**2 CORINTHIANS 4**

***FRAGILE! JARS of CLAY***

Paul has been contrasting the old way, the Law, to the new covenant of grace. Was there glory in the Law? YES! It was manifest in the face of Moses BUT… That glory faded. The glory of the grace of Jesus Christ will NEVER fade…. Therefore…

**THE MINISTRY OF GRACE**

**2 Corinthians 4:1** Therefore, since we have this ministry, **(Grace)** as we have received mercy, we do not lose heart.

* Why WOULD Paul have been disheartened?
* Because he took a lot of heat for his stand. He was hated in Jewish circles, AND in some Gentile cities as well.
* But he was both giving mercy… AND receiving it from God too. **So are we!**

**WE HAVE NO HIDDEN AGENDA**

2 But we have renounced the hidden things of shame, not walking in craftiness nor handling the word of God deceitfully, but by manifestation of the truth commending ourselves to every man's conscience in the sight of God.

* Paul calls them to the witness stand here…
* Did any of you see us take advantage of anyone? NO!
* Did we twist the scripture to get rich? NO!
* Beware of anyone who does!

**LIGHTEN UP!**

3 But even if our gospel is veiled, **(hidden)** it is veiled to those who are perishing,

* **CEV** - If there is anything hidden about our message, it is hidden only to someone who is lost.

4 whose minds the god of this age **(Satan)** has blinded, who do not believe, lest the light of the gospel of the glory of Christ, who is the image of God, should shine on them.

* It IS disturbing that Paul calls Satan the **g**od of this world. RIGHT?
* Jesus calls Satan the ruler of this world too in John 12:31, 14:30, 16:11.
* Satan is the reason people reject the Gospel. He is our enemy… Not politics, immorality, or Sunday morning soccer leagues. THOSE are just some of his tools! Pray against Satan’s hold on people.
* Our best tool against him is preaching Christ to the lost! Listen…

**THE LIGHT!**

5 For we do not preach ourselves, but Christ Jesus the Lord, and ourselves your **bondservants** for Jesus' sake.

* Serving others is a powerful way to witness!
* **Romans 12:20** - Therefore "IF YOUR ENEMY IS HUNGRY, FEED HIM; IF HE IS THIRSTY, GIVE HIM A DRINK; **PROVERBS 25:21** FOR IN SO DOING YOU WILL HEAP COALS OF FIRE ON HIS HEAD." IE, You will help him rekindle a stove that has gone cold.
* **Find ways to be kind to people who you want to witness to**… It works!

6 For it is the God who commanded light to shine out of darkness, **(Creation)** who has shone in our hearts to *give* the light of the knowledge of **the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ**.

* NOT the glory of the law in the face of Moses…
* In this dark world we have the privilege of being light… NOT OUR LIGHT… The light of knowing Jesus and **sharing HIS glory**!
* We DO NOT have to be 100% perfect… We CANNOT be perfect! Listen…

**TREASURE IN JARS OF CLAY**

7 But we have this treasure ***(Salvation)*** in earthen vessels, that the excellence of the power may be of God and not of us.

“We are all broken people… That is how the light gets in!”

* We have a couple of pieces of artwork in our home that are glued back together. Some Lynette even knows about…
* When I broke them, I did not throw them away… I reached for the superglue gel… I patched them back and left them in place for somebody else to break! ***Listen broken loved ones…***
* **1 Peter 5:10** In His kindness God called you to share in His eternal glory by means of Christ Jesus. So after you have suffered a little while, He will restore, **(repair)** support, and strengthen you, and He will place you on a firm foundation.
* Avoid ministries who make themselves the hero… **CHUCK SMITH** – “If you try to bring glory to a clay pot – that makes you a crack pot!”

**FOR YOUR SAKE – PAUL SAYS…**

8 We are hard-pressed on every side, yet not crushed; *we are* perplexed, but not in despair; 9 persecuted, but not forsaken; **BY GOD** struck down, but not destroyed—10 always carrying about in the body ***HIS SCARS*** the dying of the Lord Jesus, that the life of Jesus also may be manifested in our body.

* Paul was not **complaining**… He was **explaining** his love for the Church.
* In **Chapter 11** he will say: 25 Three times I was beaten with rods; once I was stoned; three times I was shipwrecked; a night and a day I have been in the deep; in journeys often, *in* perils of waters, *in* perils of robbers, *in* perils of *my own* countrymen, *in* perils of the Gentiles, *in* perils in the city, *in* perils in the wilderness, *in* perils in the sea, *in* perils among false brethren; in weariness and toil, in sleeplessness often, in hunger and thirst, in fasting often, in cold and nakedness—

**MINISTRY IN SPITE OF THREAT**

11 For we who live are always delivered to death for Jesus' sake, that the life of Jesus also may be manifested in our mortal flesh.

* I thought of the 17 missionaries being held in Haiti this week… Pray for them that they too can say this about their ordeal.
* This same gang kidnapped some Priests and Nuns a few years ago. The kidnapped believers spent their days in prayer and were finally released but not before the gang Leader asked them to pray for him. Greg Barshaw said last week that the life span of Gang Leaders is 8 months after they become the boss of a gang.

12 So then death is working in us, but life in you.

**NLT** - So we live in the face of death, but this has resulted in eternal life for you.

**THIS MAY KILL US, BUT…**

13 And since we have the same spirit of faith, according to what is written, "I BELIEVED AND THEREFORE I SPOKE," **PSALM 116:10** we also believe and therefore speak, 14 knowing that He who raised up the Lord Jesus will also raise us up with Jesus, and will present *us* with you.

* Paul’s working knowledge of the bible was a sweet comfort to him.
* How many of us find comfort in our time spent in the word every morning? God is SO faithful to encourage Lynette and I – Often, more Lynette than I, she will read me a verse to encourage me. *Please keep doing that!* 😊

**THANKSGIVING IS HERE**

15 For all things *are* for your sakes, that grace, having spread through the many, may cause thanksgiving to abound to the glory of God.

* Paul was willing to suffer thankfully for the glory of God!
* *I really need to work on my suffering thankfully skills! I stink at it! ☹*

**DO NOT LOSE HEART**

16 Therefore we do not lose heart. Even though our outward man is perishing, yet the inward *man* is being renewed **(repaired)** day by day.

**TEMPORARY AFFLICTION**

17 For our light affliction, which is but for a moment, is working for us a far more exceeding *and* eternal weight of glory, 18 while we do not look at the things which are seen, but at the things which are not seen. For the things which are seen *are* **temporary**, but the things which are not seen *are* **eternal**. ***What a great, eternal perspective!***