

PAUL'S SECOND LETTER TO THE CORINTHIANS CHAPTER 4

What you will learn:

1. Paul outlines the glory of his gospel ministry (verses 1-6)
2. This preaching of the gospel sustains the hearts and minds of Christ's ministers through all their weaknesses and trials (verses 7-15)
3. This is especially true by their faith in things that are unseen (verses 16-18)
4. **People who are still trying to get saved by works are still under the works of the old testament law. The ministry that Paul sets out in this chapter is as follows: "You are sinners and don't deserve to be saved. You can't earn your salvation by doing the works of the law because God's standard is 100% perfection. Just supposing you could keep the outward aspects of the law, it still wouldn't right, because God demands that you have a love of the law and a desire of the heart to fulfil it. Not just going through the outward motions. Therefore no-one can keep the law. But God will save you if you come to him as a sinner and trust that Jesus Christ not only kept the law on your behalf but also he had the right heart attitude to it because he loved it. You can trust in the perfect work of Jesus and not your own works."**

1. Paul outlines the glory of his gospel ministry (verses 1-6)

4:1 Therefore seeing we have this ministry, as we have received mercy, we faint not;

Paul has the ministry of reconciliation which means that he brings people to know Jesus Christ. He brings them together. He introduces the sinner to Christ. "Dear sinner, have you ever met Christ? Why don't I tell you about him and what he has done for you. Why don't you shake his hand, become friends by having him as your Saviour. Yes, only Jesus can save you from god's wrath of sending you to hell because you are a sinner." That is what is called the ministry of reconciliation. *And all things are of God, who hath reconciled us to himself by Jesus Christ, and hath given to us the ministry of reconciliation; 2 Corinthians 5:18*

Now we have been given God's mercy and been saved, we will work for him. We will not faint because of the task ahead of us with this ministry.

4:2 But have renounced the hidden things of dishonesty, 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.

False teachers are dishonest, they are cunning and crafty, and they destroy God's words and their meanings, found in the King James Bible, The Authorized Bible. Such as: 1. They add words 2. They subtract words 3. They remove a verse from the Bible 4. They change and substitute words for others in the Bible. These false Bibles are the NIV, the NASB, the Good News and so on. In other words, there are over 300 Bibles that differ from The King James Bible. All these other so called 'bibles' have been corrupted and most of them come out of Rome and their scholars. Paul says "We will clearly show you by our actions that we have the truth. We will not lie to you. We will tell you, that you don't have to mix the works of the law of the old testament with Christ having completed and fulfilled these works for you on your behalf." The minister has to *"provide things honest in the sight of all men."* (Romans 12:17). Let people think what they like about you, but be honest and genuine. Don't pretend, no "put-ons", no calculated and controlled speeches to produce the right impression or get the desired results. DON'T BE A HYPOCRITE.

4:3 But if our gospel be hid, it is hid to them that are lost:

The question we often ask ourselves is this "Why don't all people get saved?" Answer: "They are lost because of the reason found in the next verse.

4:4 In whom the god of this world hath blinded the minds of them which believe not, lest the light of the glorious gospel of Christ, who is the image of God, should shine unto them.

Satan blinds the minds people. How does he do this? Easy. He whispers in their ears and says things like "You aren't as bad as the next person. They are really bad sinners. They need to get saved before you do." Or he says "Look, you have done a lot of good things for others. Surely this will impress God and he'll let you into heaven." Or Satan will say "You are a politician and have helped many people with passing good laws for them." Or "You have given a lot of money to help others" You have fasted twice a week." Does this remind you of anyone? That's right the Pharisee.

¹¹ *The Pharisee stood and prayed thus with himself, God, I thank thee, that I am not as other men are, extortioners, unjust, adulterers, or even as this publican.*

¹² *I **fast twice in the week, I give tithes** of all that I possess.*

¹³ *And the **publican**, standing afar off, would not lift up so much as his eyes unto heaven, but smote upon his breast, saying, God be merciful to me a sinner.*

¹⁴ *I tell you, this man went down to his house justified rather than the other: for every one that exalteth himself shall be abased; and he that humbleth himself shall be exalted. Luke 18:11-14 (KJB).*

There was another man wasn't there? The publican (tax-gatherer. He collected taxes for a living). Satan blinds the minds of people by "puffing them up". You are a really good person. There are a lot of others worse than you. You are top of the tree." And so on.

