

Treasure in Jars of Clay – Authentic Faith

2 Corinthians 3:1-18

Intro

BO:

Engage: This week will begin the fantasy football season. I actually became a football fan when I became the youth pastor as a way to connect with some of my guys. Over time it's become a pretty significant hobby of mine. At the beginning of each year there is always people known as "sleeper picks". These are players that you try to get on your team because you think that they're going to become a big star. They aren't yet a big star but you think they'll become one. One of the guys I picked up off the free agents is a quarterback named Robert Griffin 3rd or RG3. He had a really great first season but got hurt towards the end of the season. Ever since his first season he has had moments of greatness but mainly below average play followed by serious injuries. 5 years into being an NFL quarterback it's still not clear if he's really as good as he looked his first year. Is he really a great quarterback that has had some bad luck or did he just fool us all his rookie year? Finding players that will continue to get better is a must for fantasy football. You don't want a player who just gets lucky for one game. But what about faith?

THT: How can you tell if your faith is an authentic faith? An authentic faith is an increasingly bright faith that comes from seeing Jesus. You can't fake authentic faith in Jesus no matter how hard you try. If you're source of faith is in Jesus then you will be changed and it will be seen brighter and brighter as time goes on.

Back: Before we get into our text tonight I want to be reminded of the situation. We have Paul writing a letter to the Corinthian church to settle some of the sin issues going on in the church. One of the situations that had happened were false teachers coming to the Corinthians to try and make money off of them. They brought some letters to try and prove that they were trustworthy but Paul wants to demonstrate to the Corinthians how he is different. ***17 For we are not, like so many, peddlers of God's word, but as men of sincerity, as commissioned by God, in the sight of God we speak in Christ.***

Prvw: Tonight we'll see how Paul was different than these false Christians and how an authentic Christians faith is seen!

Pass: Our passage tonight will be 2 Corinthians 3:1-18

Trans: Let's see how Paul demonstrates that his faith was real

Authentic Faith Seen

Read: ***3:1 Are we beginning to commend ourselves again? Or do we need, as some do, letters of recommendation to you, or from you?***

Ex: First faith isn't seen by someone's recommendation.

Ill: I have filled out literally hundreds of recommendations for students to Camp Of Champions, Miracle Camp, and many colleges. These recommendations can be a help but they don't really get at whether a person is fit for the job or for the school. So many times when people give recommendations they stretch the truth or maybe don't know the person that well and are just doing it as a favor. Paul's message of Jesus isn't true or false because someone from Jerusalem signed a paper saying that people should listen to Paul. Let's go...

Read: ***2 You yourselves are our letter of recommendation, written on our hearts, to be known and read by all. 3 And you show that you are a letter from Christ delivered by us, written not with ink but with the Spirit of the living God, not on tablets of stone but on tablets of human hearts.***

Ex: Paul's proof that his message is true and that his faith is true is in the Corinthians newfound faith. The proof is in the pudding. Faith isn't true just because someone else says it's true but rather something that is personally experienced for yourself. The Corinthians have been able to see that their faith comes straight from God. Their faith isn't just in the OT commandments of God but rather they've come to know God personally.

App: Sometimes Christians become people pleasers. If this person will think this about me or if that person will say this nice thing about me. I know that I've heard when people switch churches that one of the hardest things can be that people don't know you and so your reputation of being a "good" Christian is diminished. We can care far too much what people say and think about us than who we actually are in Jesus. Is your Christian reputation worth more to you than actually see Jesus work in and through you?

Prvw: I can say look at how nice this real orchid is but it doesn't change the fact that it's simply not real. Are you real?

Tran: But how can they really tell if their faith and Paul's faith is authentic? First we'll see an authentic faith from God contrasted with a fading faith from human effort. Secondly, we'll see how that faith plays out.

Authentic faith seen more and more

Set up: We'll start by looking at the authentic faith that is from God. Verse 4

Read: **4 Such is the confidence that we have through Christ toward God. 5 Not that we are sufficient in ourselves to claim anything as coming from us, but our sufficiency is from God, 6 who has made us sufficient to be ministers of a new covenant, not of the letter but of the Spirit. For the letter kills, but the Spirit gives life.**

Ex: The thing that Paul can have confidence in is not that he is able to make up how to have real faith but his sufficiency is that God actually provided a way of salvation through Jesus dying on the cross and confirmed by the Holy Spirit dwelling inside a believer. Authentic Faith is a faith that isn't from humans but following God's plan through Jesus.

