

Parson to Person

2 Corinthians 4 – Part 1

(Truth and Error—Light and Darkness: The Consequences)

“Therefore, since we have this ministry, as we have received mercy, we do not lose heart. But we have renounced the hidden things of shame, not walking in craftiness nor handling the word of God deceitfully, but by manifestation of the truth commending ourselves to every man’s conscience in the sight of God. But even if our gospel is veiled, it is veiled to those who are perishing, whose minds the god of this age has blinded, who do not believe, lest the light of the gospel of the glory of Christ, who is the image of God, should shine on them. For we do not preach ourselves, but Christ Jesus the Lord, and ourselves your bondservants for Jesus’ sake. For it is the God who commanded light to 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.

But we have this treasure in earthen vessels, that the excellence of the power may be of God and not of us. We are hard-pressed on every side, yet not crushed; we are perplexed, but not in despair; persecuted, but not forsaken; struck down, but not destroyed—always carrying about in the body the dying of the Lord Jesus, that the life of Jesus also may be manifested in our body. For we who live are always delivered to death for Jesus’ sake, that the life of Jesus also may be manifested in our mortal flesh. So then death is working in us, but life in you.

And since we have the same spirit of faith, according to what is written, ‘I believed and therefore I spoke,’ we also believe and therefore speak, knowing that He who raised up the Lord Jesus will also raise us up with Jesus, and will present us with you. For all things are for your sakes, that grace, having spread through the many, may cause thanksgiving to abound to the glory of God.

Therefore we do not lose heart. Even though our outward man is perishing, yet the inward man is being renewed day by day. For our light affliction, which is but for a moment, is working for us a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory, while we do not look at the things which are seen, but at the things which are not seen. For the things which are seen are temporary, but the things which are not seen are eternal” (2 Corinthians 4).

A Continuing Defense

In a continuation and continuity of thought (from chapter 3), Paul contrasted himself (and his co-laborers) to the false teachers/apostles who were boasting of themselves. He wrote that he (they) had *“renounced the hidden things of shame, not walking in craftiness nor handling the word of God deceitfully”* (vs. 2). He wrote, *“we do not preach ourselves, but Christ Jesus the Lord, and ourselves your bondservants for Jesus’ sake”* (vs. 5), declaring that *“the power may be of God and not of us”* (vs. 7).

The false teachers were manipulating the Corinthians by twisting and deceitfully teaching the word of God in order to gain the affection and allegiance of the Corinthian church. Moreover, they were *“preaching”* themselves in order to call the Corinthians to self-focused self-adulation. To the contrary, Paul understood that the ministry was not, and is not, about the preacher—but about the Lord. Paul knew that there is no God-sent *“power”* in a false gospel or in the praise of men. The power of God rests upon the truth of the word—and that the anointing of the Holy Spirit rests upon those who proclaim the truth in the integrity of a God-focused Gospel.

Opposition

There was no question about the difficulties of preaching the truth as it will always be accompanied by difficulties and opposition. Thus his motivation was dependent upon the fact that he and his co-

laborers had “*received mercy,*” and, therefore, they were focused and did not (would not) “*lose heart.*”

A.W. Tozer once wrote, “*Now, I might say that a man is known by his friends. I think that’s generally understood. But the opposite is also true, a man is known by his enemies. No man is worth his salt but will have enemies. If he does not have enemies, then he’s not doing anything.*” This fact was certainly true of Paul. The persecution he (and the other apostles) endured is the proof. Therefore, amidst persecution, he and his co-laborers were “*perplexed, but not in despair; persecuted, but not forsaken; struck down, but not destroyed—always carrying about in the body the dying of the Lord Jesus, that the life of Jesus also may be manifested in our body. For we who live are always delivered to death for Jesus’ sake, that the life of Jesus also may be manifested in our mortal flesh*” (8b–11), and concluded with the thought, “*Even though our outward man is perishing, yet the inward man is being renewed day by day. For our light affliction, which is but for a moment, is working for us a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory*” (16b–17).

Paul knew that he carried the gospel “*treasure in earthen vessels, that the excellence of the power may be of God and not of us*” (7b). We too must do the same.

Many ministries today are built on the flesh, on false teaching, and on temporal things. Far too many preachers are teaching the “*here and now*” rather than the glories of the future.

No Controversy—I’m Building a Church?

I have learned that many churches don’t touch prophecy for they find it too controversial. Too many preachers won’t teach the glories of the true Gospel and/or the details of the New Covenant—because they are building a name for themselves, building a “*church,*” and seeking to fill the pews. Furthermore, the result of a

human-centric Gospel misses the impact of the entirety of the word of God (from Genesis to Revelation), failing to declare that the Bible is a book about redemption from this cursed earthly sojourn that points us to the glories of those things future—granted by the power of God.

Blinded “from” the Light

In the midst of this chapter (coupled together with chapter 3), Paul pointed out a very interesting hidden gem. He wrote, *“But even if our gospel is veiled, it is veiled to those who are perishing, whose minds the god of this age has blinded, who do not believe, lest the light of the gospel of the glory of Christ, who is the image of God, should shine on them”* (vss. 3–4).

In study we understand the following:

- 1) The “veil” used to cover the face of Moses was literal and physical—as it sheltered the people of Israel from the radiance of Moses' face after being exposed to the presence of God (Exodus 34:35).
- 2) The “veil” was illustrative yet spiritual—as it prevented the Jews from noting the fading glory of the Old Covenant that was soon to give place to the New (3:13).
- 3) The “veil” is presently obscuring the unbelieving Jews from understanding when reading the Old Testament (3:14)—thus preventing them from seeing the truths found therein.
- 4) The rebellious who have rejected the Gospel today have a “veil” of Satan-assisted blindness *“lest the light of the gospel of the glory of Christ, who is the image of God, should shine on them”* (vs. 4).

What a tragedy! The rebellious are blinded “from” the light—through their own willful suppression of the truth. However, *“when*

one turns to the Lord, the veil is taken away” (3:16b) for “the veil is taken away in Christ” (3:14c).

For this reason, Paul and his companions endured, pressed on, contended... for (as he put it) *“our light affliction, which is but for a moment, is working for us a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory”* (vs. 17).

No Defense Needed, But...

Paul’s defense for himself was really a defense for the Gospel. He contended not for himself but for the people he served and for the glory of God.

I love you all,
Pastor Paul