But as the Bible says "All the good things we do are nothing but filthy rags in God's sight" (Isaiah 64:6). Satan blinds us to how 100% perfect Christ is. The glorious gospel of Christ is this "You are sinner, blind to your own sin but Christ was perfect. To get into heaven you must have Christ's works put into your account." It's like a bank account you have at the bank, however this is God's bank and you must have a spiritual account with him. Now in that spiritual account, when God looks into it, he must see "Ah good. This man has Christ's works in it. This man has Christ's works as a substitute instead of his own. Well done my son, please come into heaven."

You see Satan works on the flesh and on the mind and says "Your works are better than Christ's. You can reject what he has done for you. You have done enough and in your heart you really are a good person even though you sin and are not perfect." As the scriptures say *For we dare not make ourselves of the number, or compare ourselves with some that commend themselves: but they measuring themselves by themselves, and **comparing themselves among themselves, are not wise.** 2 Corinthians 10:12 (KJV)*

4:5 For we preach not ourselves, but Christ Jesus the Lord; and ourselves your servants for Jesus' sake.

Why do ministers want to preach about themselves all the time? They shouldn't. Go back to the gospels and preach Jesus – his life, his works, what he did, his perfect works, his death, his burial, his resurrection and so on. Paul says we are your helpers and servants for the sake of Jesus. In other words as he has saved us and guided us, we are here to likewise for you.

4:6 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.

Christ appeared physically on the earth and was the bright shining light.

The people that walked in darkness have seen a great light: they that dwell in the land of the shadow of death, upon them hath the light shined. Isaiah 9:2. Israel have seen Jesus Christ in the flesh. They were in darkness and Jesus was sent to them as a bright shining light. In fact, the star that came from the East and guided the wise men to the manger showed that Christ was the light that had come unto, and onto, the earth (Matthew 2:2).

Now even as we know no more Christ in the flesh *Wherefore henceforth know we no man after the flesh: yea, though we have known Christ after the flesh, yet now henceforth know we him no more. 2 Corinthians 5:16,* we can have Christ shine in our hearts by the Holy Ghost as Christ now sits in heaven at the right hand of God the Father (Hebrews 10:12; 12:2). Christ not only is the Light that lighteth every one that is born (we all have conscience), but for those who are saved, we have him in our hearts. He is the treasure in earthen vessels.

Christ is the brightness of God's glory as the scriptures say **Who** (Jesus) **being the brightness of his glory, and the express image of his person, and upholding all things by the word of his power, when he had by himself purged our sins, sat down on the right hand of the Majesty on high; Hebrews 1:3 (King James Bible)**

2. This preaching of the gospel sustains the hearts and minds of Christ's ministers through all their weaknesses and trials (verses 7-15)

4:7 But we have this treasure in earthen vessels, that the excellency of the power may be of God, and not of us.

What is this treasure we have in ourselves? Our physical bodies are the vessels made for the earth. Adam was formed from the earth and the dust (Gen 2:7). It is Christ himself in our hearts. It is the Holy Ghost in us. It is God himself in us. These three are one. *For there are three that bear record in heaven, the Father, the Word, and the Holy Ghost: and **these three are one.** 1 John 5:7.* Furthermore, *In the beginning was the Word (Jesus Christ), and the Word was with God, and **the Word was God.** John 1:1 (KJV).*

Many people go through life 'under their own steam' as the saying goes. They get through life under their own power. They won't let God control their life and be as a branch that gets its life from the tree (John 15:4-5).

4:8 We are troubled on every side, yet not distressed; we are perplexed, but not in despair;

4:9 Persecuted, but not forsaken; cast down, but not destroyed;

4:10 Always bearing about in the body the dying of the Lord Jesus, that the life also of Jesus might be made manifest in our body.

