

opposition, and however intense the conflict, Paul is ever urged forward by the stimulus and exhilaration of the task committed to him - there can be no question of abandoning the struggle. This great theme is developed more fully from v. 7 onwards, leading up to vs. 16 where Paul repeats his affirmation "therefore we faint not," and from there on into chapter 5 where, with his eye fixed on the future consummation, he confidently proclaims that he is always of good courage (5:6), which is the opposite of being faint.

*The ministry exercised is a result of the mercy experienced*  
In saying the he possesses the ministry the Apostle is making no arrogant claim to self-sufficiency (3:5). Any such criticism is disarmed by the addition of the clause, "even as we obtained mercy." The evangelical ministry is by virtue of the evangelical mercy he had experienced. It is not an achievement of human ability but a consequence of divine mercy. Paul, in fact, is making an acknowledgment of his own utter unworthiness, mercy is shown only to the guilty, the condemned, the hopeless. cf I Tim. 1:12-17

Against this background of mercy, his ministry is seen in its true perspective as something from which self-esteem is entirely excluded. (NIC)

(5) Faint not - he does not shrink from the duties it (this ministry) lays upon him, but discharges them with frankness, alacrity and courage. (Tyndale)

(6) Here Paul dilates awhile upon the great phenomenon of the Christian ministry, its message, its motives, the divine energies which can alone sustain the minister, the illumination which his own spirit must needs receive if he is to shed the light of Christ around him. (Moule)

2 Cor. 4  
page 3

Verse 2

ἀπειπάμεθα (ἀπέπιπον) disown,  
renounce.

- lit. to tell from - In the LXX of 1 Kings  
11:2, it signifies to forbid, a meaning  
found in the papyri. The meaning to renounce  
may therefore carry with it the thought of  
forbidding the approach of the things disowned.  
(Vine)

κρυπτά (κρυπτός) - hidden, secret -  
the hidden, secret things.

αἰσχύνῃς - modesty, shame a feeling  
that one has, shamefacedness.

πανουργία (πανουργός) - clever, crafty, cunning  
cleverness, usually with the idea that it  
is evil. (Souter)

Lit. "all working", i.e. doing everything -  
(παν. all, ἔργον - work) hence, unscrupulous  
conduct. (Vine)

δολοῦντες (δολόω) falsity, adulterate -  
primarily signifies to insnare, hence, to  
corrupt, especially by mingling the truths  
of the Word of God with false doctrines or  
motions, and so handling it deceitfully.

The noun, δόλος, a bait, a  
snare, akin to verb δολίω, to lure, as  
by a bait. (Vine)

συνιστάνοντες - (unite) (συνίστημι) bring  
together, unite, collect, recommend, commend,  
introduce, show, prove - lit. to place together,  
denotes to introduce one person to another,  
represent as worthy. (Vine)

2 Cor. 4  
page 4

(1) The stress is on hidden: it is the openness and candor of his ministry on which he insists.

by manifestation of the truth: by plain statement of the truths of the Gospel in public preaching, commending ourselves to every man's conscience - Lit. - to every conscience of men - i.e. to every possible variety of the human conscience -

The appeal to conscience can never be omitted with safety, and any presentation of Christainity which is neglectful of the verdict of conscience on the doctrines taught is at once un-Apostolic and un-Christ like.  
(EGT).

(2) But (on the contrary) we have renounced ... shame (dishonesty) means that which one feels for evil that is done; and the hidden things of shame are things which a sense of shame leads one to conceal - Everything which shame naturally hides is included, but what follows shows what he specially had in mind.

Craftiness is the exact opposite of such renunciation. It is readiness to do anything, villainy, unscrupulous conduct, often with the motion of cunning added to it.

Handling the word ... deceitfully - He does not intrigue, and he does not adulterate the gospel with worthless traditions and misinterpretations; but on the contrary it is by the manifestation of the Truth (placed first with emphasis) that he commends himself.

And to what does he commend himself?  
Not to men's fancies, or passions, or prejudices, but to every man's conscience, and that with the utmost solemnity and sense of responsibility, in the sight of God.  
(Cambridge)

(3) Paul speaks of the pruity and candour of his ministerial conduct. Renounced - at the time of his conversion Paul renounced once and finally those shameful things which are done in secret or surreptitiously - the moment of obtaining mercy was also a moment of renunciation.

There are certain things to which every Christian has said a decided No. Where there is no such renunciation, it must be questioned whether there has been any experience of obtaining mercy.

The hidden things of shame - secret practices which are dishonorable, deceitful, sensual, and which can only result in shame when brought to the light.

Manifestation of the Truth - Instead of subterfuge and self interest and deceit, Paul's ministry was one in which the truth was manifested, openly displayed, outspokenly proclaimed, in such a manner that none could gainsay the genuineness and sincerity of his motives. The internal forum of every conscience bore witness to this. Herein lay his impregnable commendation, not in external written testimonials, which might be counterfeit and valueless.

Every conscience - To every type and variety of the human conscience, whether clear or dull, whether of friend or of adversary - no conscience (no man conscientiously) could pronounce against the authenticity of his ministry.

Paul's ministry, above all, was conducted "in the sight of God" - There is a higher scrutiny than that of the human conscience: it is to God that every ministry of the gospel is ultimately and eternally answerable.

(NIC)

2 Cor. 4  
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Verse 3

κεκαλυμμένον - καλύπτω - cover, hide,  
conceal.

(1) Hid - veiled, in accordance with the  
imagery of ch. 3 (Vincent).

(2) The fault lies with the hearer, not the  
preacher. (EGT)

(3) It is veiled in them (Cambridge)

(4) Criticism - If your gospel is so powerful,  
etc. - why have so many failed to believe it.

