

Ministry of Mercy

2 Corinthians 4:1-6

Opening Comments:

There are many things that will trip you up as a Christian who desires to live a life devoted to the Lord.

1. besetting sins - we will always fight the fleshly desires that wage war in our members
2. common trials and affliction - saints go through tough times just like everyone else

There are two things that can really derail even a sincere believer:

1. discouragement
2. deception

The victory over both "D's" is found no where else but in the victory of Christ.

Jesus warned in the Olivet discourse - Matthew that because of lawlessness' increase the love of many would grow cold.

He also taught that then...many would fall away and false teachers would lead them astray. "And many will fall away and betray one another" means that many would give up and say it's too tough. Then Jesus said, "But the one who endures to the end will be saved."

I believe that those who fall away at that time will not really be true believers. They will be like those who cry Lord Lord - but do not obey the gospel.

Yet, we who are believers. Who are sincere must guard against our love growing cold.

We who love the Lord must guard against falling after false teachers and falling into deceptions. Deceptions lead to living lives of hypocrisy...compromise...tweaking God's eternal Word for our own designs and to our own satisfaction.

Discouragement and self-deception.
Both will cause you spiritual harm.

Both problems are introspective.
They keep the focus of one's life inward.

What we must do is get our focus on Christ and what He has done and what He will do...

It doesn't mean we don't deal with reality.
On the contrary we pray the God of heaven to change people's reality with His gospel the same way He has changed us.

4 Therefore, having this ministry by the mercy of God, we do not lose heart. **2** 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. **3** 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. **5** For what we proclaim is not ourselves, but Jesus Christ as Lord, with ourselves as your servants for Jesus' sake. **6** 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.

Restated in My Words

1. We do not lose heart (get discouraged) because the work we do do is already because of God's mercy. vs 1
2. We do not use the world's methods of work but instead fully state the truth (living it and saying it) and so commend ourselves to everyone's conscience though some can't see it because of a veil of unbelief that will lead to final judgment. vs. 2-3
3. Those who have chosen unbelief are also blinded by the god of this world and they can't see just how glorious the light of Jesus is - that He is and must be God's Son. vs. 4
4. We do not preach that we are anything but Jesus is everything - Lord of all - we are just your servants for Jesus' sake. vs. 5
5. The same God who created light in the first place has shone (lampo) in our hearts to give the enlightenment that Jesus is supremely glorious because the glory of God is seen in the very face of Jesus Christ. (Moses' face shined - even more does Jesus face shine with love and grace and mercy made possible via the cross)

1. We do not lose heart (get discouraged) because the work we do do is always because of God's mercy. vs 1 *"by the mercy of God"*

"lose heart"

WHEN YOU LOSE HEART YOU ACT DESPERATELY.

- a. you turn to worldly methods - you fall back to the sinful nature...
- b. you give into discouragement and are overwhelmed with sorrow for those who won't change (even over yourself?)

We must realize that the condition of our heart will have a bearing on our attitudes and ultimately our actions. "As a man thinketh so is he."⁷ For as he thinks in his heart, so is he. As one who reckons, he says to you, eat and drink, yet his heart is not with you [but is grudging the cost]. Proverbs 23:7 Amp (so what does the man who in his heart begrudges a meal in a restaurant? He takes it out on the tip. Or he fakes sickness and jets before paying the bill.

Paul knew he could not do nothing with God's mercy - by merciful provision - God's helper - the Holy Spirit - who worked in him....

"MERCY"

- a. He reasoned in himself - the basis of his reasoning was mercy. Why should I stress? Everything I have is by God's mercy...if things fall apart God will still be here. By His mercy all things will turn out for my good... he could not lose heart because he knew that by God's mercy he could not lose. God's mercy won't allow it - because the whole ministry, all that he was doing came by mercy in the first place - it wasn't something he deserved or earned...it was all by mercy and it always would be. Mercy by definition is undeserved compassion and love. It is not a feeling primarily. It is a fact. A fact that changes the outlook and is a basis of

our lives as believers. When we abandon it and turn to earning favor we will suffer discouragement almost immediately...throw that bum out of your mind. Out of the game. Cling to His mercy. That is what humble people do. Mercy knows know pride. Humble people find grace in time of need.

Paul reasoned by mercy...He thought on it - meditated on it. Muddled it over and it drew him to worship the Lord of mercy.

- deep discouragement over a person's life or another person's failure is a huge determiner of ultimate failure

If you know that it's all about mercy in the first place...you can't be discouraged long.

"of God"

This mercy - this plan to help a helpless people - was "of God" God's plan - His work - it can not be thwarted in the end. It belongs to Him - He has fore-ordained that if someone comes to Christ - He is made a new creation and adopted in God's family - and sealed with the Holy Spirit - all of this is "of God" in the same way the God made the earth and fashioned - He spoke the words and the world was!

So when by faith we come to God - He fits us to serve Him immediately taking out the heart of stone and replacing it with a heart of flesh. He begins to mould us and refashion us after the image of Jesus. It is of God - we glory in it - and even if we stumble into disobedience for a time - we declare - that is not me - that is sin dwelling in me. I am one who is born again - born from above - born "of God" of incorruptible seed.

The mercy that Paul from deep discouragement was a "mercy **of God**" seed planted at the core of his being. **1 Peter 1:23** Being born again, not of corruptible seed, but of incorruptible, by the word of God, which liveth and abideth for ever. From that seed came a ministry that was also a "mercy of God" to further the spread of the Gospel and the Great Commission.

