

II Corinthians 4:5-12

<sup>5</sup> For we do not proclaim ourselves; we proclaim Jesus Christ as Lord and ourselves as your servants for Jesus' sake. <sup>6</sup> For it is the God who said, "Let light shine out of darkness," who has shone in our hearts to give the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ.

<sup>7</sup> But we have this treasure in clay jars, so that it may be made clear that this extraordinary power belongs to God and does not come from us. <sup>8</sup> We are afflicted in every way, but not crushed; perplexed, but not driven to despair; <sup>9</sup> persecuted, but not forsaken; struck down, but not destroyed; <sup>10</sup> always carrying in the body the death of Jesus, so that the life of Jesus may also be made visible in our bodies. <sup>11</sup> For while we live, we are always being given up to death for Jesus' sake, so that the life of Jesus may be made visible in our mortal flesh. <sup>12</sup> So death is at work in us, but life in you.

She attended Law School when few women attended. She was one of nine women in a class of 500 at Harvard Law School. In her first semester she and the other eight female students were requested to visit the Dean of Harvard Law. After some pleasantries the Dean asked each student to introduce themselves and then tell him why they were each taking the place in their class that a man could otherwise possess. Not a warm welcome. Yet it was 1956 and the Dean reflected one vision of the world. She would come to learn that it was an accurate vision. She served as the first female member of the Harvard Law Review. This meant she was one of top 25 students in her class of 500. Her husband graduated from Harvard Law a year before she did. They moved to New York City so he could accept a position at a law firm there. But she had one more year of law school left, so she transferred to Columbia Law School and served on their Law Review as well. She graduated first in her class at Columbia Law in 1959. Top of her class at Harvard and then top of her class at Columbia but she could not find one law firm in New York City that would hire her. We call that gender discrimination today. That was one view of how the world works. It took her time to help America find power in a "second sight" on how the workplace might operate.

Maintaining a "second sight" is part and parcel of the Biblical story. Jesus maintained a "second sight" as he shared various parables about the Kingdom of God. The Apostle Paul maintained this "second sight" as he penned the words in our letter lesson today. When we are afflicted in every way, but not crushed; perplexed, but not driven to despair; persecuted, but not forsaken; struck down, but not destroyed it is because we have resiliency born out of a "second sight" that supersedes our experience.

Let's consider how you and I have and might maintain "second sight" vision in trying times.

Rev. Otis Moss III of Trinity United Church of Christ in Chicago coined the term "second sight." He notes that "we see that Moses had his power in this "second sight." Moses possessed an intimate knowledge of Egyptian culture, from having been a student of Amen-Ra. He knew the Ivy League culture of the Egyptian mystery system. Yet he was still a child of Abraham. Moses had second sight, a veil giving his soul the power to see the true nature of the empire. ... He can recite the story of Abraham and sing the songs of Osiris. This section of his resume causes the heavens to take notice. He knows the pain of oppression and the comfort of the empire. It is Vernon Johns who stated, "When Moses hit the Egyptian upside the head with that brickbat, all the heavens took note and God pointed and said, 'Get me that young man. He knows something about the pain of oppression and he knows about the comfort of the empire. He shall lead my movement.'" Moses was able to let light shine in darkness.

"Second sight" which is qualitatively superior to present reality enables us to be afflicted in every way, but not crushed; perplexed, but not driven to despair; persecuted, but not forsaken; struck down, but not destroyed. It provides us with that God given power which we call hope. It enables us to:

Do all the good we can,  
By all the means we can,  
In all the ways we can...

### **Perplexed, but not driven to despair**

One can be perplexed. The actions of others that cause harm continue to perplex me. Then I look at my own actions and I perplex myself. I have transitioned with the seasons of the year from occasionally getting Chai Tea across the street from our condo at the Himalayan Java to walking a few blocks to get a refreshing drink at the Juice Stop. What perplexed me at the Himalayan Java was the fact that I was getting my drink in a new cup each time I had Chai.

I knew a new cup for each Chai is wasteful but at least it is paper cup that is recyclable. I felt worse at the Juice Stop because the cups there are not paper but Styrofoam, very bad for the environment. I was perplexed. I want to be friendly to the environment but look at these large Styrofoam cups I am using and tossing out so I can get some optional refreshment. What might I do other than stop getting my favorite drink composed of orange juice, banana, strawberries and ice blended together? We can be perplexed by not driven to despair because God can and a good retailer will provide us with a solution, that is, a “second sight.” It came to my attention that the Juice Stop sells reusable juice mugs for \$5. Not only that, buy a mug and each drink is 50 cents off which means that in ten visits the mug pays for itself. That is a good business solution to an environmental concern. Plus it is good marketing on their part as I walk around with a mug that has their logo emblazoned on it. I need to talk with the Himalayan Java with this “second sight” discovery of providing reusable mugs for their coffee and teas. It is a small way I can let the light shine on the ever expanding amount of waste humanity produces. It is also my way of...