- The unveiled gospel, openly proclaimed,  
has been veiled to them because it is veiled  
in them: the veil is over their hearts and  
minds, not over the gospel. It is not Paul's  
gospel but they who stand condemned. The  
absence of its saving effects in their lives  
shows that they are perishing in blind unbelief,  
while its glory continues undiminished.  
(NIC)

Weakness

Spargem = dispir, stamen, tongue

James Penny quote

Joe Henry Hankins

- SECRET of spiritual life  
 1- CLEANING of the Spiritual life - v. 1, 2  
 2- COMMITMENT to the Servant life. v. 5  
 3- CRUCIFIXION of the Self life v. 7-12  
 4- COMMUNICATION of the Saviour's life. v. 10-12  
 5- CONCENTRATION of the SECRET life. v. 16-18  
 6- CONFIDENCE in the Suffering Life v. 7-9

Exegesis of II Cor. 4

Verse 1

ἡλεήθημεν - plural - aor. poss. of ἐλεῶ  
 pity, to feel sympathy with the misery of another,  
 especially sympathy manifested in act.

ἐγκακοῦμεν - pres. ind. of ἐγκακέω, ἐνκακέω  
 (from κακός, in the sense of cowardly), lose  
heart.

(1) As we have received mercy = Construe with  
We have this ministry. Having this ministry as a  
 gift of divine mercy. cf I Cor. 7:25, Bengel says,  
 "The mercy of God, by which the ministry is received,  
 makes us earnest and sincere."

(Vincent)

(2) In verses 1-6, he perseveres with his vindication of the apostolic office, with special reference to the charges of insincerity and self-seeking.

Therefore = This at once shows the close connection with what precedes. What follows explains the special reference of "for this cause", seeing that the christian ministry is so immeasurably superior to the Jewish.

As we received mercy = The aorist refers to the time when he was made an apostle. It is a very humble way of speaking of his call.

We faint not = We do not lose courage and become timid. Cf Gal. 6:9; Eph. 3:13, II Thess. 3:13.

## II Cor. 4

Apostles set an example of the courage which is enjoined. Cowardice leads readily to "the hidden things of shame", and hence the connection with what follows.

(Cambridge)

(3) "This ministry" of Paul's is that of the new covenant described in the preceding passage (3:6-18). Having a ministry of such splendor, there is no place for faint-heartedness or concealment, but only for boldness and outspokenness (cf 3:12). However severe the opposition, and however intense the conflict, Paul is ever urged forward by the stimulus and exhilaration of the task committed to him of making known Christ as the mediator of the new covenant -- there can be no question of abandoning the struggle.

This great theme is developed more fully from v. 7 onwards, leading up to v. 16 where Paul repeats his affirmation "therefore we faint not", and from there on into chapter 5 where, with his eye fixed on the future consummation, he confidently proclaims that he is always of good courage (5:6), which is the opposite of being faint.

In saying that he has or possesses this ministry the Apostle is making no arrogant claim to self-sufficiency (3:5). Any such criticism is disarmed by the addition of the clause, "even as we obtained mercy.: The evangelical ministry is by virtue of the evangelical mercy he had experienced. It is not an achievement of human ability but a consequence of divine mercy. Paul, in fact, is making an acknowledgement of his own utter unworthiness, mercy is shown only to the guilty, the condemned, the hopeless. cf I Tim. 1:12-17

Against this background of mercy, his ministry is seen in its true perspective as something from which self-esteem is entirely excluded.

(NIC)



II Cor. 4

(4) We do not neglect our duty - our duty is evidently to proclaim the Gospel in all its purity and power; this thought leads naturally to the next verse. (Barrett)

(5) Paul is a minister of the new covenant, a ministry far more glorious than that of the law. The possession of such an office he assigns as the reason why he does not faint; we do not turn out bad, or prove recreant. We do not fail in the discharge of duty, either through weariness or cowardice. (Hodge)

(6) Paul's Source of Encouragement - So glorious is the commission he has received that it outweighs in his estimation all the distressing experiences which he has to undergo in discharging it. The dignity of his ministry and the assurance that its success and his own ultimate triumph depend on God's power, not on his, fill him with hope that eclipses everything that might otherwise drive him to despair. The train of thought begun in vs.1 is taken up again in v. 16; meanwhile he turns aside to say more about his ministry and what is involved in fulfilling it. (Bruce)

(7) This ministry has been committed to him by the unmerited mercy of God; he does not shrink from the duties it lays upon him. (Tyndale)

(8) To have received such a great ministry is a manifest sign of the mercy of God. In the light of that mercy, with its hope of future glory (3:12) and present experience of the Spirit's transforming power (3:18) we do not lose heart. (Broadman)

II Cor. 4

(9) Here Paul dilates awhile upon the great phenomenon of the Christian ministry, its message, its motives, the divine energies which can alone sustain the minister, the illumination which his own spirit must needs receive if he is to shed the light of Christ around him.

(Moule)

Verse 2

ἀπειπάμεθα  
of ἀπέπov

- aor. middle, plural  
- We have renounced.  
(Souter)

To tell from, to renounce. The meaning to renounce may carry with it the thought of forbidding the approach of the things disowned.  
cf I Kings 11:2 - LXX

(Vine)

κρυπτά - hidden, secret, concealed  
αἰσχύνῃς - shame, shamefacedness  
(Souter)

Signifies, subjectively, the confusion of one who is ashamed of anything, a sense of shame; those things which shame conceals. The verb: to have a feeling of fear or shame which prevents a person from doing a thing.

(Vine)

περιπατοῦντες - pres. part. of περιπατέω  
I walk, I conduct my life.

πανουργία - cleverness, usually with the idea that it is evil; cunning, craftiness.  
(Souter)

- lit. "all-working", i.e. doing everything, hence, unscrupulous conduct.

(Vine)

II Cor. 4

δολοῦντες - Pres. act. part. of δολοῶ -  
I adulterate. (Souter)

- signifies to ensnare; to corrupt, especially by mingling the truths of the Word of God with false doctrines or notions, and so handling it deceitfully.

a short of δολιόω , to lure, as by  
a bait. (Vine)

φανερῶσει - future act ind. of φανερῶω ,  
"I make clear, visible, manifest.

