



9/7/26

So... Tim shared a theme from a quote by... you guessed it... Andrew Murray in Sunday's message. I thought I would share the updated-for-this-century quote with you. I don't feel bad about it being updated because Andrew Murray spoke Dutch. So, it had to be translated one way or another. Hahaha. The quote is, "It is only in the possession of God that I lose myself. As it is in the height, width, and glory of the sunshine that the speck of dust playing and its beam is seen. Even so, humility is taking our place in God's presence to be nothing but a bit of dust dwelling in the sunlight of His love." Yes, I'm a speck of dust. And yes, I dwell in His love. These two beautiful truths come together to make us humble and secure in the presence of our HUGE God and Father. Amen!

*Blessings,
Jonna*

2 Corinthians 4:1-10 ~

When I was a senior in high school I competed on a Bible quiz team. In that year, I memorized all of 1 and 2 Corinthians, which most of it I promptly forgot after I graduated. For today's reading plan, I started reading this passage in 2 Corinthians 4 and saw that it starts with the word, "Therefore," so I went back to chapter 3 to see what the therefore was there for.

I'm so thankful that I was able to memorize the words so many years ago... but as I see the richness of these words, I'm a little sad that I missed the meaning and application of these words all those years ago. I wonder how much pain I would have been saved from if I had just applied the words!!! I praise God for His mercy. He's letting me apply them now... and my life is so much better and richer because of it. My life is not easier, but it's far better.

What is so important about chapter 3 that I wish I had really taken to heart? The ministry of the Holy Spirit. He writes the truth on my heart as well as on the words of the page. He gives me life. His ministry is not the ministry of condemnation but of righteousness that brings greater, eternal glory. He removes the veil so that I can see His glory. He gives me freedom

(from sin and myself). He transforms me to be like Jesus. Wow. That's just what's said in chapter 3. Scripture is FULL of other wonderful truths about the Holy Spirit's role in my life. Praise God for this wonderful gift that Jesus said was better than any other gift we could have from the Father through salvation in Him.

Now, I come to chapter 4. What incredible strength, humility, and boldness does the Spirit give as we give Him full access to our hearts?

Vs. 1 ~ "Therefore, having this ministry by the mercy of God, we do not lose heart."

Let me not miss this... The ministry that God has given me is an act of His mercy, His compassion... just as my salvation is His gift. His mercy did not stop at my salvation. His mercy gave me a whole new purpose. With Him, my life means something. It has purpose that goes beyond the confines of this world. I could never create that kind of purpose for myself. That is an act of His compassion and kindness. O Lord, please don't let me miss the privilege of serving You in whatever way You choose for me.

Paul said, "We do not lose heart." This is a big deal because, in light of his circumstances, he would have lots of reasons to lose heart. In fact, at this point in his ministry, he had already experienced a lot of persecution for his faith, including prison and beatings... well, here's what he wrote in chapter 11... He experienced "far greater labors, far more imprisonments, with countless beatings, and often near death. Five times I received at the hands of the Jews the forty lashes less one. Three times I was beaten with rods. Once I was stoned. Three times I was shipwrecked; a night and a day I was adrift at sea; on frequent journeys, in danger from rivers, danger from robbers, danger from my own people, danger from Gentiles, danger in the city, danger in the wilderness, danger at sea, danger from false brothers; in toil and hardship, through many a sleepless night, in hunger and thirst, often without food, in cold and exposure. And, apart from other things, there is the daily pressure on me of my anxiety for all the churches." Just imagine going through a fraction of that!!!

In all this, he did not lose heart because he knew that his ministry was a mercy of God, worth far more than any suffering he would experience in his short time on earth compared to the surpassing worth of knowing Jesus and knowing that He would spend eternity with Him, without any suffering or shame.

O Lord, do I view my suffering that way? The first thing I do when I experience trials is question Your goodness! I'm so sorry. Please help me to see Your mercy. Everything You allow me to go through, as I'll see in vs. 8-10, You only allow me to experience to a point. And You never abandon me in it. And yes, it IS a mercy to have this ministry even if it means struggle. I could choose to live without the struggle, but then I would miss out on all the huge benefits of being with You, benefits that come because of Your mercy and nothing I could ever do to earn them!!!

Vs. 2-4 ~ "But we have renounced disgraceful, underhanded ways. We refuse to practice

cunning or to tamper with God's word, but by the open statement of the truth we would commend ourselves to everyone's conscience in the sight of God. And even if our gospel is veiled, it is veiled to those who are perishing. In their case the god of this world has blinded the minds of the unbelievers, to keep them from seeing the light of the gospel of the glory of Christ, who is the image of God."

The Berean Literal Bible translation, which is tied even closer to the original Greek than the ESV, calls the "disgraceful underhanded ways" that Paul renounced, "hidden things of shame." Paul said he refused to hide the truth of the gospel. He refused to falsify the word of God. Before he wanted to please any man, he wanted to please God.

We save ourselves so much trouble when our eyes are on pleasing God before man. Yes, we pray that our testimony would prove out to everyone's conscience that we're speaking the word of God faithfully and truthfully. But we refuse to spin the words or manipulate them to keep another person happy. We answer to the Lord who sees into our hearts, who knows our thoughts and motives.