What we have here, is a comparison between what is happening on the outside of the body in the flesh and the state of the treasure on the inside. In the natural and the physical, there was all sorts of trials and tribulations, but the Lord was on the inside taking care of them. *As Paul says I am crucified with Christ: nevertheless I live; yet not I, but Christ liveth in me: and the life which I now live in the flesh I live by the faith of the Son of God, who loved me, and gave himself for me. Galatians 2:20 (KJV).* You can praise God through all the mess you are going through at the moment on the outside, but not complain and murmur.

4:11 For we which live are always delivered unto death for Jesus' sake, that the life also of Jesus might be made manifest in our mortal flesh.

As Paul says elsewhere *As it is written, For thy sake we are killed all the day long; we are accounted as sheep for the slaughter. Nay, in all these things we are more than conquerors through him that loved us. Romans 8:36-37.* Victory comes through dying to self.

4:12 So then death worketh in us, but life in you.

So Paul summarizes by saying, that all the trouble that he had been through back in verse 8-11, was for the benefit of the Corinthians. It was to help the spiritual life of them and work for their good.

4:13 We having the same spirit of faith, according as it is written, I believed, and therefore have I spoken; we also believe, and therefore speak;

This is Psalm 116:10. Paul says that although some may be of weaker faith, it is still the same Holy Ghost, himself, that works his power in us. As David said in the old testament, that he spoke as he believed, then Paul says he can do no better than follow David in that what Paul believes he speaks. I don't believe one thing and then speak another.

4:14 Knowing that he which raised up the Lord Jesus shall raise up us also by Jesus, and shall present us with you.

Just as Christ was raised from the dead by God the Father, when the Lord comes for us in the rapture (1Thessalonians 4:16-18) it will just the same. Those that have already died as Christians (they are called dead in Christ) shall be brought back to life and we all shall meet the Lord in the air.

4:15 For all things are for your sakes, that the abundant grace might through the thanksgiving of many redound to the glory of God.

Paul says that everything that has happened to him is for the sake of the Corinthians and they can then grow further in the Lord. They then can give the Lord more thanks for this. The more people that give the Lord thanks, the more glory God gets.

3. This is especially true by their faith in things that are unseen (verses 16-18)

4:16 For which cause we faint not; but though our outward man perish, yet the inward man is renewed day by day.

Isn't that true! We all die eventually from our bodies rotting away and slowing down. Our hearts eventually stop beating. But our souls never die. They live forever. What is our soul? It's like a person in a car that crashes. The car may be destroyed but the person gets out and walks away. This is a good description of the soul. The real you is not your body, but your soul. That is why we say that our soul gets saved and our spirit becomes born again. We have a new spirit. Do you know anyone like that? Of course. Before they received Jesus Christ as their Saviour, they were grumpy, depressed and angry. But God gave them a new spirit. Their old spirit became born again, just like a little baby that is happy all the time.

4:17 For our light affliction, which is but for a moment, worketh for us a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory;

Paul calls everything that happens to us down here as a light affliction. Sort of like a mosquito bite that goes for a second. But how we handle it, is the thing that is important. Whatever you can do for the Lord down here which includes a sweet spirit, that no matter what happens to you are giving thanks to the Lord for the power he has put in you. In spite of your personal difficulties, did you work for the Lord? These are the rewards in heaven that await you.

4:18 While we look not at the things which are seen, but at the things which are not seen: for the things which are seen are temporal; but the things which are not seen are eternal.

We keep our eyes on Jesus and he is in heaven right now. We say "Dear Jesus I am coming home one day to be with you. I can hardly wait."

'Temporal' means 'not lasting long' or 'temporary' or 'short lived'. What happens on earth goes quick but heaven is forever.

So we don't dwell on our bodies as they will last forever. They rot. As they say "Muscles come and go, but flab lasts forever."

The real you is your soul and that is not what you can see.