συνιστάνοντες - pres. part. of συνίστημι ,  
I recommend, commend, introduce.

ἐνώπιον - before the face of, in the  
presence of, in the eyes of.

A Preachers Recommendation

1. By manifesting the truth
2. To every man's conscience
3. In the sight of God

(1) But (on the contrary) we have renounced =  
 This doesn't mean he gave them up. He abjured them from the first.

Shame means that which one feels for evil that is done; and the hidden things of shame are things which a sense of shame leads one to conceal. Everything which shame naturally hides is included, but what follows shows what he specially has in mind.

## II Cor. 4

Craftiness is the exact opposite of such renunciation. It is readiness to do anything, villainy, unscrupulous conduct, often with the notion of cunning added to it.

Handling the word ... deceitfully - He does not intrigue, and he does not adulterate the gospel with worthless traditions and misinterpretations; but on the contrary it is by the manifestation of the Truth (placed first with emphasis) that he commends himself (looking back to 3:1).

And to what does he commend himself? Not to men's fancies, or passions, or prejudices, but to every man's conscience, and that with the utmost solemnity and sense of responsibility, in the sight of God.

(Cambridge)

(2) Hidden ... shame refers to things one may do, but will do only under cover, and with shame if found out -- he has in mind the practices condemned in the next clause. The force of the middle voice may be to refuse something offered to one; in this case Paul would be thinking of the courses he described as genuinely open to him and rejected by him.

Craftiness - readiness to do anything -- will stop at nothing.

In the sight of God whose judgement alone matters.

Almost every word in this sentence is significant both positively and negatively. Paul has not yet finished with the theme of commendation, which evidently played an important part in affairs at Corinth.

II Cor. 4

Conscience - Paul refers here to the capacity for moral judgement, which apparently he attributes to non-Christians as well as Christians; the man who does not accept Paul's sincerity as an Apostle will in the end condemn himself for not recognizing the truth.

Paul's appeal is universal; there is no question of his seeking approval from a small group of partisans. Any man who has a conscience should be able to recognize Paul's good faith, because he appeals to the conscience by showing forth the truth.

As always, Paul sees his ministry as validated by the Gospel he proclaims, not vice versa. The choice of the word truth, which has a much wider range of meaning than Gospel, is significant; Paul commends himself not by spinning a tale about his own importance but simply by telling the truth.

(Barrett)

(3) The stress is on τῇ κρυπτῇ ; it is the openness and candor of his ministry on which he insists.

Manifestation of the Truth - by plain statement of the truths of the Gospel in public preaching.

To Every Man's Conscience - to every possible variety of the human conscience.

In the sight of God - The appeal to conscience can never be omitted with safety, and any presentation of christianity which is neglectful of the verdict of conscience on the doctrines taught is at once un-Apostolic and un-Christlike.

(EGT)

## II Cor. 4

[ If a preacher does these things, it is plain he has received neither mercy nor ministry from the Lord. ]

(4) Paul speaks of the purity and candor of his ministerial conduct. At the time of his conversion Paul renounced once and finally those shameful things which are done in secret or surreptitiously; the moment of obtaining mercy was also a moment of renunciation -- there are certain things to which every christian has said a decided no. Where there is no such renunciation, it must be questioned whether there has been any experience of obtaining mercy.

By "the hidden things of shame" are meant secret practices which are dishonourable, deceitful, and sensual, and which can only result in shame when brought to light.

Craftiness signifies a cunning readiness to adopt any device or trickery for the achievement of ends which are anything but altruistic. Craftiness is characteristic of Satan, the arch-deceiver (11:3), and also, of those who are Satan's ministers (11:13-15). From 12:16 it would appear that Paul had actually been accused by his calumniators of being a crafty trickster.

So far from being marked by subterfuge, self-interest, and deceit, Paul's ministry was one in which the truth was manifested, openly displayed, outspokenly proclaimed (cf 3:12f), in such a manner that none could gainsay the genuineness and sincerity of his motives. The internal forum of every conscience bore witness to this. Herein lay his impregnable commendation, not in external written testimonials, which might be, as with the false apostles, counterfeit and valueless (3:11).

II Cor. 4

Every man's conscience - to every type and variety of the human conscience, whether clear or dull, whether of friend or of adversary -- no conscience (in other words, no man conscientiously) could pronounce against the authenticity of his ministry.

The Apostle's ministry, above all, was conducted "in the sight of God" (cf 1:12; 2:17), to whom every creature is manifest. There is a higher scrutiny than that of the human conscience: it is to God that every minister of the Gospel is ultimately and eternally answerable.

In the light of the divine presence the true is infallibly separated from the false.

(NIC)

(5) Paul is describing some general characteristics of his ministry.

Hidden - "disgraceful underhanded ways". Paul's methods are always open and above-board.

Craftiness - The same word used in 11:3 to describe the manner in which Satan beguiled Eve.

(Tyndale)

(6) There is no "veil" in the new covenant, as there was in the old: everything is open and above-board where the gospel is concerned, and everything must be open and above-board where its preachers are concerned. (The character of the Gospel determines the character of its preachers and the character of the way it is preached.)

Paul doesn't stoop to use methods unworthy of his message.

(Bruce)

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(7) The apostle in the description which he here gives of his official conduct, evidently intends to describe the false teachers of Corinth. What he denies of himself he impliedly affirms of them.

Not walking in craftiness - this is an amplification of what precedes.

Deceitfully - The word *δολῶς* means not only to deceive but also to falsify. Not falsifying or corrupting the Word of God -- not adulterating it with the doctrines or traditions of men.

The Apostles always thus speak with the consciousness of being the mouth of God or organs of the Spirit, so that we cannot deny their inspiration without denying not only their authority but their integrity.

But by the manifestation of the truth - This stands opposed to the preceding clause.

