

## INTRODUCTION.

- A. Scripture text: **2Cor. 4:1-6**.
- B. East Peoria Summer Sermon Series. Thank-yous.
- C. I believe the literal translation of 4:1 is "having this kind of ministry." What kind? A glorious ministry that:
  - 1. Brings life (3:6).
  - 2. Brings righteousness (3:9).
  - 3. Brings liberty (3:17).
  - 4. Brings transformation (3:18).
- D. Paul also understood that his glorious ministry was a gift, like that of mercy (4:1).

## I. THE MINISTRY KEPT PAUL FROM BEING A QUITTER.

- A. Scripture text: **2Cor. 4: 1**.
- B. Paul had come close to quitting before. While in Asia he "despaired, even of life" (2Cor. 1:8).
- C. We wonder at why Paul would get so discouraged when he had been so richly blessed. He had:
  - 1. Been lead into all the truth.
  - 2. Been caught up unto the third heaven.
  - 3. The power to speak in many tongues.
  - 4. The power to heal and raise the dead.
- D. The fact is that even with great talent and blessings, his humanity came out and he had times of discouragement. And why not) there had been those who had quit:
  - 1. Demas loved the present world and fled Paul (2Tim. 4:10).
  - 2. Hymenaeus and Philetus went astray and spread ungodliness (2Tim. 2:16,17).
  - 3. Diotrophes wanted to be first and rejected apostolic teachings (3Jn. v9-10).
- E. As ministers of the gospel (full-time, or not) we need massive amounts of encouragement. Charles Swindoll has written:

Harassed by demands and deadlines; bruised by worry, adversity, and failure; broken by disillusionment; and defeated by sin, [we] live somewhere between dull discouragement and sheer panic. We... struggle, lose our balance, slip and slide, tumble, and fall flat on our faces. All of us need encouragement--somebody to believe in us. To reassure and reinforce us. To help us pick up the pieces and go on. To provide us with increased determination in spite of the odds. (Strengthening Your Grip, p. 44)
- F. We need three things to help keep us going:
  - 1. Appreciation. This means to encourage by giving praise for what a person does. May we always give honor where honor is due.
  - 2. Affirmation. This means to encourage by giving praise for who a person is. This takes the pressure off of performance, and puts it on character.
  - 3. Assurance. This means a reminder of our glorious work. "Don't ever stop preaching," remarked Alexander Whyte, "The angels are envious of your great work!"
- G. The apostle Paul had a great ministry, and new it was a gift of God. Therefore he used his work to help him remain at his task, no matter how difficult.

## II. THIS GLORIOUS MINISTRY KEPT HIM FROM BEING A DECEIVER.

- A. Scripture text: **2Cor. 4:2-4**.

- B. The Judaizing teachers were always a problem. They would teach the Scriptures in such a way as to prove their own preconceived interpretations. Paul condemns those who have secretly done shameful things. He accuses some of practicing shameful, unethical behavior in preaching.
- C. Paul mentions two things that these false teachers do:
  - 1. **Practice cunning** (walking in craftiness; NAS, using deception, NIV).  
The Greek here can mean resourceful but in this context it means the characteristic of the serpent who lied to Eve (11 :3). Paul asserts that there was an attempt by others to deceive by cunning or craftiness his preaching of the gospel.
  - 2. **To tamper with** (adulterating; NAS, distort, NIV) God's word.  
The Greek here means to dilute wine or to beguile. It would carry the idea that some were corrupting the word of God by mingling in alien ideas.
- D. Paul's answer to this kind of behavior and teaching is that he openly preached the truth and appealed to people's conscience. Notice that Paul openly (manifest; NAS, setting forth; NIV) preached and conducted himself; not in hidden or shameful ways. By appealing to the conscience people could see the difference between his life and message, and the life and message of the false teachers. People could see that Paul acted with integrity.
- E. The glory of his ministry kept Paul from being a deceiver. In no way could he ever win converts if he acted like the false teachers did. He therefore kept his life and message open and in the truth, that people's consciences would be able to discern the difference.
- F. Why then is the gospel still veiled to some? (2Cor. 4:3,4).  
The gospel is still being rejected by so many because of the condition of the hearts (minds) of the hearers. The mind of one who is lost is blinded by Satan, that is, he/she is not thinking clearly or rationally enough to allow the conscience to make the right discernment. Paul might even be referring back to his own manner of life before becoming a Xian. He was blinded by Satan ("the god of this world"), thinking that as a Jew, he was doing God's will in persecuting Xians.
- G. The veil, the darkness, the keeps men/women from seeing the truth, is only removed in X. Paul spoke of the veil in 3:14-16. Once people see Jesus as the Christ, the Son of God, they will see everything else. The will "the light of the gospel of the glory of X" that pertains to life, righteousness, and transformation.

### III. **THIS GLORIOUS MINISTRY KEPT HIM FROM BEING A SELF-PROMOTER.**

- A. Scripture text: **2Cor. 4:5,6.**
- B. The fact that Paul had received this glorious ministry from God kept him from preaching himself. Contrast this fact w/what the Judaizing teachers were doing.
- C. The Judaizing teachers:
  - 1. Measured themselves by themselves (10:12)
  - 2. Compared themselves by themselves (10:12).
  - 3. Boasted beyond their measure (10:13).
  - 4. Boasted in other men's labors (10:14).
  - 5. Boasted in other men's accomplishments in other places (10:16).
- D. Paul practiced humility:
  - 1. He did not trust in himself (1:9).
  - 2. His adequacies were not in himself (3:1-5).
  - 3. He did not preach himself (4:5).
- E. It would have been easy for Paul to have a "fan club" but he did not desire that. It would have been quite easy for him to take advantage of weak people who thrive on associating with great men (1Cor. 1:13-17).
- F. What happens when the gospel is preached?

A light begins to shine. God is bringing into creation a new creation! Paul goes back and speaks of God's words at the creation of the universe (Gen. 1:3). As the earth was formless and void, God shone light upon it and it began to take shape. The same is true when one obeys the gospel. The formless and void life of following after Satan is enlightened with true knowledge.

- G. We then experience what this light and this glorious ministry give:
  - 1. Life. The abundant life that comes from knowing X (4: 10,11).
  - 2. Righteousness. X died so that we might be the righteousness of God in Him (5:21).
  - 3. Liberty. "It was for freedom that X set us free" (Gal. 5:1).
  - 4. Transformation. We are a new creature (5:17).

#### **CONCLUSION AND INVITATION.**

- A. Because of God's gift of ministry, Paul did not lose heart.
- B. He chose to count the things he had rather than the things he did not.
- C. Our introspective questions based on this text are:
  - 1. Are you ready to quit? If so, why? You have received mercy and ministry from God.
  - 2. Are you being truthful to yourself and to others? If not, why not?
  - 3. Are you boasting in yourself or in X? Is God's light beginning a new creation in you?
- D. Plan of salvation for non-Xians; erring Xians.