Paul reasoned on mercy.

b. Secondly he renounced deception.

apeipon - to be determined to avoid something - to renounce to reject, to put aside, to forbid. Paul forcefully determined - he forbid himself from resorting to ungodly methods. Anything that was below board was out of bounds.

disgraceful - is shameful -

practice cunning...no way - Satan was crafty - in fact later in Paul's argument he brings this up - it is how Satan means to draw people from the gospel. He is cunning.

The snake was more crafty than all the beasts of the fields... in Genesis and he has not changed and when discouraged servants of God resort to manipulation or think this way...

Christians are susceptible to thinking that the end justifies the means and have in the past and will in the future resort to using cunning craftiness.

The servant of the Lord must renounce these methods.

We don't reason as the world does.

The ends don't justify the means.

What is the right way....

2. We do not use the world's methods of work but instead fully state the truth (living it and say it) and so commend ourselves to everyone's conscience though some can't see it because of a veil of unbelief that will lead to final judgment. vs. 2-3

Some no doubt accused Paul of using compromised methods - methods that the world uses - of being underhanded.

In truth **they** were twisting what Paul taught - His teaching was by command of the Lord.

READ 2 Peter says this...ch 3 verse 15 **15** And count the patience of our Lord as salvation, just as our beloved brother Paul also wrote to you according to the wisdom given him, **16** as he does in all his letters when he speaks in them of these matters. There are some things in them that are hard to understand, which the ignorant and unstable twist to their own destruction, as they do the other Scriptures.

Our enemies might twist what we say - but we must stick to the truth...even if we are misjudged. Misunderstood.

Dealing With Reality....isn't that tough? Show Cultural Blindness Pic

3. Those who have (1)chosen unbelief are also (2)blinded by the god of this world and they can't see just how glorious the light of Jesus is - that He is and must be God's Son. vs. 4

The Proclamation - the Preaching of the Gospel Went Out into the Whole World
YET SOME WOULD NOT BELIEVE - THEY CHOSE TO NOT BELIEVE AND
THEREFORE VEILED THEMSELVES FROM THE TRUTH

Acts 7:51 **51** "You stiff-necked people, uncircumcised in heart and ears, you always **resist** the Holy Spirit. As your fathers did, so do you. **52** Which of the prophets did your fathers not persecute?

What are they avoiding? The truth!!!

Open statement of the truth...Paul preached...That is the great need...of our culture.
We must pray for receptivity for the truth...

2 Thessalonians 2

9 The coming of the lawless one is by the activity of Satan with all power and **false signs and wonders(craftiness)**, **10** and with all wicked deception for those who are perishing, because they **refused** to love the truth and so be saved. **11** Therefore God sends them a strong delusion, so that they may believe what is false, **12** in order that all may be condemned who did not believe the truth but had pleasure in unrighteousness.

A person can go so far in refusing to accept truth - they will believe falsehoods and finally God gives them over to what they really want and in the end days - the days of the anti-Christ God will send them a strong delusion...

But is the open statement of the truth dependent on us? Really?

No - we must pray that the Spirit of God will do what He did when we were saved.
Open the eyes of the blind.

We must pray for the Work of the Holy Spirit in our day...

How does Jesus describe the Holy Spirit - the Spirit of Truth (3x -

a. John 14:17 even the Spirit of truth, whom the world cannot receive because it neither sees Him nor knows Him. You know Him, for He dwells with you and will be in you. **The disciples saw the Holy Spirit working in Jesus (dwells with you) and were promised one day He would "be in you."**

b. John 15:26 but when the Helper comes, whom I will send to you from the Father, the Spirit of truth, who proceeds from the Father, He will bear witness about Me. the role of the Spirit is to witness about Jesus not Himself.

c. John 16:13 when the Spirit of truth comes, He will guide you into all truth, for He will not speak on His own authority, but whatever He hears, He will speak, and He will declare to you the things that are to come. Revelation came - 2 Thessalonians came - all the prophetic passages came because of the work of the Holy Spirit on these chosen messengers.

We must know that some will disbelieve and some will listen and believe...HOPE in the power of the Gospel preached....

d. ACTS 28:23-28

vs. 24 some were convinced...others disbelieved

vs. 27 grown dull - vs. 28 Gentiles; they will listen

We simply preach and live Christ...

4. We do not preach that we are anything but Jesus is everything - Lord of all - we are just your servants for Jesus' sake. vs. 5

5. The same God who created light in the first place has shone (lampo) in our hearts to give the enlightenment that Jesus is supremely glorious because the glory of God is seen in the very face of Jesus Christ. (Moses' face shined - even more does Jesus face shine with love and grace and mercy made possible via the cross)

There is glory in the face of Jesus Christ.

As we spend our days in His presence...

Worshipping in His presence...

Meditating on His Word in His presence...

That glory becomes evident on us..

We are transformed....

3:18 we are transformed in His presence...

1. don't lose hope - it's all mercy

2. renounce sinful ways - forbid yourself from craftiness of any kind

3. proclaim the truth of God - "open statement of the truth"

4. know that some will be veiled by the god of this world (age)

5. always point to Jesus - as Lord - we are simply His servants

The gospel light is still shining....now is the age of grace...