Commending ... Paul's opponents endeavored to recommend themselves and to secure the confidence of others by cunning, and by corrupting the gospel; but he relied simply on the manifestation of the truth. He knew that the truth had such a self-evidencing power that even where it was rejected and hated it commended itself to the conscience as true. And those ministers who are humble and sincere ... and simply declare the truth as God has revealed it, commend themselves to the consciences of men. They secure the testimony of the conscience even of wicked men in their favor.

In the sight of God - This is an assertion of the purity of the motives which governed his official behavior. He acted as in the sight of God.

(Hodge)



II Cor. 4

Manuel Scott: "making x unrejectable" - Book: The Worldly Evangelicals

(8) There is no need to adapt the truth of God to make it palatable to men. The Gospel is truth that shines in its own light.

Paul's preaching in the sight of God implies that he uttered every word as though he stood before the judgment seat of God. The reality in the Gospel demands reality in the preacher.

*conscious of his Presence  
content w/ his Praise*

It is directed to the hearer's sense of reality, i.e., to his conscience. The preacher's aim is not so much to present arguments to elicit the agreement of reason as it is to penetrate a man's conscience and stir up his will to turn to God.

The ultimate strife between the Spirit of God and the spirit of a man takes place not in the sphere of reason but on the battlefield of the will.

(Broadman)

Verse 3

κεκαλυμμένον - Perf. Pass. Part. of καλύπτω  
- I veil, hide, conceal, envelop.

Signifies to cover, conceal, so that no trace of it can be seen. (Vine)

ἀπολλυμένοις - Pres. Pass. Part. of  
ἀπόλλυμι - I destroy, I lose, I am perishing  
(the resultant death being viewed as certain).

They are already perishing. (Dunn)

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Signifies to destroy utterly; in middle voice, to perish. The idea is not extinction but ruin, loss, not of being, but of well-being.

(1) Hid - veiled, in accordance with the imagery of Ch. 3.

(Vincent)

(2) The fault lies with the hearers, not with the preacher.

(EGT)

(3) At this point Paul turns to the objection that the Gospel for which he claims so unique a power, has patently been ineffective in the case of many. The fault is not in the gospel, but in those who have failed to discern its glory. The unveiled gospel, openly proclaimed, has been veiled to them because it is veiled in them: the veil is over their hearts and minds (3:14 ff), not over the gospel. It is not Paul's gospel but they who stand condemned. The absence of its saving effects in their lives shows that they are perishing in blind unbelief, while its glory continues undiminished. Calvin: "The blindness of unbelievers in no-way detracts from the clearness of his gospel, for the sun is no less resplendent because the blind do not perceive its light."

Note Paul's expression: Our Gospel - cf II Thess. 2:14; Rom 2:16; II Tim. 2:8.

(NIC)

(4) Some of Paul's critics maintained that his message was obscure (like some today say it is not relevant, need to make it more update --if you don't appreciate the gospel, your eyes are veiled).

(Bruce)

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(5) It's true character and excellence as a revelation from God was not apprehended or recognized. The reason or cause of this fact was not to be sought either in the nature of the gospel, or in the mode of its exhibition, but in the state and character of these who rejected it. Paul does not hesitate to say that if any man does not receive the gospel when clearly presented, he is lost.

A man's faith is not a matter of indifference. He cannot be an atheist and yet be saved. He cannot reject the gospel and yet go to heaven when he dies.

The rejection of the gospel is as clear a proof or moral depravity, as inability to see the light of the sun at noon is a proof of blindness.

A good infidel, according to the Bible, is as much a contradiction as good wickedness or sweet bitterness.

(Hodge)

Verse 4

ἐτύφλωσεν - 3 per. aor. act. of τυφλώω  
make blind

νοήματα - thought, design

αὐγάσαι - aor. infin. of αὐγάζω  
flash, gleam, appear white, bright or I see clearly.

(1) The light - only here and in v.6. Lit., the illumination, act of enlightening.

## II Cor. 4

Image of God - Christ's light is also God's.

(Vincent)

(2) World - age: a certain limit of time.

"To the end that the illumination of the gospel of the glory of Christ, who is the Image of God, should not dawn upon them."

(EGT)

(3) Satan is called "the god of this world" because of the power which he exercises over the men of the world and because of the servile obedience which they render to him. It is not necessary in order that men should serve Satan, and even worship him, that they should intend to do so, or even that they should know that such a being exists. cf I Cor. 10:20. Not to serve God is to serve Satan.

Blind the minds - He exerts such an influence over them as prevents their apprehending the glory of the gospel. This control of Satan over the human mind, although so effectual, is analagous to the influence of one created intellect over another in other cases, and therefore is perfectly consistent with free agency and responsibility.

The Glory of Christ - is the sum of all the divine and human excellence which is centered in his person, and makes him the radiant point in the universe, the clearest manifestation of God to his creatures, the object of supreme admiration, adoration and love, to all intelligent beings, and especially to his saints. To see this glory is to be saved; for we are thereby transformed into his likeness from glory to glory (3:18). Therefore it is that Satan, the great adversary, directs all his energy to prevent men becoming the subject of that illumination, of which the gospel, as the revelation of the glory of Christ, is the source.  
(Hodge)

## II Cor. 4

(4) Because "this age" is dominated by Satan, it is "the present evil age", but believers already enjoy through the Spirit the life of the world to come and the god of this world has no power to blind their minds.

Glory, Image: If man was "created" in the image of God", then Christ, being Himself the image of God, is the archtype of man, and those who "beholding the glory of the Lord, are being changed into his likeness, are being conformed anew to that archtype and experiencing the Creator's purpose in bringing man into being.

(Bruce)

(5) As long as men are on the road to perdition, the gospel is veiled to them; and they are in this situation because of the activity of the god of this world.

Unbelief and blindness of spiritual vision caused by this evil potentate are closely related, and it is impossible to state definitely which is cause and effect.

