

2nd Corinthians 4:1-6

Introduction: In this section of Scripture Paul describes some basic presuppositions regarding his ministry. This passages addresses the internal reasons why ministers of the Gospel do or do not lose heart. We live in a culture that tends to evaluate the value of anything solely by immediate results, trappings of success, or by felt benefits. Paul did not succumb to this man-centered way of thinking. The sobering fact is that Christian ministry is faced with obstacles.

- *Because of this* (3:6-18), *we have this ministry* [διακονία] ...—4:1
 - This Godward confidence (3:4), this God-engendered sufficiency (3:6) with a God-sent glory of this new covenant

Paul's Godward perseverance—4:1

- 1) Stated clearly—*we are not becoming discouraged* [pres. act. ind. ἐκκακέω].
 - a) *To the degree we have received mercy* [aor. pass. ind. ἐλέεω] (from God),
 - i) Mercy—God's active goodwill demonstrated to us in our misery
- 2) Because he recognized that God freely gives both ministry and mercy, he did not become discouraged.
 - a) The *minister's* persistence should reflect the persistence of the new covenant *ministry*
- 3) In spite of trials, difficulties, accusations, and obstacles, Paul did not grow weary. In spite of what *appeared* to be a lack of success, Paul did not grow weary.

Paul's Godward integrity—4:2

- 1) Stated clearly—*But* [ἀλλά] *we have denounced* [aor. mid. ind. ἀπειπόμην] *the hidden* [κρυπτός] *things of shame* [αἰσχύνη]—4:2
 - Shameful motives, like seeking to please people rather than God; seeking to fulfill selfish motives or interests, etc.
- 2) Negatively—*we are not* ...
 - a) *living* [pres. act. ptc. περιπατέω] *in* (unscrupulous) *trickery* [πανουργία]
 - i) Not conducting ourselves with a readiness to anything. How Satan deceived Eve (2nd Corinthians 11:3). What false teachers attempt (Ephesians 4:14).
 - b) *or distorting/tampering with* [pres. act. ptc. δολόω] *the word of God*,
 - i) To corrupt something that is good by mingling it with what is wrong
 - ii) What the Jewish leaders did in arresting Jesus (Matthew 26:4).
 - c) There is no need to change the message in an attempt to see external results. We don't need a new message or new methods.
 - 3) Positively—*but ... we are commending* [pres. act. ptc. συνιστάω] *ourselves*
 - Commending includes the idea of presenting evidence to back up previously made claims.
 - a) How does Paul commend himself? *by the disclosure* [φανέρωσις] *of the truth*

- i) It is the presentation of God's truth that verifies Paul's ministry
- b) To whom does Paul himself?
 - i) Manward—to everyone's conscience
 - ii) Godward—in the sight of God
- 4) Observations
 - a) Paul simply speaks the truth in love and leaves the results up to God.
 - b) Paul discloses the truth, even if hearts are veiled.
 - c) People need to hear the Truth, not what they think they *want* to hear.

Paul battles a supernatural enemy—4:3-4

- 1) The difficulty—*But even if* [1st class condition] *our gospel is veiled* [pf. pass. ptc. καλύπτω], *it is veiled* [pf. pass. ptc. καλύπτω] *only to those who are perishing* [pres. mid. ptc. ἀπόλλυμι]—4:3-4
 - There **are** certain difficulties in sharing the Gospel message. Let's acknowledge that and move on. There will *always* be those who find the Gospel message difficult to understand and accept. To them the message will always be obscure until God does a work of grace in their heart.
- 2) What has happened? *In whom the god of this age* (Satan) *has blinded* [aor. act. ind. τυφλόω] *the minds* [νόημα] *of the unbelievers*
 - a) This “age” is the floating mass of thoughts, opinions, values, hopes, impulses, and aspirations in the world at any time. It is the cultural air that we breathe.
 - b) The mind [νόημα] is: the reasoning ability, the conclusions reached based on the intellectual process, the purposes and opinions arrived at by reason
 - c) The unbeliever is **not** the enemy because he does not believe. Satan has blinded their minds; Satan is the enemy. Their blindness is part of the reason for their unbelief.
- 3) Why has Satan blinded them? *So that they may not clearly see* [ἀνγάζω] *the light*
 - o To prevent them from seeing “the light” of what?
 - a) *of the gospel*—the good news or good message
 - b) *of the glory*—His glory is expressed in the Gospel. This light streams into the human heart through the hearing of the Gospel.
 - c) *of the Christ, who is the image* [εἰκόν] *of God*—this is why He has glory
 - i) Glorious **in who He is**—eternal, perfect God, perfect man, unchangeable, omnipresent, omniscient, omnipotent, incomprehensible, infinite, holy, truth, love, righteous, faithful, and merciful
 - ii) Glorious **in what He does**—creates, preserves, controls, converts, strengthens, gives life, judges, recreates
 - iii) Glorious **in what He desires**—to please the Father for His glory
 - iv) Glorious **in what He deserves**—John 5:22-23; Philippians 2:10-11
 - d) Clearly this “sight” is a figure of speech for hearing the Word of God. The gospel is heard and if the hearer turns to the Lord, the veil is removed so that he now “sees” the glory of Christ.

