

II CORINTHIANS: MINISTERING TO BELIEVERS FACING FALSE TEACHERS

I. Paul's Relationship With The Church, 2 Corinthians 1-7

F. The Basis Of Encouragement For Godly Ministries (2 Corinthians 4:1-15)

I. Introduction

- A. False teachers, claiming to be apostles, had entered the Church at Corinth, and tried to promote their own views while discrediting the person and message of the Apostle Paul. (Bible Know. Com., N. T., p. 552)
- B. This was a difficult situation for Paul: his readers were immature believers who had been saved out of corrupt backgrounds in a city known for its vice, so they were easy prey for false teachers, and Paul had to be careful how he handled the situation lest his readers think he was being unjustly defensive and thus discredit himself.
- C. 2 Corinthians chapters 1-7 deal with Paul's relationship with the church, and 2 Corinthians 4:1-15 ESV gives the basis of encouragement for godly Christian ministries. We view it for our insight and application:

II. The Basis Of Encouragement For Godly Ministries, 2 Corinthians 4:1-15 ESV.

- A. Though godly ministry is "glorious" due to the sure "triumph of Christ (2:14) and the transforming work of the Spirit (3:18)," it also comes with "hardships" in terms of physical and spiritual demands. (Ibid., p. 562)
- B. Paul "reflected on these experiences" and "what sustained him, namely, the power of God (4:7)," Ibid.:
 - 1. Since Paul's team had received a glorious ministry from God and having received mercy to serve by God's grace, they did not lose heart, 2 Corinthians 3:4-4:1.
 - 2. Rather, they had commended themselves to everyone's conscience in God's estimation by renouncing disgraceful, underhanded ways of ministry, refusing to be cunning or to tamper with God's Word, but making candid statements of the truth, 2 Corinthians 4:2.
 - 3. Even if the Gospel of Christ that they preached was veiled, it was veiled only to those who were perishing, for Satan, the god of this world, had blinded the eyes of such unbelievers to keep them from seeing the light of the gospel of the glory of Christ, Who is the image of God, 2 Corinthians 4:3-4.
 - 4. What Paul's team proclaimed was not themselves, but Jesus Christ as Lord, and they presented themselves rather as servants of fellow believers' needs for the sake of Christ, 2 Corinthians 4:5. God had shone in the hearts of Paul's ministry team the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ, and all they were doing was voicing that knowledge to their hearers, 2 Corinthians 4:6.
 - 5. However, this treasure of the Gospel of salvation in Christ in the minds of Paul and his ministry team had been placed in the jars of the clay of their weak humanity to display the surpassing power of their ministry belonged to God and not to them, 2 Corinthians 4:7. They were afflicted in every way, but not crushed; perplexed, but not driven to despair; persecuted, but not forsaken; struck down, but not destroyed; always carrying in the body the death of Jesus that His life might also be manifested in their bodies, v. 8-10.
 - 6. Paul noted that he and his coworkers were always being given to death for Christ's sake that the life of Jesus might be seen in their mortal flesh for the discipling of their hearers, 2 Corinthians 4:11-12.
 - 7. Alluding to Psalm 116:3 where the psalmist mentioned the anguish of the grave but in Psalm 116:8 affirmed his confidence that God would deliver him from death, Paul had the same confidence that God would likewise work in behalf of him and his team to save them from premature death, 2 Corinthians 4:13.
 - 8. Indeed, Paul was confident that He Who raised Jesus from the dead would raise them also with Jesus and bring Paul and his ministry team with his believing readers into His heavenly presence, 2 Corinthians 4:14.
 - 9. All the suffering that Paul and his team experienced was for the benefit of other believers (2 Corinthians 4:15a) that the unmerited favor of God might be extended to more and more people through the Gospel of Christ that Paul and his team proclaimed. This would result in thanksgiving to God from the many whose lives would be changed by the ministry of Paul's team to God's glory, 2 Corinthians 4:15.

Lesson: *Though Christian ministry is glorious due to its sure final success, it is often marked by hardships in living. However, Paul and his coworkers did not lose heart over their hardships, for the contrast between the weakness of their humanity that was exposed by their hardships and the glory of God's truth that they proclaimed was used of God to glorify the Lord. Thus, Paul and his team valued the "dying" that they faced in hardships that Christ's "resurrection" might be seen in them for the edification of many grateful hearers to the glory of God.*

Application: *May we accept the hardships we face in ministry as an essential part of God's use of us to disciple other people, and thus not lose heart over the hardships, but persevere in the ministry for the glory of God.*