

2 CORINTHIANS

STUDY NUMBER SEVEN

- 2 Corinthians 4:1-7

TEXT:

- v. 1 Therefore since we are having this ministry, even as we were favored with mercy, we are not losing heart.
- v. 2 But we have renounced the things hidden because of shame, not walking around in craftiness or adulterating the word of God, but by the manifestation of truth commending ourselves to every man's conscience in the sight of God.
- v. 3 And even if our gospel is covered, it is covered to those who are perishing.
- v. 4 In whose case the god of this world blinded the minds of the unbelieving of the glory of Christ, who is the image of God.
- v. 5 For we are not preaching ourselves but Christ Jesus' as Lord, and ourselves as your bondservants for Jesus' sake.
- v. 6 For God, who said, "Light shall shine out of darkness," is the One who shined in our hearts to give the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Christ.
- v. 7 But we are having this treasure in earthenware vessels, in order that the extraordinary (quality of the) power may be of God and not from ourselves.

INTRODUCTION:

Bob Richards in his book The Heart of a Champion says,

But I have never really seen a great champion who quit when he was beaten; he somehow has that quality of soul that refuses to go down; he bounces back to an even greater victory. In 1948 we were in the Dyche Stadium in Chicago for the Olympic trials. There was a boy there who was acclaimed as probably the finest Olympic prospect America had, a fellow by the name of Harrison Dillard, a wonderful colored boy from Cleveland, Ohio. I happen to know Harrison personally. We have made a number of trips together, and have roomed together. I think he is one of the greatest athletes I have ever met. I saw Harrison as he got down to his mark in the 110-meter hurdles. He hadn't been beaten in eighty-three consecutive races. In two and a half years no one had come close to him. He was the prime hurdler of the world. They got down to their marks --- six boys; of those six, only three could qualify for the Olympic team. They were out there giving everything they had. They got set. The gun went off. Harrison lunged out to an early lead. He was about a yard and a half ahead at the first hurdle. But somehow he overstrode and hit the second hurdle. He practically fell down on the third and stumbled and draped himself over the last hurdle.

I'll never forget it as long as I live. I was standing nearby and I saw Harry come up off that hurdle and look down the track. His lower jaw dropped and that cold realization of defeat began to creep into his face and I wondered if a fellow could ever

feel worse. He had missed the Olympic teams, and an Olympic championship that was a cinch was gone because he couldn't even represent the United States. Could a fellow ever feel worse?

Harrison told me afterwards that right there, at that hurdle, looking down the track and watching those boys go on to claim his berth on that team, he made one of the greatest decisions of his running career. That was to come back and to change that defeat into victory. And so, a few moments later, he qualified for the 110-meters. He barely made the team for third place by nosing out Eddie Conwell by a quarter of an inch.

They went to London. No one gave this made-over hurdler a chance. But when they got down on their marks in Wembley Stadium, one of them was a fellow who knew how to take defeat. When the gun went off before 100,000 people, he lunged out, dug in with everything he had, hit the tape in 10.3 to tie Jesse Owens' Olympic record. He had won the 100-meter championships, an event not his own, to claim probably the greatest championship of his life.

Four years later in Helsinki I saw him run his specialty, the hurdles, in 13.7 to win another Olympic championship. It's that sort of thing that makes a champion. They don't quit when they're beaten. They bounce back to an even more glorious victory. They not only do it in competition; they do it in life.
pp. 75-77

We are going to see that quality of unbeatable lifestyle apparent in the apostle Paul in this 4th chapter.

Ya' Gotta' Love That Texas

A man in Topeka, Kansas decided to write a book about churches around the country. He started by flying to San Francisco, and started working east from there. Going to a very large church, he began taking photographs and making notes. He spotted a golden telephone on the vestibule wall and was intrigued with a sign which read "\$10,000 a minute."

Seeking out the Pastor he asked about the phone and the sign. The Pastor answered that this golden phone is, in fact, a direct line to Heaven and if he pays the price he can talk directly to God. The man thanked the Pastor and continued on his way.

As he continued to visit churches in Seattle, Chicago, Atlanta, Baltimore, Boston, and all around the United States, he found more phones with the same sign, and the same answer from each Pastor.

Finally, he arrived in Texas. Upon entering Green Acres in Tyler, behold, he saw the usual golden telephone. But THIS time, the sign read:

"35 cents." Fascinated, he asked to talk to the Pastor.

“Reverend, I have been in cities all across the country and in each church I have found this golden telephone and have been told it is a direct line to Heaven and that I could talk to God, but, in the other churches the cost was \$10,000 a minute.

Your sign reads 35 cents a call. Why?”

Dykes, smiling benignly, replied, “Son, you’re in Texas now.....it’s a local call.”

Why Parents go Gray

The boss of a big company needed to call one of his employees about an urgent problem with one of the main computers, dialed the employee’s home phone number and was greeted with a child’s whisper,

“Hello.”

“Is your daddy home?” he asked.

“Yes,” whispered the small voice.

“May I talk with him?”

The child whispered, “No.”

Surprised, and wanting to talk with an adult, the boss asked, “Is your mommy there?”

“Yes.”

“May I talk with her?”

Again the small voice whispered, “No.”

Hoping there was somebody with whom he could leave a message, the boss asked,

“Is anybody else there?”

“Yes,” whispered the child, “a policeman.”

Wondering what a cop would be doing at his employee’s home, the boss asked,

“May I speak with the policeman?”

“No, he’s busy,” whispered the child.

“Busy doing what?”

“Talking to Daddy and Mommy and the Fireman,” came the whispered answer.

Growing concerned and even worried as he heard what sounded like a helicopter through the earpiece on the phone the boss asked, “What is that noise?” “A hello-copper” answered the whispering voice.

“What is going on there?” asked the boss, now alarmed.

In an awed whispering voice the child answered, “The search team just landed the hello-copper.” Alarmed, concerned, and even more then just a little frustrated the boss asked,

“What are they searching for?”

Still whispering, the young voice replied along with a muffled giggle:

“ME.”

An Ode to a Cowboy

He rode his last roundup
And hung up his spurs,
His 'kerchif and hat on their pegs.
Bedroll's rolled up in the
Bunkhouse, with the tattered
Chaps he wore on his legs.

And his well worn old saddle
Is stacked in the corner,
The blanket folded on top.
With his run-over boots,
And that old rawhide rope
That brought many a calf to a stop.

Where he's at now, there's
No need for spurs.
There's no bad one to hook.
There's no hot dusty days or
Bad storms and cold weather.
His new 'kerchif and hat are for looks.

And his saddle up there
Is studded with gold.
The old one he just left behind.
His boots are made of
The finest top leather and
His rope, the finest of twine.

He rode for the brand
While here on this earth.
He was just that kind of a man.
Where he's at now on that
Range that's beyond, you can bet
He still rides for the brand.

Written by Sam Davis
11-26-01

A Prayer

O Father of glory, this is the cry of our hearts – to be changed from one degree of glory to another, until, in the resurrection, at the last trumpet, we are completely conformed to the image of your Son, Jesus Christ, our Lord. Until then, we long to grow in grace and in

the knowledge of our Lord, especially the knowledge of his glory. We want to see it as clearly as we see the sun, and to savor it as deeply as our most desired pleasure. O merciful God, incline our hearts to your Word and the wonders of your glory. Wean us from our obsession with trivial things. Open the eyes of our hearts to see each day what the created universe is telling about your glory. Enlighten our minds to see the glory of your Son in the Gospel. We believe that you are the All-glorious One, and that there is none like you. Help our unbelief. Forgive the wandering of our affections and the undue attention we give to lesser things. Have mercy on us for Christ's sake, and fulfill in us your great design to display the glory of your grace. In Jesus' name we pray, amen.

True Worship

“Worship God.” – Rev. xxii. 9.