Paul explains the essence of his message—4:5-6

- 1) The **means**— *For* [γάρ] *we are proclaiming* [pres. act. ind. κηρύσσω]—4:5
- 2) What is the **content** of his proclamation?
 - a) Negatively—*Not ourselves*
 - i) No Christian should be self-promoting or self-focused. To speak about the messenger would hinder the communication of the light of His glory.
 - b) Positively—*but* [ἀλλά] ...
 - i) Godward—*Christ Jesus as Lord*,
 - (1) The authoritative lordship of Christ is the message we need to communicate to the spiritually blind
 - ii) Manward—*and ourselves as your bondservants* [δούλος]
 - (1) Bondservants to the self-centered Corinthians?! How is that possible, except by the grace of God.
 - iii) Why would Paul proclaim such a message?—*for* [διὰ] *Jesus' sake*
- 3) The **reason** Paul's preaching focuses on Christ and not himself? *Because* [ὅτι] ...
 - a) Who? *The God*
 - b) God has done what?
 - i) In the past—*Who told light to shine* [λάμπω] *out of darkness*, (Genesis 1:3)
 - ii) Present—*has shone* [λάμπω] *in our hearts*
 - (1) Because we were in spiritual darkness (Ephesians 5:8; Colossians 1:13; but especially 1st Peter 2:9)
 - (2) Remember specifically Paul's experience in Acts 9.
 - c) Why did this God shine in our hearts?
 - i) *Toward* [πρός] *the illumination* [φωτισμός] *of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ*.
 - (1) i.e., the God who commanded light out of the darkness at original creation is the same God who can command light out of darkness at the new creation (salvation) (2nd Corinthians 5:17).
 - (2) We see His glory as the Gospel is presented accurately
 - ii) If God has shone light into **our** hearts, can He not do the same with other unbelievers?
 - iii) It is from the once darkened heart of Paul that true light now flows to others. The same with us as we share the Truth with those around us. Who is sufficient for such a task?!

Summary and applications

- 1) Don't despair over unfulfilled expectations or unforeseen obstacles when sharing the Gospel.
- 2) Don't yield to the temptation to market the message to a blind audience. The Truth is still the answer, even to those who say there is no truth.
- 3) Focus on...
 - a) God the Father
 - i) The giver of mercy
 - ii) The powerful, wise Creator

- iii) The giver of Truth and Light
- b) God the Son—the Lord and Master
- 4) Let us pray Biblical prayers of evangelism:
 - a) Matthew 9:38—*Therefore pray the Lord of the harvest to send out laborers into His harvest.*
 - b) Ephesians 6:18-20—*praying always with all prayer and supplication in the Spirit, being watchful to this end with all perseverance and supplication for all the saints—¹⁹ and for me, that utterance may be given to me, that I may open my mouth boldly to make known the mystery of the gospel, ²⁰ for which I am an ambassador in chains; that in it I may speak boldly, as I ought to speak.*
 - c) Colossians 4:2-4—*Continue earnestly in prayer, being vigilant in it with thanksgiving; ³ meanwhile praying also for us, that God would open to us a door for the word, to speak the mystery of Christ, for which I am also in chains, ⁴ that I may make it manifest, as I ought to speak.*
 - d) 2nd Thessalonians 3:1—*Finally, brethren, pray for us, that the word of the Lord may run swiftly and be glorified, just as it is with you,*
 - e) Philemon 1:6—*that the sharing of your faith may become effective by the acknowledgment of every good thing which is in you in Christ Jesus.*