

"The New Ministry"

2 Corinthians 4:1-7

Part 1

Introduction: In Ephesians 4 we find the blueprint which God has given for church growth.

Ephesians 4:7-16

⁷ *But unto every one of us is given grace according to the measure of the gift of Christ.*

⁸ *Wherefore he saith, When he ascended up on high, he led captivity captive, and gave gifts unto men.*

⁹ *(Now that he ascended, what is it but that he also descended first into the lower parts of the earth?*

¹⁰ *He that descended is the same also that ascended up far above all heavens, that he might fill all things.)*

¹¹ *And he gave some, apostles; and some, prophets; and some, evangelists; and some, pastors and teachers;*

¹² *For the perfecting of the saints, for the work of the ministry, for the edifying of the body of Christ:*

¹³ *Till we all come in the unity of the faith, and of the knowledge of the Son of God, unto a perfect man, unto the measure of the stature of the fulness of Christ:*

¹⁴ *That we henceforth be no more children, tossed to and fro, and carried about with every wind of doctrine, by the sleight of men, and cunning craftiness, whereby they lie in wait to deceive;*

¹⁵ *But speaking the truth in love, may grow up into him in all things, which is the head, even Christ:*

¹⁶ *From whom the whole body fitly joined together and compacted by that which every joint supplieth, according to the effectual working in the measure of every part, maketh increase of the body unto the edifying of itself in love.*

This is the blue print which God gave concerning church growth. The men whom God gave the gift of teaching are to exercise that gift within the body of Christ and as the Word is taught the saints are to learn and they then are to exercise their gifts. The result of all of this is spiritual growth.

Now if we combine this with what Jesus said concerning His church we can see how the growth takes places.

Matthew 16:18

¹⁸ *And I say also unto thee, That thou art Peter, and upon this rock **I will build my church**: and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it.*

So it is through the teaching of the Word of God that Jesus then brings about spiritual growth in the church. Remember what Jesus said to Peter?

John 21:15-17

¹⁵ *So when they had dined, Jesus saith to Simon Peter, Simon, son of Jonas, lovest thou me more than these? He saith unto him, Yea, Lord; thou knowest that I love thee. He saith unto him, **Feed my lambs**.*

¹⁶ *He saith to him again the second time, Simon, son of Jonas, lovest thou me? He saith unto him, Yea, Lord; thou knowest that I love thee. He saith unto him, **Feed my sheep**.*

¹⁷ *He saith unto him the third time, Simon, son of Jonas, lovest thou me? Peter was grieved because he said unto him the third time, Lovest thou me? And he said unto him, Lord, thou knowest all things; thou knowest that I love thee. Jesus saith unto him, **Feed my sheep**.*

As Peter was about to be sent into the world as a Pastor Jesus drove home to him what he was to focus upon and it would be feeding the lambs and the sheep. Let me show you the focus of the Apostles in Acts 6.

Acts 6:1-4

And in those days, when the number of the disciples was multiplied, there arose a murmuring of the Grecians against the Hebrews, because their widows were neglected in the daily ministrations.

² *Then the twelve called the multitude of the disciples unto them, and said, It is not reason that we should leave the word of God, and serve tables.*

³ *Wherefore, brethren, look ye out among you seven men of honest report, full of the Holy Ghost and wisdom, whom we may appoint over this business.*

⁴ *But we will give ourselves continually to prayer, **and to the ministry of the word**.*

So we can see that it is God's will that His Word be taught to His children so that there will be spiritual growth within the body of Christ.

I. **Paul's Purpose**

Notice 2 Corinthians 4:1

The word "therefore" looks back over everything Paul just wrote concerning the New Covenant and its superiority over the Old Covenant.

Notice 2 Corinthians 3:6

Here is where Paul started with the thought concerning the ministry which had been entrusted to him.

He was given a ministry of LIFE and Paul was determined to press forward with this ministry. He tells us at the end of 4:1 that he and those with him "never lost heart". This is the meaning of the words "faint not". Paul understood the importance of the message which had been entrusted to him and for that reason he would not give up. The idea was that he was not afraid to proclaim the Truth and he would never back down. He was a man who had dedicated his life to preaching the New Testament. What was it that motivated Paul? It was his love for people and his love for what the Lord had done for him.

