

The Demands of Ministry

II Corinthians 4: 1-4

In our text today the Apostle Paul is dealing with the demands of ministry. He seeks to encourage the Corinthians to live lives that honor the Lord and to be bold in their witness for Him. This is a passage that many would assume applies only to those called of God to preach His Word, but there is great application for all believers.

I read these verses a few weeks ago in my personal devotional time and have been burdened with them ever since. The Lord spoke to me as I read these words and I pray that He will speak to us today. These verses are certainly relevant and needful, particularly with where we are in ministry. We are seeking to make a conscious effort of sharing the Gospel and reaching those who have yet to encounter Christ in a personal way. The Apostle Paul points out various priorities regarding ministry in this passage. Let's take a few moments to consider these [priorities](#) as we think on: [The Demands of Ministry](#).

➤ I want to emphasize [vv.3-4](#) as the focus of the message, but we need to quickly address the opening verses as well. First of all we find that:

I. Ministry Demands Consistency (1) – [Therefore seeing we have this ministry, as we have received mercy, we faint not](#); Consider with me:

A. The Possession (1a) – [Therefore seeing we have this ministry](#). Paul was well aware that he possessed a gift of the Lord. He had been called of God to proclaim the Gospel. If you are a child of God, you too possess this ministry. You have an obligation to share the Good News of Jesus Christ with the world!

B. The Perception (1b) – [as we have received mercy](#). Paul also was aware that he had received this gracious gift, based on no merit of his own. Paul knew that it was only by the grace and mercy of God that he had been saved and given the opportunity to share the Gospel. If you are a child of God, you too are a recipient of mercy and grace, this marvelous gift!

C. The Persistence (1c) – [we faint not](#); That literally has the idea of “*not giving up, losing heart, becoming discouraged, spiritless, fainthearted, despondent, or discouraged.*” When we consider all that Christ has done for us, how could we possibly give up or lose faith. There are times when we all face discouragement and doubt, but we must not faint!

I. Ministry Demands Consistency (1)

II. Ministry Demands Integrity (2) – But have renounced the hidden things of dishonesty, 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. Notice:

A. Our With-drawl (2a) – But have renounced the hidden things of dishonesty. Literally to “abandon or forsake” the hidden things of “shame, disgrace, or scandal.” In our day of absolute tolerance and total abandon of truth, the believer is still called upon to forsake the things of this world and seek the things of God. 2 Cor.6:17 – Wherefore come out from among them, and be ye separate, saith the Lord, and touch not the unclean thing; and I will receive you,

B. Our Walk (2b) – not walking in craftiness. He is not to walk in *trickery, cunning, or evil design*. Those who walk in craftiness will do anything or use any means necessary to achieve his desires. Col.2:6 – As ye have therefore received Christ Jesus the Lord, so walk ye in him:

C. Our Wisdom (2c) – nor handling the word of God deceitfully. Paul had dealt with many who used the Word of God deceitfully in order to deceive and ensnare others. We are called to use the Word with truth and honesty, rightly dividing the Word of Truth. Many seek to twist and distort the Scripture, using it out of context, for their own purposes and gain.

D. Our Witness (2d) – but by manifestation of the truth commending ourselves to every man's conscience in the sight of God. We are to proclaim the Word openly, honestly, and from a pure heart, living and carrying ourselves in such a way that pleases and honors the Lord. Much damage has been done by those who profess purity and practice profanity.

III. Ministry Demands Visibility (3-4) – This is the heart of the message. These are the verses that spoke so profoundly to me. Consider this last priority as we discover:

A. The Admonition (3) – But if our gospel be hid, it is hid to them that are lost: Paul speaks words so simple that a child could comprehend them, but they are very profound. Notice:

1. The Potential – [But if our gospel be hid](#). I was humbled when I read these words. Here Paul speaks of the damaging potential of the Gospel being hid from a world that needs it so desperately. [But if our gospel be hid](#). This was no doubt a great burden on the Apostle. Many had given their lives for their faith. The Spirit was moving in great power; countless souls had come to Christ. There was enormous potential for revival and untold souls coming to a saving knowledge of Christ. But, if their gospel was hid, the world would never see the light or hear the great truth of Jesus Christ.

- That seems unthinkable in our day as well, but I fear that this damaging potential has become a devastating reality. We live in a society where there are churches on every corner. Pastors have the benefit of seminary and countless resources from some of the greatest men of God to ever preach the Word. We have the means to send the gospel message around the world, and yet I fear that it is being hid rather than being shared. We are guilty of keeping the greatest news ever told within our hearts and churches. We are keeping the message that brings salvation among those who already know Christ. You might ask why that is so damaging. Consider with me next:

2. The Peril (3) – [But if our gospel be hid, it is hid to them that are lost](#): Did you grasp what that said? If our gospel be hid, it is hid to them that are lost. It is hid, veiled or concealed, from those who need it most. I have received the gospel. I have been born again; I know Christ as my Lord and Savior. Keeping the gospel to myself will not further benefit me. I am sealed until the day of redemption.

