

2Corinthians – Week 11

I. Continuation

A. Chapter 4

- i. Paul's obligation to make the gospel message plain and clear (vv. 1-6)
- ii. The gospel has been entrusted to human vessels like Paul and his companions! (vv. 7-5:10)

B. 2Cor. 4:1-2

- i. The ministry of the new covenant was given by mercy...
 1. To Paul (1Timothy 1:12-13)
 2. And to all those in Christ (Titus 3:5)
- ii. Because of the hope this new covenant brings, we do not shrink back, matter what life brings!
 1. Paul is going to address the challenges he faced in verses 8-9 and again, in chapter 6:4-5.
 2. None of these hardships caused him to lose heart and give up!
- iii. Paul, unlike the false teachers of his day and even today, was not being...
 1. Shameful and underhanded (secretive), but rather, he was being honest and open!
 2. Nor did he tamper with God's Word, like those of 2:17, who peddled (*kapeleuo* – to corrupt) the word of God. He preached the plain truth!
 3. No one can accuse Paul and his companions of watering down the truth!
 - a. Whether they accept it or not, Paul presented the truth plainly to his hearers.
- iv. Today, false teachers love to flatter their listeners and avoid ruffling feathers.
 1. They avoid certain topics and woo their audience with interpretations that will never question their conduct or character.

II. Continuation

A. Paul now returns to the theme he mentioned earlier regarding those who are perishing...

- i. 2Cor. 2:15-16 (ESV), "*For we are the aroma of Christ to God among those who are being saved and among those who are perishing,¹⁶ to one a fragrance from death to death, to the other a fragrance from life to life...*"

B. 2Cor. 4:3 (ESV), "*And even if our gospel is veiled, it is veiled to those who are perishing.*"

- i. What veils the gospel?
 1. 1Cor. 1:23 (ESV), "*but we preach Christ crucified, a stumbling block to Jews and folly to Gentiles*"
 - a. To the Jews of Paul's day, preaching Messiah crucified was offensive to them.
 - i. To say to a Jew that there is no salvation except by Jesus' death incites anger!
 - ii. To them, justification comes by Moses' Law!
 - iii. In their mind, they expected the Messiah to restore Israel's glory by overthrowing her pagan oppressors (Roman Regime).
 - iv. But saying that God reconciles the world to Himself through Jesus' death was a mockery! Not to mention, a blow to their expectations!
 - b. To the Gentiles of Paul's day, preaching the resurrection sounded ridiculous (cf. Acts 17:32)

ii. Other things that veil the gospel...

1. Preaching repentance

- a. What also veils the gospel is the refusal to turn from practices that are deemed scripturally immoral.
- b. In Acts 24:25, preaching Christ crucified involved preaching repentance

...

- i. Acts 24:25 (ESV), *“And as he reasoned about righteousness and self-control and the coming judgment, Felix was alarmed and said, ‘Go away for the present. When I get an opportunity I will summon you.’”*
 1. In this passage, Felix became afraid and told Paul to leave.
 2. People may accept the fact that Christ died for their sins but at the same time refuse to repent.

2. Suffering

- a. Many will not be willing to follow a message whose outcome in this life may bring much persecution and hardships!
- b. They would rather have a Messiah that does not invite them to carry their cross!

iii. Ultimately, what (or rather who) veils the truth of the gospel? Satan!...

C. 2Cor. 4:4 (ESV), *“In their case the god of this world has blinded the minds of the unbelievers, to keep them from seeing the light of the gospel of the glory of Christ, who is the image of God.”*

1. In the universe, the sun is always shining...

- a. But we do not always see it because something comes between the sun and us.

2. In the same way, the gospel light is always shining...

- a. But Satan puts various barriers between unbelievers and God.
 - i. It may be the cloud of pride, rebellion, self-righteousness, etc.
 - ii. All of these barriers effectively hid the gospel light from shining within the hearts of men!
 - iii. Satan simply does not want men to be saved!

3. Christ is the image of God!

- a. Christ brings clarity to our hazy notions of God.
- b. He perfectly represents the character of God!
 - i. His death and resurrection reveals God’s love and power.
 - ii. His life on earth reveals God’s character.

iii. Jesus said the following...

1. John 12:44-45 (ESV), *“Whoever believes in me, believes not in me but in him who sent me. ⁴⁵ And whoever sees me sees him who sent me”*

- ii. **2Cor. 4:5-6 (ESV), “For what we proclaim is not ourselves, but Jesus Christ as Lord, with ourselves as your servants for Jesus’ sake. ⁶ For God, who said, “Let light shine out of darkness,” has shone in our hearts to give the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ.”**
 - 1. **Paul’s basic message is this:**
 - a. **We are not preaching ourselves**
 - i. **It is possible that Paul was taking a swipe at those who infiltrated the church at Corinth as implied by the following passage:**
 - 1. **2Cor. 10:12 (ESV), “Not that we dare to classify or compare ourselves with some of those who are commending themselves. But when they measure themselves by one another and compare themselves with one another, they are without understanding.”**
 - b. **We are preaching Christ as Lord!**
 - i. **He is the One whom we worship and adore!**
 - ii. **He is the One who brings forgiveness and justification!**
 - iii. **He is the Mediator of the new covenant!**
 - iv. **He is the One we are to whom we submit!**
 - v. **Paul’s purpose was to bring men and women to the place where they would bow to Christ and make Him Lord of their lives!**
 - c. **We are your servants!**
 - i. **The same God who commanded light to shine in the darkness in Genesis 1:3 has shone the light of the knowledge of Christ in our hearts.**
 - ii. **And as servants, we are called to spread that knowledge to all! (cf. 2Cor. 2:14)**
 - 2. **By the way, this passage clearly shows that we don’t display the literal glory of God in Christ, but rather, we display the knowledge of the glory of God in Christ!**
 - a. **People see Jesus in us by the transforming knowledge of Christ!**