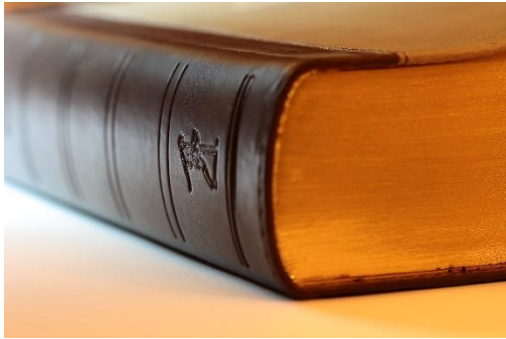




Don't Lose Heart: A timely encouragement for weary servants

2 Corinthians 4:1-6

Here in 2 Corinthians an embattled Paul wrings himself out for the Corinthian church in this letter. The church at Corinth, as you may remember, was given to divisions and following after different leaders. Apparently they had been enamored with those who called themselves “super-apostles.” These men accused Paul of all sorts

of things. In this letter he makes his defense but not for his sake. He makes his defense for the sake of the gospel, the glory of Christ.

Don't lose heart. Our God is merciful. (v. 1)

- 1.) *Therefore* - We are not under the Covenant of Works wherein we need to earn our salvation. The salvation has been earned for us by Jesus' work on the cross. Therefore, we are under the new covenant, the Covenant of Grace, whereby God through His mercy places the penalty for our sin upon His perfect Son Jesus and grants up the perfect righteousness of Christ. In Christ we have the Spirit of God. Since we have the Spirit, Paul argues, we are free! Free from legalism or extra laws in which we believe that we can work our way into God's grace. He has kindly and lavishly given us His grace.
- 2.) *having this ministry by the mercy of God* - Paul's whole ministry was rooted in mercy. (Acts 9:1-5, 15-16, 1 Timothy 1:12-13)
 - Paul was not minister because he was handsome or strong or smart or such a good speaker. He was a minister because God had mercy on him. The mercy of God was what identified him. It was at his core. Therefore, though the pressures, heartache, and anxiety of ministry came upon him; he remembered the mercy of God.
 - Like Paul we are bearers of God's mercy. The undeserved love of God is the very heartbeat of the Christian and the church.
- 3.) *we do not lose heart* - Paul had every reason to lose heart (2 Corinthians 1:8-9, 4:8, 11:24-28)
 - The reason Paul didn't lose heart was because it was God's ministry. He remembered God's forgiveness, His pardon, His mercy. The ministry was not based on Paul.
 - “Covenant Presbyterian Church is Christ's church first to last.” (J.D. Patton).
 - “Be still, and know that I am God. I will be exalted among the nations, I will be exalted in the earth!” (Psalm 46:10)

Don't lose heart. God's Word is powerful. (v. 2)

- Paul is appealing to the Spirit endowed conscience of the believers. He is saying, “We're not playing tricks or trying to pull one over on you. We are not using the Word of God to get at your wallet or as a magical formula to make you happy. We are calling you to the Word of God that you know. Our message aligns with what you know from the Word. No tricks. No illusions. No strings attached. Just the Word.”

Don't lose heart. God draws people to Himself. (vv. 3-4)

- 1.) Paul proclaimed the gospel, but not everyone who heard the gospel believed in Jesus.
 - The issue at hand was not his message, but the blindness and veiled-ness of those who heard and rejected his message.
- 2.) Paul knew what it was like to be blinded.

- 3.) If you sit here this morning and have not understood the gospel, perhaps the gospel has been veiled for you. If you have sat in this church or another church for years and have not understood the mercy of God, perhaps the gospel has been veiled for you. I have good news for you, ask that God would remove the veil of your heart! He will!

Don't lose heart. Proclaim Christ. (v. 5)

- 1.) "It would be hard to describe the Christian ministry more comprehensively in so few words" (C. K. Barrett quoted in *NICNT: The Second Epistle to the Corinthians*, p. 221).
- 2.) Paul proclaims that the antidote for blindness is lifting high Jesus Christ. It isn't some technique or craftiness. It's openly preaching the Word.
- 3.) "Jesus Christ as Lord"
 - Jesus, as Todd has said, His name is His mission, means "he will save his people from their sins" (Matthew 1:21).
 - Christ, the Messiah, the long-awaited One who would deliver God's people from slavery and darkness into His marvelous light.
 - Lord, the King of kings and Lord of lords. Jesus is the only One who deserves all honor, praise and glory because He rules supreme over all creation. He holds all things together.
 - Romans 10:9 because if you confess with your mouth that Jesus is Lord and believe in your heart that God raised him from the dead, you will be saved.
 - As we've been hearing all throughout the book of John, "Believe in Jesus." That is for what the Scriptures are written.
- 4.) Paul's posture of humility. He serves the church in Corinth for the sake of Jesus.
 - This should be the posture of every minister towards the church. We serve you for Jesus' sake.
 - But all the more, this should be the posture of every member towards one another. We should serve each other for Jesus' sake, for the honor and glory of Christ.

Don't lose heart. The God who spoke is the God who saves. (v. 6)

- 1.) This is referencing the creation narrative in Genesis 1:3 and what we often hear at Christmas from Isaiah 9:2, "The people who walked in darkness have seen a great light; those who dwelt in a land of deep darkness, on them has light shone."
- 2.) What Paul is showing us here is phenomenal. The power of God in creation is directly connected to the power of God at work in our salvation. We had nothing to do with creation. We didn't make Him make light. We can't make light – not out of nothing, but God can. That same God who spoke light into existence works in our hearts, drawing us to Himself. This is a work of His mercy so that He might be glorified above all. (Colossians 1:15, John 1:14)