

Wednesday Evening Bible Study

June 22, 2022

Series - *The Life and Writings of the Apostle Paul*

The Corinthian Letters

The Last Letter (Second Corinthians)

Chapter Four

Text – 2 Corinthians 4 - *Purposes and Problems in the Ministry*

Memory Verse – 2 Corinthians 4:16

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

Introduction

Paul, having settled the question of his credentials; and having refuted the legalists in chapter three, now begins to describe the purpose of his ministry. In so doing he also reveals some of the problems that he has faced while serving the Lord. Why did Paul do what he did? Why did he put up with the hardness and persecution? Because he understood that the grace that was bestowed upon him needed also to be bestowed upon the Corinthians. Verse 15 states, “*For all things are for your sakes.*” This statement reveals what should be the heart of any true servant of God. We ought to be others motivated. Our love for the Lord, of course, should be first and foremost; but our next motivation ought to be our love for people. Paul will develop this theme in chapters 4 – 6. We will get a glimpse of Paul’s ministry here, and we will also get a better picture of what our ministry might be like.

I. His Ministry (vs. 1 - 6)

A. Received [and Re-distributed] Mercy (v. 1)

1. We must be a partaker of mercy
2. We must also pass out mercy to others (2 Corinthians 5:18 – 20; Matthew 14:15 - 22)

*Heal the sick, cleanse the lepers, raise the dead, cast out devils: **freely ye have received, freely give.*** (Matthew 10:8)

B. Resolute Determination [Tenacity] (v. 1; 2 Corinthians 11:23 – 33)

1. We don’t quit because God will strengthen us and enable us to endure. (1 Corinthians 10:13) We only quit because we want to.
2. We don’t quit because of our appreciation for the mercy we have received.

Thou therefore endure hardness, as a good soldier of Jesus Christ. (2 Timothy 2:3)

But thou hast fully known my doctrine, manner of life, purpose, faith, longsuffering, charity, patience, Persecutions, afflictions, which came unto me at Antioch, at Iconium, at Lystra; what

persecutions I endured: but out of them all the Lord delivered me. Yea, and all that will live godly in Christ Jesus shall suffer persecution. (2 Timothy 3:10 – 12)

But watch thou in all things, endure afflictions, do the work of an evangelist, make full proof of thy ministry. For I am now ready to be offered, and the time of my departure is at hand. I have fought a good fight, I have finished my course, I have kept the faith: (2 Timothy 4:5 – 8)

C. Renounced Dishonesty [Truth] (v. 2)

For we have not followed cunningly devised fables, when we made known unto you the power and coming of our Lord Jesus Christ, but were eyewitnesses of his majesty. (2 Peter 1:16)

1. We are not trying to sell something.
2. We are not trying to get people to like us.
3. We are ambassadors, speaking God's truth for God. If people want the truth, they will receive it.

D. Restricted Delivery (vs. 3 – 4)

1. God does not restrict truth; but he will not force his will on you.
2. People are blinded when they reject God's truth and receive the lies of the devil. (Adam and Eve)

- a. The Nation of Israel rejected their Messiah and as a result they are blind today as a nation.

He came unto his own, and his own received him not. (John 1:11)

For I would not, brethren, that ye should be ignorant of this mystery, lest ye should be wise in your own conceits; that blindness in part is happened to Israel, until the fulness of the Gentiles be come in. (Romans 11:25)

- b. Many Gentiles and Jews are blinded because they love evil. (Romans 1:18 – 32)

And this is the condemnation, that light is come into the world, and men loved darkness rather than light, because their deeds were evil. (John 3:19)

- c. Many Christians are blind to areas where growth is needed.

E. Representing the Lord as His Delegates (v. 5)

1. We represent the Lord.
2. We serve the people.

F. Reflecting Light out of the Darkness (v. 6)

Ye are the light of the world. A city that is set on an hill cannot be hid. Neither do men light a candle, and put it under a bushel, but on a candlestick; and it giveth light unto all that are in the house. Let your light so shine before men, that they may see your good works, and glorify your Father which is in heaven. (Matthew 5:14 – 16)

II. His Misfortune and Misery (v. 7 – 12)

Though we serve the King of Kings and Lord of Lords; we serve Him in weak, earthly bodies; and we serve Him in a sin cursed earth. Notice the word “treasure” in verse 7. What is the treasure? The treasure is the ministry; but serving God and people will not be easy. It is ministry (Gk - diakonia – meaning a servant to). God is glorified when His children serve Him faithfully through adverse circumstances. (2 Corinthians 12:1 – 10)

A. There will be Problems (v. 8)

1. There will be people problems.
2. There will be health problems.
3. There will be financial problems.
4. There will be mechanical problems.
5. However, though the problems are many we know that God is bigger than our problems. He does not take away all our problems; but he will give us grace and guidance to deal with our problems.

B. There will be times when you are Perplexed (v. 8)

1. God will give you what you need.
2. God will guide you in His will.

C. There will be Persecution (vs. 9 – 11)

1. From people
2. From the devil

But Jesus answered and said, Ye know not what ye ask. Are ye able to drink of the cup that I shall drink of, and to be baptized with the baptism that I am baptized with? They say unto him, We are able. (Matthew 20:22)

Verily, verily, I say unto thee, When thou wast young, thou girdedst thyself, and walkedst whither thou wouldst: but when thou shalt be old, thou shalt stretch forth thy hands, and another shall gird thee, and carry thee whither thou wouldst not. This spake he, signifying by what death he should glorify God. And when he had spoken this, he saith unto him, Follow me. (John 21:18-19)

But thou hast fully known my doctrine, manner of life, purpose, faith, longsuffering, charity, patience, Persecutions, afflictions, which came unto me at Antioch, at Iconium, at Lystra; what persecutions I endured: but out of them all the Lord delivered me. Yea, and all that will live godly in Christ Jesus shall suffer persecution. (2 Timothy 3:10 – 12)

III. His Motivation (vs. 13 – 18)

Why do Christians serve the Lord? Why do they minister? Why do they endure all the problems associated with the ministry? Paul answers these questions in this section and in the next chapter.

A. Looking to Pay Back [Appreciation] (vs. 13 – 14)

For ye are bought with a price: therefore glorify God in your body, and in your spirit, which are God's. (1Corinthians 6:20)

I beseech you therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God, that ye present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable unto God, which is your reasonable service. (Romans 12:1)

B. Loving People [Compassion] (v. 15; 2 Corinthians 12:14 – 15)

I say the truth in Christ, I lie not, my conscience also bearing me witness in the Holy Ghost, That I have great heaviness and continual sorrow in my heart. For I could wish that myself were accursed from Christ for my brethren, my kinsmen according to the flesh: (Romans 9:1-3)

C. Longing for the Permanent [Concentration on Eternity] (vs. 16 – 18)

Wherefore seeing we also are compassed about with so great a cloud of witnesses, let us lay aside every weight, and the sin which doth so easily beset us, and let us run with patience the race that is set before us, Looking unto Jesus the author and finisher of our faith; who for the joy that was set before him endured the cross, despising the shame, and is set down at the right hand of the throne of God. (Hebrews 12: 1 – 2)