

2 CORINTHIANS - (Chapter 4)

The Light of Christ's Gospel (vs. 1-6)

This is one of the most impactful chapters in the life of pastors, ministers, evangelists, missionaries, deacons, servant leaders...this chapter focusses on maintaining a heart for the work of the ministry in the face of challenges and it calls for wholehearted faithfulness to God and Trust in God to provide everything you need to accomplish His purpose for your life. This chapter helps keep us from becoming discouraged in our Christian service. In chapter 4 Paul alludes to a group of Greek philosophers called “*Sophists*” who were well known in that era for traveling from town to town selling their teachings and seeking to solicit funds from the people as they strived to gain the largest followings...this is very similar in our day with *non-called by God self-proclaimed prophets and prophetesses; evangelist*. Pay attention to the message preached – the lesson taught – always be a Berean after you have been taught/preached to. Be careful of people who merely talk but don’t walk you through the text.

Vs. 1 - Paul preached his gospel boldly. When Paul considered the greatness of his calling, it gave him the heart to face all his difficulties. Believers remain positive in ministry because they realize they are divinely commissioned by God to proclaim the gospel. If you are called by God to teach and preach then

you have a ministry received not one achieved. The word ***“therefore”*** refers to the ministry of the new covenant of Jesus the Christ and this new covenant is what helped Paul continue in ministry despite difficulties. Paul realized it was God who called him to service; therefore he was not to “lose heart” or not to become weary and abandon what he was called to do. Matter of fact this same Paul who wrote Galatians said in ***Galatians 6:9*** *“Let us not grow weary while doing good, for in due season we shall reap if we do not lose heart.”* So the reward to this type of victory comes with not quitting the ministry. The ancient Greek word for the phrase *“lose heart”* refers to not only a lack of courage but of bad behavior and evil conduct. You know it is so awesome to know the God of this universe selected us to do what we’ve been called and spiritually gifted to do...this should motivate us to press on even when it seems like you’re working all by yourself...even when people talk about and lie on you...they did not commission you; God did, so go do what God has called you to do. It is not man’s approval you should seek but God’s approval.

Vs. 2 – The phrases *“renounced the hidden things of shame”*, not *“walking in craftiness”* nor *“handling the word of God deceitfully”* – reflect Paul preached the gospel with accuracy, clarity, depth, and truth. The word ***“renounced”*** means to ***repent*** – to turn away from one thing to a totally different thing.

Shame in this verse refers to that which is disgraceful to God's word. **Hidden things** refers to the sins you do when you think no one is watching or observing you...things like pornography, secret affairs, and gossip. When one is saved they are saved from the **penalty of sin** (Justification) and then they receive the Holy Spirit to allow them to live in the Sanctification phase (being saved from the power of sin). *The message that we must repent and be converted is sorely missing in the church...*with equal vigor as we preach grace, mercy, and love we must preach confession and repentance of sin. The major issue with preaching about repentance for many churches/pastors is some refuse to call what God calls sin – just what it is, SIN. This text reflects why homosexuality is a great divider in the church at large...the church once agreed and called homosexuality and same sex marriage sin...but that is not true today...the *Great Apostasy is before us and the issue of homosexuality is one of the issues that opened the door...*if you do not think something is sin; you will not ask God for forgiveness thus, you will not repent. “**Craftiness**” speaks of a cunning readiness to adopt any device or trickery for the achievement of ends which are anything but godly. It refers to using Scripture out of context for personal gain. When Paul talks about the phrase “**by manifestation of the truth**”: Paul preached an openly true gospel. Anyone could look at what Paul preached and see the plain truth of it. He did not preach an

elaborate system of hidden mysteries. Paul promotes the Berean thought process regarding when he teaches. Regarding the phrase “commending ourselves to every man’s conscience” - Paul preached a gospel of integrity. Anyone could look at Paul’s gospel and ministry, then judge it by his or her own conscience and see that it was full of integrity. Now some men attacked Paul with words and some attacked him with actions. Nevertheless, Paul knew both his ministry and his message found approval in the conscience of every man, even if he would not admit it. Regarding the phrase “in the sight of God” - Paul preached his gospel before God. It was important to Paul to know every man’s conscience would approve his manner of ministry, but it was far more important to know that what he did was right in the sight of God.

