

LESSON FIVE

2 CORINTHIANS 4: 1 - 18

As Paul had been made a minister of the New Covenant, he acted in such a way as was becoming of such a high commission. He was neither timid nor deceitful. He doubted not the truth, the power, nor the success of the gospel which he preached. Nor did he in any way corrupt or conceal the truth, but he commended himself to every man's conscience (vs 1,2). Why then is the gospel still hidden to some? It can only be explained by the "god of this world" blinding the eyes of men. The ignorance of unbelievers is not because the gospel is obscure, but it is a result of their own lusts and prejudices (vs 3-6).

The treasure of the gospel is in earthen vessels (clay jars). The gospel is God's revelation. It is to do for the world what the creation of light did for the chaotic earth during creation. But we are to have none of the glory of the work. We are nothing. The power is from God. Just as there is no value in the jar, but it is what is inside the jar that is valuable. Paul was so perplexed, persecuted, downtrodden, and exposed to death, that it was evident that a divine power is in control of his preservation and continued efficiency. His continuing to live in spite of the trouble that he faced, is evidence that Jesus lives (7-12).

Paul had the same confidence that David had, and therefore he spoke with equal confidence, that God, who raised Christ from the dead, would also raise him from the dead. Everything that Paul did, and endured, was for the benefit of the church. Therefore, he knew that the people of God would give thanks for his preservation and success (vs 13-15).

It is for these reasons, Paul says, that he would not give up ("I faint not"). Even though his outward man perishes, his inward man was being renewed everyday. He knew that his afflictions were only temporary and that they would be succeeded with an eternal weight of glory (vs 16-18).

KEY PHRASES:

1. "This ministry" - The New Covenant. The kind he described in Chapter three. The kind of ministry that brings life, salvation, and righteousness.
2. "We faint not" - He would not lose heart, no matter what.
3. "Hidden things of shame" - When we became Christians we renounced the sinful practices that bring shame.
4. "Craftiness" Trickery, deceitful practices.
5. "Handling Deceitfully" Tamper with, to beguile.
6. "The god of this world" - Satan.
7. "spirit of faith" (vs 13) - Attitude or outlook of faith.

APPLICATION:

Paul had courage in the face of conflict, and he rejoiced in what he has.

1. He had a glorious ministry
2. He had a valuable treasure.
3. He had a confident faith.

QUESTIONS:

1. What kind of ministry is Paul talking about (vs 1)?
2. Define Ministry as Paul uses it here.
3. How did Paul keep from “fainting”?
4. If Paul was such a faithful preacher, and the gospel is everything he claimed, why do so many reject it?
5. How do we know we have the “word of God” today?
6. Beginning in verse 13, what are the four reasons Paul was able to endure so many trials?
 - A.
 - B.
 - C.
 - D.
7. What does Paul mean by “Outward and Inward man”?
8. How could Paul refer to his afflictions as light?
9. What are the things that are seen, and what is not seen?