

The Glory Of The Soul Winner

2 Corinthians 4: 1-6

As you begin reading chapter 4, you see the word "therefore." Every time you see a "therefore" in the Bible you always ask yourself the question, "What is the 'therefore' there for?" **It points us back to what Paul or the writer has previously said.** He begins the chapter by saying, "Therefore seeing we have this ministry..."

He is referring back to what he, said in 2 Corinthians 3:6, which connects with the 4th chapter, "Who also hath made us able ministers of the New Testament. Seeing therefore we have this ministry."

He is talking about the ministry that God gives to every born again believer. I have been called by God as a minister to preach the Word of God and to serve as pastor of a church. God has also called every born again child of God as a minister. **It is the will of God that every Christian lives a life of ministering and serving the Lord Jesus Christ.** It is a wonderful thing to know Jesus as your Savior. But Paul is speaking here of the privilege of living a life of ministry in witnessing and winning the lost to faith in the Lord Jesus Christ. **This ministry Paul describes is the wonderful glorious, opportunity of sharing the gospel of Jesus Christ with a lost a dying world.**

Paul was a soul winner. If there was ever a man whose heart beat for the lost, it was this man, Paul. When you read of this apostle in the book of Acts, you will notice he went to many of the major cities of the ancient world. **In his travels to these various cities, Paul undoubtedly would have seen many wonders of the ancient world, yet there are almost no references to any of the places or things Paul had seen.** The reason for this is very simple. When Paul went on his journeys he didn't go as a "site seer." **He went as a "soul winner."** He was not interested in just seeing the beauties of the world. Paul's interest was to go into the cesspools of society to tell people about Jesus

Christ, and to lift up those who were in the depths and pits of sin. **That is the ministry God had given to Paul.** It is also the ministry that God gave to everyone of us! If God has called you to be a Christian and you receive that call of salvation, His second call to you is to tell others about Jesus! **When we hear that first Word of the Lord and respond to it, we are faced with His second Word, to go and preach the gospel and tell a lost world about Christ.** God has given us the privilege of that wonderful ministry. If you are a faithful witness, then you never really fail. God does not call us to be successful. God calls us to be faithful.

There are many times when we talk to people about Jesus, they just simply refuse to respond. But, if you keep witnessing and telling people about the Lord, somewhere down the road you are going to lead somebody to Jesus. That is what Paul is talking about here, the soul sinner's life and the glory of the soul winner.

In 2 Corinthians 4:1 Paul is talking about the *motives* of the soul winner, *motives* that causes us to do what we do, "Therefore seeing we have this ministry, as we have received mercy, we faint not." He says, "...we have received mercy." **This is what happens when we are saved.** There are different words that describe what salvation means in the life of the believer. For instance, we are saved by "grace through faith." "Grace" means that God gives us what we do not deserve. The Bible also teaches that when we are saved we obtain *mercy*.

When Paul gives his testimony he always likes to tell people what Jesus has done in his life, as seen in 1 Timothy 1: 12-13,15, "I thank Christ Jesus our Lord who has enabled me, for he has counted me faithful putting me into the ministry. Who was before a blasphemer and a persecutor and injurious, but I obtained mercy because I did it ignorantly in unbelief. This is a faithful saying worthy of all acceptance, that Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners of whom I am chief. However for this cause I obtained mercy."

Paul tells us he was a blasphemer, injurious and a persecutor. In spite of all that, he obtained "mercy." "Mercy" means you do not get what you deserve. **I hear a lot of people today talking about their "rights."** Listen, I don't want my "rights." If I got my rights I would be in hell today. **I rejoice in the "mercy" of God.** I thank God for the Savior who is rich in mercy, who reached down and saved us. We are saved by the mercy of God. Our ministry of being soul winners is based upon that mercy.

Look once more at verse 1, "As we have received mercy, ye faint not." **We do not lose heart and get discouraged, because we have obtained mercy.** If I witnessed all of my life and nobody ever got saved, I have no right to lose heart. God has been so good to save me. If I spent the rest of my life witnessing and only one person came to Christ, it would be the least I could do for my Lord.

Notice the second thing that happens when you get saved, as seen in verse 2, "But have renounced the hidden things of dishonesty..."

It is human nature to hide those things in our lives that we are ashamed of. But Paul says when we come to Christ, we not only obtain mercy, but we renounce the hidden shame of shame. In other words, we sense the need for *confession*. **We sense the need to "come clean" before the Lord!** We now have a different set of motives by which we live by. And because we have been saved, Paul says that we want to remove the deception. We want to make sure that our lives do not present a distorted Gospel.