Vs. 3-4 – Regarding the phrase “Even if our gospel is veiled, it is veiled to those who are perishing” - if people do not respond to this glorious gospel, it isn’t Paul’s fault or his gospel’s fault. Only those who are perishing miss the message. The blindness of unbelievers in no way detracts from the clearness of the gospel for the sun is no less resplendent because the blind do not perceive its light. The problem of the gospel lies in the hearts and minds of those who reject the gospel not in the message. Paul earlier said in 1 Corinthians 1:18 - *“For the foolishness of the cross is foolishness to those whom are perishing, but to those who are being saved it is the power of God.”* Paul goes on to say those

whose mind the god of this age has blinded are perishing and those whom the gospel is veiled have been *blinded by Satan, the god of this age*. Satan is a pseudo ‘little g god’ – he is not in ultimate control nor does he have the final say on anything...because, the earth is the Lord’s, and all its fullness, the world and those who dwell therein (*Psalm 24:1*). Now don’t fool yourself...Satan is far more powerful than man but He is no match for God. Satan is a defeated being. This age refers to this world’s current mindset expressed by their ungodly – unscriptural ideals, laws, goals, and viewpoints. And those who have allowed themselves to be blinded by Satan this doesn’t mean they are innocent victims of Satan’s blinding work. Satan’s work upon them is not the only reason they are blinded. John 3:19 says, *this is the condemnation, that the light has come into the world, and men loved darkness rather than light, because their deeds were evil. Though men love the darkness, and choose the darkness, Satan still works hard to keep them blinded to the glorious gospel of light and salvation in Jesus*. Notice the text says *the minds of the unbelieving that are blinded*. Of course, Satan also works on the heart and the emotions of the lost, but his main battleground is the mind. This also is why God has chosen the word to transmit the gospel, because the word touches our minds and it can touch the minds the god of this age (Satan) has blinded. Regarding the phrase “*who do not believe*”- Satan is able only to

blind the minds of the unbelieving. Regarding the phrase *“lest the light of the gospel of the glory of Christ”... should shine on them* - to see this glory is to be saved. Therefore, Satan directs his energies into blinding men from ever seeing the light of the gospel of the glory of Christ. This is why prayer should come from the lips of the saved especially, during the invitation to discipleship phase of the worship service. When we understand Satan’s strategy with unbelievers this should affect how we pray for the lost. We should ask God to shine His light, to bind the blinding work of Satan, and to give faith to overcome the unbelief that invites the blinding.

Vs. 5-6 – the phrase *“we do not preach ourselves”* - Paul didn’t climb into the pulpit or stand before an audience to preach himself. He wasn’t important and he wasn’t the focus. *Jesus was the focus*, so Paul could strongly say, we do not preach ourselves. Instead, the focus must be on Christ Jesus the Lord. He is the one to preach about! Not everyone who opens a Bible and starts talking is preaching Christ Jesus the Lord. Many well-intentioned preachers actually preach themselves instead of Jesus. If the focus is on the funny stories or the touching life experiences of the preacher, he may be preaching himself. If we are preaching Christ that means we are in the text...we are explaining the meaning of the text. The preacher himself can’t bring you to God and save your eternal soul; only Jesus can. So preach Jesus! Now there is nothing

