

A Study in II Corinthians

Strength in Weakness

Chapter Four - Lesson Five

Paul's Ministry Vindicated (1-5): In the previous chapter Paul underscored how he and his coworkers were the "able ministers of the New Testament" (3:6). This calling was not of self will but of God who called them (3:5 cf. 4:1). Now therefore, Paul throughout this chapter will vindicate his ministry.

Paul and his companions have renounced or rejected the hidden things of dishonesty, not walking in craftiness, nor have they handled the Word of God deceitfully (2). The implication is that there had been some who did such things. However, Paul and his companions did not. They made manifest the truth, commending themselves to every man's conscience in the sight of God (2). Paul preached truth, he did not preach philosophy or psychology or motivational speaking but TRUTH.

The god of this world is the one who blinds the minds of those that believe not (3-4). The god of this world, Satan, blinds the unsaved through his tactics. False worship, false religions, false doctrines, false science, fables, and many more are such tactics.

Paul did not let the sprinkling of "self" taint the pure Gospel of the grace of God (5) for he was a servant of Christ; he did all things to elevate Christ Jesus his LORD!

Treasure in Earthen Vessels (6-12): Paul uses a biblical truth to bring about a spiritual lesson: "For God, who commanded the light to shine out of darkness, hath shined in our hearts, to give the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ" (6). Paul's point in referencing the creation account is to emphasize the light we have as believers, and more specifically the light Paul and his companions have as those bringing this glorious light to others in the face of Jesus Christ, i.e. by preaching or making known Christ (6).

This light within the believer is hid in an earthen vessel. Is it a vessel of excellency? A vessel of honor and glory? No, it is a vessel of dishonor, a body that is feeble and weak, not eternal. The vessel of course is our outward body. So then how is this "treasure" within us made manifest? It is manifest when our vessel is broken, revealing the light which is inside. Why would such a glorious light be placed in such a weak and fragile

vessel? "That the excellency of the power may be of God and not us" (7). Paul gloried in the cross, and the preaching of the cross, therefore he was willing to endure all things for Christ's sake.

Our earthen vessel, our flesh, desires fleshly things. It is our flesh that would be lifted with pride in seeking attention, glory, and honor, desiring to steal such from God and the Lord Jesus Christ. Therefore, Paul was willing to bear "in the body the dying of the Lord Jesus, that the life also of Jesus might be made manifest in his body" (10-11). Thus, Paul states in verse 16, "For which cause we faint not." Paul was not only willing to suffer for Christ but was willing also to give his life for Christ, that the name of Christ would be preached to all (11-12).

Our Driving Hope (13-18): How is it the Apostle Paul could not only endure such suffering and affliction, but to a certain extent embrace such sufferings for Christ? The answer is in the resurrection. Paul knew that as Christ was raised from the dead, so he would be raised from the dead, at which time he would receive a glorified body. This is the reason Paul and his companions "faint not" (16). This is how he could look at his sufferings as "light affliction" (17). The hope of the resurrection is that "far more exceeding and eternal weight off glory" (17). Thus, Paul looked at the things that are not seen: his resurrection, his glorified body, and the reality that all the redeemed one day will "redound to the glory of God" (15).

This is the answer for all those who are in trials or tribulation; we have the hope of the resurrection and a glorified body, a home in heaven.