

## Do not Lose Heart

### 2 Corinthians 4:7-18

Online Sermon: [http://www.mckeesfamily.com/?page\\_id=3567](http://www.mckeesfamily.com/?page_id=3567)

**“If Christians are prepared to be identified with Christ in a fallen world and accept whatever sufferings and afflictions they may thus encounter, they will share His glory.”<sup>1</sup>**

How do aliens live in a world that is not their own please their Creator? We are told in Scripture to please God we must love Him and one another (Matthew 22:37-40). Loving God starts with being adopted into His family through belief in the atoning sacrifice of His Son (John 3:16). Once born again the Spirit of God lives inside the person and guides him/her to know and obey the truth concerning their Master (John 16:13). We show we love others by sharing with them the treasure or pearl we found in Jesus (Matthew 13:44-46). To obey the command to “go and make disciples” (Matthew 28:16-20) or to “be ready to give reasons why we have hope in the Lord” (1 Peter 3:15) is not an easy task because the Light within exposes the darkness of the soul. If we are to be good witnesses of the love of God, then we simply must draw nearer to Him but in doing so the Light will expose our own sins, invite confession, and often discipline (1 John 1:9; Hebrews 12:6). Also, when we go out into the world and demonstrate both in word and deed the Gospel message our Light will shine, expose the darkness of those on the broad path and they in turn will persecute us (John 3:20-21); after all, no one wants to be shown their goals, dreams and accomplishments are vanity and will only lead to their destruction! To make matters even more difficult we are but mere jars of clay who experience constant physical decay and eventual death! Faced with the constant need to change from within, persecution from others and the constant decaying of our bodies it is very easy to lose heart and give up in defeat of either truly loving God or those created in His image!<sup>2</sup> From part of Paul’s letter to the church of Corinth we learn that it is through our participation in Christ’s death and resurrection and by focusing on things unseen<sup>3</sup> and our eternal destination that our inner person is renewed day by day<sup>4</sup> with divine strength needed to love God and one another! Let us look in more detail the reasons why Paul says we are not to lose heart when proclaiming God’s love.

### Glorification of God’s Power

Paul states we are not to lose heart when we profess the name of the Lord because “we have this treasure in jars of clay to show that this all-surpassing power is from God and not from us.” The treasure Paul speaks of is the knowledge of God in the face of Christ that lives within

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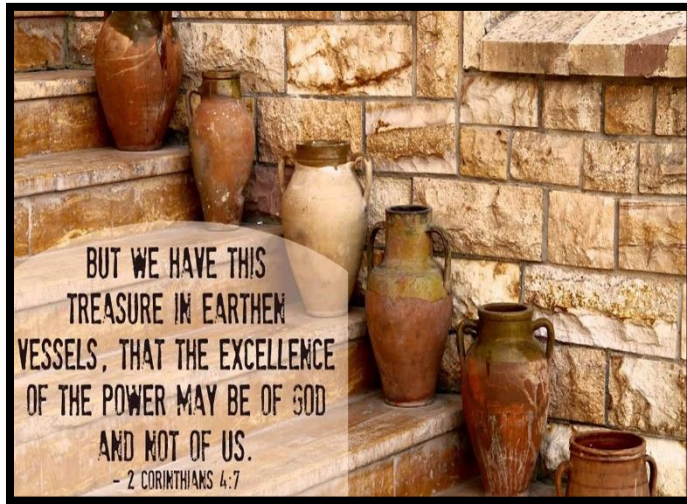
<sup>1</sup> Colin G. Kruse, *2 Corinthians: An Introduction and Commentary*, vol. 8, Tyndale New Testament Commentaries (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 1987), 110.

<sup>2</sup> John Piper, *Sermons from John Piper (1990–1999)* (Minneapolis, MN: Desiring God, 2007).

<sup>3</sup> Anthony T. Evans, “‘Comforting the Afflicted’ (Part 2),” in *Tony Evans Sermon Archive* (Tony Evans, 2011), 2 Co 4:7–15.