Those who have read the section on *The Secret of Intercession* have doubtless more than once asked: ‘What may be the reason that prayer and intercession are not a greater joy and delight? And is there any way in which we may become fitted to make fellowship with God our chief joy, and as intercessors to bring down His power and blessing on those for whom we pray?’

There may be more than one answer to the question. But the chief answer is undoubtedly: *We know God too little*. In our prayer, His presence is not waited for as the chief thing on which our heart is set. And yet it should be so. We think mostly of ourselves, our need, and weakness, our desire and prayer. But we forget that in every prayer *God must be First, must be All*. To seek Him, to find Him, to tarry in His presence, to be assured *that His Holy Presence rests upon us*, that He actually listens to what we say, and is working in us – it is this alone that gives the inspiration that makes the prayer as natural and easy to us as is the intercourse of a child with his father.

And how is one to attain to this nearness to God and fellowship with Him? The answer is simple: *We must give God time to make Himself known to us*. Believe with all your whole hearts, that just as you present yourself to God as a supplicant, so God presents Himself to you as the Hearer of prayer. But you cannot realize this except as you give Him time and quiet. It is not the multitude or the earnestness of your words in which prayer has its power, but in the living faith that God Himself is taking you and your prayer into His loving heart. He Himself will give the assurance that in His time your prayer will be heard.

The object of this book is to help you to know the way thus to meet God in every prayer. We shall seek to give you texts with which your heart can bow before God, waiting on Him to make them living and true in your experience.

Begin this day with the word:

“Unto Thee, O Lord, do I lift up my soul.” Bow before Him in stillness, believing that He looks on you and will reveal His presence.

“My soul thirsteth for God, for the living God.”

Our youngest daughter Julea is graduating from college this December. I had this letter waiting for me this weekend:

Dear Dad:

Hi. Your letter was just in time. I needed it to know that you are behind me. Today was the worse day so far of this semester. Last night my best friend and I decided it wouldn't, or I decided I couldn't go on being his friend. I cried so hard last night. Then this morning I got a D on my Theories of personality test. I went to call Mom and had another good cry. I went to lunch with a good friend and that was great. Then I got a card from you. Thanks, it totally ministered to me. I guess the Lord has a lot to teach me this semester. I'm tired, though, and I'm rebelling. I guess I'm doubting that I can make it. You've always taught us not to be quitters so I'm trying. I've decided I'm going to be a fighter. I've just hit an all-time low. This semester has got to get better. I guess I've got to be refined and changed, not necessarily my situation or circumstances.

Thanks again for the plaque and the card. It meant so much to me.

- v. 1 therefore since we are having this ministry, even as we were favored with mercy, we are not losing heart.

THEREFORE points us back to chap. 3:18:

But we all with unveiled face beholding as in a mirror the glory of the Lord are being transformed into the same image from glory to glory, just as from the Lord, the Spirit.

Therefore, in view of this transforming ministry, we have a reason for living. We have a reason for going on. We have a reason to be rejoicing.

“EVEN AS WE WERE FAVORED WITH MERCY.”

We are having this ministry and we are favored with mercy.

Keep the Organ Playing

Many years ago an accomplished organist was giving a concert. (In those days someone had to pump large bellows backstage to provide air for the pipes.) After each song, the audience applauded heartily. Before his final number, the organist stood and said, “I shall now play...” and he announced the title. He sat down and adjusted his music. With feet poised over the pedals and hands over the keys, he began with a mighty chord. But the organ remained silent. Just then a voice was heard from backstage: “Say ‘We’!”

Acts 9:15, 16

But the Lord said to him, “Go, for he is a chosen instrument of Mine, to bear My name before the Gentiles and kings and the sons of Israel; for I will show him how much he must suffer for My name’s sake.”

Galatians 1:11, 12

For I would have you know, brethren, that the gospel which was preached by me is not according to man. For I neither received it from man, nor was I taught it, but I received it through a revelation of Jesus Christ.

The ministry is a gift granted in mercy.

Psalm 75:6, 7

No one from the east or the west
Or from the desert can exalt a man.
But it is God who judges:
He brings one down, he exalts another.

“HAVING THIS MINISTRY, being favored with mercy, WE ARE NOT LOSING HEART.”

Positively: “WE ARE HAVING THIS MINISTRY”

Negatively: “WE ARE NOT LOSING HEART”

We are not discouraged. We are not quitters when the difficult times come.

Remembering that we have been given this special ministry keeps us from discouragement.

This ministry gives us something to live for, something to be excited about, something that makes us feel useful.

Daniel 10:10-12

A hand touched me and set me trembling on my hands and knees. He said, “Daniel, you who are highly esteemed, consider carefully the words I am about to speak to you, and stand up, for I have now been sent to you.” And when he said this to me, I stood up trembling.

Then he continued, “Do not be afraid, Daniel. Since the first day that you set your mind to gain understanding and to humble yourself before your God, your words were heard, and I have come in response to them.

Robert Foster in his biweekly letter to men for October 15, 1987, says

In his book, GUNS OF THE TIMBERLANDS, Louie L’Amour tells about the quality of man who helped win the western part of the USA: “They were tall men, short men but all of them were strong men with skin like saddle-leather and clear eyes that saw beyond today. These men who stayed were not necessarily wealthy men, but they were steadfast men, confident men, strong with an inner strength that knew no defeat...”

Daniel was such a man! We seem to have lost something of the daring which characterized our pioneering forefathers. For our daily tasks, we seemingly want “instant pudding, instant fudge, and an instant mashed potatoes mind-set which simply will not get the job done!”

Daniel was a man over 80 years young, sitting along side the river Tigris in Babylon. In the sunset of life, he didn't poop out coming down the home-stretch. As he did at the age of 16, he “set his heart and chastened himself...” Daniel never lost his temerity!

“Set you[r] heart”...temerity. It has several names...purpose, fearlessness, courage, expectation, poise, contempt of danger, a reckless and often presumptuous venturesomeness.

Whatever is the name of the game...don't lose you temerity. “The difficulty of your employment motivates it. The demands of competition inspires it. Criticism challenges it. Adventure arouses it. Danger incites it. Threats quicken it!”

“Set your heart...” David had it when he grabbed his slingshot and went after the giant; Joseph demonstrated it when the Egyptian harlot got him cornered; Elijah evidenced it when the odds were 450 to one on top of Mt. Carmel; Job showed it when he was covered with boils and surrounded by misunderstanding; Moses validated it when he stood before Pharaoh and refused to be intimidated.

William Yeats defines genius as “living with the major issues of life.” Daniel with his Type A personality, exercised strong will power toward a planned end. His fixed purpose was to end life well.

Paul in this first verse is saying, Because we are having this ministry, and we were favored with mercy in granting it, we are not discouraged. We are not losing heart.

- v. 2 But we have renounced the things hidden because of shame, not walking around in craftiness or adulterating the word of God, but by the manifestation of truth, commending ourselves to every man's conscience in the sight of God.

In contrast to being discouraged, because they are having a ministry and have been favored with mercy, the NEGATIVE thing is they “are not losing heart” but the POSITIVE things they are doing --- we note three of them here in the first part of the second verse:

1. “WE HAVE RENOUNCED THE THINGS HIDDEN BECAUSE OF SHAME”

Paul recognizes what sin will do to the life of the believer. A decision has to be made. The nerve has to be severed. The sin must be put away. They have by deliberate action renounced the things hidden because of shame.

There are things we have to cut out of our lives. There are things we have to say “no” to.

Daniel 1:8

But Daniel resolved not to defile himself with the royal food and wine, and he asked the chief official for permission not to defile himself this way.

When these things are renounced in our lives and put away, God blesses us for our obedience and our stand in conviction.

Perhaps these hidden things are habits.

1 Cor. 9:27

But I am treating my body roughly and making it serve me, lest possibly, after I have preached to others, I myself should be disqualified.

