

***Returning to the Authentic Gospel
Restoring Our Faith – Courageous Ministry
2 Corinthians 4:1-6***

Ministry in God's Kingdom has always carried with it Privilege, Pressure and Persecution...

Privilege...

2 Corinthians 2:14 (ESV) — But thanks be to God, who in Christ always leads us in triumphal procession, and through us spreads the fragrance of the knowledge of him everywhere.

2 Corinthians 3:18 (ESV) — And we all, with unveiled face, beholding the glory of the Lord, are being transformed into the same image from one degree of glory to another. For this comes from the Lord who is the Spirit.

Pressure...

2 Corinthians 7:5 (ESV) — For even when we came into Macedonia, our bodies had no rest, but we were afflicted at every turn—fighting without and fear within.

2 Corinthians 11:28–29 (ESV) — And, apart from other things, there is the daily pressure on me of my anxiety for all the churches. Who is weak, and I am not weak? Who is made to fall, and I am not indignant?

Persecution...

2 Corinthians 1:8 (ESV) — For we do not want you to be unaware, brothers, of the affliction we experienced in Asia. For we were so utterly burdened beyond our strength that we despaired of life itself.

So natural are these things that Paul declared to Timothy...

2 Timothy 3:12 (ESV) — Indeed, all who desire to live a godly life in Christ Jesus will be persecuted

These realities cause many to cower and compromise, but the call of God is for great COURAGE!

In these first six verses of 2 Corinthians 4, Paul lays out for us FIVE realities for COURAGEOUS MINISTRY...

Courageous Ministry Comes...

1. From the HEART...

2 Corinthians 4:1 (ESV) — Therefore, having this ministry by the mercy of God, we do not lose heart.

To “lose heart” means to “become disheartened”...

2 Corinthians 4:16 (ESV) — So we do not lose heart. Though our outer self is wasting away, our inner self is being renewed day by day.

Luke 18:1 (ESV) — And he told them a parable to the effect that they ought always to pray and not lose heart.

Galatians 6:9 (ESV) — And let us not grow weary of doing good, for in due season we will reap, if we do not give up.

2 Thessalonians 3:13 (ESV) — As for you, brothers, do not grow weary in doing good.

Because courageous ministry must come from the heart, we must guard our hearts!

Proverbs 4:23 (NLT) — Guard your heart above all else, for it determines the course of your life.

One way to not “lose heart” would be to keep the heart disengaged from ministry...

This might guarantee that you won’t get too hurt, but it also means that you will be ineffective in ministry!

We do not guard our hearts from pains, but we guard our hearts from Satan’s deceptions!

Another name for Courageous ministry from the heart is COMPASSION

Compassion is not simply an emotion of the soul, but an overflow of God’s heart for others

Compassion means “to suffer together with another”

Matthew 9:36 (ESV) — When he saw the crowds, he had compassion for them, because they were harassed and helpless, like sheep without a shepherd.

Courageous Ministry Comes...

1. From the HEART...

2. With complete HONESTY...

2 Corinthians 4:2 (ESV) — But we have renounced disgraceful, underhanded ways. We refuse to practice cunning or to tamper with God’s word, but by the open statement of the truth we would commend ourselves to everyone’s conscience in the sight of God.

To minister with complete honesty we must first BREAK ALL DISHONESTY!

➤ **RENOUNCE DISGRACEFUL activities**

But we have renounced disgraceful, underhanded ways.

➤ **REFUSE DECEPTIVE practices**

... We refuse to practice cunning...

➤ **REJECT DISTORTING God’s Word**

... or to tamper with God’s word...

Paul begins by telling what he DOESN’T do, but then follows by telling what he DOES do!

2 Corinthians 4:2 (ESV) — ... but by the open statement of the truth we would commend ourselves to everyone’s conscience in the sight of God.

The phrase, “by the open statement of the truth...” literally means...

“by the manifestation of the truth”

First, what is “THE TRUTH”?

In this context, Paul is referring to God’s Word...

2 Corinthians 4:2 (ESV) — But we have renounced disgraceful, underhanded ways. We refuse to practice cunning or to tamper with God’s word, but by the open statement of the truth we would commend ourselves to everyone’s conscience in the sight of God.

So Paul is declaring, ...

“By the manifestation/unveiling of God’s Word we would recommend ourselves to everyone’s conscience before God.”

Another way of understanding Paul’s statement here regarding his honesty...

“Before God we unveil God’s Word to the hearts of all people”

The Courageous Minister realizes that he/she preaches to an audience of ONE!

