

SM 4 3 2016

WOODLANDS BIBLE CHURCH

Title of Series: "In Defense of the Truth"
\\ II Corinthians

Theme: "The Encouragement of Christian
Ministry" #7

Passage: II Corinthians 4:1-7

- Last Week: "The Unfading Glory of Jesus" #6
 - The character of the covenants v7-11
 - The consequences of the covenants v12-18

Introduction:

Do you truly believe in the ministry God has given you that believe on the Lord Jesus Christ unto salvation? Do you possess confidence and courage in the fact of knowing your position in Christ is, as a servant, empowered of the Holy Spirit, for ministry? These questions may only be answered in light of affirming your *position in Christ*. Your *place of service* is not dependant on a system of "do's and don'ts, but rather on the grace and mercy provided by a loving Savior! **Psalm 85:10** Mercy and truth are met together; righteousness and peace have kissed *each other*.

Because God's glory is being revealed in every Christian as a consequence of the ministry of the New Covenant (**3:18**), those who, because of God's mercy, are now

privileged to proclaim the Good News, need never be discouraged. As Paul writes, such "do not lose heart," **v1, 16**. Means "to give into evil, to lose courage,"to be utterly spiritless, - "discouragement." Note how the word is used in **Luke 18:1** and **Galatians 6:9**: "Then He spoke a parable to them, "that men always ought to pray and not lose heart." "And let us not grow weary while doing good, for in due season we shall reap if we do not lose heart."

Four realities insure that we need never "lose heart" in our ministry (service) of being a witness for our Savior.

I. OUR MESSAGE IS CLEAR V1, 2

\\ promoted by the mercy we received! V1

\\ unworthy, yet

knowing God does not bless just those things we do well, but also our inadequacies as well.

A. Disgraceful methods renounced

The gospel does not need fixing! Note: He continues his self-defense from **2:17**. He did not trick anyone! No deceitful behavior, ref. **7:2; 12:16**.

1. **v2a**, ESV, "We have renounced disgraceful, underhanded ways." Paul is not saying he *used* to practice such things but rather that he repudiates any notion to use such methods in ministry. We don't *need* to!

2. Nor was his ministry marked by “craftiness,” *panourgia*, a “readiness to do anything,” Ref. “craft,” as “skill in deceiving to gain an end.” Note **2 Corinthians 11:3**. Ref. today’s *pragmatic* efforts to make the Gospel less offensive and more “hip.” Note: the Spirit would enlighten them concerning the “truth”. He wasn’t preaching an easy believism!

John MacArthur, “Contemporary critics argue for a subtler and less offensive approach to presenting the gospel. Preaching sin, repentance, judgment, and hell is out; ‘user-friendly’ churches are in, Worship services give way to entertainment designed to make nonbelievers feel comfortable and not threatened.”

3. Nor did Paul need to “handle the word of God deceitfully.” “Handling . . . deceitfully,” *doloō*, “to use deceit, to use bait, to falsify, to corrupt,”

a. NASB, “adulterating;” HCSB, “distorting;” ESV, “tamper with.” Such tactics are so common today!

b. Contrast with **2 Timothy 2:15**, NASB, “Be diligent to present yourself approved to God as a workman who does not need to be ashamed, accurately handling the word of truth. We are dealing with *God’s* word!”

B. Then, he affirmed how he *did* minister—making the truth plain with transparent sincerity. Ref. ESV, “by the

open statement of the truth we would commend ourselves to everyone’s conscience in the sight of God.”

C. It is this forthright clarity that commends us to those to whom we witness. **v2b**, “We tell the truth before God, and all who are honest know this.” Ref. **Ezekiel 2:5**, “As for them, whether they listen or not . . . they will know that a prophet has been among them.”

II. SPIRITUAL BLINDNESS IS AN EVER-PRESENT REALITY V3, 4

A. “Even if,” “since.” The fact that the Gospel is “veiled” (obscure), **3:16,17; John 16:8-11; I Corinthians 2:14-16**, to those who are perishing does not negate our responsibility to proclaim it openly, plainly, and with sincerity, apart from any gimmicks or schemes.

John Calvin, “The blindness of unbelievers in no way detracts from the clearness of the gospel, for the sun is no less resplendent because the blind do not perceive it.”

B. We have no control over how the Gospel is received but understand that Satan does all in his power to keep people from seeing the Truth! (Only here is he referred to as the god of this age. It’s *his* age!) Note Aorist, “has blinded.” Ref. **Matthew 4:8, 9; John 12:31; 16:11 Galatians 1:4.**

John MacArthur, "It is that massive and pervasive influence over society by which Satan deludes the unregenerate so that they might not see the light of the gospel." Ref. the various means! "Science," society, philosophy, heresy, hypocrisy, love of sin!