<sup>4</sup> John Piper, *Sermons from John Piper (1990–1999)* (Minneapolis, MN: Desiring God, 2007).

the believer.<sup>5</sup> Let the gravity of what Paul is saying sink into your soul for it is invaluable<sup>6</sup> for a created being, even in the image of God, to know and have a relationship with one's Creator!



Despite being “powerlessness in the face of suffering, decay, and death,”<sup>7</sup> the “life of God’s Son is manifested and glorified”<sup>8</sup> in our frail human bodies. Paul masterfully uses the metaphor “jars of clay” to signify the weakness of our bodies that will one day return to the dust in which they were formed.<sup>9</sup> Jars of clay were commonplace in the ancient Middle East and while they were useful in storing water, oil, grain, cooking, eating, and drinking; they had little intrinsic value<sup>10</sup> for they were fragile<sup>11</sup> and rarely lasted longer than a couple

of years.<sup>12</sup> Even though God shines in our hearts and chooses us to share His Gospel message through us,<sup>13</sup> we must never forget the power to overcome weaknesses, sicknesses, injuries, hardships, pressures, frustrations and disappointments of our fallen natures<sup>14</sup> is not overcome by our effort but only through the power of our Creator!<sup>15</sup> Paul draws a sharp contrast between our fragile, sinful nature and the Gospel message to ensure that no one would be tempted to take credit for His all surpassing power for salvation is His work alone, not ours (1 Corinthians 2:5;

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<sup>5</sup> Anthony T. Evans, [“‘Comforting the Afflicted’ \(Part 2\),”](#) in *Tony Evans Sermon Archive* (Tony Evans, 2011), 2 Co 4:7–15.

<sup>6</sup> Anthony T. Evans, [“‘Comforting the Afflicted’ \(Part 2\),”](#) in *Tony Evans Sermon Archive* (Tony Evans, 2011), 2 Co 4:7–15.

<sup>7</sup> Paul Barnett, [The Second Epistle to the Corinthians](#), The New International Commentary on the New Testament (Grand Rapids, MI: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 1997), 232.

<sup>8</sup> John Piper, [Sermons from John Piper \(1990–1999\)](#) (Minneapolis, MN: Desiring God, 2007).

<sup>9</sup> James M. Scott, [2 Corinthians](#), Understanding the Bible Commentary Series (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Books, 2011), 103.

<sup>10</sup> Colin G. Kruse, [2 Corinthians: An Introduction and Commentary](#), vol. 8, Tyndale New Testament Commentaries (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 1987), 106.

<sup>11</sup> C. K. Barrett, [The Second Epistle to the Corinthians](#), Black’s New Testament Commentary (London: Continuum, 1973), 137–138.

<sup>12</sup> James M. Scott, [2 Corinthians](#), Understanding the Bible Commentary Series (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Books, 2011), 103.

<sup>13</sup> C. K. Barrett, [The Second Epistle to the Corinthians](#), Black’s New Testament Commentary (London: Continuum, 1973), 137.

<sup>14</sup> John Piper, [Sermons from John Piper \(1990–1999\)](#) (Minneapolis, MN: Desiring God, 2007).

<sup>15</sup> David Brown, A. R. Fausset, and Robert Jamieson, [A Commentary, Critical, Experimental, and Practical, on the Old and New Testaments: Acts–Revelation](#), vol. VI (London; Glasgow: William Collins, Sons, & Company, Limited, n.d.), 347.

3:7).<sup>16</sup> It is in our weakness that God's power is made a perfect (12:9)<sup>17</sup> witness to the world for by the same power that He raised Christ from the dead He brings life to our souls, a divine task that is impossible to attain by our own effort! This treasure is invaluable for our witness to the world for we do not point to ourselves as examples of faith,<sup>18</sup> and rightly be called hypocrites, but to God whose holiness is absolute and the source of their very lives!

