

2 Corinthians 4:1-6
Godward Ministry in the Son-light.

Introduction: How does one persist in gospel ministry to the glory of God?

1) The two-fold DISPLAY of Godward ministry—4:1-2 ¹ *Therefore,*

- In light of 3:18
- a) **Positive: we are DETERMINED:** *we do not lose heart* [*enkakeo*],
 - i) **God-ordained:** *since we have this ministry* [*diakonia*], (cf. 3:8-9)
 - ii) **Mercy-based:** *as we received mercy,*
- b) **Negative: we have DISTANCED OURSELVES:** ² *but we have renounced* [*apeipon*] *the hidden things of shame,*
 - i) **Negative: no deceit or distortion:**
 - (1) **No deceit:** *not walking in craftiness* [*panourgia*]
 - (a) Like Satanic false teachers (cf. 11:3)
 - (2) **No distortion:** *or adulterating* [*doloo*] *the word of God,*
 - ii) **Positive: full disclosure in every detail:** *but by the manifestation* [*phanerosis*] *of (the) truth commending* [*sunistemi*] *ourselves to every man's conscience in the sight of God.*

2) The GOSPEL of Godward ministry—4:3-4

- a) **A veiled Gospel:**
 - i) **The accurate assumption:** ³ *And even if* [1st class condition] *our gospel is veiled* [pf. pass. ptc. *kalupto*],
 - ii) **The sobering reality:** *it is veiled* [pf. pass. ptc. *kalupto*] *to those who are perishing* (pres. ptc.; “being ruined” [passive] or probably better “ruining themselves” [middle]),
- b) **The blinded audience:**
 - i) **Satan has blinded them:** ⁴ *in whose case* (the perishing ones) *the god of this age* [*aiou*]
 - ii) **The unbelieving are blinded:** *has blinded the minds of the unbelieving* [*apistos*]
 - (1) Blindness is the inability to perceive and understand.
 - (2) They can understand the gospel, but they evaluate it as foolishness. (cf. 1 Cor. 1:18)
 - iii) **They are blinded so they cannot see Jesus accurately:** *so that they might not see the light of the gospel of the glory of Christ, who is the image of God.* (cf. Col. 1:15)
 - (1) Seeing is the ability to discern the clear evidence distinctly.
- c) The temptation is to make the gospel more palatable or understandable.

3) The PREACHING of Godward ministry—4:5 ⁵ *For ...*

- a) **NEGATIVE aspect of the public announcement:** *we do not preach* [*kerusso*] *ourselves* (i.e. no self-promotion)

b) **POSITIVE aspect of the public announcement:**

- i) *but* (we do preach) *Jesus Christ as Lord,*
- ii) *and* (we do preach) *ourselves as your slaves for the sake of Jesus.*

4) The REASON for Godward ministry—4:6

a) **Who is this God?**

- i) **Past action:** *6 For (the) God, who said, “Light shall shine out of darkness,” [Gen. 1:3]*
- ii) **Present action:** *is the One who has shone in our hearts*

b) **Why did this God shine in our hearts?** *to give the Light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Christ.*

- i) In contrast to those who are ruining themselves who cannot see the light of the gospel of the glory of Christ. (4:4)

5) Things to remember:

- a) Those who have a clear vision of the mercy of God in their lives and the glory of God manifested in Christ can persist in the gospel ministry during times of hardship. (David Woodall)

2 Corinthians 4:7-12
Clay Pots for God's Glory

Introduction: Warren Wiersbe related the following: A pastor friend and I once heard a young man preach an eloquent sermon, but it lacked something. "There was something missing," I said to my friend; and he replied, "Yes, and it won't be there until his heart is broken. After he has suffered awhile, he will have a message worth listening to."