Perhaps it's MORAL MATTERS, where there is compromise, solicitations to evil, temptation, fantasies.

Paul said to Timothy: "Flee youthful lusts, which way against the soul."

Galatians 5:17

For the flesh sets its desires against the Spirit, and the Spirit against the flesh; for these are in opposition to one another, so that you may not do the things that you please.

Romans 7:15

For that which I am doing, I do not understand; for I am not practicing what I would like to do, but I am doing the very thing I hate.

Paul says, We renounced these hidden things which bring shame if they were known. We kept these things from taking over in our lives.

Whereas our focus on the first phrase was on the word RENOUNCED, now our focus in the next phrase is on the word CRAFTINESS:

2. "NOT WALKING AROUND IN CRAFTINESS"

You immediately become a hypocrite when you fail to deal with these things. You have to put up a phony front. You have to fake it in the flesh, and it smells horrible in the nostrils of the Father.

Whereas we see COMPROMISE in the word RENOUNCED, and we see CRAFTINESS in the conduct, in our third word we will be focusing on CONFUSION:

3. "OR ADULTERING THE WORD OF GOD"

How do we do this?

By taking verses out of context

By avoiding any look at sin and judgment in the Word of God

By rationalizing away passages dealing with a specific problem or sin

2 Cor. 2:17

For we are not like the many, who are peddling the word of God, but out of pure motives (sincerity), but as from God, we are speaking in Christ in the sight of God.

COMPROMISE, CRAFTINESS and CONFUSION have been cut out of our lives, that we might be effective representatives of Jesus Christ.

(Expository Studies in 2 Corinthians: Power Out of Weakness by Ray C. Stedman)

Paul says also he refuses to practice cunning. Now what does that mean? Well, it means to rely on some psychological trick played on people to get them to respond --- some intense pressure tactic in a meeting, perhaps beautiful seductive music to get them to give way, or telling stories that bring tears to people's eyes, playing upon their emotions, this kind of thing. Paul says, "We don't need to use any of this. We don't rely upon that." In our day many seem given over to Christian showmanship, seeing who can put on the biggest spectacle to attract people, hiring a special band or getting trapeze artists to come and put on a show, and so on. Paul says that in the new covenant we do not rely on those kinds of things anymore.

p. 66

(Quality Friendship: The Risks and Rewards by Gary Inrig)

David's decision to hide his sin rather than to expose it by confession to the Lord is one that marred all that followed. The Bible warns us against the "deceitfulness of sin." The issues at first seem so simple --- a single night of pleasure with a beautiful woman. The hedonists trumpet loudly the joy of sex and the pleasures of indulgence, but they never show us the last chapter. The serpent speaks with great eloquence about the desirability of the forbidden fruit, but he is eloquently silent about the inevitability of the wages of sin.

p. 113

(Pilgrim at Tinker Creek by Annie Dillard)

A couple of summers ago I was walking along the edge of the island to see what I could see in the water, and mainly to scare frogs. Frogs have an inelegant way of taking off from the invisible positions on the bank just ahead of your feet, in dire panic, emitting a froggy "Yike!" and splashing into the water. Incredibly, this amused me, and, incredibly, it amuses me still. As I walked along the grassy edge of the island, I got

better and better at seeing frogs both in and out of the water. I learned to recognize, slowing down, the difference in texture of the light reflected from mudbank, water, grass, or frog. Frogs were flying all around me. At the end of the island I noticed a small green frog. He was exactly half in and half out of the water, looking like a schematic diagram of an amphibian, and he didn't jump.

He didn't jump; I crept closer. At last I knelt on the island's winterkilled grass, lost, dumbstruck, staring at the frog in the creek just four feet away. He was a very small frog with wide, dull eyes. And just as I looked at him, he slowly crumpled and began to sag. The spirit vanished from his eyes as if snuffed. His skin emptied and droop, his very skull seemed to collapse and settle like a kicked tent. He was shrinking before my eyes like a deflating football. I watched the taut, glistening skin of his shoulders ruck, and rumple, and fall. Soon, part of his skin, formless as a pricked balloon, lay in floating folds like bright scum on top of the water: it was a monstrous and terrifying thing. I gaped bewildered, appalled. An oval shadow hung on the water behind the drained frog; then the shadow glided away. The frog skin bag started to sink.

I had read about the giant water bug, but never seen one. "Giant water bug" is really the name of the creature, which is an enormous, heavy-bodied brown beetle. It eats insects, tadpoles, fish, and frogs. Its grasping forelegs are mighty and hooked inward. It seizes a victim with these legs, hugs it tight, and paralyzes it with enzyme injected during a vicious bite. That one bite is the only bite it ever takes. Through the puncture shoot the poisons that dissolve the victim's muscles and bones and organs --- all but the skin --- and through it the giant water bug sucks out the victim's body, reduced to a juice. This event is quite common in warm fresh water. The frog I saw was being sucked by a giant water bug. I had been kneeling on the island grass; when the unrecognizable flap of frog skin settled on the creek bottom, swaying, I stood up and brushed the knees of my pants. I couldn't catch my breath.

pp. 5-6

Paul has said three things thus far in the first part of this second verse:

1. "we have renounced the things hidden because of shame."
2. "We are not walking around in craftiness."
3. We are not adulterating the word of God."

With the three negatives, we come to the contrasting positive in the latter part of the verse: "BUT BY THE MANIFESTATION OF TRUTH COMMENDING OURSELVES TO EVERY MAN'S CONSCIENCE IN THE SIGHT OF GOD."

How do we see the manifestation of truth? It obviously comes from the life as we had spoken of the fragrance back in chapter 2 that exudes from our lives. And then that truth is verified by the words on our lips as we speak forth the word of God.

The apostle says: "COMMENDING OURSELVES TO EVERY MAN'S CONSCIENCE IN THE SIGHT OF GOD."

They are demonstrating by their lives what the truth will do.

Their WORKS and their WORDS bring conviction.

John 16:7, 8

But I tell you the truth, it is to your advantage that I go away; for if I do not go away, the Helper shall not come to you; but if I go, I will send Him to you. And He, when He comes, will convict the world concerning sin, and righteousness, and judgment;

Acts 24:24, 25

But some days later, Felix arrived with Drusilla, his wife who was a Jewess, and sent for Paul, and heard him speak about faith in Christ Jesus. And as he was discussing righteousness, self-control and the judgment to come, Felix became frightened and said, "Go away for the present, and when I find time, I will summon you."

(God's Glory Displayed by N. A. Woychuk)

David Livingstone is an excellent example of a large-type Christian.

The great English explorer of Africa, Sir Henry M. Stanley, who found Livingstone in the heart of the dark continent, tells the story of his conversion as follows:

"I went to Africa as prejudiced against religion as the worst infidel in London. To a reporter like myself, who had only to deal with wars, mass meetings, and political gatherings, sentimental matters were quite out of my province. But there came to me a long time for reflection. It was out there away from a worldly world. I saw this solitary old man (Livingstone) there, and I asked myself, 'Why does he stop here in such a place? What is it that inspires him?'

"For months after we met I found myself listening to him, wondering at the old man carrying out the words, 'Leave all, and follow Me.' But little by little, seeing his piety, his gentleness, his zeal, his earnestness, and how he went quietly about his business, I was converted by him, although he had not tried in any way to do it."
p. 38

v. 3 And even if our gospel is covered, it is covered to those who are perishing.

You can tell by the words "AND EVEN IF OUR GOSPEL IS COVERED" that the apostle has had to triumph over discouraging circumstances and the rejection of his message.

The reason for discouragement is people's failure to respond.

The apostle uses the phrase "WE ARE NOT LOSING HEART" back in verse 1, and he will use it again in our next study in chap. 4:16:

Therefore we are not losing heart, but though our outer man is decaying yet our inner man is being renewed day by day.