O Lord, I know that I've wanted to rewrite Your word at times. When I've been emotionally stirred by someone's pain, I've wanted to speak what would make them feel better in the moment even if it meant manipulating the meaning of Your word to do it. Please help me to NEVER even be tempted to do that again!!! No matter what someone is going through, Your word IS the answer. I can and must be compassionate and gentle as I speak the truth, but I still must speak the truth.

Your word is not hidden, and You never use deception or manipulation to accomplish Your purpose. The one who uses deception and manipulation, who knows Your word enough to falsify it, is like the god of this age. He blinds the minds of those who refuse to put their trust in the Lord. Even when the truth is spoken openly to them, they can't see it. God's word shines brightly, but the evil one does everything he can to block "the light of the gospel of the glory of Christ, who is the image of God" from their minds.

Vs. 5 ~ "For what we proclaim is not ourselves, but Jesus Christ as Lord, with ourselves as your servants for Jesus' sake."

The evil one said, "I will be like the Most High." But he didn't want to love like the Most High. He didn't want to show mercy like the Most High. He just wanted the glory and power of the Most High. He himself was blinded by pride. He refused to serve the Most High and he missed out on experiencing the joy of living in His love.

Paul refused to be like the devil. Paul did not proclaim himself... "Look at me! Look at how awesome I am. I can preach and I can do amazing things." No way. When others tried to give Paul glory, he admonished them! He said, "I am a servant, a voluntary slave of God who serves others so that the name of Jesus Christ will be lifted high, not the name of Paul." O Lord, the desire in this world to make a name for ourselves is blinding!!! Please help me to see that Your

most wonderful mercy is to give me the privilege of serving You and lifting high the name of Jesus. This is the most satisfying life, the most purposeful life, the most connected and relational life, the most secure life. O Lord, You must increase and I must decrease. May it be so.

Vs. 6 ~ "For God, who said, 'Let light shine out of darkness,' has shone in our hearts to give the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ."

The devil may try to stop God's light from shining, but who can stop the one who spoke and said, "Let there be light"? God's light not only shines throughout the world, but it shines in our hearts so that we can know Him through Jesus. That's why serving Him is such a great privilege. I serve Him in the family business, fully invested because Jesus has paved the way for me to be a child of the Father. There's no need to have my own agenda. His is awesome.

Vs. 7 ~ "But we have this treasure in jars of clay, to show that the surpassing power belongs to God and not to us."

Right now, my body is a jar of clay, a temple of the Holy Spirit... breakable and weak. Philippians 3:20-21 tells me that Jesus is going to take me home someday and transform this lowly body, this jar of clay, into a glorious body like His. This is not about one day finally having the perfect outward beauty that I wanted on earth... though I'm sure we'll all be beautiful. This is about having the perfect, holy, beautiful character of Christ.

Until then, I'm a jar of clay. There's a reason for that. The goal is to point to the glory of God, not to me. My humanness proves that I have no glory of my own to celebrate. Everything I have is a gift from God because of His mercy. Even my breath is a gift from God. He bestows that gift even on the spiritually blind unbelievers. But I have this purpose from God that points to His glory and shows everyone that the "supereminence" of His power is HIS power, not mine. I want people to be able to look at me and say, "There's no way that SHE could have done or said that on her own. That could only have been the power of God Almighty working through her." I pray that I won't try to take any glory for myself. The beauty of the glory of God is that it promotes oneness with Him, a relationship that brings more intimacy than any relationship on earth... and yet makes the relationships on earth even deeper. That's the surpassing, supereminent power of God. Praise His name!!!

Vs. 8-10 ~ "We are 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, so that the life of Jesus also may be manifested in our bodies."

Being a servant of God doesn't mean that things will be easy! O Lord, You're teaching me that this jar of clay can and does face affliction, a pressing in that hurts... but with You, no affliction can crush me. This jar of clay can experience perplexing confusion because I just don't understand Your plan sometimes. But with You, no matter how confusing the circumstances, You will keep me from thinking things are hopeless. With You, nothing is ever

hopeless. This jar of clay will be persecuted by those who hate me for loving You, but YOU will NEVER abandon me!!! I will never be alone. Your Spirit does not come and go. He is always with me, strengthening me, encouraging me, comforting me, leading me, loving me. Let me NEVER quench His power in my life by me searching for comfortable and easy. They're overrated. This jar of clay may be struck down sometimes, but with You, I will never be destroyed. That is Your mercy. I deserve eternal separation and condemnation. You give me mercy and grace. How could I not pass that on to others?

I carry the death of Jesus in my body... "I have been crucified with Christ..." so that the fact that I have life IN JESUS can shine brightly... "It is no longer I who live, but Christ who live in me. And the life I now live in the flesh I live by faith in He who loved me and gave Himself for me" (Galatians 2:20).

O Lord, let me never forget Your mercy. Jesus, in His mercy, became a servant and gave His life so that Your light could shine in my heart, so that I could have a ministry, a purpose that has eternal value beyond all comparison. Jesus was afflicted for me. Jesus cried out, "My God, My God! Why have You forsaken Me" for me. Jesus was persecuted for me. Jesus was struck down for me. Because of mercy. Father, help me to remember and celebrate Your mercy, and help me to shine and openly reflect the truth of Your word as the moon reflects the sun or as a speck of dust shines in its light, by the power of the Holy Spirit pouring love into my heart. Amen.