

In Acts 9:15,16, Jesus says to Ananias, . . .

Go thy way: for he is a chosen vessel unto Me, to bear My name before the Gentiles, and kings, and the children of Israel:

For I will show him how great things He must suffer for My name's sake.

But we have this treasure in earthen vessels, . . . the excellency of the power . . . of God . . . not us (II Corinthians 4:7). An earthen vessel can only receive and pour out the contents which comes from God. God is all-in-all. No glory should be given to the vessels.

1. From II Corinthians 4:8-18 -- fill in the blanks

We are troubled on every side, ____ ____

We are perplexed, ____ ____

We are persecuted, ____ ____

We are cast down, ____ ____

We are always bearing about in the body the dying of the Lord Jesus Christ, ____ ____

____ ____

____ ____

We have death working in us, ____ ____

We have the same spirit of faith, according as it is written, I believed, ____ ____

____ ____

We also believe, ____ ____

We, knowing that He which raised up the Lord Jesus

____ ____

For we know that all things ____ ____

FOURTH STUDY

GOD'S POWER IN THE MINISTRY

OPENNESS AND HONESTY (II Corinthians 4:1-6)

In this ministry that Paul possesses, he operates in integrity and openness, in the sight of God.

1. What have Paul and the his fellow ministers received from God that keeps them from fainting (or faltering)? (II Corinthians 4:1) _____
2. What is excluded from ministry according to Paul in II Corinthians 4:2? _____

But Paul's approach above all else, is *by the manifestation of speaking the truth* of the gospel; and living his daily life in that truth. His conscience is clear and thereby *every man's conscience* who hears this gospel, can be clear by hearing the truth (II Corinthians 4:2).

3. If Paul's gospel be hid, to whom it is hid? (II Corinthians 4:3) _____

There is a veil over the minds of those who are lost and refuse to believe the truth. For *the God of this world has blinded their minds* (II Corinthians 4:4).

4. Why has Satan blinded the minds of them that are lost? (II Corinthians 4:4) _____

5. From II Corinthians 4:5:

(a) Paul says that he and the other ministers do not preach themselves. What do you think he means by this? _____

(b) What do they preach? _____

(c) If they don't preach this to lift up themselves then for whose sake do they preach it? _____

6. From II Corinthians 4:6:

(a) *Who commanded the light to shine out of darkness that shines in our hearts?* _____

(b) Why? _____

Paul saw that Light at his conversion on his way to Damascus. He knew that Light revealed to him Jesus Christ, of whom he persecuted.

"The unkindest thing that a congregation has in its power to do to its pastor," writes C.E.B. Canfield, is "to indulge in a personality cult . . . for it tempts him to betray his ministry." ⁹⁷ To preach oneself would tempt one to use "craftiness" -- any method -- to put oneself over. It would in fact be adulterating (or contaminating) the Word of God, and would sooner or later cause one to leave the ministry discouraged and disillusioned. ¹

For Paul self-exaltation was excluded entirely

from the gospel ministry by the very nature of his conversion encounter with the risen Christ (6). In that experience, the God of creation, who by a word had dispelled the **darkness** with the light (Gen.1:3; Isa. 9:2; John 1:5), had himself more wonderfully shone ⁹⁸ into Paul's darkened life, **to give the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ** (Acts 9:3; 20:13; 22:6; Gal. 1:15-16). Denny observes, "In the light which God flashed into his heart, he saw the face of Jesus Christ, and knew that the glory which shone there was the glory of God." ⁹⁹ In the abiding reality of this experience lay Paul's unique qualification to be a minister of Christ. The light of God illumined his life that he might also illumine others (Acts 26:16-18) with the knowledge of God's glory in Jesus' face. The anchor of the apostle's ministry was certainly not in himself. ¹

To refuse the gospel of the glory of Christ is to invite spiritual darkness; to exalt self in the presentation of Jesus is to betray the ministry. ¹

A MINISTRY OF SUFFERING, BOLDNESS, AND FAITHFULNESS (II Corinthians 4:7-18; see also II Corinthians 5:1-10)

Paul, now turning from his experience of glory in Christ, concentrates on his suffering throughout his ministry (II Corinthians 4:8-5:10).

1. Beacon Bible Commentary, vol. 8, p. 534, 535.