Paul is finding his way through the maze of confusing circumstances by remembering he is having a ministry and has been favored with mercy by the father of compassionate mercies who granted it unto him.

I think one of the things that helps more than anything in the whole realm of discouragement is to realize that we are not responsible for the response to the truth but we are responsible for the communication of it.

Many times in our witness for Christ we experience rejection to the message of salvation. We must not be depressed by this indifference and rejection. We have fulfilled our function when we have been faithful to proclaim the message that God has granted unto us.

Hannah Whitall Smith in her book The God Who Is Enough says,

Fenelon says concerning this, "It is of great importance to guard against discouragement on account of our faults. Discouragement is not a fruit of humility, but of pride, and nothing can be worse. It springs from a secret love of our own excellence. We are hurt at feeling what we are. If we become discouraged we are the more enfeebled, and from our reflections on our own imperfections, a chagrin arises that is often worse than the self-love to behold itself perfect; it is vexed that it is not so, it is impatient, haughty, and out of temper with itself and with everybody else. Sad state; as though the work of God could be accomplished by our ill-humor. As though the peace of God could be attained by our interior restlessness."

p. 184

If I am asked how we are to get rid of discouragements, I can only say, as I have had to say of so many other wrong spiritual habits, we must give them up. It is never worth while to argue against discouragement. There is only one argument that can meet it, and that is the argument of God. When David was in the midst of what were perhaps the most discouraging moments of his life, when he had found his city burned, and his wives stolen, and he and the men with him had wept until they had not more power to weep and when his men, exasperated at their misfortunes, spoke of stoning him, then we are told, "But David encouraged himself in the Lord his God"; and the result was a magnificent victory, in which all that they had lost was more than restored to them. This always will be, and always must be the result of a courageous faith, because faith lays hold of the omnipotence of God.

p. 189

We can only be strong in Him when we are weak in ourselves, and our weakness, therefore, is in reality our greatest strength.

The children of Israel can give us a warning lesson here. After the Lord had delivered them out of Egypt, and had brought them to the borders of the promised land,

Moses urged them to go up and possess it. "Behold," he said, "the Lord thy God hath set the land before thee; go up and possess it, as the Lord God of thy fathers hath said unto thee; fear not, neither be discouraged." But the circumstances were so discouraging, and they felt themselves to be so helpless, that they could not believe God would really do all He had said; and they murmured in their tents, and declared that it must be because the Lord hated them that He had brought them out of Egypt in order to deliver them into the hands of their enemies. "And they said, Whither shall we go up? Our brethren have discouraged our heart, saying, The people is greater and taller than we; the cities are great and walled up to heaven; and moreover we have seen the sons of the Anakims there."

When we read the report of the spies we cannot be surprised at their discouragement; and we can even believe they would have felt that courage under such circumstances would be only foolhardiness. "The land through which we have gone to search it," the spies declared, "is a land that eateth up the inhabitants thereof; and all the men that we saw in it are men of a great stature. And there we saw the giants, the sons of Anak, which come of the giants: and we were in our own sight as grasshoppers, and so we were in their sight." Nothing could have seemed humbler than for them to look upon themselves as poor, good-for-nothing grasshoppers; and true humility would have seemed to teach that it would be the height of presumption for grasshoppers to try to conquer giants. We also often feel ourselves to be but grasshoppers in the face of the giants of temptation and trouble that assail us, and we think ourselves justified in being discouraged. But the question is not, whether we are grasshoppers, but whether God is; for it is not we who have to fight these giants, but God.

pp. 179, 180

"AND EVEN IF OUR GOSPEL IS COVERED,"

Here the apostle picks up on the word VEIL that he had used back in chap. 3 when he was characterizing the law and its fading glory: Moses was putting a veil over his face.

We could read this verse: And even if our gospel is veiled, it is veiled to those who are perishing.

2 Cor. 2:15

Because we are a fragrance of Christ to God among those who are being saved and among those who are perishing;

John 3:16

For God so loved the world that he gave his only begotten son, that whoever believes in him should not perish but have eternal life.

2 Peter 3:9

The Lord is not slow about his promise, as some count slowness, but is patient toward you, not wishing for any to perish but for all to come to repentance.

You cannot nullify the power of the gospel to make blind eyes see by simply rejecting it.

The fault is not with the message but with the recipients who choose to reject the message and to perish as a result of it.

Discouragement can only come into our lives when we put the blame for circumstances and happenings in our lives in the wrong place. When we get the focus on us as the problem, we get discouraged. When we put the focus on the message, we lose our confidence. We must place the full responsibility on the God of this world who is fighting a battle to the death for those who are perishing.

v. 4 In whose case the god of this world blinded the minds of the unbelieving, that they might not see the light of the gospel of the glory of Christ, who is the image of God.

Moses had a veil so they wouldn't see the fading glory. Satan veils so they won't see the greater glory.

“IN WHOSE CASE” refers back to the perishing of verse 3.

Why are they in this condition? Does it have something to do with the minister or the message? No, it does not. It is the fruit of the work of the god of this world --- Satan --- who blinded the minds.

How does he do this? Well, there are five ways that I came up with:

1. Never thinking of death or accepting one's mortality.
2. Unwilling to acknowledge one's sinfulness
3. Living only for the here and now
4. Consumed with challenges and stresses of living.
5. Denial of accountability in the hereafter

Satan, the god of this world, blinded the minds. The blinding is getting them ready for outer darkness, which is their destiny.

In the case of the perishing, the god of this world blinded the minds; and then the perishing are characterized by the word UNBELIEVING. They are unwilling to put their faith in the promises of God and the person of the Lord Jesus to adequately provide for them the gift of salvation.

(Expository Studies in 2 Corinthians: Power Out of Weakness by Ray C. Stedman)

I want you to be careful how you read this because it is often misread. Some of the commentaries I read on this passage put it this way: Paul is responding to the question, “Why are people perishing?” and his answer is, “Because they are blinded by

the devil.” And then he asks, in effect, “Why are they blinded by the devil?” and his answer is, “Because they won’t believe.”

That is the way it is often understood. It means, if you take it this way, that the basic reason for people being lost is their refusal to believe, giving the devil an opportunity to blind them. But that is not what Paul says. It is the other way around. People are perishing because they do not believe; and they do not believe because they are blinded by the devil. The god of this age, the god behind the scenes of world events, the god whom the world unconsciously worships in everything they think and say and do, has brainwashed them. Therefore, they cannot understand what the good news is saying; that is why they do not believe it.

“I Don’t Need Any Help!”

This is a great, revealing passage. Paul says the devil’s tool is the veil. The devil is responsible for the unbelief of men, and men and women are helpless victims in the hands of the god of this age. This veil is the delusion that we are adequate to handle life by ourselves, that independent sense of pride which says, “I don’t need any help; I can handle it by myself; I need no religious crutch; I don’t need a savior.” Put in the words of William Henley’s famous poem, “Invictus,” it is saying:

It matters not how strait the gate,
How charged with punishment the scroll,
I am the master of my fate:
I am the captain of my soul.

This is the veil which lies over the minds of people to keep them from seeing the death and condemnation that awaits at the end of the fading glory. The devil’s purpose, Paul says here, is to keep men and women from seeing that Jesus Christ is the secret of being like God, of being godly in freedom and in loving others, “...to keep them from seeing the light of the gospel of the glory of Christ, who is the likeness of God.”

p. 70

(God’s Glory Displayed by N. A. Woychuk)

A scholar once entered the Lutheran Church in Copenhagen to view Thorwaldsen’s world famous statue of Christ. At first, he seemed critical and dissatisfied. Then a child, aware of the man’s disappointment, explained, “You must kneel down and look up into His face.” The visitor followed the child’s instruction and, kneeling, he saw the marble masterpiece in a new, glorious light. He found a countenance of heavenly beauty directed to him.