- BUT, there is a world around us that has never heard the gospel; they have never sensed their need of salvation; they are yet in their sin, hopelessly lost and bound for hell. If the gospel is hid, it is hid from a world that is lost, apart from God! Doesn't that stir your heart? Doesn't that challenge you to share the gospel with those who have not heard? Do we even realize the severity of their lostness? Sadly I have to ask, do we even care? May God help us to realize that a hidden gospel is hidden from those who desperately need it!

B. The Opposition (4a) – [In whom the god of this world hath blinded the minds of them which believe not](#), Paul speaks of the opposition that all who seek the Lord will face. Consider:

1. The Adversary – He is described as the [god of this world](#). The world in which we live is dominated by the influence of Satan. He was cast out of heaven because he sought to be as God, seeking the place that God possessed. He does not possess the power our Lord does, but he possesses great power and influence over humanity.

- His sole purpose and goal is to bring reproach and hurt to the Lord through deceiving and defiling humanity. All who seek Christ will face opposition from the adversary.

2. The Approach – Satan continually seeks to [blind the minds of those who do not believe the gospel](#). He seeks to keep those who are in darkness bound by that darkness. He works through the mind, the intellect of man. Our world is filled with false doctrine, all devices of Satan that men readily embrace rather than truth. He has so deceived and darkened men's understanding that they will believe a lie rather than the truth, i.e. evolution, Christian Science, humanism, etc. Napoleon was quoted as saying, "*Men will believe almost anything, so long as it is not in the Bible.*"

3. The Apprehension – Paul speaks of the extent of this devastation: [In whom the god of this world hath blinded the minds of them which believe not](#), Satan seeks out those who do not believe. I am well aware that he also attacks the believer, but he knows he can't touch the souls of those who belong to Christ. They are already rescued from his evil grasp, but he seeks to keep those in darkness bound to their hopeless state. As the Spirit begins to deal with the hearts of unbelievers, Satan is there to deceive and hinder them from coming to a saving knowledge of Christ. He seeks to hinder the light of the gospel from illuminating their minds and hearts. This is a battle that has raged since Eden and it will continue until Satan is bound.

C. The Illumination (4b) – [lest the light of the glorious gospel of Christ, who is the image of God, should shine unto them](#). Paul knew this is what Satan fears most. He does not want the hearts and minds of humanity illuminated by the gospel. Let's consider the illumination. We see:

1. The Potential – [lest the light of the glorious gospel...](#) Paul knew that the gospel could free men from their bondage. He knew the message had the ability to illuminate the hearts of those who live in bondage. Satan knows that as well. That is why he seeks so desperately to keep them in darkness, apart from the light of the gospel.

- That ought to challenge and encourage us. We have the solution to the darkness humanity faces and finds themselves bound to, the light of Jesus Christ!

2. The Power – [lest the light of the glorious gospel...](#) This is not some message of little value. It is not a message with vague or limited power. It is the light of the glorious gospel, the death,

burial, and triumphant resurrection of Christ! There is no light upon the earth that compares to the light of Christ. The sun in all her glory pales in comparison to the light of Christ. His light can invade the deepest, darkest, sinful heart, illuminating sin and revealing the need for salvation. The light of Christ has the ability to bring men out of darkness and sin into the glorious light of salvation and reconciliation!

3. The Person – lest the light of the glorious gospel of Christ, who is the image of God... This Light is powerful and special because it is no ordinary light; it is the light of Jesus Christ, the image of God. He is the Christ, the anointed One, Messiah, Savior and Redeemer of all humanity. Paul rejoiced in the light of Christ and Satan trembles under its glory!

- He is the image of God, the eternal God-Man, come in the flesh. He came to reveal the Father to us and restore fellowship that sin had broken. Through Christ we have the glorious privilege of seeing and knowing the Father!

4. The Pardon – lest the light of the glorious gospel of Christ, who is the image of God, should shine unto them. Here we discover what Satan fears the most. He seeks to do all he possibly can to prevent the light of Christ shining upon the hearts of men. When the glorious light of Christ shines in the heart of a sinner, revealing sin and the need for salvation, the sinner is confronted with his sin and also introduced to the Savior. He then realizes that he no longer has to live bound in sin, captive to Satan. He can turn from his sin and unto the Lord in salvation. The enemy fears the light of Christ because it has the power to pardon sin and liberate the captive!

Isn't this a wonderful passage of Scripture. It reveals the struggle for men's souls, a struggle almost as old as time. We see the determination of the adversary to hinder the lost from seeing the light. We see the power of that light and the hope that it brings. We are reminded of the holiness of our Lord and the price He paid for our redemption.

I am still touched by the words of [V.3 – But if our gospel be hid, it is hid to them that are lost:](#) We have that gospel within us. We have the truth this sin cursed world needs to hear. What will we as believers do about it? Are we committed to letting the light of Christ shine through us or will we continue to keep it hidden safely away?

Have you received the light of the glorious gospel, resulting in the salvation of your soul? If not, you ought to come and seek the Lord. The Light has been revealed. Will you receive that Light or continue to live in darkness?