The gospel reveals the glory of Christ; it enables men to see His essential splendor. This glory was present in His earthly life, but only after suffering and death did He enter fully into His glory.

(Tyndale)

(6) Age - it is world regarded as time, and not world regarded as ordered space.

Minds of them which believe not - it may be understood as explaining how it was that the evil one was able to do this and put them on the road to perdition: it was through their refusal to believe what was offered to them for their salvation. They would not use their eyes, and thus they lost the power of seeing. They strayed into the

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path of destruction, and a veil of darkness hindered them from perceiving the truth which the Apostle brought to them. cf 3:14. In what follows words are piled up to express the intense brilliancy of that which Satan prevented them from being able to see.

The aim which Satan has in blinding them--  
should not shine its brightness.

(Cambridge)

(7) Those who are on the way to destruction are the victims of Satan; yet they are also those who do not believe; that is, the fault that leads to their destruction is their own.

(Barrett)

(8) There is another power at work besides the wills of those whose hearts are veiled against the gospel light--the god of this world, to whom, in turning away from the one true God, those who are perishing have submitted themselves, and by whom their unbelieving minds are blinded.

The temporal designation ("of this age") must be understood in terms of the scriptural distinction between two different ages, namely, (i) what is variously described as "this age", "the present season", "the age of this world", and (ii) the future age.

Satan holds a certain sway over the world during the present age-- a consideration which adds point to our Lord's third temptation in the wilderness. But it is a sway that is usurped, temporary, and in no sense absolute. The satanic world sovereignty is in fact apparant rather than real; for God alone is "the King of the ages", (I Tim. 1:17 Gk), that is, of every age, past, present, and future.

## II Cor. 4

Satan wishes to set himself up as God, and sinners, in rebelling against the true God, subject themselves to him who is the author of their rebellion. The unregenerate serve Satan as though he were their God. They do not thereby, however, escape from the dominion of the one true God. On the contrary, they bring themselves under His righteous judgement; for Satan is a creature and not a God to be served.

This age, in rebelling against the one true God and submitting to Satan, offers homage to one who is aptly, though ironically, called "the god of this age", even though he is in fact a no-god, and himself a rebellious creature under the judgement of almighty God. This situation reveals both the appalling folly of sin and also its extreme wickedness.

The dreadful consequence of unbelief, of bowing down to the god of this age is that the mind is blinded. This effect is attributed to Satan as the initiator of sin and therefore of its consequences; but it should not be overlooked that despite the satanic revolt, God is still sovereign and that this blindness resulting from sin also has the nature of judgement upon the wilful and persistent rebelliousness of the human heart. This, in turn, is attended by the inability to perceive and rejoice in the surpassing splendour of the gospel, and that means perdition. The tempter sets in motion a kind of chain-reaction: sin leads to blindness, and blindness leads to destruction.

Unbelievers, their minds blinded by that no-God the devil, are incapacitated from "gazing upon the light of the gospel of the glory of Christ"-- a characteristically splendid verbal sequence which rings with the thrill of personal experience.

(NIC)

## II Cor. 4

### Verse 5

(1) Paul's gospel is the gospel of the glory of Christ. It is not, therefore, himself that he preaches, nor at any time has he been found seeking the glory of men (I Thess. 2:5 f). So incompatible was self-aggrandisement with the character of his apostleship that from the very first he had determined to know nothing among the Corinthians save Christ crucified.

The burden of its proclamation is Christ Jesus as Lord, for the Lordship of Christ is central and altogether indispensable to the evangelical message.

The force of the concluding clause of this verse is: "and as for myself, I am your bondservant for Jesus' sake." This is the only mention of himself that is permissible in his preaching-- a mention which by declaring the humility of his station ascribes all the glory to God and focuses the attention of the hearers entirely upon Christ. Paul is a minister, not a master; a bondsman, not an ecclesiastical lord. What humbler view of himself could a messenger of the gospel take than to regard himself not only as a bondservant of Jesus Christ but even as the bondservant of those to whom he ministers?

Paul is not suggesting, however, that those to whom he ministers are his masters. There is but one Master, and so he affirms that it is for Jesus' sake that he assumes the role of the servant of others. The servant of Jesus is also the servant of his fellow-man, but always for the sake of Him who is his sole master.

Christ's bondservant is free from all men, but in order to win others to the acknowledgement of Christ's sovereignty he brings himself under



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bondage to all (I Cor. 9:19). The expression "for Jesus' sake" is significant because the name Jesus is properly associated with our Lord in His state of humiliation, as incarnate for our redemption.

(NIC)

(2) Paul could not deny his commission without surrendering the Gospel, nor could he practice his vocation as an apostle without denying to himself any personal status or privilege. His apostolic authority could be manifested only by the renunciation of all the commonly recognized marks of authority.

Vs. 5 - It would be hard to describe the christian ministry more comprehensively in so few words.

As the substance of christian proclamation it means that the crucified messiah has been exalted by God to a position of lordship in heaven; the agent of atonement and proof of God's love is now the merciful ruler of the world, and victor over all evil powers. To accept him as what he is thus means release from sin, law and death; it also means to become his slave. But to be the slave of Christ means concretely to be the slave of those who are Christ's, a readiness to spend and be spent up on their behalf.

Paul was wise to add that he served them not because they were such pleasing masters, or had in themselves any claim upon him, but for Jesus' sake.

(Barrett)

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(3) Any other so-called "gospel" would be only an exhibition of the speaker's own opinions, prejudices and idiosyncrosies. The business of a preacher is to draw attention, not to himself, but to Christ. All the service Paul renders to his converts is not done primarily for their sakes. He has a more compelling love and a more overriding loyalty. He is their servant, because first and foremost he is a servant of Christ.

(Tyndale)

(4) Christ is the subject matter of the message. The herald does not draw attention to himself or devise his own proclamation.