C. Literally, "light from the Gospel;" *photismos*, "enlightenment." The Gospel is so plain and Christ is so glorious that Satan *has* to keep people from "seeing" the Lord, who is the image of God! Ref. **Colossians 1:15**, "He is the image of the invisible God."

"God is sovereign in the salvation of men. At his best, Elijah could not convert the nation Israel. At his worst, Jonah could not prevent the conversion of the entire population of Nineveh. The God who gave us the Great Commission is the same God who called forth light in the midst of the darkness. He said, "**Let there be Light,**" and there was light. He is the One who has declared that the "**Light will shine out of darkness.**" We are lights shining in a dark place, and God will use our light to bring others out of the darkness into the kingdom of light. He who causes others to see the light is He who has shone in our hearts and revealed His glory to us in the face of Christ." (Robert L. Deffinbaugh).

III. ONLY GOD CAN CAUSE PEOPLE TO "SEE THE LIGHT" V5, 6

A. Paul was not the focus of his preaching; he was simply the servant through whom the Gospel was proclaimed. Ref. the tendency to make the messenger the message! "I of Paul," etc. Note: "A herald draws attention to himself only to promote the one he or she announces. Paul's mission, his calling from God involved serving others! "He considered himself not only a bondservant of Jesus, but also to those he ministers. (Hughes)."

B. His message was "Jesus is Lord," which Kent Hughes describes as "shorthand for the Gospel message." It's not about *us!* Ref. **Romans 10:9**, "If you confess with your mouth, 'Jesus is Lord,' and believe in your heart that God raised Him from the dead, you will be saved."

C. Contrast "has shown," **v6**, with "has blinded," **v4**, both Aorist active verbs. It is God who opens our hearts to believe by allowing us to see his glory in the person of Jesus Christ. Note: **Romans 3:25**, "whom God set forth as a *propitiation* by His blood, through faith, to demonstrate His righteousness, because in His forbearance God had passed over the sins that were previously committed."

"...Individual regeneration is a work of God as supernatural and as powerful as the creation of the cosmos (**Gen. 1:3**). Now Paul wanted to share that "Light" with others. In the physical Creation, God spoke

directly, but in the spiritual creation of new life, He usually speaks indirectly through His servants. Nevertheless it is His Word that creates new life.” (Dr. Constable’s notes on 2 Cor.).

Romans 1:4, “declared *to be* the Son of God with power according to the Spirit of holiness, by the resurrection from the dead.”

D. *He* is the one who removes the veil, not us! We are simply the Lord’s *witnesses* (**Acts 1:8**).

IV. WE JUST HONOR THE TRUTH V7

A. “Jars of clay” were common, cheap, and expendable; their value lay only in their *utility*. “Fitness for some purpose . . . to some end.” Ref. “utility” players in baseball.

1. Ref. **1 Corinthians 1:26-29**.

2. Note **2 Tim 2:20-21**, “in a great house there are not only vessels of gold and silver, but also of wood and clay, some for honor and some for dishonor. Therefore if anyone cleanses himself from the latter [iniquity], he will be a vessel for honor, sanctified and useful for the Master, prepared for every good work.”

The simple truth is that we are nothing in and of ourselves! The Judizers peddled the law absent “Grace”,

while promoting self glory at the expense of all those souls who fell as prey to their falsehood. Others may look at you and determine, like they did with Paul, you are a miserable failure. Their chatter is like that of our modern day “text”. Texting how unsuccessful you are, speaking out the glories of the gospel, while seeing little results. Satan has blinded their minds!

We must always be aware how privileged we are to be a servant of our Lord, one who proclaims the Gospel before a lost and dying world. We are to live this life not by sight, but by faith in the realities which God declares in His Word. Confidence and courage you possess will become stronger as you proclaim His riches of truth, knowing the power to do so is not in us!

B. The power is not in us! We simply *carry* the Gospel! Ref. **5:20**! Consider the Lord’s charge to Paul, recorded in **Acts 26:16-18**.

Conclusion:

“We must never lose heart and succumb to the pressure put upon us to tone down the message of the gospel or to jazz up its presentation to attract converts. Ours is an impossible task, but it is not dependent upon our own strengths and abilities. We are not adequate to be ministers of the new covenant, but God is, and He has given us all we need. He does not need our strengths so

much as He overcomes and uses our weaknesses”.
(Robert Deffinbaugh).

We should never “lose heart” because so many people are spiritually blind. We can proclaim the Good News with confident clarity, always keeping in mind that only God can cause people to “see the light.” If we are faithful in proclaiming and living the Gospel, we will be vessels fit for our Master’s use and can be real “eye openers!”

The Apostle Paul delivered the message of the Gospel over two thousands year ago to his generation. Likewise, we also must deliver the Gospel message with sincerity, simplicity, and steadfastness to our generation. It is our time to do so!