

TITLE: THE PREACHING OF THE CHRISTIAN MINISTER

TEXT: 2 CORINTHIANS 4:1-7

INTRO: In ch. 3, Paul introduced the Christian ministry; now he discusses the Christian minister. The Christian minister has an extremely important role in saving souls. And to accomplish this requires certain attitudes & actions (from the Christian *and* the person he/she is trying to save).

I. THE PROPER ATTITUDE (v. 1-4):

A. In the preacher (v. 1-2)

(v. 1) *Therefore seeing we have this ministry, as we have received mercy, we faint not.* Two reasons why we don't faint (lose heart; become weary): **1)** because of the exceeding glory of the NT (**ch. 3**), and **2)** because we've received mercy (God's help in all problems). We don't give up because the message is too glorious & the mission too important!

(v. 2) *But have renounced (disown) 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.*

1. Negative (we don't): We speak against, deny the hidden things of shame/disgrace. He seems to be referring to those at Corinth who were against him & who probably had sided with the fornicator (**1 Cor 5**). No craftiness/tricks (**2 Pet 1:16** - no "cunningly devised fables"). We don't corrupt the word of God (as others would do for personal gain - **Eph 4:14; Phil 1:5**)!
2. Positive (we do): We commend (prove-**3:1**) ourselves to every man's conscience (as trained by God). How? By our manifestation of the truth (**John 7:17**; cf. **2 John 9-10**)!
3. Contrast of "hidden" & "manifested": With the false teachers, many things were "hidden" (just as they are today with the liberal change agents). But an honest Christian is transparent. Right or wrong, he won't hide what he believes! These change agents. Change agents (and those who follow them) **miss the power in a sincere presentation of the truth!**

B. In the listener (v. 3-4)

(v. 3) *But if our gospel be hid, it is hid to them that are lost. 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.*

1. Paul is probably referring specifically to the false teachers in Corinth who would not accept Paul & his teaching. But this applies to all people at all times: once we present the pure gospel, the rest is in the hands of the recipient.
 - a. (v. 3) Problem: IF our gospel is hid (covered/veiled - cf. **3:13-18**)... The Greek communicates reality (i.e., "since" it is hidden). It is hidden to (from) those who are perishing. Is this Calvinism? Why are they perishing?
 - b. (v. 4) Cause: The god of this world - Satan. He's the god of this world because he's the object of its worship - either by outright Satanic worship, or by anything *other than* worship of Jehovah in spirit & truth (**Jn 4:24**). God does not accept worship that is *not* in spirit & truth, but Satan does (**1 Cor 10:20**)!
 - First, this verse says they *could* be saved ("*lest the light of the glorious gospel...should shine unto them*"), so this cannot prove Calvinism (which says the gospel was never for the lost). So what is this verse saying?
 - If they would believe, they could be saved. But they've allowed themselves to be blinded by not believing (in spite of evidence). This is *their* fault, not the gospel's. "Gospel"="good message" - this word tells us that it's a message designed to be delivered, not hidden! Paul made it known (v. 2), so those who didn't know **chose** not to know.
 - Satan takes advantage of this attitude. He wants to devour anyone & everyone (**1 Pet 5:8**). He does **NOT** possess people against their wills, so he does this through deceit (father of lies - **Jn 8:44**) and distractions (parable of the sower - **Matt 13**; distractions that keep you from caring, distractions caused by life's struggles, distractions that keep you busy with other things more important to you than God). The ultimate culprit is **you** (**2 Thess 2:10**).
2. These two verses apply to *anyone* who will not accept the truth. The truth isn't hidden (veiled). It hasn't given "in part," but 100% (**2 Tim 3:16-17; 2 Pet 1:3**). Nothing God desires & expects of us is missing from the Bible (this is why we don't need the book of Mormon, Watchtower tracts, confessions of faith, etc.). All we need is the Bible and an open heart.

II. THE PROPER SOURCE (v. 5-7):

A. (v. 5) For we preach not ourselves, but Christ Jesus the Lord; and ourselves your servants for Jesus' sake.

1. We *don't* preach ourselves! Unlike these others, it's *not* about us! This makes very clear what the false teachers are about!
2. We *do* preach Jesus! This does **not** mean what people today try to make it mean - that we just preach Jesus' birth, crucifixion, death, burial, & resurrection, but completely ignore His life, His teaching, His commitment to **ALL** that God commanded Him (**Jn 12:49-50**), & His demand that His followers be just as committed! It's all or nothing!
3. We put *Jesus* on the throne, not ourselves! We're your servants! This must come as a complete shock to so many of the "pastors" around us, who seem to think that *they* deserve to sit on Christ's throne! No wonder the followers of these men accept *their* words over *the* Word! ****As a Christian minister, don't exalt yourself (but also, don't take rejection personally)!**

B. (v. 6) For God, who commanded the light to shine out of darkness (Gen 1:3), hath shined in our hearts, to give the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ.

1. As sure as God created physical light (out of physical darkness), He also brought the spiritual light into a dark (sinful) world.
2. That "light" is the "knowledge of the glory of God..." It's something the world can & should **know**! But how?

C. (v. 7) But we have this treasure in earthen vessels, that the excellency of the power may be of God, and not of us.

1. This treasure is 'the light' (v. 6), 'the gospel' (v. 2; **Rom 1:16**-salvation), & is in earthen (clay; frail) vessels (i.e., humans)!
2. God's perfect message of salvation is in imperfect, frail human beings - so we'll see that the power is God's, not ours! There is such a dichotomy here: in being given this honor/responsibility as messengers, we are so glorified *and* humbled!
3. And God intends for this message to be delivered (**Rom 10:14**-*how shall they call on him in whom they have not...heard*)
 - Philip was sent to teach the Ethiopian eunuch (**Acts 8**); Ananias taught Saul (**Acts 9**); Peter taught Cornelius (**Acts 10**)!

CONCLUSION: In the context, Paul is speaking of *his* role as a minister (especially in contrast to the false teachers). But in ch. 5 he'll make it clear that the Corinthians had the *same* ministry (the same business of delivering the gospel). We too need to be about our Father's business!