(Bruce)

(5) To preach one's self is to make self the end of preaching; that is, preaching with the design to attract to ourselves the admiration, the confidence or homage of men (what will they think of me rather than what will they think of Christ?)

Paul's object in preaching was to bring men to recognize Jesus the Son of Mary as Christ. This is the only proper end of preaching. It is the only way by which men can be made either virtuous or religious. It is the only way in which either the true interests of society or the salvation of souls can be secured. To make the end of preaching the inculcation of virtue, to render men honest, sober, benevolent and faithful is part and parcel of that wisdom of the world that is foolishness with God. It is attempting to raise fruit without trees. When a man is brought to recognize Jesus Christ as Lord, and to love and worship Him as such, then he becomes like Christ.

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Paul cared little for the clamor of the Greeks that he should preach wisdom and virtue. He knew that by preaching Christ he was adopting the only means by which men can be made wise and virtuous here and blessed hereafter.

(We are often duped into preaching the end rather than the means.) Dunn

The motive which influenced him to devote himself to the service of the Corinthians was the love of Christ. Here again the wisdom of the world would say the proper motive would be a desire for their good. Paul always put God before man. A regard for the glory of Christ is a far higher motive than regard for the good of man; and the former is the only true source of the latter.

The ideal of a Christian minister, as presented in this pregnant passage, is, that he is a preacher of Christ, and a servant of the church, governed and animated by the love of Jesus.

(Hodge)

## Verse 6

(1) Who commanded - "It is God that said light shall shine."

To Give the Light of the Knowledge - Lit. for the illumination, as in v. 4. In order that the knowledge may lighten. Knowledge, if not diffused, is not of the nature of light.

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In face of Jesus Christ - Containing the thought of 3:18. The knowledge of the divine glory becomes clear revelation to men in the face of Christ as it appears in the Gospel: "So that in this seen countenance that clear-shining knowledge has the source of its light, as it were, its focus."

(Vincent)

(2) There is nothing secret or crafty in the ministration of the new covenant: it is the proclamation of a second Fiat Lux in the hearts of men.

(EGT)

(3) The end or design of God's shining into our hearts is that we should apprehend the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ.

Darkness originally brooded over chaos, until God said, Let there be light. So spiritual darkness broods over the minds of men, until God shines into their hearts.

It is the glory of God as revealed in Christ that men are by the illumination of the Holy Ghost enabled to see - Two important truths in this statement.

1. God becomes in Christ the object of knowledge. Those who refuse to see God in Christ lose all true knowledge of Him.

2. This knowledge of God in Christ is not a mere matter of intellectual apprehension, which one man may communicate to another. It is spiritual discernment, to be derived only from the Spirit of God. God must shine in our hearts to give us this knowledge. As the glory of God is spiritual, it must be spiritually discerned.

(Hodge)

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(3) "Let light shine out of darkness," is a paraphrase of Gen. 1:3. The gospel light mentioned in vs. 4 is as much the creation of God as was the light which he called into existence in the beginning. -- A reminiscence of Paul's conversion experience, when the glory of that light from heaven outshone the sun and blinded his eyes to everything else.

(Bruce)

(4) The connecting particle FOR seems to give the reason first, why Paul preaches Jesus, and secondly, why he is the servant of the Corinthians. His own heart has been divinely illumined, not only that he himself may be able to see who Jesus is, but also that he may bring the knowledge of what he has seen to others.

(Tyndale)

(5) Paul's apostolic activity resembles the creation of light. The creation of light in Genesis (was for the illumination of the world; the revelation of light in Paul's conversion was for the dissemination, through Paul's apostolic work, of knowledge.

Paul sees his ministry as the means of bringing light to the world; that which illuminates the world, in the spiritual sense, is knowledge; Knowledge is knowledge of the glory (not simply the majesty but the saving acts) of God; and this is to be seen in the face, that is, in the person of Christ.

Thus the paragraph, which begins as a justifying comment on Paul's apostolic ministry, ends with an account of the content of the Gospel. As at the creation light broke out from the

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darkness and illuminated the world, so through Paul's apostolic ministry the knowledge of God is diffused in glory.

(Barrett)

(6) The past tense shined, points back to the moment of conversion. The shining, is in the heart, in its scriptural significance, the center of man's whole being, moral, intellectual and spiritual.

(NIC)

Verse 7

θησαυρὸν - a storehouse for precious things, or treasure, a store.

δοτρακίνοῦ - made of pottery, of earthenware

σκεύεσιν - a vessel

ὑπερβολή - excess, abundance; exceedingly, beyond measure.

(1) The conjunction "but" introduces the startling contrast between the splendour of which Paul has just been speaking and the poor vessels in which it is contained. The treasure in question is "the light of the knowledge of the glory of God."

It is one of the main purposes of this epistle to show that this immense discrepancy between the treasure and the vessel serves simply to attest that human weakness presents no barrier to the purposes of God, that God's power is made perfect in weakness.

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In Roman triumphal processions it was customary for gold and silver to be carried in earthen vessels. It was very possibly his intention here to suggest a picture of the victorious Christ entrusting His riches to the poor earthen vessels of His human followers.

Weakness is a challenge to power. The extent of God's power is such that it overcomes and transcends all man's weakness: the former is not merely sufficient to counterbalance the latter, but it goes beyond and far exceeds it-- (transcending or exceeding ordinary limits).

It was the exceeding greatness of this same power that enabled Gideon with his contemptible handful of followers to advance in the darkness against the host of Midian and, by the breaking of their earthen pitchers and the consequent shining forth of the light, to turn to flight the alien army. So also for the christian (as the succeeding verses show) the breaking up of the outward man, the daily dying to self, allows the divine life and glory within to burst forth and drive back the powers of darkness, to the praise of Almighty God. It is precisely the christian's utter frailty which lays him open to the experience of the all-sufficiency of God's grace, so that he is able even to rejoice because of his weakness (12:9) -- something that astonishes and baffles the world, which thinks only in terms of human ability.