## God Sustaining Presence

Even though we are hard pressed on every side, perplexed, persecuted, and often struck down for obeying God's command to share the Light amongst those living in darkness, we are to rejoice for God promises we will not be crushed, we will not live-in utter despair, not be



abandoned, or destroyed. To let our Light shine not only within but amongst the world invites trials, tribulations, and great persecutions! Later in this letter Paul says he five times received from the Jews forty lashes minus one, three times beaten by rods, once pelted with stones, three times shipwrecked, and was always had both Jews and Gentiles trying to do him bodily harm (11:20). And yet despite being sent out like sheep amongst ravenous wolves (Matthew 10:16), like the king David Paul feared no evil (Psalms 23) for he knew that God never leaves nor

forsake but sustains His own!<sup>19</sup> Even though the world might see us as “feeble and foolish sufferers,”<sup>20</sup> it is often through God enabling us to divinely survive the most devastating blows of the evil one<sup>21</sup> that His Gospel message of grace and mercy becomes the clearest to the fallen of this world! While Paul is primarily talking about sustaining persecution during evangelism in this passage, one should not dismiss too quickly the possibility that trials, and tribulations are not

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<sup>16</sup> David K. Lowery, [“2 Corinthians,”](#) in *The Bible Knowledge Commentary: An Exposition of the Scriptures*, ed. J. F. Walvoord and R. B. Zuck, vol. 2 (Wheaton, IL: Victor Books, 1985), 563.

<sup>17</sup> Paul Barnett, [The Second Epistle to the Corinthians](#), The New International Commentary on the New Testament (Grand Rapids, MI: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 1997), 231.

<sup>18</sup> Anthony T. Evans, [“‘Comforting the Afflicted’ \(Part 2\),”](#) in *Tony Evans Sermon Archive* (Tony Evans, 2011), 2 Co 4:7–15.

<sup>19</sup> John Piper, [Sermons from John Piper \(1990–1999\)](#) (Minneapolis, MN: Desiring God, 2007).

<sup>20</sup> C. K. Barrett, [The Second Epistle to the Corinthians](#), Black's New Testament Commentary (London: Continuum, 1973), 138.

<sup>21</sup> C. K. Barrett, [The Second Epistle to the Corinthians](#), Black's New Testament Commentary (London: Continuum, 1973), 139.

the product of God wanting someone else to change but for one to repent so that what is getting in way of one obtaining experiential knowledge of God and the fullness of Christ might be obtained.<sup>22</sup> “So it’s the Jesus factor that unveils the knowledge of God and it’s never unveiled any more than when life is not working<sup>23</sup> but praise be that when one invites God to work in one’s life one is divinely enabled to withstand His refining fire.”<sup>24</sup>

## Our Resurrection from the Dead

Even though we are “hard pressed on every side” we are not to lose heart because “we



always carry around in our body the death of Jesus, so that the life of Jesus may also be revealed in our body” (10). The more we “unwrap the treasure of the experiential knowledge of God” and let our Light shine the more God is going to allow trials, tribulations and persecution happen to us to help transform both us and others through our witness.<sup>25</sup> “Christ was made sin that sinners might be given righteousness, and, in consequence, be reconciled unto God (5:18-21).”<sup>26</sup> Since the world hates the Light because it exposes their evil deeds (John 3:20), to share His Gospel will require one to participate in the persecution and suffering of His death.<sup>27</sup> Even though this suffering will be unpleasant and

might even speed up our physical death<sup>28</sup> we are to rejoice for we also participate in Christ’s resurrection.<sup>29</sup> We carry around in our bodies the dying of Jesus so that the life of Jesus might

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<sup>22</sup> Anthony T. Evans, [“‘Comforting the Afflicted’ \(Part 2\),”](#) in *Tony Evans Sermon Archive* (Tony Evans, 2011), 2 Co 4:7–15.

<sup>23</sup> Anthony T. Evans, [“‘Comforting the Afflicted’ \(Part 2\),”](#) in *Tony Evans Sermon Archive* (Tony Evans, 2011), 2 Co 4:7–15.

<sup>24</sup> James M. Scott, [2 Corinthians](#), Understanding the Bible Commentary Series (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Books, 2011), 104.

<sup>25</sup> Anthony T. Evans, [“‘Comforting the Afflicted’ \(Part 2\),”](#) in *Tony Evans Sermon Archive* (Tony Evans, 2011), 2 Co 4:7–15.