wrong in our teaching and preaching to use illustrations but the focus of the illustration must be Jesus – it must help one see Jesus. Paul’s main objective was presenting Christ Jesus the Lord...When a man is brought to recognize Jesus Christ as Lord, and to love and worship Him as such, then he becomes like Christ. In vs. 6 when Paul says, *“who has shone in our hearts”* this describes Paul’s own conversion from Acts 9:1-9. On his way to Damascus to persecute and kill Christians, suddenly a light shone around him from heaven. This was the first encounter with Jesus in the life of Saul of Tarsus (also known later as the Apostle Paul). This should be a good way to describe every Christian: people with shining hearts. Now what exactly has God shone in our hearts? It is the light of the knowledge of the glory of God. Every Christian should have some knowledge of the glory of God. If one is a Christian and can say, “I really know nothing of the light of the knowledge of the glory of God,” then he or she should seek God earnestly so that He would shine it in their heart. Regarding the phrase *“In the face of Jesus Christ”* - we come to the knowledge of the glory of God by seeing it in the face of Jesus. God gave us a display, a picture, a representation of His glory: His Son, Jesus Christ. Jesus said, He who has seen Me has seen the Father (*John 14:9*). He also prayed that we would see His glory, the glory of God the Father: that they may behold My glory which You have given Me (*John 17:24*). John chapter affirms Jesus is

also the “Word” so we see Jesus as we read, study, meditate on, and pray back His word.

Cast Down but not Unconquered (vs. 7-15)

Vs. 7 - Paul begins **vs. 7** with the word “but” to illuminate the contrast between the supremely valuable message of salvation which can ONLY be found in Jesus the Christ, but God has entrusted it to frail and fallible human beings - Paul’s focus was not on the perishable earthen vessels but on its priceless content of God’s power dwelling in us. Also, this immense discrepancy between the treasure and the earthen vessel serve to prove that human weakness presents no barrier to the purposes of God... **2 Corinthians 12:9** affirms that God’s power is made perfect in weakness. God does not call the qualified; He qualifies those He calls. Regarding the phrase *“and not of us”* earthen vessels have nothing in which to boast; we have no basis for feeling superior. If you have ever taken your child to a birthday party often times they have a piñata - it’s made of material like an earthen vessels in that its common, fragile, and its easily broken...the kids are excited to see the piñata but the real reason for their joy is because of the treasure that is inside of the piñata - not the outside package no matter how colorful it is...it is what’s inside of the piñata that gives the piñata significance, worth and

value...a piñata without the “good treasure” inside of it is just paper - it has not real value. And to get to the treasure of the piñata we have to do what...it has to be beaten and broken - the “treasure” within it is then released...*the treasure is poured out, much to the delight of those seeking it.* You see when you and I begin to humble ourselves and begin to minister to God’s people and worship – Then, the gifts of the spirit – the treasure that God has placed in us...flows from us and can be received by others...It is not by the exalting of the messenger that God’s power and glory is revealed...No, it is by breaking the container that holds the treasure...when its broken the treasure can be released and dispensed.

Vs. 8 – the phrase “hard pressed” means afflicted – agitated. Now whether we like it or not occasional “suffering” is a part of the Christian journey – Paul said in Philippians 1:29 – *“For to you it has been granted on behalf of Christ, not only to Believe in Him, but also to Suffer for His sake.”* Now the good news is that God will not allow us to suffer beyond what He is willing to help us bear – You see sometimes - in order for God to Make us - He has to Break us - because Brokenness allow failure so that Success can be Found - Brokenness crucifies self so the Holy Spirit may reign supreme - God often times uses Brokenness to bring about blessing in the life of the Believer. Even though we are hard pressed on every side don’t forget what John 4:4 says, *Greater is He*