Tran: So if that's the authentic faith then what does the fading faith of human effort look like? For seeing false faith it's important to understand something about the law that God gave to his people. God gave the law not to bring about salvation but rather the purpose of the Ten Commandments and so on was to show that man can't get to God based off their own efforts. Even if they're able to approach God it's only temporary because it's based off of them. So now we'll see how this played out with Moses.

Read: **7 Now if the ministry of death, carved in letters on stone, came with such glory that the Israelites could not gaze at Moses' face because of its glory, which was being brought to an end,**

Ex: So as we read think about how when Moses encountered God his face reflected God's glory and was bright but as time went on Moses face came back to normal. He actually began wearing a veil to cover his face so the Israelites wouldn't see that God's glory wouldn't last on him. The passage turns to imagine the glory of an authentic faith.

Read: **8 will not the ministry of the Spirit have even more glory? 9 For if there was glory in the ministry of condemnation, the ministry of righteousness must far exceed it in glory. 10 Indeed, in this case, what once had glory has come to have no glory at all, because of the glory that surpasses it. 11 For if what was being brought to an end came with glory, much more will what is permanent have glory.**

Ex: The glory that the Christian receives is permanent because it's seeing God through Jesus the perfect sacrifice rather than seeing God based on our own works which can only be just a glimpse of God.

Read: **12 Since we have such a hope, we are very bold, 13 not like Moses, who would put a veil over his face so that the Israelites might not gaze at the outcome of what was being brought to an end. 14 But their minds were hardened. For to this day, when they read the old covenant, that same veil remains unlifted, because only through Christ is it taken away. 15 Yes, to this day whenever Moses is read a veil lies over their hearts. 16 But when one turns to the Lord, the veil is removed.**

Ex: The veil covers being able to see just how glorious God is. People who aren't Christians just can't see that God is more glorious than the things on earth. It's like the person who insists on eating Totinos pizza because he's never tasted a Chicago deep dish pizza or wood fired pizza at Brienzo's. You just don't know what you're missing out on.

Prin: Have you ever seen someone who is an angry person try to control their temper? It's like we can play this sport for a little bit and even though you may have held it in the first time you just know the person will erupt. That's kind of like what's happening here. A person who tries to live a moral life or to see Jesus based off their own efforts will eventually fail.

App: No matter how hard you try in your faith, if it's not a faith based off salvation in Jesus then you're destined to fail. You might have moments of tricking people that your faith is genuine or maybe even trick yourself for awhile but eventually the glory will rub off and it won't last.

Ill: I've seen this happen time and time again. Often times high school students want to be able to look like they have a genuine faith because it's the thing to do but whenever a tough time comes then the glory fades and they show their true colors. However this doesn't have to be the case. Genuine faith is actually increased over time...

Read: **17 Now the Lord is the Spirit, and where the Spirit of the Lord is, there is freedom. 18 And we all, with unveiled face, beholding the glory of the Lord, are being transformed into the same image from one degree of glory to another. For this comes from the Lord who is the Spirit.**

Ex: When you see the face of God then you are changed. If you have full access to God through Jesus then that change will go from one degree of glory to another. You will grow closer to God as time goes on and your face will shine brighter and brighter.

App: What are some ways that we can see the glory of God reflected in our lives? How will we be brighter and brighter to those around us? I think when you are in a relationship with God through Jesus sacrifice and you have God the Holy Spirit convicting you of sin, leading your life then your authentic faith will keep getting stronger. What are some ways?

Relationships that shine

A life that shines God will demonstrate forgiveness to those who hurt you, patience to those who annoy you, love to those you can't stand. One degree of glory to another starts seeing the way you treat your family differently.

One degree of glory to another changes the way you talk about your teachers and those in leadership around you.

Priorities that shine

A life that shines God is able to see the eternal and not get caught up in the temporary. Your priorities match your faith. You set aside time for God to speak from the Bible to you personally, you care about people and give them your time even at great personal cost. Your goals in life are second to your goals for eternity.

Thoughts and attitudes that shine

A life that shines God, will not merely stop at your actions but even to your thoughts. Impure thoughts are held at bay. Anger becomes increasingly easy to deal with.

THT: How can you tell if your faith is an authentic faith? An authentic faith is an increasingly bright faith that comes from seeing Jesus. Does your life reflect an authentic faith from God or a fading faith from just trying hard to look good?