And every man who will earnestly humble himself and look by faith at the living Saviour will not only behold the glory of God but will be transformed into the same likeness, “from glory to glory, even as by the Spirit of the Lord” (II Cor. 3:18).

p. 88

A certain tyrant sent for one of his subjects, and said to him, "What is your employment?" He said, "I am a blacksmith." "Go home and make me a chain of such a length." He went home; it occupied him several months, and he had no income all the time he was making it. Then he brought that chain to the monarch, who looked at it and said, "Go, make it twice as long." He brought it up again, and the monarch said, "Go, make it longer still." Each time he brought it, he received nothing but the command to make it longer still. And when he brought it up at last, the monarch said to his servants, "It is long enough, take it and bind him hand and foot with it, and cast him into the furnace of fire." These were the wages of making the chain.
pp. 88-89

(Creativity in Preaching by J. Grant Howard)

Adam and Eve went on their merry way, creatively enjoying Eden and each other; carefully keeping the rules set up by their Creator. Then it happened. Seductively challenged by Satan to think incorrectly and to act disobediently, they wavered precipitously on the thin edge of decision and finally plunged headlong into the disastrous choice to pit their human wills against the will of their sovereign Creator. They sinned, and from that point on the world has been occupied by fallen, sinful human beings.

We know from Scripture and from experience that the Fall and the curse that followed profoundly affected man's mind. He can still think, but he can't always think correctly. Adam's mind began to malfunction immediately. He lost the proper perspective of nakedness. He tried to hide from God. He was slow to confess his active part in the forbidden indulgence. He tried to put the blame on his partner, Eve. His sons inherited this flawed thinking process, so much so that Cain came to the erroneous conclusion that the best way to solve a sibling squabble was to commit murder.

Within a few generations man's mind had deteriorated to the point where "every inclination of the thoughts of his heart was only evil all the time" (Gen. 6:5). Except for Noah's faithful remnant, the flood drowned out all of this bizarre thinking, yet before things hardly had time to dry out, God, knowing man's belligerent bent, instituted capital punishment (Gen. 9:5-6).

The world, the flesh and the devil continue to conspire to keep fallen people thinking half a bubble off plumb, at the very least. A classic analysis of man's cerebral corruption is contained in Ephesians 4:17-19:

You must no longer live as the Gentiles do, in the futility of their thinking. They are darkened in their understanding and separated from the life of God because of the ignorance that is due to the hardening of their hearts. Having lost all sensitivity, they have given themselves over to sensuality so as to indulge in every kind of impurity, with a continual lust for more.
pp. 22-23

The recognition of the reality of Satanic opposition and activity as the message is proclaimed causes one to place the responsibility where it really lies and frees one from discouragement. This is the reason the apostle can say, "Therefore since we are having

this ministry, even as we were favored with mercy, we are not losing heart.” The apostle says, We don’t quit. We keep it going. We know we’re going to make it. The victory was ultimately secured for us when Jesus died upon the cross, and now we’re walking in that victory.

Colossians 2:15

When He had disarmed the rulers and authorities, He made a public display of them, having triumphed over them through Him.

“IN WHOSE CASE THE GOD OF THIS WORLD BLINDED THE MINDS OF THE UNBELIEVING” and then the last phrase gives us the purpose behind this blinding: “THAT THEY MIGHT NOT SEE THE LIGHT OF THE GOSPEL OF THE GLORY OF CHRIST, WHO IS THE IMAGE OF GOD.”

The purpose in the blinding is that they might not see the light.

What does light do? Well, three things:

1. it ILLUMINATES.
2. it gives INSIGHT.
3. it gives INSTRUCTION

Psalms 119:130

The entrance of your words gives light;
It gives understanding to the simple.

Psalms 119:105

Your word is a lamp to my feet
And a light for my path.

Our text says: “THAT THEY MIGHT NOT SEE.”

John 1:11

He came to His own, and those who were His own did not receive Him.

John 3:19-21

And this is the judgment, that the light has come into the world, and men loved the darkness rather than the light; for their deeds were evil. For everyone who does evil hates the light, and does not come to the light, lest his deeds should be exposed. But he who practices the truth comes to the light, that his deeds may be manifested as having been wrought in God.

John 8:12

Again therefore Jesus spoke to them, saying, "I am the light of the world; he who follows Me shall not walk in the darkness, but shall have the light of life."

1 John 1:5-7

And this is the message we have heard from Him and announce to you, that God is light, and in Him there is no darkness at all. If we say that we have fellowship with Him and yet walk in the darkness, we lie and do not practice the truth; but if we walk in the light as He Himself is in the light, we have fellowship with one another, and the blood of Jesus His Son cleanses us from all sin.

2 Cor. 3:18

But we all, with unveiled face beholding as in a mirror the glory of the Lord, are being transformed into the same image from glory to glory, just as from the Lord, the Spirit.

Ephesians 5:14

For this reason it says,
 "Awake, sleeper,
 And arise from the dead,
 And Christ will shine on you."

"THAT THEY MIGHT NOT SEE THE LIGHT OF THE GOSPEL OF THE GLORY OF CHRIST, WHO IS THE IMAGE OF GOD."

Wednesday – November 11 Read: 2 Cor. 11:1-1, 13-15

Know Your Enemy

...we are not ignorant of [Satan's] devices

2 Corinthians 2:11

General George Patton of World War II fame was seldom at a loss for words. What he said during a battle in North Africa may be a legend, but it typifies the man. Patton's troops and tanks were engaged in a successful counterattack of German forces under General Erwin Rommel. Patton is reported to have shouted in the thick of battle, "I read your book, Rommel! I read your book!" And that he did. In Rommel's book *Infantry Attacks*, the famed "Desert Fox" carefully detailed his military strategy. And Patton, having read it and knowing what to expect, planned his moves accordingly.

Satan has authored no book. God, however, has exposed our enemy's tactics in His Holy Word. Here are but a few of his subtle strategies: Quote Scripture to lead us astray (Matt. 4:6). Afflict the body (2 Cor. 12:7). Pluck away the seed of the Word (Mark 4:15). Tempt by impure thoughts (1 Cor. 7:5). Tempt by pride (1 Tim. 3:6).

Hinder through circumstances (1 Thess. 2:18). Seduce by pleasure (1 Tim. 5:11,15). Severely buffet in a crisis (Luke 22:31). Tempt to hypocrisy and lying (Acts 5:3).

The name Satan means *adversary*. He is also described as “the accuser of our brethren” (Rev. 12:10) and “a murderer from the beginning” and a liar (John 8:44).

Study these passages and plan your defense. Be always on the alert. Submit to God and resist the devil. Victory can be yours, but first you must know your enemy so you can recognize his strategy. - D.J.D.

*Satan, in his subtle way,
Will chloroform your soul.
If you don't quickly turn to Christ,
Whose blood can make you whole.* - Lyle
Satan's ploys are no match for the Savior's power.

(Birthright by David C. Needham)

A Christian is not simply a person who gets forgiveness, who gets to go to heaven, who gets the Holy Spirit, who gets a new nature. Mark this --- a Christian is a person who has become someone he was not before. A Christian, in terms of his deepest identity, is a SAINT, a born child of God, a divine masterpiece, a child of light, a citizen of heaven. Not only positionally (true in the mind of God but not true in actuality here on earth), not only judicially (a matter of God's moral bookkeeping), but ACTUALLY.

Becoming a Christian is not just getting something, no matter how wonderful that something may be.

It is becoming someone.
p. 47

Being born again involves a radical change of being. It is not simply a change in citizenship papers; it is a change in me! I was “by nature a child of wrath.” No more. By nature I am now someone else: a child of God.
p. 53

(The Be (Happy) Attitudes by Robert Schuller)

My conversation with Tom Landry didn't end with talk about winning. He went on to explain how he had found real satisfaction.