1) Describing clay pots—4:7-10

- a) **What is the treasure?** (4:7a) ⁷ *But we have this treasure [thesauros] in earthen [ostrakinos] vessels,*
- i) The treasure is the light of the knowledge of God's glory in the face of Jesus. (4:6)
 - ii) Clay pots were commonplace, inexpensive, unattractive, vulnerable and disposable (easily broken and easily discarded), and replaceable. They were of little intrinsic value, though they are essential for a functioning household. The container is relatively worthless, the contents are priceless.
 - iii) This refers not simply to Paul's physical body, but the whole of his existence. Remember 2 Tim. 2:20-21.
- b) **Why put something so valuable in clay pots?** (4:7b) *so that the surpassing greatness [hyperbole] of the power [dunamis]*
- "The power" that enables him to possess and proclaim the gospel
- i) **Positively:** *will be of God*
 - ii) **Negatively:** *and not from [ek] ourselves;*
 - Because the gospel treasure has been entrusted to frail mortals who lack inherent power, the power displayed through preaching and in suffering is demonstrably divine and not human. (Murray Harris)
 - The container is relatively worthless, the contents are priceless.
- c) **Vulnerability of clay pots:** (4:8-9) [contrasts are all present etc.]
- Contrasting human weakness with God's power. Cf. 11:23-33.
- i) **Internal**
 - (1) (Rhyming) **PRESSURED:** ⁸ *in every way afflicted [thlibo], but not crushed [stenochoreo]; cf. 1:6*
 - (2) (Word play) **PERPLEXED:** *Perplexed [aporeo], but not despairing/totally desperate [exaporeo]; cf. 1:8-9; Gal. 4:20*
 - ii) **External**
 - (1) **PERSECUTED:** ⁹ *persecuted/hunted [dioko], but not forsaken/abandoned [egkataleipo] (by God); (cf. Heb. 13:5-6)*
 - (2) **PHYSICALLY ABUSED:** *struck down [kataballo], but not destroyed [apollumi]; (knocked down but not knocked out)*
 - (a) Illustrated in both athletics and military settings.
- d) **What do clay pots contain?** (4:10) (contrasts death and life)

- i) **What?** ¹⁰ *always carrying about [periphero] in the body the dying/deadness [nekrosis] of (experienced by) Jesus,*
 - (1) In addition to containing glory, it contains the danger of dying violently as Jesus died. Cf. 4:8-9, 11; Gal. 2:20.
- ii) **Why?** *so that the life [zoe] of Jesus also may be manifested [phaneroo] in our body.*

2) Describing what manifesting the life of Christ look like—4:11-12

- a) **Life-threatening situations in ministry:** ¹¹ *For we who live are constantly being delivered over (ultimately by God) to death for Jesus' sake, (cf. 4:10)*
- b) **Why are we constantly in these life-threatening situations?** *so that the life of Jesus also may be manifested [phaneroo] in our mortal flesh. (cf. 4:10)*
 - i) Through our weaknesses, Christ is put on display.
- c) **What is one summary paradox of Christian ministry?** ¹² *So ...*
 - i) Paul's suffering: *death works [energeo] in us,*
 - ii) Corinthians' spiritual benefit: *but life in you.*
 - (1) Cf. Col. 1:24

3) Things to remember:

- a) Why not work through impressive, flashy vessels? Why not call the world's most qualified people to steward the gospel, if it is so precious? Because the world's most qualified tend to be the most unqualified in the eyes of God. They are prone to work out of their own resources. But to communicate the gospel out of one's own power or cleverness or impressiveness is inherently contradictory to what the gospel is—good news for the unimpressive; qualifying news for the disqualified. (Dane Ortlund)
- b) For the Christian minister, suffering constitutes a normal characteristic of authentic ministry. (George Guthrie)
- c) How can Paul respond to the adversities as he did? By daily trusting in God's faithful, gracious power.

2 Corinthians 4:13-18
Willingness of Ministers to Suffer for God's Glory

Introduction:

1) Three-fold root—4:13-15

a) **Rooted in SCRIPTURE:**

- i) **The past:** ¹³ *But [de] having the same spirit (or Spirit that enables us to trust) of faith, according to what is written [pf. pass. ptc.], "I BELIEVED [aor. act. ind.], THEREFORE [dio] I SPOKE [aor. act. ind.]," [Ps. 116:10, LXX]*
(1) Psalm 116 addresses difficulties, even to the point of death.
(2) Despite death working in Paul (4:12) he speaks in faith.
- ii) **The present:** *we also believe [pres. act. ind.], therefore we also speak [pres. act. ind.],*

b) **Rooted in KNOWLEDGE OF GOD THE FATHER:** ¹⁴ *knowing [pf. act. ptc.] that [hoti] He who raised the Lord Jesus ... (will do two things)*