Paul continues in verse 2, "Not walking in craftiness..." **That means using deceitful methods to try to get people to the Lord.** Literally, Paul is saying that we are not to try to "cunn" people into being saved. **The invitations we give in our church are very simple and low key.** There is a reason for this. We do not want to trick a person into doing something that is not the genuine desire of their heart. **We do not use "scare" tactics.** I know enough psychology to fill these altars every

Sunday with people walking down the aisle, but if God doesn't bring them down the aisle, it doesn't do any good. If God doesn't get hold of a man's heart, then walking down an aisle, signing a card, going to a counseling room, or anything else won't do him any good.

Therefore, Paul says we are not to mix misleading persuasions with the truth. We are not to use the Word of God in a wrong way.

The Bible is the Word of God that follows simple rules of interpretation. The Bible must be interpreted properly. The truth of the matter is, you can take the Bible and prove about anything you want. **A man can handle the Word of God deceitfully.** That is what every false cult does. It takes the Word of God and twists it to comply with its own theology. **Our responsibility is not to take the Bible and squeeze it into our own way of thinking.** Our job is to take our finite brains to the Word of God and conform our thinking to what God says in the Bible. That is our ministry. The motives of our ministry should include **no discouragement, no distortion, and no deception.**

In verse 2b we see the soul winner's message, "...but by the manifestation of the truth commending ourselves to every man's conscience in the sight of God."

Paul is saying, "When I try to win people to Jesus Christ I just give a simple presentation of the truth. I present the truth of what God says in the Bible." **There is tremendous power upon the human conscience in truth.** Truth has a tremendous persuading power. God has so constituted the human conscience that when it hears truth it has the normal desire to respond to it in a positive way. **That is why you don't have to "doctor up" the Bible.** That is why you don't have to twist the Bible or use deceitful methods to get the Gospel into the hearts of people. I am convinced that if I could get every lost person to think with me seriously about the Word of God, they would come to know Jesus Christ as their Savior.

The *prodigal son* was in the hog pen, and the Bible says, "...he came to himself." **He began to think sanely about the truth.** He began to think about the fact that at his father's house there was a table laden down with good things. The simple truth caused him to come to himself. Someone says, "I'm not a Christian because I think for myself." **That's not it at all!** You're not a Christian because you don't think for yourself. The truth of the matter is that you let everybody else think for you. **You let the television, the newspaper, your friends, and this ungodly world think for you.** If you would start using your brain, that conscience God gave you; I'm convinced you would come to know Jesus as your Lord and Savior. The manifestation of the truth commends our message to the conscience of every man in the sight of God.

If the truth has such a powerful persuading force on the human conscience, why is it that some people are not saved? Why is it that there are those who hear the truth and yet they do not respond to it? Why is it that we preach and people sit unmoved and do not come to Christ? **We go into homes and share the gospel of Jesus, plainly and simply, verse by verse, the way of salvation.** People hear it and yet they won't respond to it.

The answer is seen in verses 3-4, "But if our gospel be hidden it is hidden to them that are lost, in whom the god of this age hath blinded the minds of them who believe not, lest the light of the glorious gospel of Christ, who is the image of God should shine unto them."

We have an adversary. We have an enemy who doesn't want people to be saved. Therefore, the devil seeks to blind "the minds of them who believe not."

But how does Satan do his dirty work? He blinds the minds of those who are lost. The tense of the Greek verb here is present tense. **Literally, Paul is referring to those who are in the process of perishing – those who are lost.** You don't become lost. You are lost. **A man outside of Christ is lost.** He is already on the road to

destruction and punishment because of his sin. The Bible says the wrath of God abideth on him. If you are lost, if you do not know Jesus Christ as your Savior, you are on the road to punishment. The wrath of God is already over you.

The problem is not that a person cannot believe the Gospel, because the Bible teaches us in Romans 12:3 that God has given every man the measure of faith, so that no man is without excuse. You see, when the lost person hears the Gospel refuses to exercise that ability to receive Christ as Savior they give the devil a stronger foothold in their life. The god of this world blinds them who believe not.

The lost man is blinded to the terrible consequences of his condition. The Bible describes the man outside of Christ as a poor, lost sinner, under the judgment of God. If that is so, and it is, why aren't lost people afraid of that condition? Because the god of this world has blinded their minds, so that they simply do not believe the truth of their lostness. In their spiritual blindness they do not see the urgency to be saved.

Last of all, Paul gives us the soul winner's motivation. Look at verses 5-6, "For we preach not ourselves, but Christ Jesus the Lord, and ourselves your servants for Jesus' sake. For God, who commanded the light to shine out of darkness, hath shone in our hearts, to give the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ."

What is the soul winner's motivation? His own salvation! There is nothing like seeing a lost person come to a saving knowledge of Jesus Christ. And the reason we share Christ is because we have been saved, and we know the meaning of grace and mercy.