midst, and be separate from them, says the Lord, and touch no unclean thing; then I will welcome you...

Isaiah 52:11

Depart, depart, go out from there; touch no unclean thing; go out from the midst of her

Ezekiel 20:34

I will [welcome you] from the peoples and gather you out of the countries where you are scattered, with a mighty hand and an outstretched arm, and with wrath poured out.

...I will be a father to you, and you shall be sons and daughters to me, says the Lord Almighty

2 Samuel 7:14

I will be to him a father, and he shall be to me a son

Let us...

Very bold

What do you want to listen to?

How will you speak?

Questions to ponder:

- How does this affect the way that you read Paul's letters?
- How much do we want to hear the bold implications of the gospel? Why / why not?
- What opportunities do you have to proclaim Christ's message of reconciliation? How should you approach them? Why?