<sup>26</sup> Paul Barnett, [The Second Epistle to the Corinthians](#), The New International Commentary on the New Testament (Grand Rapids, MI: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 1997), 238.

<sup>27</sup> C. K. Barrett, [The Second Epistle to the Corinthians](#), Black’s New Testament Commentary (London: Continuum, 1973), 140.

<sup>28</sup> C. K. Barrett, [The Second Epistle to the Corinthians](#), Black’s New Testament Commentary (London: Continuum, 1973), 140.

<sup>29</sup> Mark A. Seifrid, [The Pillar New Testament Commentary: The Second Letter to the Corinthians](#), ed. D. A. Carson (Grand Rapids, MI; Cambridge, U.K.; England: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company; Apollos, 2014), 208.



also be revealed in our bodies. His grace not only comforts, sustains, and provides a powerful witness to the world of God’s glory<sup>30</sup> but for those who the Shepherd calls by name will participate in Christ’s exaltation by eternally glorifying His name in paradise (Romans 8:17)!<sup>31</sup> So, let us look at the example of Christ who gave His life a ransom for many (Mark 10:45)<sup>32</sup> and let us be motivated through the power of the Spirit to let His light shine not only in the darkest places of our hearts but amongst our friends, acquaintances, family and all others with the profound message that life, strength and hope are found in Jesus!<sup>33</sup>

## Thanksgiving to the Glory of God

The next reason Paul tells the church of Corinth to not loose heart that their ministry is not in vain for the One who raised Christ from the dead raise God’s own as well.<sup>34</sup> Despite the long list of afflictions and persecutions Paul received, he still prioritized his life in a spirit of



faith.<sup>35</sup> What is important in life is not money, power or prestige but in faith to acknowledge and surrender to God’s right to rule one’s life by looking for ways to love Him and one another through one’s thoughts, words, and deeds. For Paul, this kind of faith was strengthened by the knowledge that he would one day be raised with the Lord Jesus and ultimately brought into the presence of God.<sup>36</sup> In his first letter to Corinth Paul quoted Hosea 13:14 and stated death has no victory or sting for a believer (15:55)! As Christ’s

ambassadors we are also to rejoice while here on this earth that “grace that is reaching more and more people causes thanksgiving to overflow to the glory of God (15)! Our believing, speaking, and suffering in this world, because we let our light shine, is not just so that we might be found faithful<sup>37</sup> at the judgement seat of

<sup>30</sup> John Piper, [\*Sermons from John Piper \(1990–1999\)\*](#) (Minneapolis, MN: Desiring God, 2007).

<sup>31</sup> James M. Scott, [\*2 Corinthians\*](#), Understanding the Bible Commentary Series (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Books, 2011), 105.

<sup>32</sup> David K. Lowery, [\*“2 Corinthians,”\*](#) in *The Bible Knowledge Commentary: An Exposition of the Scriptures*, ed. J. F. Walvoord and R. B. Zuck, vol. 2 (Wheaton, IL: Victor Books, 1985), 564.

<sup>33</sup> John Piper, [\*Sermons from John Piper \(1990–1999\)\*](#) (Minneapolis, MN: Desiring God, 2007).

<sup>34</sup> John Piper, [\*Sermons from John Piper \(1990–1999\)\*](#) (Minneapolis, MN: Desiring God, 2007).

<sup>35</sup> Anthony T. Evans, [\*“‘Comforting the Afflicted’ \(Part 2\),”\*](#) in *Tony Evans Sermon Archive* (Tony Evans, 2011), 2 Co 4:7–15.