Doing all the good I can,  
By all the means I can,  
In all the ways I can...

### **Persecuted, but not forsaken**

There is being perplexed and then there is being persecuted. Paul, the writer of the letter we are using as our spiritual guideline in this message, knew persecution but he did not feel forsaken. A good example of this is found in the 16<sup>th</sup> chapter of Acts where Luke writes about his travels with Paul and says,

<sup>16</sup> Once when we were going to the place of prayer, we were met by a female slave who had a spirit by which she predicted the future. She earned a great deal of money for her owners by fortune-telling. <sup>17</sup> She followed Paul and the rest of us, shouting, “These men are servants of the Most High God, who are telling you the way to be saved.” <sup>18</sup> She kept this up for many days. Finally Paul became so annoyed that he turned around and said to the spirit, “In the name of Jesus Christ I command you to come out of her!” At that moment the spirit left her.

<sup>19</sup> When her owners realized that their hope of making money was gone, they seized Paul and Silas and dragged them into the marketplace to face the authorities. <sup>20</sup> They brought them before the magistrates and said, “These men are Jews, and are throwing our city into an uproar <sup>21</sup> by advocating customs unlawful for us Romans to accept or practice.”

<sup>22</sup> The crowd joined in the attack against Paul and Silas, and the magistrates ordered them to be stripped and beaten with rods. <sup>23</sup> After they had been severely flogged, they were thrown into prison, and the jailer was commanded to guard them carefully. <sup>24</sup> When he received these orders, he put them in the inner cell and fastened their feet in the stocks.

That is the definition of persecution. It is also the definition of torture. In fact, one would not blame Paul and Silas if they were filled with despair and felt forsaken. Yet, they never did lose hope because they possessed a “second sight.” They knew the God they served was more powerful than the beating they absorbed and jail cells they found themselves in. God who raised Jesus from the dead following His crucifixion was by their side during the beatings and in the jail cell. With that resurrection perspective enabling Paul and Silas to maintained

a “second sight” of God’s presence in their midst we find them not bemoaning their circumstances but praying and singing hymns to God as the other prisoners listened. “Second sight” supersedes present circumstances so we can..

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In all the ways we can...

### **Struck down, but not destroyed**

“Being struck down, but not destroyed” brings us back to that top law student who could not find a job after her graduation back in 1959. How did she help America develop a “second sight” beyond what she initially experienced? Well, one of her Columbia Law professors helped her get hired as a clerk to a U.S. District Judge that owed him some favors after she was rebuffed by the law firms of New York City. That was a start. After her clerking she was offered some jobs at law firms but always at a much lower salary than her male counterparts. She instead took some time to pursue her other legal passion, civil procedure, choosing to join the Columbia Project on International Civil Procedure. After a successful stint there she accepted a job as a professor at Rutgers University Law School in 1963, a position she held until accepting an offer to teach at Columbia in 1972. There, she became the first female professor at Columbia to earn tenure. Yet she knew gender discrimination continued to be a dominate business practice in America. That is when a lawsuit pending in Court came to her attention which enabled her to see another vision, a better vision, that is, a “second sight” for employment practices in America. It was a “second sight” of gender discrimination being successfully challenged by the law of the land.

In 1972 this lawyer took the case of the woman in the military who had filed a lawsuit against the Army when she found out that her male counter-parts received a housing allowance but she did not. They had the same job but superior compensation. When the military woman found out it was not a clerical mistake but it was policy she decided to sue the Army for equal compensation. Our female lawyer took the case all the way to the Supreme Court. That is the definition of...

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By all the means you can,  
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She won the case. This lawyer who felt the sting of workplace discrimination, who was afflicted, but not crushed; perplexed, but not driven to despair; persecuted, but not forsaken; struck down, but not destroyed went on to led the fight against workplace gender discrimination as she successfully argued six landmark cases before the U.S. Supreme Court in the 1970’s, winning five of them. There is still progress that needs to be made in the workplace but this lawyer has helped America develop a “second sight” for employment practices. By now you have probably guessed that this lawyer did not only argue cases before the Supreme Court in the 1970’s but she, Ruth Bader Ginsberg, has been a Supreme Court Justice since 1993.

Each of us has known affliction and being perplexed, maybe even persecution and being struck down. Yet, as children of God who called Moses to lead the Exodus and resurrected Jesus from the dead, we are not crushed, driven to despair, forsaken or destroyed because we maintain a “second sight” so we are able to let the light of love shine as we...

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