that is in me than he that is of this world. Paul then says in vs. 8 – we are Perplexed, but not in Despair. Well, the Greek word translated for Perplexed carries the idea of to be at a loss. You see contrary to what you hear some preachers, evangelists, or even those in laity say...our words cannot override the sovereignty of God...we cannot pray over the sovereignty of God's purpose for your life. If it's the will of God for you to have cancer you are going to have cancer...if it's the will of God for you to lose your job – you are going to lose your job...and as perplexing as it may be at the time...no matter how much initial despair it brings us, God is sovereign...but the good news is that God's will is for our good and His glory. Nothing happens to you unless God allows it. Remember what Jesus said during His sermon on the mount in *Matthew 6:10-11* *“Blessed are those who are persecuted for righteousness sake for theirs is the kingdom of heaven. Blessed are you when they revile and persecute you, and say all kinds of evil against you falsely for My sake.”* Now man may reject us and our message; but as Christians, we are never completely abandoned because God's word assures us we are never alone - though the whole world seems against us and the message of the gospel we proclaim - we just need to lift up Jesus and He will do the drawing.

Vs. 9 - Paul says *“we're struck down but not destroyed”* - You see if a brother or sister fall due to sin or to the seemingly over bearing weight of

ministry...when God's people gather around him/her - meaning they pray for that one - God will not allow them to be destroyed but rather, in His perfect timing God will Restore that one...now as a side note, Paul is not assuring us that we will never die a martyr's death, but rather if we die, and have accepted Jesus as our Lord and Savior, we can be assured of our future resurrection. Now this literally happened to Paul in Lystra (*Acts 14:19-20*). In essence Paul is assuring us in vs. 8-9 in life there will be valleys. Paul is alerting us in the valley is where you will learn many life lessons...because a valley will highlight for you, who you are and who your real friends are.

Vs. 10/11 - By writing "*always carrying about in the body the dying of the Lord Jesus*" - Paul meant that he felt as if the death of Jesus was being spiritually worked inside of him. *He is saying that the death of Jesus was not only a historical fact, it also was a spiritual reality in his life.* The phrase "*always delivered to death*" – Paul knew the spiritual riches that he brought to the Corinthian Christians came in part through the death-like suffering he endured in ministry. God made Paul more effective in ministry through his suffering...too many people want the limelight in ministry but they fail to understand the testing/braking/suffering that must come first if you are being lifted and raised by God for kingdom advancement. In *Philippians 3:10*, Paul speaks about the glory of knowing Jesus: *that I may know Him and the power*

of His resurrection, and the fellowship of His sufferings, being conformed to His death. Many long to know the power of His resurrection but want nothing to do with the fellowship of His sufferings or being conformed to His death. However, there are certain fragrances God can only release through a broken vial, so Paul rejoiced in knowing both the suffering and the glory. He knew the two were connected. *Paul is teaching us no cross no crown.*

Vs. 12 – Paul’s facing death would result in the Corinthians coming to know Christ. This is why missionaries and evangelist go to the outer reaches of the world to reach unsaved people groups fully knowing the danger. But when you are secure in your faith and the fact heaven awaits the saved; you know to live is Christ but to die is gain. We must also know until we finish God’s mission and purpose for our life nothing can take us ought.

Vs. 13 – In vs. 13-15 Paul is making a point that believers remain positive in ministry because they realize the surpassing assurances that accompany faith in God. These assurances allow Christians to continue in ministry without discouragement, disillusionment, or failure. In **vs. 13** Paul finds support in the kind of faith the psalmist expressed when He declared that God saved him when he was caught in dire circumstances (Psalm 116:1-19). If you can’t say “we also believe,” then you should not speak. “That is one great secret of

power and success in the Christian ministry. If you do not believe, shut your mouth.

Vs. 14 – Paul rested in what he knew about God not how he felt at the moment. The assurance of the resurrection is a foundational building block for those in ministry called out by God. Read Romans 8:36-37. The assurance of Jesus’ resurrection gave Paul the certainty that he too would be resurrected and would live in eternity with God.