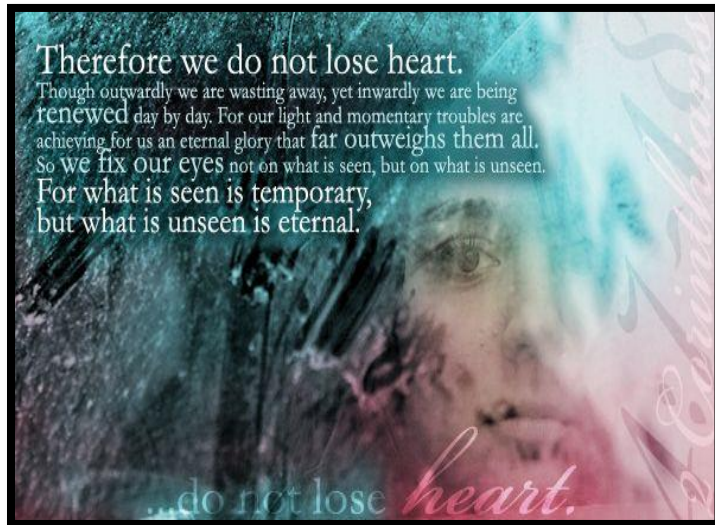
<sup>36</sup> Colin G. Kruse, [\*2 Corinthians: An Introduction and Commentary\*](#), vol. 8, Tyndale New Testament Commentaries (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 1987), 108.

<sup>37</sup> C. K. Barrett, [\*The Second Epistle to the Corinthians\*](#), Black’s New Testament Commentary (London: Continuum, 1973), 143–144.

Christ but also so that others might have every opportunity to turn from the broad path and embrace Christ's gracious gift of salvation! "To receive and understand God's grace is necessarily to thank Him, and thus to glorify Him; not objectively to increase His glory, which would be impossible, but to recognize it and make it known."<sup>38</sup> While the Gospel message "sounds forth from the unimpressive, weak and powerless" jars of clay this does in no way diminishes the work of the Spirit but accentuates the truth that wisdom and salvation are a free gift found only in the power and glory of God (1 Corinthians 2:4-5).<sup>39</sup>

## Renewed Day by Day

In verse sixteen Paul tells the church of Corinth to not loose heart for though these jars of clay are daily wasting away they are also being renewed! We should not let stiffer joints, less



energy, and numerous health threats discourage us and be used as an excuse to not share the Gospel message.<sup>40</sup> Regardless of our infirmities, He whose Spirit lives inside of us will renew our inner being to speak and demonstrate His love and power to those he sends our way! For Paul, the inner nature is the "center of a person, the source of will, emotion, thought and affection."<sup>41</sup> When a person becomes born again, they become a new creation, the old is gone and the new has come (5:17) ... but that is just the beginning of becoming more like Jesus!<sup>42</sup> "The

inner nature is to be strengthened when by the Spirit it is indwelt by Christ and rooted and grounded in the love of God"<sup>43</sup> but also in daily submission to His will. To become a living sacrifice that is holy and pleasing unto God then one must reject the ways of this world and

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<sup>38</sup> C. K. Barrett, *The Second Epistle to the Corinthians*, Black's New Testament Commentary (London: Continuum, 1973), 145.

<sup>39</sup> Mark A. Seifrid, *The Pillar New Testament Commentary: The Second Letter to the Corinthians*, ed. D. A. Carson (Grand Rapids, MI; Cambridge, U.K.; England: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company; Apollos, 2014), 211.

<sup>40</sup> C. K. Barrett, *The Second Epistle to the Corinthians*, Black's New Testament Commentary (London: Continuum, 1973), 145.

<sup>41</sup> Colin G. Kruse, *2 Corinthians: An Introduction and Commentary*, vol. 8, Tyndale New Testament Commentaries (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 1987), 109.

<sup>42</sup> James M. Scott, *2 Corinthians*, Understanding the Bible Commentary Series (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Books, 2011), 107.

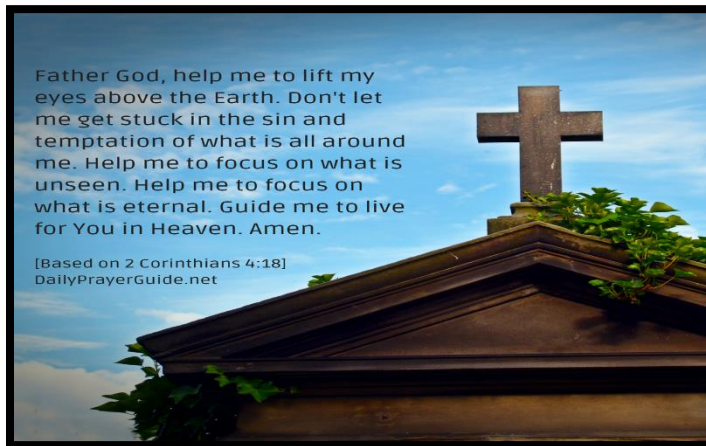
<sup>43</sup> Colin G. Kruse, *2 Corinthians: An Introduction and Commentary*, vol. 8, Tyndale New Testament Commentaries (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 1987), 109.