“I wanted to be a good football coach, so my whole life was absorbed in that. As I went up the ladder all the way to becoming a professional football player and winning world championships with the New York Giants (that's where I was before I joined the Cowboys), I discovered that after the excitement of winning or being successful, there was always an emptiness and a restlessness that stayed with me afterwards.

“I didn't understand that. I thought that somewhere along the way you ought to win a victory that would sustain you for the rest of your life. But I never discovered that kind of satisfaction until one time a friend asked me to attend a Bible study that met at a hotel in Dallas on Wednesday morning. I thought he was crazy because I knew the Christmas story and the Easter story and I'd been to church every Sunday. But he was a

good friend, so I went. I remember it so well. We were reading in the Sermon on the Mount in Matthew, where Jesus said, 'Do not be anxious about your life, what you shall eat or what you shall drink, nor about your body, what you shall put on. Is not life more than food, and the body more than clothing?...Seek first God's kingdom and His righteousness, and all these things shall be yours as well' (Matt. 6:25,33).

"Well, that was my first real discovery of the Bible! It was the first time I'd ever studied it. I went on to learn what the gospel of Jesus Christ is all about. As a result I accepted Christ --- one year before I took over the Dallas Cowboys. I learned what St. Augustine meant when he said, 'Our hearts are restless, O God, until they find their rest in thee.'

"I found that the emptiness and the restlessness left me. I really realized two things, Dr. Schuller. I realized that you can go to church all your life and not be a Christian. I had never known that. I think the other thing I discovered was that life is a matter of priorities. Up until that point, football was my first priority in life; my family and God took a back seat. But once I accepted Christ as my Lord and Savior, I discovered that God was first in my life. That made all the difference in the world and it's been that way in my life ever since."

pp. 107-8

Chuck Colson, who was once one of the most powerful men in our country and then was imprisoned as a result of the Watergate scandal, is a living example of this: You cannot find happiness through power.

Chuck was not happy when he commanded great power influence. Instead, his power led to ruin and even imprisonment. But then Chuck Colson found Jesus and was born again. Today he has an active ministry going on in over three hundred sixty-five prisons in the United States and in twenty-one countries of the world. He has thirty thousand volunteers active in the United States, and some fifty-eight thousand inmates have graduated from his evangelistic and discipleship training programs inside the prisons. He says, "It is the greatest thrill in the world to be part of a movement of God's people raised up to bring the Good News that Jesus Christ can change lives in those dark dungeons we call prisons in America.

"I've been so close to those in the highest office in the world," he continues. "I've been in palaces; I've preached in great cathedrals around the globe but the greatest joy and fulfillment I've had is to be in prison on a grimy concrete floor with a burly convict who, in a flood of tears, gives his life to Jesus."

pp. 108-9

- v. 5 For we are not preaching ourselves but Christ Jesus as Lord, and ourselves as your bondservants for Jesus' sake.

The reason our gospel is covered is because we are:

Negatively: "NOT PREACHING OURSELVES"

Positively: "CHRIST JESUS AS LORD"

We are not preaching about ourselves but our message is Jesus Christ, and our method is one of being a bondservant for Jesus' sake.

You have LIGHT and LOVE wedded together here. The message is a message of light and the method is one of love.

We are there to serve you. We are ministering to the needs of others.

SERVING SACRIFICIALLY is our calling.

Mark 10:45

“For even the Son of Man did not come to be served, but to serve, and to give His life a ransom for many.”

Matt. 20:26, 27

“It is not so among you, but whoever wishes to become great among you shall be your servant, and whoever wishes to be first among you shall be your slave;

(Adventure in Adversity by Paul E. Billheimer)

Living for self is always counterproductive. Solemnly consider these significant lines:

Jesus and Alexander died at thirty-three.
One lived and died for self; One died for you and me.
The Greek died on a throne; the Jew died on a cross;
One's life a triumph seemed; the other but a loss.
One led vast armies forth; the other walked alone;
One shed a whole world's blood; the other gave His own.
One won the world in life and lost it all in death; The other lost His life to win the whole world's faith.

Jesus and Alexander died at thirty-three,
One died in Babylon; and one on Calvary.
One gained all for self; and one Himself He gave;
One conquered every throne; the other every grave.
The one made himself God; the God made Himself less;
The one lived but to blast; the other but to bless.
When died the Greek, forever fell his throne of swords;
But Jesus died to live forever Lord of lords.

Jesus and Alexander died at thirty-three,
The Greek made all men slaves; the Jew made all men free.
One built a throne on blood; the other built on love,
The one was born of earth; the other from above;
One won all this earth, to lose all earth and heaven;
The other gave up all, that all to Him might be given.

The Greek forever died; the Jew forever lives.
He loses all who gets, and wins all things who gives.
Author unknown

pp.29-30

(Holy Sweat by Tim Hansel)

This both/and paradox of the nature of servant leadership is brilliantly captured in the following words by Philip C. Brewer:

Paradoxes of a Man of God

Strong enough to be weak;
Successful enough to fail;
Busy enough to take time;
Wise enough to say, "I don't know";
Serious enough to laugh;
Rich enough to be poor;
Right enough to say, "I'm wrong";
Compassionate enough to discipline;
Conservative enough to give freely;
Mature enough to be childlike;
Righteous enough to be a sinner;
Important enough to be last;
Courageous enough to fear God;
Planned enough to be spontaneous;
Controlled enough to be flexible;
Free enough to endure captivity;
Knowledgeable enough to ask questions;
Loving enough to be angry;
Great enough to be anonymous;
Responsible enough to play;
Assured enough to be rejected;
Stable enough to cry;
Victorious enough to lose;
Industrious enough to relax;
Leading enough to serve.

---Philip C. Brewer

pp. 156-57

(Quality Friendship: The Risks and Rewards by Gary Inrig)

Here is a list of those allelon statements with duplicate references omitted, and what a list it is! In the Body of Christ, we are to:

- ❖ wash one another's feet (John 13:14)

- ❖ love one another (John 13:34 and many other times)
- ❖ be devoted to one another in brotherly love (Romans 12:10)
- ❖ give preference to one another in honor (Romans 12:10)
- ❖ be of the same mind toward one another (Romans 12:16; 15:5)
- ❖ stop judging one another (Romans 14:13)
- ❖ pursue the building up of one another (Romans 14:19)
- ❖ accept one another (Romans 15:7)
- ❖ admonish one another (Romans 15:14)
- ❖ greet one another (Romans 16:16)
- ❖ wait for one another (1 Corinthians 11:33)
- ❖ care for one another (1 Corinthians 12:25)
- ❖ serve one another through love (Galatians 5:13)
- ❖ bear one another's burdens (Galatians 6:2)
- ❖ show forbearance to one another (Ephesians 4:2)
- ❖ be kind to one another (Ephesians 4:32)
- ❖ forgive each other (Ephesians 4:32)
- ❖ speak to one another in psalms, hymns, and spiritual songs (Ephesians 5:19)
- ❖ be subject to one another (Ephesians 5:21)
- ❖ regard one another as more important (Philippians 2:3)
- ❖ not lie to one another (Colossians 3:9)
- ❖ teach one another (Colossians 3:16)
- ❖ comfort one another (1 Thessalonians 4:18)
- ❖ encourage one another (1 Thessalonians 5:11)
- ❖ be at peace with one another (1 Thessalonians 5:13)
- ❖ pursue good to one another (1 Thessalonians 5:15)
- ❖ considering one another (Hebrews 10:24)
- ❖ not speak against one another (James 4:11)
- ❖ not complain against one another (James 5:9)
- ❖ confess your sins to one another (James 5:16)
- ❖ pray for one another (James 5:16)
- ❖ be hospitable to one another (1 Peter 4:9)
- ❖ clothe yourself with humility toward one another (1 Peter 5:5)

pp. 221-22

(Serving One Another by Gene Getz)