Vs. 15 – Paul had faced suffering, trials, and distress as he preached the Good News. But he knew that they would one day be over, and he would obtain God’s rest and rewards. Paul was also upheld in his ministry by faith’s assurance that while his sufferings and afflictions would be multiplied, the loving-kindness of God would reach to more and more people and thereby result in increased thanksgiving and praise to God. This is an area the modern church need to review...because so many quit ministry or become despondent from what God has called them to do the moment trials become hard. We must understand everyone will not like you – everyone will not be your friend, even people who smile with you can be your chief enemy...when we know this; when it happens we don’t lose faith nor quit our mission for the Lord.

Seeing the Invisible (vs. 16-18)

Vs. 16 - *“Therefore”* rather than quitting when these difficult times emerge...we must concentrate on the inner strength that comes from the Holy Spirit...don't let fatigue or criticism – don't allow anything to rob you of the joy that should be experienced in ministry because God called you to it. What we all have to do sometimes is what David did in 1 Samuel 30:6 – But David strengthened himself in the Lord. Paul and David teach us a crisis does not make a person; a crisis shows what a person is made of...and a crisis will reflect just how much “Christ” is in you. Regarding the phrase *“even though our outward man is perishing, yet the inward man is being renewed day by day”* - another reason why Paul does not lose heart is because although his suffering takes a toll on the *outward man*, yet, the *inward man* is being renewed and blessed. The outward man has the same idea as earthen vessels in *2 Corinthians 4:7* and mortal flesh in *2 Corinthians 4:11*. The message is the same: “On the outside, we are suffering and taking a beating, but on the inside, God is blessing and renewing us!” In order for God to make us He must break us. You can't experience this if you are not: Exercising Spiritual Disciplines, Guarding your behavior (Philippians 2:5), using your spiritual gift (1 Peter 4:10); learn how to worship when you are perplexed (Psalm 100 –

Acts 16:25); learn to live in expectancy that God will deliver you in His perfect timing (1 John 5:14-15).

Vs. 17 – When Paul writes, he does not write as a kindergartner in the school of suffering – he had an advanced graduate degree. He described some of his suffering with these terms in 2 Corinthians 11:23-28 (get reader to read aloud). And those were just the *physical, outward sufferings* – what about the *spiritual burdens he bore and spiritual attacks he faced*? “This rich theology of suffering was forged on the anvil of his own experiences of ‘the sufferings of Christ.’ So when Paul writes our light affliction, we can know God means our light affliction. If Paul could say his affliction was light, then what is ours. And why is our affliction light and not heavy? Because of what God accomplishes in us through our affliction, “*a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory.*” The Scriptures are clear – *Romans 8:17* says “if indeed we suffer with Him, that we may also be glorified together.” Glory is tied to suffering, and God will accomplish in us a glory far heavier than any affliction we have suffered here. “Affliction is not something to be endured in order to reach glory. It is the very process which creates the glory. Through travail comes birth.” Regarding the phrase “weight of glory” it isn’t easy to appreciate the weight of glory because it is an eternal weight. Often, the problem isn’t so much in what we think about our light affliction but in that

we think so little of our coming weight of glory. We are microwave people – we want everything here and now...whereas the greatest is later.

Vs. 18 – Regarding the phrase “*we do not look at the things which are seen, but at the things which are not seen*”- Paul meant this especially about his own life and ministry. In the world’s eyes, Paul’s life was an incredible failure. At the height of a career that would reach much higher, he left it all for a life of hardship, suffering and persecution, with eventual martyrdom. Paul recognized that the world only sees the outward, not the unseen eternal things. When we look at the things which are seen, all we see is our light affliction, and then it doesn’t seem very light! But when we look at the things which are not seen, then we see and appreciate the eternal weight of glory. Paul isn’t saying that all afflictions automatically produce glory. *Some of our affliction is we are reaping what we have sown*...but even in that, God shows grace and mercy when we repent. If we will look to the things which are not seen then our affliction will work in us an eternal weight of glory. Our ultimate hope when we are experiencing terrible illness, persecution, or pain is the realization that this life is not all there is. There is life after death. Knowing that we will live forever with God in a place without sin and suffering can help us live above the pain that we face in this life.