seek and obey His will as revealed both in Scriptures and through the Spirit (Romans 12:1-2). While our seeking the face of God is necessary to be renewed, we must not forget daily renewal of Christian existence, is not guaranteed by an act of faith, or by baptism, in the past, albeit these are great prerequisites; but truly is a gift from its source, our Creator.<sup>44</sup> So, Paul says don't lose heart for while the body is wasting away and one has to go through debilitating persecutions, remember His grace is sufficient for God's power is made perfect in our weakness (12:9)!

## Eyes Fixed on What is Unseen

Finally, we are not to lose heart because our suffering and persecution is but momentary and nothing in comparison to the eternal weight of glory we are about to receive!<sup>45</sup> This does not mean that afflictions are easy to bear but merely that we need the right lens to look through to see their temporary nature and rejoice in suffering and pain. Let me give you an illustration.

"It's like the man who was at the filling station and the guy, the attendant was cleaning his window. He was cleaning his window and the man said, "Go back and



do that again, you did a poor job." He went and cleaned his window, "Man, I don't know why you can't clean this window, that window's still filthy." the man went back again, the man's getting frustrated but the guy in the car, he said ... "I came here and you know, and I'm getting a

full service, and you're supposed to clean the window, its dirty ..." had him clean it four times and the window was no cleaner. Finally the wife leaned over, pull the glasses off his eyes, rubbed the lenses on his glasses. "Fool! the problem is not the window cleaner, the problem are the glasses through which you are looking!"<sup>46</sup>

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<sup>44</sup> C. K. Barrett, *The Second Epistle to the Corinthians*, Black's New Testament Commentary (London: Continuum, 1973), 147.

<sup>45</sup> Colin G. Kruse, *2 Corinthians: An Introduction and Commentary*, vol. 8, Tyndale New Testament Commentaries (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 1987), 110.

<sup>46</sup> Anthony T. Evans, *"'Comforting the Afflicted' (Part 2),"* in *Tony Evans Sermon Archive* (Tony Evans, 2011), 2 Co 4:7-15.

“If all you see is what you see, then you do not see all that there is to be seen!”<sup>47</sup> If we look through worldly lenses all we will see in our suffering, persecution, discomfort and pain but if we look through eternal lenses, then we see hardship as not only providing a profound witness and bringing glory to God’s name<sup>48</sup> but also “producing in us an eternal weight of glory”<sup>49</sup> when we arrive in heaven. Praise be what is coming is not momentary but eternal. It is not light, but weighty. Its not affliction, but glory. And it is beyond all comprehension for the eye has not seen nor ear heard what God has prepared for those who love Him (1 Corinthians 2:9).<sup>50</sup> So, let us share the treasure and pearl we have found in Jesus with the world, and let us not loose heart but rejoice and let our Light shine so that we and those around us might be constantly invited to be transformed into Christ’s likeness!

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<sup>47</sup> Anthony T. Evans, [“‘Comforting the Afflicted’ \(Part 2\),”](#) in *Tony Evans Sermon Archive* (Tony Evans, 2011), 2 Co 4:7–15.

<sup>48</sup> John Piper, [Sermons from John Piper \(1990–1999\)](#) (Minneapolis, MN: Desiring God, 2007).

<sup>49</sup> Colin G. Kruse, [2 Corinthians: An Introduction and Commentary](#), vol. 8, Tyndale New Testament Commentaries (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 1987), 110.

<sup>50</sup> John Piper, [Sermons from John Piper \(1990–1999\)](#) (Minneapolis, MN: Desiring God, 2007).