Put in very practical terms, we will either serve one another as we “indulge the sinful nature,” or we will serve one another as we are led by God’s Holy Spirit. If we serve others by indulging the sinful nature, we will do so primarily out of self-centered and carnal reasons. If we serve others according to God’s Spirit, we will do so with motives that are God centered and oriented toward the other person’s good. If we serve one another with selfish motives, our behavior becomes unrighteous. But if we serve one another in love, following the leadership of the Holy Spirit, we will relate to one another in righteous and holy ways. And as members of God’s family we are to be “servants of righteousness,” not unrighteousness.

p. 47

Note that Paul encouraged these Galatian Christians to “do good to all people” as they had opportunity. With this statement he was recognizing the fact that all of us operate within the limits of space and time. In reality, there are more valid needs among both Christians and non-Christians in this world than all of us together could ever meet. But there are unique situations that come our way that provide us with opportunities to meet needs in special ways.

p. 86

As an elder and pastor over the years, I’ve had the privilege to serve with men who have served as fellow elders. At the present time, I serve with six men whom I believe exemplify servant leader qualities in unusual ways. They are all models to me and their lives are constant reminders that I am to be, by God’s design, a servant leader. True, we are to lead the church. We are to manage well (1 Tim. 3:5). That is our responsibility, but with only one purpose in mind --- to serve the body of Christians entrusted to our care. We are to be servant leaders. Every decision, every action on our part should be for the benefit of those we serve and for the honor and glory of Jesus Christ.

p. 103

Few of us are called on to pay the ultimate price in order to serve God and others. But throughout history there are noble examples of this very act of love.

The story is told of George Atley, a young Englishman who was engaged in the Central African mission. He was attacked by a party of natives. He had with him a Winchester repeating rifle with 10 loaded chambers. His attackers were completely at his mercy. He could have destroyed them one by one.

It seems that he calmly and quickly summed up the situation and concluded that if he killed these men it would do the mission and the cause of Christ more harm than if he allowed them to take his own life. So, as a lamb to the slaughter he was led. And when his body was found in the stream, his rifle was also found with its 10 chambers still loaded.

p. 127

We need more Christians like Timothy and Epaphroditus --- Christians who are willing to put God and others first, no matter what the circumstances. Needless to say, this is a process. No one decision will ever be adequate for all time. Circumstances change. Twenty years from now many of the issues we wrestle with may no longer be relevant. But God’s eternal principles will always be relevant in every situation of life. And one of those principles is that we always be servants of God and one another.

p. 142

(The Danger of Self-Love by Paul Brownback)

The possibilities of this kind of life are exciting. How much richer and more genuine our personalities would be, and how much fuller our lives would become. In addition, an other-oriented approach would make some of the rough spots of life

substantially easier. For example, one of the blessings of that mind-set is that it helps rid us of the pain of embarrassment. No one escapes embarrassing circumstances of varying degrees of severity. But when we have no I to protect, when it has been absorbed in others, there is no longer a firm basis for embarrassment.

p. 155

Other' oriented living has potential to remove the fears, the inhibitions, the need for games and pretensions, and other barriers in our relations with God and others. Then the life of God is free to flow through us to others. Some believe that all the aspects of the fruit of the Spirit (Galatians 5:22) are found in the first --- agape. It certainly is the starting point. It will draw your focus away from yourself to God and to others for His sake, and as you "lose" your life you will find it again in the presence of the One for whom you died to self --- and began to live.

p. 157

(How to Help People Change by Jay E. Adams)

2. The words diakonia tou logou, "the ministry of the Word," remind one of the duties of a domestic who goes about carrying out his or her chores. "Ministry" is a word not adequately understood. A diakonos was "one who waits on a table." It is possible that the word's etymology refers to "one who has come through the dust." In that sense, it is not far from our expression "one who does the dirty work." The notions of menial work are not altogether absent from it, but because of the dignity of the Word that is "served" in Christian counseling and preaching, the meaning of the term is modified and heightened, though never to the point of making the minister "the expert" or, as he is called in some traditions, the "Dominie" ("Lord"). Humility and willingness to give of oneself combined with expertise in teaching the Scriptures in a practical and authoritative manner (the authority always evidently God's) characterize the nice blend that inheres in the term as it is used by the New Testament writers.

p. 76

(The Walk-On-Water Syndrome by Edward B. Bratcher)

I have in my office a prayer attributed to Martin Luther which has been helpful in directing me to God as I attempt to carry out my duties as a pastor and seek to grow spiritually. The prayer reads:

Oh Lord God, Thou hast made me a pastor and teacher in the church.
Thou seest how unfit I am to administer rightly this great responsible office; and had I been without Thy aid and counsel I would surely have ruined it long ago.
Therefore do I invoke Thee.

How gladly do I desire to yield and consecrate my heart and mouth to this ministry. I desire to teach the congregation. I, too, desire ever to learn and to keep Thy Word my constant companion and to meditate thereupon earnestly.

Use me as Thy instrument in Thy service. Only do not Thou forsake me, for if I am left to myself, I will certainly bring it all to destruction. Amem.

p. 64

(Choices – Making Right Decisions in a Complex World by Lewis B. Smedes)

When we commit ourselves to people, we create an island of certainty for them in the ocean of life's swelling uncertainties. When everything else goes berserk and life seems to be falling apart at the seams, the people we know are given one certainty: We will be there with them. People can count on us when we make commitments and keep them.

p. 104

- v. 6 For God, who said, "Light shall shine out of darkness," is the One who shined in our hearts to give the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Christ.

The reason we are not preaching ourselves is because it is God who said, "Light shall shine out of darkness."

Genesis 1:3-5

And God said, "Let there be light," and there was light. God saw that the light was good, and he separated the light from the darkness. God called the light "day," and the darkness he called "night." And there was evening, and there was morning --- the first day.

"FOR GOD, WHO SAID, 'LIGHT SHALL SHINE OUT OF DARKNESS,' IS THE ONE WHO SHINED IN OUR HEARTS"

Acts 9:3-5

And it came about that as he journeyed, he was approaching Damascus, and suddenly a light from heaven flashed around him; and he fell to the ground, and heard a voice saying to him, "Saul, Saul, why are you persecuting Me?" And he said, "Who are you, Lord?" And He said, "I am Jesus whom you are persecuting,

He is **"THE ONE WHO SHINED IN OUR HEARTS TO GIVE THE LIGHT OF THE KNOWLEDGE OF THE GLORY OF GOD IN THE FACE OF CHRIST."**

This takes us again back to chap. 3:18:

But we all with unveiled face beholding as in a mirror the glory of the Lord are being transformed into the same image from glory to glory, just as from the Lord, the Spirit.

This is the reason we are bondservants, for God who said, "Light shall shine out of darkness," is the One who shined in our hearts to make all of this possible.

Matt. 5:14-16

“You are the light of the world. A city set on a hill cannot be hidden. Nor do men light a lamp, and put it under the peck-measure, but on the lampstand; and it gives light to all who are in the house. Let your light shine before men in such a way that they may see your good works, and glorify your Father who is in heaven.

Philippians 2:14-16

Do all things without grumbling or disrupting; that you may prove yourselves to be blameless and innocent, children of God above reproach in the midst of a crooked and perverse generation, among whom you appear as light in the world, holding fast the word of life, so that in the day of Christ I may have cause to glory because I did not run in vain nor toil in vain.

- v. 7 But we are having this treasure in earthenware vessels, in order that the extraordinary (quality of the) power may be of God and not from ourselves.

Paul in verse 1 says, “We are having this ministry,” and now in verse 7, “We are having this treasure.”

The treasure, of course, is the Christ of verse 6 and the earthenware vessels refer to our bodies.

Colossians 2:3

In whom are hidden all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge.

Matt. 6:19-21

“Do not lay up for yourselves treasures upon earth, where moth and rust destroy, and where thieves break in and steal; but lay up for yourselves treasures in heaven, where neither moth nor rust destroys, and where thieves do not break in or steal; for where your treasure is, there will your heart be also.

