

2 Corinthians: Encouragement in Troubling Times
"Don't Lose Heart" # 9
2 Cor. 4:1-6
6-12-16 Sun AM

In **3:7-4:6** Paul looks at the glory and superiority of the New Covenant over the old covenant that the false teachers promoted.

The key theme of this section is repeated in 4:1, 16, "We faint not!" Literally, Paul said, "We do not lose heart!" There were certainly plenty of reasons for discouragement in Paul's situation and ours, yet the great apostle did not quit.

Q- What was it that kept him from fainting in the conflicts of life? *He knew what he possessed in Jesus Christ!* Instead of complaining about what he did not have, Paul rejoiced in what he did have; and you and I can do the same thing.

In the preaching text today we see that we have a glorious ministry. What kind of ministry? The kind described in the previous chapter: a glorious ministry that brings men life, forgiveness, salvation, and righteousness; a ministry that is able to transform men's lives.

This ministry is a gift - we receive it from God. It is given to us because of God's mercy, not because of anything we are or we have done.

TT- This positive attitude toward the ministry has some practical consequences in his life.

I. We Don't Quit (4:1).

He confessed to the Corinthians that his trials in Asia had almost brought him to despair (1:8).

In spite of his great gifts and vast experience, Paul was human and subject to human frailties.

But how could we lose heart when we are involved in such a wonderful ministry? Would God have entrusted this ministry to us so that we might fail?

Of course not! With the divine calling came the divine enabling; he knew that God would see him through.

II. We Don't Deceive (4:2-4).

Paul was certainly alluding to the Judaizers when he wrote these words. Many false teachers today claim to base their doctrine on the Word of God, but false teachers handle God's Word in deceptive ways.

You can prove anything by the Bible, provided you twist the Scriptures out of context and reject the witness of your own conscience. The Bible must be interpreted according to the fundamental rules of interpretation.

Paul had nothing to hide, either in his personal life or in his preaching of the Word. Everything was open and honest; there was no deception or distortion of the Word.

The Judaizers were guilty of twisting the Scriptures to fit their own preconceived interpretations, and ignorant people were willing to follow them.

If Paul was such a faithful teacher of the Word, then why did not more people believe his message? Why are the false teachers so successful in winning converts?

- Because the mind of the lost sinner is blinded by Satan, and fallen man finds it easier to believe lies than to believe truth.
- Those who are lost (“perishing”) cannot understand the message of the Gospel.
- Satan does not want the glorious light of salvation to shine into their hearts. As the god of this age and the prince of this world, Satan keeps lost sinners in the dark.
- The sad thing is that Satan uses *religious* teachers (like the Judaizers) to deceive people. Many of the people who today belong to cults were originally members of Christian churches.

III. We Don't self-promote (4:5-6).

Because we received this ministry from Christ keeps us from being a quitter and a deceiver; but it also keeps us from being a self-promoter.

“We preach not ourselves!” The Judaizers enjoyed preaching about themselves and glorying in their achievements (2 Cor. 10:12-18). They were not servants who tried to help people; they were dictators who exploited people.

Paul was certainly a man who practiced genuine humility. He did not trust in himself or commend himself or preach himself.

He sought only to lead people to Jesus Christ and to build them up in the faith. It would have been easy for Paul to build a “fan club” for himself and take advantage of weak people who thrive on associating with great men. The Judaizers operated in that way, but Paul rejected that kind of ministry.

When we think of the glorious ministry we have been entrusted with- We don't quit, we don't deceive, and we don't self-promote!