Hebrews 13:17 (ESV) — Obey your leaders and submit to them, for they are keeping watch over your souls, as those who will have to give an account. Let them do this with joy and not with groaning, for that would be of no advantage to you.

2 Timothy 2:15 (ESV) — Do your best to present yourself to God as one approved, a worker who has no need to be ashamed, rightly handling the word of truth.

Courageous Ministry Comes...

1. From the HEART...

2. With complete HONESTY...

3. Against demonic HINDRANCE...

2 Corinthians 4:3-4 (ESV) — And even if our gospel is veiled, it is veiled to those who are perishing. 4 In their case the god of this world has blinded the minds of the unbelievers, to keep them from seeing the light of the gospel of the glory of Christ, who is the image of God.

Satan hates the Gospel of Christ!

He knows Jesus came to destroy his kingdom!

1 John 3:8 (ESV) — ... The reason the Son of God appeared was to destroy the works of the devil.

He knows the Gospel is dismantling his kingdom!

Colossians 1:13 (ESV) — He has delivered us from the domain of darkness and transferred us to the kingdom of his beloved Son

He knows we have divine power against his kingdom!

2 Corinthians 10:3–5 (ESV) — For though we walk in the flesh, we are not waging war according to the flesh. For the weapons of our warfare are not of the flesh but have divine power to destroy strongholds. We destroy arguments and

every lofty opinion raised against the knowledge of God, and take every thought captive to obey Christ

Listen to Jesus' command & commission to Paul in sending him to preach the gospel to the Gentiles...

Acts 26:18 (ESV) — To open their eyes, so that they may turn from darkness to light and from the power of Satan to God, that they may receive forgiveness of sins and a place among those who are sanctified by faith in me.

Therefore, Courageous Ministry always faces demonic hindrances!

Ephesians 6:12 (ESV) — For we do not wrestle against flesh and blood, but against the rulers, against the authorities, against the cosmic powers over this present darkness, against the spiritual forces of evil in the heavenly places.

Dr. Michael Brown recently stated that if believers don't have a target on their back then they have either compromised or been silent through cowardice.

In his article he states...

- ***If you speak up for the unborn, you will be targeted.***
- ***If you uphold marriage and family as God intended, you will be targeted.***
- ***If you engage in effective outreach to the lost, you will be targeted.***
- ***If you claim salvation is only through Jesus, you will be targeted.***
- ***If you resist LGBT activism in the schools, you will be targeted.***

- ***If you preach the Word of God, with brokenness and humility but without compromise or dilution, you will be targeted.***

Courageous Ministry Comes...

1. From the HEART...

2. With complete HONESTY...

3. Against demonic HINDRANCE...

4. In all HUMILITY...

2 Corinthians 4:5 (ESV) — For what we proclaim is not ourselves, but Jesus Christ as Lord, with ourselves as your servants for Jesus' sake.

Courageous ministers are not your SAVIORS, God is!

Nor are they your SOVEREIGN, God is!

Courageous ministers are your SERVANTS... for Jesus' sake!

Philippians 2:3–5 (ESV) — Do nothing from selfish ambition or conceit, but in humility count others more significant than yourselves. Let each of you look not only to his own interests, but also to the interests of others. Have this mind among yourselves, which is yours in Christ Jesus

Courageous Ministry builds Jesus' Church!

Matthew 16:16–18 (ESV) — Simon Peter replied, "You are the Christ, the Son of the living God." And Jesus answered

him, “Blessed are you, Simon Bar-Jonah! For flesh and blood has not revealed this to you, but my Father who is in heaven. And I tell you, you are Peter, and on this rock I will build my church, and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it.

Courageous Ministry Comes...

1. From the HEART...

2. With complete HONESTY...

3. Against demonic HINDRANCE...

4. In all HUMILITY...

5. Through God’s illuminating HOLINESS.

2 Corinthians 4:6 (ESV) — For God, who said, “Let light shine out of darkness,” has shone in our hearts to give the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ.

The first recorded words of God in creation...

Genesis 1:3 (ESV) — And God said, “Let there be light,” and there was light.

The first recorded works of God in unleashing His new creation...

John 1:4–5 (ESV) — In him was life, and the life was the light of men. The light shines in the darkness, and the darkness has not overcome it.

Colossians 1:13 (ESV) — He has delivered us from the domain of darkness and transferred us to the kingdom of his beloved Son

Ephesians 5:8 (ESV) — For at one time you were darkness, but now you are light in the Lord. Walk as children of light

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Courageous Ministry comes...

1. From the _____...

2. With complete _____...

➤ _____ activities

➤ _____ practices

➤ _____ God's Word

3. Against demonic _____...

4. In all _____...

5. Through God's illuminating _____.