

Parson to Person
2 Corinthians 4 – Part 2
(Mercy Received—Mercy Given)

“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).

Motivation for Service—Mercy

“Therefore, since we have this ministry, as we have received mercy, we do not lose heart” (vs. 1).

Having a true understanding of who Paul was (both pre-Christian as a Jew and then as an elect bondservant to Jesus) gives deep understanding to his explained motivation for endurance in ministry. He saw himself as the “chief of sinners” (persecuting the Church—and thus Jesus Himself) and “the least of the apostles” (as called, late in time—by special intervention). However, Paul, knowing the pit from which he had been drawn, and the mercy (unmerited redemption from the well-deserved penalty he would have rightly suffered) granted him, was compelled to a higher level of determination than that of many others.

Truly one must recognize the truth of Jesus’ words to Simon Peter:

“And Jesus answered and said to him, ‘Simon, I have something to say to you.’ So he said, ‘Teacher, say it.’ ‘There was a certain creditor who had two debtors. One owed five hundred denarii, and the other fifty. And when they had nothing with which to repay, he freely forgave them both. Tell Me, therefore, which of them will love him more?’ Simon answered and said, ‘I suppose the one whom he forgave more.’ And He said to him, ‘You have rightly judged.’ ‘But to whom little is forgiven, the same loves little’” (Luke 7:40–43, 47b).

Paul was forgiven much and loved much. Therefore, we can see in him a perseverance encouraged by the right focus on God's granted mercy. He was motivated by the reception of mercy!

Motivation for Service—Love

Many years ago I was asked if I loved the Lord. The question shook me.

I was a believer and had been “born again”—for at the least several months. However, I did not know true love for the Lord. I knew the forgiveness of “sins,” but had not truly reflected upon the grotesque nature and costliness of *my* sins. I wanted to get to heaven and knew that I was assured the future, other-worldly home promised me in the Gospel by faith, but had not grasped the greatness of the price Jesus paid for me—for us. I knew that Jesus had died for me, but not until an extensive study of the events leading up to the cross and the long six hours He spent on the “tree” did I come to see His passion—His passion for me! In fact, no believer really loves the Lord until they come to see the depth of their sins and the greatness of the price Jesus paid to redeem us.

Paul loved the Lord. His love for Jesus motivated him—even more than the love he had for his “*countrymen according to the flesh*” (the Jews) or the nations to whom he was called. He loved the Lord by virtue of the revelation of who he (Paul) was—and the mercy received by grace alone, through faith alone, in Christ alone, as declared in the Scriptures alone, for the glory of God alone.

Me too!

The Psalmist wrote the words only I could wish to have written:

“I love the LORD, because He has heard My voice and my supplications. Because He has inclined His ear to me, therefore I will

call upon Him as long as I live. The pains of death surrounded me, and the pangs of Sheol laid hold of me; I found trouble and sorrow. Then I called upon the name of the LORD: ‘O LORD, I implore You, deliver my soul!’ Gracious is the LORD, and righteous; Yes, our God is merciful. The LORD preserves the simple; I was brought low, and He saved me. Return to your rest, O my soul, for the LORD has dealt bountifully with you. For You have delivered my soul from death, My eyes from tears, and my feet from falling. I will walk before the LORD in the land of the living. I believed, therefore I spoke, ‘I am greatly afflicted.’ I said in my haste, ‘All men are liars.’ What shall I render to the LORD for all His benefits toward me? I will take up the cup of salvation, and call upon the name of the LORD. I will pay my vows to the LORD now in the presence of all His people” (Psalm 116:1–14).

I will serve the Lord—motivated by love, as the result of mercy.

Motivation for Service—and Eternal Perspective

Paul closes this chapter with the voice of endurance.

“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” (vss. 16–18).

May the Lord call us all to greater devotion as He reveals in us the nature of the Son of His love.

I love you all,
Pastor Paul