(NIC)

(2) In II Tim. 2:20 f. the point seems to be that whether a vessel is made of gold, silver or earthenward, it may be clean, and thus ready for honorable service to its owner.

No one looking at Paul's insignificant person would suppose him to be the source of

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power working towards salvation; this would therefore be attributed to its proper source.

Illumination, knowledge, glory, have now given place to power; all are closely related to Paul's understanding of the Gospel.

(Barrett)

(3) In vs. 8-11 there are five illustrations of the contrast between the treasure and the earthen vessel. cf 6:4-10; 11:23-30.

(Cambridge)

(4) vs. 7-15 The contrast between the message and the messenger.

To know the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ and to be called to spread this knowledge is the most treasured of all possessions.

Paul sees in this (v.7) a supreme manifestation of the divine law that God's strength is made perfect in human weakness. This striking paradox makes it clear that the gospel is not product of human ingenuity, no clever discovery of the human intellect, no bright idea of some outstanding genius, but a revelation of the power of a sovereign God.

(Tyndale)

(5) The apostles were expendible but the treasure was of indestructible worth.

(Bruce)



II Cor. 4Verse 8

θλιβόμενοι - make narrow, by pressure, persecute, press hard

στενδοχωρούμενοι - pressed upon, cramp, restrain, to keep someone in a tight place.

ἀπορούμενοι - I lose the way; I am in difficulties, I am at my wit's end.

ἐξαπορούμενοι - I am at my wit's end, I despair.

(1) Perplexed - ἀ, NOT and πῶρος - a passage. Lit., to be unable to find a way out.

Despair - The word expresses an advance of thought on perplexed, yet on the same line. We are perplexed, but not utterly perplexed.

(Vincent)

(2) Pressed for room but still having room - The figure is that of a combatant sore pressed by his antagonist, but still finding room to turn himself.

Perplexed - constantly doubtful what way to take, and yet always finding some way open --means to be at a loss what to say or do.

Despairing is intensive, to be absolutely shut up so as to have no way or means available.

(Hodge)

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(3) Verses 8,9 - with a sudden change of metaphor, the Apostle now thinks of himself as a soldier engaged with an apparently stronger foe, and at every moment on the point of defeat; and in four pairs of antithetical participles he describes his condition -- "In every difection pressed hard, but not hemmed in; bewildered, but not utterly despairing; pursued, but not forsaken (abandoned to the pursuing foe); struck down (as by an arrow), but not destroyed." cf Prov. 24:16

(EGT)

(4) These two verses (8,9) are illustrative of the great principle that the excess of power working in the christian is all of God. The Apostle is speaking the language of experience, and of constant experience (as the present tenses and the "always" of V.10 show) -- the experience simultaneously of his own incapacity and of God's transcending power which transforms every situation.

Hostile forces press in upon him from all sides and threaten to crush and immobilize him, but a way out of the desperate straits in which he finds himself is always provided; contrary to all human probability, God brings him safely through. Moreover, there is always the inner secret, the treasure of divine grace within the earthen vessel of his physical frame, which ensures that, no matter how straightened his outward circumstances, his heart is not narrowed and confined, but enlarged and expanded by the liberating love of Christ. (See 6:11 ff). An ill. of what Paul means if found in 7:5 ff.

To be at the end of man's resources is not to be at the end of God's resources; on the contrary, it is to be precisely in the position best suited to prove and benefit from them, and to experience the surplus of the power of God breaking through and resolving the human dilemma.

(NIC)

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(5) No one troubles to handle a cheap piece of earthenware with specially tender care. The worthlessness and fragility of the vessels, the weakness and insignificance of the apostles, is emphasized in v.v. 8,9 in language reminiscent of I Cor. 4:9-13, but here a contrast is drawn between the Apostles' sufferings (cf 1:8-10) and their preservation, the wretchedness of their lot viewed by worldly standards and their triumph by the mercy of God, culminating in the contrast between their carrying in the body the death of Jesus and the purpose and consequence of doing so: that the life of Jesus may be manifested in our bodies.

(Bruce)

(6) Paul contrasts the humiliating circumstances in which he often finds himself with the divine power which redeems them and makes them occasions for further manifestations of God's glory. Never are his enemies allowed to do their worst.

Troubled - not distressed - The underlying metaphor is that of a combatant who gives his opponent little room for action, but is nevertheless unable to drive him into a corner where no movement is possible. He is "hemmed in on every side", but not completely restricted. In the second metaphor emphasis is laid on the limited means that, humanly speaking, are available for Paul. He is without proper provision, but not totally so. "At a loss but not at a loss that matters."

(Tyndale)

(7) Verses 8-11: Five illustrations of the contrast between the treasure and the earthen vessel.

(Cambridge)

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(8) The next verses bring out the double fact that Paul himself looks like anything but the actual source of divine power, for he is a feeble sufferer, and yet is also the scene of such a display of divine power as delivers him from the natural consequences of his suffering.

(Barrett)

The power sees to it that the vessel that contains it is preserved. Men think if they destroy the vessel, they destroy the power. (Christ's crucifixion)

(9) Truly the earthenware is battered and broken; yet always with a glorious counterpart, showing God in us.

(Moule)

(10) Such poor vessels holding so vast a treasure! Such superlative power using such fragile vessels! Will they not break at once when this treasure and its power attempt to operate among men? Sheep among wolves, and yet the sheep win! Death all around, yet so many given life!

All the participles are iterative presents, all are descriptive of what constantly goes on in repetition after repetition.

Note the gradation and the picture of a mortal chase and a flight: hard pressed--at a loss which way to flee--chased--caught and thrown down--ever carrying around this hostile action of being put to death. Why do they not receive the fatal blow? --Matt. 28:20

There are four metaphors, the usual number employed by good writers when they wish to sketch completeness.

(Lenski)

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Verse 9

διωκόμενοι - pres. part. of διώκω  
pursue; hence, persecute.