Hebrews 11:24-26

By faith Moses, when he had grown up, refused to be called the son of Pharaoh's daughter; choosing rather to endure ill-treatment with the people of God, than to enjoy the passing pleasures of sin; considering the reproach of Christ greater riches than the treasures of Egypt; for he was looking to the reward.

“BUT WE ARE HAVING THIS TREASURE IN EARTHENWARE VESSELS” One translator translates that “we’re having this treasure in cracked pots.” It is in clay jars that are broken that the light begins to shine out.

One poet put it this way:

An earthen vessel is this frame,
So weak, so frail, so worn by time;
Yet through it God receives acclaim
When it shows forth His grace sublime.

Isaiah 64:8

Yet, O Lord, you are our Father.
We are the clay, you are the potter;
We are all the work of your hand.

Jeremiah 18:1-4

This is the word that came to Jeremiah from the Lord: “Go down to the potter’s house, and there I will give you my message.” So I went down to the potter’s house, and I saw him working at the wheel. But the pot he was shaping from the clay was marred in his hands; so the potter formed it into another pot, shaping it as seemed best to him.

(Be Encouraged by Warren W. Wiersbe)

The important thing about a vessel is that it be clean, empty, and available for service. Each of us must seek to become “a vessel unto honor, sanctified [set apart], and meet for the master’s use, and prepared unto every good work” (2 Tim. 2:21). We are vessels so that God might use us. We are earthen vessels so that we might depend on God’s power and not our own.

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(Expository Studies in 2 Corinthians: Power Out of Weakness by Ray C. Stedman)

A pot, or a vessel, is made to hold something. Basic to our humanity is that we are not designed to operate on our own. We were made to hold someone, and that someone is God himself. The glory of humanity is that somehow God designed us to correspond to his deity; and his marvelous deity, with its fullness and wisdom and power somehow relates to and corresponds to and manifests itself through our humanity.

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(Explore the Book by J. Sidlow Baxter)

Yes, what a message! Yet the writer is just up from a sick bed, and cannot help thinking how frail is the poor, earthen vessel which conveys such treasure: “But we have this treasure in earthen vessels” (iv. 7). See the sharp contrasts which now become vivid to his mind --- “earthen vessels,” yet the “power of God” (verse 7); “troubled” yet “not

depressed" (verse 8); "perplexed" yet "not in despair" (verse 8); "persecuted" yet "not forsaken" (verse 9); "struck down" but "not destroyed" (verse 9); the "outward man" perishing, the inward man daily "renewed" (verse 16); present "affliction," but a coming compensation of "glory" (verse 17); visible things evanescent, but the invisible ever-abiding (verse 18); this mortal body (only a "tabernacle") being taken down, but an imperishable "house in heaven" (v. I); "absent" from the body, "at home" with the Lord (verse 8).

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"BUT WE ARE HAVING THIS TREASURE IN EARTHENWARE VESSELS" and the purpose is seen in the last phrase: "IN ORDER THAT THE EXTRAORDINARY (QUALITY OF THE) POWER MAY BE OF GOD AND NOT FROM OURSELVES."

We do not preach ourselves and the power is not from ourselves.

Isaiah 40:31

but those who hope in the Lord
will renew their strength.
They will soar on wings like eagles;
they will run and not grow weary,
they will walk and not be faint.

Colossians 1:11

strengthened with all power, according to His glorious might, for the attaining of all steadfastness and patience, joyously.

Philippians 4:13

I can do all things through Him who strengthens me.

Betty Elliot says it so well:

We resist sentimentality. We know that it distorts our vision, weakens our purpose...Time changes things we do not want changed. Death puts an end to our love, decays our dreams. We almost lift our hands in an involuntary gesture to stop them, hold them back. But we drop them again, knowing our impotence.

2 Cor. 12:9

And He has said to me, "My grace is sufficient for you, for power is perfected in weakness." Most gladly, therefore, I will rather boast about my weaknesses, that the power of Christ may dwell in me.

CONCLUSION:

What are some of the lessons that we can learn from this particular study?

LESSON #1: Ministry is a gift granted in mercy.

LESSON #2: Remembering that we have been given this special ministry keeps us from discouragement.

LESSON #3: It is our responsibility to PROCLAIM and the Father's to PRODUCE.

LESSON #4: Satan is in the business of blinding the minds of the unbelieving.

LESSON #5: You cannot nullify the power of the gospel by rejecting it.

LESSON #6: Proclaiming Christ and serving others is our ministry.

LESSON #7: Christ is the treasure indwelling the earthenware jar.

LESSON #8: The power for performance comes from God.

Where does this study find you?

Are you living in compromise, not having renounced the things hidden because of shame?

Are you walking in craftiness, trying to FAKE IT IN THE FLESH?

Are you Mister Confusion, adulterating the word of God?

How about accepting the invitation to come to the light and let those deeds be reproved and become open, honest, and transparent.

Psalm 27:1

The Lord is my light and my salvation ---
whom shall I fear?

The Lord is the stronghold of my life ---
of whom shall I be afraid?

Rev. 22:5

And there shall no longer be any night; and they shall not have need of the light of a lamp nor the light of the sun, because the Lord God shall illumine them; and they shall reign forever and ever.

Jeremiah 14:7

Although our sins testify against us,
O Lord, do something for the sake of you name.
For our backsliding is great;
we have sinned against you.

Perhaps this message finds you discouraged and defeated. The big question that comes to you at this time is:

What does it take to be a good finisher?

I always think of the three D's along this line:

1. The first D is the D of DISCIPLINE.

1 Cor. 9:27

I treat my body roughly and I make it serve me.

2. The second D is the D of DESIRE.

Hebrews 12:1

Seeing that we are compassed about by so great a cloud of witnesses, let us lay aside every weight, and the sin which does so easily beset us, and let us run with patience the race that is set before us,

3. The third D is the D of DETERMINATION.

Isaiah 50:7

Because the Sovereign Lord helps me,
I will not be disgraced.
Therefore have I set my face like flint,
and I know I will not be put to shame.

It is a wonderful thing to bear witness to the fact that as the apostle rises above discouragement, he doesn't quit. He keeps going, and he keeps telling himself that he'll make it; and he does. The shout of victory comes in 2 Timothy chap. 4:6-8:

For I am already being poured out as a drink offering, and the time of my departure has come. I have fought the good fight, I have finished the course, I have kept the faith; in the future there is laid up for me the crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous Judge, will award to me on that day; and not only to me, but also to all who have loved His appearing.

God's Handwriting

He write in characters too grand
For our short sight to understand;
We catch but broken stroke and try
To fathom all the mystery
Of withered hopes, of death, of life,
The endless war, the useless strife ---
But there, with larger, clearer sight,
We shall see this ---

His way was right!

Don't quit. Keep it going. You'll make it. You too will be able to say: "I fought a good fight, I finished the course, I kept the faith."

The Sinking of the Titanic – Death – 591-03

Just before it makes its final plunge into the North Atlantic, Jack says to Rose, "Do not let go of my hand. This is going to get worse before it gets better. Do not let go."

How awful, how haunting are the scenes of the sea of humanity left to freeze to death in water so cold, as Jack said, it stabs every part of the body like a knife. Everything is gone – the beauty, the romance, the adventure. Paradise is lost. And we know it. More than ever before, we know it. As Chesterton said, we all somehow know that we are the "survivors of a wreck, the crew of a golden ship that had gone down before the beginning of the world." The ship has gone down. We are lost at sea.

Finally it is clear that both cannot share the little piece of floating wreckage they have found, and Jack insists that Rose climb upon it while he slowly succumbs to hypothermia and death.

He dies that she may live.

When she finishes telling her tale, Rose pauses for a moment. Then she adds one last thing: "He saved me in every way a person can be saved."

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