- This addresses the content of what Paul believed.
- i) **Resurrect us for life:** *will raise [egeiro] us also with Jesus*
- ii) **Present us for judgment:** *and will present us [paristemi] (to Himself (cf. Eph. 5:27) or to Christ (cf. 2 Cor. 5:10; 11:2)) with you.*
(1) Paul does not view himself as being on a higher level than the Corinthians.

c) **Rooted in THE GLORY OF GOD:** ¹⁵ *For [gar] ...*

- i) **IMMEDIATE purpose:** *all things (Paul's ministry of the Word and suffering) are for your sakes,*
- ii) **ULTIMATE purpose:** *so that [hina] the grace which is spreading to more and more people may cause the giving of thanks to abound to the glory of God.*
(1) The reception of God's grace should lead to gratitude and to God's glory.

2) Balanced perspective related to discouragement—4:16-18

a) **Clear statement of Biblical courage—4:16a** ¹⁶ *Therefore [dio] (cf. 4:14-15) we do not lose heart [enkakeo],*

- i) This brings this chapter full circle back to 4:1.

b) **Two interwoven spheres of existence—4:16b**

- i) **External, what people see:** *but [alla] though [1st class condition] our outer [exo] man is decaying [pres. pass. ind. diaptheiro],*
(1) The physical suffering had taken their toll. Check out his scars. (cf. 2 Cor. 4:8-10; 11:23-27)
- ii) **Internal, what only God sees:** *yet [alla] our inner [eso] man is being renewed [pres. pass. ind. anakainoo] day by day. (cf. Col. 3:10)*

iii) David Garland writes: As his outward life conforms ever more closely to the crucified Christ, his inward life conforms ever more closely to the glorified Christ.

c) **Comparing perspectives—4:17-18**

- The next five sentences in Greek each begin with the word *gar*. (cf. 4:17, 18b; 5:1, 2, 4)
- Perspective shapes response.
- David Garland writes: Rather than openly berating them for their spiritual myopia, he tries to unfold the paradox for them. Their culture had conditioned them to see and appreciate only a counterfeit glory and honor. Those with honor in this culture were the elite who ruthlessly beat down all others around them to preserve their pride of place. If the Corinthians allow themselves to continue to be seduced by such a twisted value system, they will miss the authentic glory and honor that reside less conspicuously in the hearts of those who have been beaten down by a malevolent world but who will be raised up by God. Suffering is so visible and inner transformation so invisible, except to the eyes of faith.

i) **Time and heaviness:**

(1) **Temporary/transient, lightweight:** ¹⁷ For *gar* our momentary [*parautika*], light [*elaphros*] affliction [*thlipsis*] is working out [pres. dep. ind. *katergazomai*] for us

(a) He doesn't deny that it really is pressure. (Cf. 4:8-11)

(2) **Eternal, heavyweight:** an eternal [*aionios*] weight [*baros*] of glory far beyond all comparison [*kata hyperbole eis hyperbole*],

(a) The Hebrew word for glory [*kavod*] has the idea of heaviness.

ii) **Focus and expectation:** ¹⁸ while we look [pres. act. ptc. *skopeo*]

(1) **Negative:** not at the things which are seen [*blepo*],

(2) **Positive:** but at the things which are not seen [*blepo*];

iii) **Focus and time:** for *gar* ...

(1) the things which are seen [*blepo*] are temporal [*proskairos*],

(2) but the things which are not seen [*blepo*] are eternal [*aionios*].

3) **Things to remember:**

- a) Christians should be characterized by a fixation on invisible, eternal realities. Paradoxically, their eyes are riveted on what cannot be seen. The world of sense does not determine their outlook and action. (Murray Harris)
- b) The daughter of missionaries to the Congo Republic recounted how as a little girl she had participate in the celebration of the 100th anniversary of missionaries coming to the Congo Republic (in the early 1900's). Speeches were given, music was played, and at the end of the day a very old man stood before the crowd to speak. He said that when the missionaries first came, the people thought them odd and their message suspicious. The tribal leaders, seeking to test the missionaries, slowly poisoned them to death over a period of months, even years. Children of the missionaries died one by one, but the

missionaries stayed and proclaimed the gospel, even as they died. The old man commented, “It was as we watched how they died that we decided we wanted to live as Christians.” (George Guthrie, BECNT)