

Intro: When you read Paul's letters, especially here in Ch4 of 2Cor. It's as though he's always uncovering a better perspective. We think of the apostle Paul as this elite; larger than life, super hero type Christian that was given special powers to conquer the world for Jesus and pen scripture. As though they just don't make them like that anymore and that was a special calling for those back then. *The bible's already been written and the gospel's been spread so all we really need to do in our day is read a little of it and go to church, maybe tithe ... and live our good little Christian lives till Jesus comes back or we die.*

And thought I know that sounds a little shallow, I believe that's the temptation todays church faces. "I'm not called to preach, therefore I'll leave all that higher calling stuff to the Pastors."

But Jesus' command was to all of us. "Go and make disciples of all nations." Disciples make more disciples. When you first come to the Lord you repent or turn from your old life and begin a new life as someone in the body of Christ begins to disciple you. Meaning mature you, assist you, show you how this life in Christ is lived. In a practical way. "Discipleship is not done from the pulpit" It's done up close and personal, in the backstreets of every day life. And we're all called into the ministry. *Ministry* -- Greek word means service. To Serve! Jesus said a servant is no greater than his master then said the Son of Man did not come to be served but to serve. And to give His life. The commission is not just for the apostles or the evangelists filling up baseball stadiums, or todays Pastors it's for every Christian! We're all called to be discipled then to help and disciples others. (Family, friends, coworkers, kids.)

Now, if you have spent anytime doing your part in that ministry, you've soon realized there's opposition and straight out attack that comes along with it.

With all this as our backdrop, # 1 understanding we all have this ministry or called to serve God in one way or another if it's not simply to just disciple others #2 That though there's opposition to it we're not called to shrink back, we have victory. Then

lets take a look at the perspective Paul gives us as he shares his thoughts concerning "his" ministry and the trials he's endured. As he exhorts us "to not lose heart"

(read 1-2)

- Therefore – application to a previous point. See 2:14-17. 3:4-6; :7-18

1-6 I. **HOW THE GOSPEL SHOULD BE PRESENTED**

A. **Without losing heart nor walking deceitfully**

Paul's been given this specific ministry to spread the gospel and here he begins to show us how that gospel should be presented. First off it's with the right perspective and without losing heart nor walking in deceit.

1. **Therefore , since we have this ministry , as we have received mercy, we do not lose heart** Paul's perspective on his "ministry" is looked at in the light of God's mercy. (expound)
 - a. Mercy – Grace. Grace is getting what we don't deserve. But Mercy is Not getting what we Do deserve.
 - b. Why? It's always good to look at our ministry not only in the light of getting something we didn't deserve , but in the light of what I should've received.
 - i. That gives perspective
- 1b c. Since we've received this mercy "we do not lose heart". That's what Paul says is helping him to not lose heart. The fact that if God was so merciful to forgive Paul for killing Christians it now doubled as assurance for him to not lose heart as he's not doing His will.
 - i. Lose heart – become discouraged, weary tired or faint.
- d. Ministry should be looked at in the right perspective.

2 2. So the gospel should be presented (or lived or while discipling) with the right perspective, without losing heart and with integrity.
(read vs 2)

- a. He's alluding to those he brought up in 2:17.
- b. We've handled the word of God correctly and with integrity.
- c. That's all of our responsibility. To not only read but study the word of God and to handle it correctly.
 - i. **2 Tim 2:15-16** (Study to show thyself approved) Be diligent to present yourself approved to God, a worker who does not need to be ashamed, rightly dividing the word of truth.
 - ii. Better yet not only how much of the word are we handling but how much of the word is handling us?

2b 3. **“Commending ourselves to every mans conscience”** What does that mean Wens? That means that we live out our lives before others in a way that when we present the gospel to them although they may reject it, reject us, attack us with ridicule; in their own conscience – in the back of their mind they know we live out what we believe.