ἐγκαταλείπόμενοι pres. part. of ἐγκαταλείπω  
leave in the lurch, abandon (one who is in  
straits), desert.

Vine: To leave behind, among, leave  
surviving; to forsake, abandon, leave in straits  
or helpless.

καταβαλλόμενοι - pres. part. of καταβάλλω  
Cast down.

ἀπολλύμενοι - pres. part. of ἀπόλλυμι  
destroy, lose, perishing (the resultant death  
being viewed as certain).

(1) Cast down - destroyed - This carries on the  
previous figure. Though the pursuers overtake and  
smite down, yet are we not killed. In all these  
paradoxes the A.V. fails to bring out the metaphors.

(Vincent)

(2) Paul was actually overtaken and cast down to  
the ground, but not killed. When they seemed to  
have him in their power, God delivered him. This  
occurred so often, and in cases so extreme, as to  
make it manifest that the power of God was  
exerted on his behalf. No man from his own resources  
could have endured or escaped so much. There is in  
these verses an evident climax, which reaches its  
culmination in the next succeeding sentence.

(Hodge)

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(3) There are indeed times when Christ's servants seem to be overtaken and struck down by their pursuers and when it appears that they and the truth they proclaim are destroyed. But Paul knew that the reality differed from the appearance.

In the ultimate view the christian is indestructible. His life is hid with Christ in God. His death, like Christ's, is indissolubly linked to resurrection. As death is the culminating moment of the christian's weakness, so also it is the point at which the all-transcending power of God is most marvellously displayed. The death-resurrection-florification experience is the climax of God's power working in us.

(NIC)

(4) Not forsaken - not abandoned to the enemy, nor left solely to his own resources.

(Tyndale)

(5) The pattern of christian existence is determined by crucifixion and resurrection.

Paul's life, in addition to his preaching, is a clear witness to the Gospel.

(Barrett)

The body that received the death, releases the life.

- the death of Jesus
- the life of Jesus

It is the dying of Jesus, not of Paul, that he is experiencing: in a sense men are still crucifying Jesus. Ex. 16 - murmurings are against ME, not you. But here is the victory: when Jesus dies, there is resurrection and glorification!

II Cor. 4Verse 10

ΝΕΚΡΩΣΙΝ - putting to death  
 ΠΕΡΙΦΕΡΟΝΤΕΣ - pres. act. part. of ΠΕΡΙΦΕΡΩ  
Carry around.

ΦΑΝΕΡΩΘῆ - aor. pass., subj. of ΦΑΝΕΡΩ  
make clear (visible, manifest).

(1) "Our body is constantly exposed to the same putting to death which Jesus suffered. The daily liability to a violent death is something we carry about with us."

In order that - The purpose of this daily dying is to set forth the resurrection-life through Christ in us.

(Vincent)

(2) The climax of the preceding antithesis is now reached. The key to the interpretation of v.10 is to observe that v.11 is the explanation of it; the two verses are strictly parallel.

(EGT)

(3) Here we have the summing up and also the explanation of the paradoxical experiences mentioned in the two preceding verses. The theme of this constant dying is indeed integral to Paul's thought and experience.

Paul is speaking of something more than example. Between Master and follower there is a certain unity of experience and destiny. There is an inclusiveness of the latter in the former, martyrdom, for Paul, was not confined to the hour

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of his death in Rome; it was expressed daily and constantly in his dying-living existence.

But this perpetual dying is not solely the expression of the earthen vessel's frailty. It is taken up into and transformed by the divine power and purpose, so that it becomes precisely the opportunity for the display of the life of Jesus in that same body that carries about the dying of Jesus. The qualification "of Jesus" is of central importance, for the dying of Jesus cannot be divorced from the life of Jesus. The dying of Jesus is essentially the seed of resurrection. God's power is made perfect in his weakness, the life of Jesus in his dying.

(NIC)

(4) We constantly illustrate in our person the sufferings of Christ.

The death of Jesus does not mean death on his account; but such death as He suffered. The death or suffering of Christ were constantly, as it were, reproduced in the experience of the apostle. cf. Gal. 6:17

That the life of Jesus ... This expresses the design of God in allowing Paul to be thus persecuted. He was pressed...in order that his preservation, his wonderful efficiency and astonishing success, should be a constant proof that Jesus lives, and not only exercises a providential care over His servants, delivering them out of all their perils, but also attends their labors with his own divine efficiency. Paul's deliverances, and the effects of his preaching, made it manifest that Jesus lives.

We die (daily, and at last, literally) in order that the life of Christ may be revealed. cf. Rom 8:17; II Tim 2:11

(Hodge)



II Cor. 4

Paul sees all his sufferings and hardships as a minister as the dying of the Lord Jesus, a fellowship in His sufferings. This dignifies indignities, and elevates his sufferings -- makes them more than bearable.

(Dunn)

(5) The death that Jesus ultimately died was but the final state of a dying that had been continuous while He trod the way of obedience as the Suffering Servant of God. Paul can indeed understand with a sympathy born of similar experiences this dying life that Jesus lived on earth. But as "a man in Christ" he can also enjoy the power of his Master's resurrection. The apostles were thus witnesses in deed as well as in word to the truth of their Lord's resurrection.

(Tyndale)

(6) Always - First with emphasis.

The dying - in Romans 4:9 of Sarah's womb. Literally, "making a corpse." It is a process leading towards death, rather than the end of the process.

(Cambridge)

The world has never stopped crucifying Jesus.

(Dunn)

(7) The dying - *νεκρωσις* - only here and Rom. 4:19 - suggests a process. Behind his sufferings lay a "dying with Christ" which gave them meaning.

It is not, however, an end in itself. That the life... the destruction of the earthenware vessel reveals more clearly the treasure it contains.

(Barrett)

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(8) Manifest - φανερόν - this exhibition  
is public in every way.

(Lenski)