- a. That when I begin to do something contrary to the word of God in front of a non believer , I'm aware their conscience may be tainted because of it.
- b. **See 1 Pet 2:11-17** (Peter talks about how to live amongst non believers)

That's what being a Christian is all about. It's not a church status or a social position it's presenting the gospel to a dark world through the way I live my life. And that means even if it's veiled to some

B. Even if it's veiled to some

1. Again Paul's alluding to what he was saying in Ch 3 about those who were veiled from the truth. Look at 3:12-16

a. The Jews who held on to the law for righteousness were actually blinded in their minds because it's in Jesus that the veil is taken is removed.

b. And it's the same with those today right? (read 3-4)

i. Satan has blinded them.

ii. Many have their own sense of righteousness.

2. Whether people receive the message or not doesn't validate the message.

a. Sometimes we think "Well, if no one else is buying it, it must not be good enough to have; I aint gonna buy it!"

b. But if people are flocking to it!

c. The Son doesn't seize to be the Sun just because the blind can't see it.

But we continue to live out the gospel and share to our friends n family and disciple others cause that's our ministry. It's our commission from our commander in chief by continuing pressing forward and by remembering to preach Him and not ourselves.....

C. By preaching Christ and not ourselves

1. Paul's like, "I'm not gonna get all bothered personally about this rejection from some of you nor am I gonna allow the blindness of some or the mishandling of others to detour my work in the Lord.

a. Because I keep preaching Jesus and not myself as Lord I'm not belittled when I'm treated as a nobody. Or worse a slave of yours.

- i. Bondservant = willing slave.
- ii. How do we see the lost around us? How do we see the church?
- b. How do you know when someone's a true servant or not? By the way they act when they're treated like one!

6

- 2. **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.**

So in these next 9 verses Paul continues to share a bit of his struggle in ministry as he offers us the right perspective on how we are to pursue through trial. I've outlined 4 points for us to remember as we follow Paul's journey, if you want to jot them down they are #1 Paul mentions that WE'RE JUST THE VESSELS.

7-15 II. **HOW WE PURSUE THROUGH TRIAL**

7

A. **We're just the vessels**

(read vs 7)

- 1. Paul's reminded that it is God who granted us His mercy instead of judgment; that even though none of us are sufficient, He's given us this ministry. That it's Him who has unveiled our eyes; that it's God who commanded the light to shine in our hearts and it's His power that's at work and not our own!

- a. **we have this treasure in earthen vessels, that the excellence of the power may be of God and not of us.**

- b. Guys, we're just the vessels. Earthen vessels. Clay Pots. It's the treasure we hold inside that the value.

- i. The message we preach.

c. We don't uplift the vessel- clay pot. Because then you start to think the power's in the vessel.

- i. We are not the Holy Spirit.
- ii. God does the work – we present the gospel.

So #1 We're just the vessels. #2 WE MAY BE CHALLENGED BUT WE'RE NEVER DEFEATED.

8-9

B. We may be challenged but never defeated

(read8-9)

- 1.** This term "hard-pressed" it has the idea of being hunted. Paul was a wanted – hunted man because he converted to Jesus. Remember in Acts 23:12 after Paul tried to go to Jerusalem to share the gospel, how his own countrymen rejected him and tried to capture him but he was taken by the Romans.
 - a.** The Romans we're still trying to figure out why the Jews wanted to kill him when 40 men took an oath to not eat or drink till they killed Paul.
- 2.** Paul knows what it's like to be hunted on every side.

So as we seek to pursue through trial we need to remember #1 WE ARE JUST THE VESSEL the powers all God's #2 WE MAY BE CHALLENGED BUT NEVER DEFEATED. Then #3 to pursue through trial WE DIE TO THE FLESH.

10-12

C. Dying to the flesh

(read 10-12)

- 1.** Paul understood this There are some aspects of Gods great work in our lives that only happen through trials and suffering.
 - a.** And it's when we die to ourselves we are dying the Lords death and **"carrying about in the body the dying of the Lord Jesus"**

b. (expound)

2. There are certain fragrances God can only release through a broken vial.

a. (I think of the violet and the boot)

So as we seek to pursue through trial the 4th point is ... no matter what WE KEEP OUR FAITH IN CHRIST AND OUR EYES ON THE ETERNAL.

13-15 **D. Keep our faith in Christ**

16-18 **C. Keep our eyes on the eternal**