Notice 2 Corinthians 4:1 again.

Here in the middle of the verse Paul states that he had received MERCY. The definition of mercy is "not getting what we deserve". Paul was so thankful that God showed him mercy for if He had not done so Paul would have died in his sins and burned in hell. But that day on the road to Damascus God's mercy was poured upon Paul and he never forgot it. He knew what he had been saved from and so he really wanted others to experience the same grace and mercy in their lives. For this reason he refused to quit.

Application:

We too must press on and refuse to give up. We have been shown mercy and grace and there are multitudes around us who need the very same message. They need the message of LIFE.

1 Corinthians 15:58

⁵⁸ Therefore, my beloved brethren, be ye steadfast, unmoveable, always abounding in the work of the Lord, forasmuch as ye know that your labour is not in vain in the Lord

So Paul's purpose was to press forward with the message of the New Covenant.

II. Paul's Position

Notice 2 Corinthians 4:2a

Instead of quitting and giving up Paul states here several positions he has taken:

1. **He had renounced the hidden things of dishonesty.**

The word "renounce" means "to stand against". Paul is stating here that he is not involved in a dishonest ministry. He did not try to trick people with his words.

2. **He was not walking in craftiness.**

This means he was not promoting false wisdom or a false message.

3. **He was not handling the Word of God deceitfully.**

This means that Paul was not twisting the Scriptures to use them to say what he desired for them to say.

This was all in contrast to the false teachers and the false Apostles which plagued the church.

2 Corinthians 2:17

¹⁷ **For we are not as many, which corrupt the word of God:** but as of sincerity, but as of God, in the sight of God speak we in Christ.

2 Corinthians 11:13-15

¹³ For such are false apostles, deceitful workers, transforming themselves into the apostles of Christ.

¹⁴ And no marvel; for Satan himself is transformed into an angel of light.

¹⁵ Therefore it is no great thing if his ministers also be transformed as the ministers of righteousness; whose end shall be according to their works.

Peter wrote about how the false teachers would often twist the words of Paul.

2 Peter 3:15-17

¹⁵ And account that the longsuffering of our Lord is salvation; even as our beloved brother Paul also according to the wisdom given unto him hath written unto you;

¹⁶ As also in all his epistles, speaking in them of these things; in which are some things hard to be understood, **which they that are unlearned and unstable wrest, as they do also the other scriptures,** unto their own destruction.

¹⁷ Ye therefore, beloved, seeing ye know these things before, beware lest ye also, being led away with the error of the wicked, fall from your own steadfastness.

In contrast to how the false teachers and the false Apostles acted in deceitfulness the Apostle Paul would never resort to these means.

Notice 2 Corinthians 4:2b

He words "but by manifestation of the truth" means that Paul simply taught the Word of God. He never attempted to deceive people to get them to come to listen. He never resorted to twisting the Scriptures in order to gain a larger crowd. Paul just preached the Word of God straight forward.

Application:

Today there are many churches that resort to all kinds of gimmicks in order to lure people into their services. There are now coffee shops located within the churches. There are casual services and contemporary services. Some have completely changed up the order of service as well as music to appeal to the world so as to bring the world in.

I knew of a man years ago who said he would kiss a cow in the church if they reached a certain number. They reached the number and they led the cow down the center aisle. Those in the service told me he grabbed the cow by the ears and kissed it right on the lips.

I heard of a church years ago who had a bus ministry and they would tape a 5 dollar bill under one or more seats This was all done to lure people on the bus to get them to ride to church.

Let me show you the words of Ray Stedman concerning one of the most common methods of deceit. It is one many would not consider.

"The most common way of twisting the Scriptures is to resort to what is called "proof-texting." This is coming to the Bible with an idea of something you want to teach and then going through it, picking out a few isolated passages here and there that sound like what you wanted to say, and listing these so that when people hear you, they say, "Well, that is biblically supported; he's got the Bible for that." Every Christian cult that has ever existed has done that. But unfortunately there are a number of widely respected Christian spokesmen, for the most part very earnest and godly men, who still do this very thing. Perhaps they are unconscious of what they are doing. They are taking part of the Scripture and supporting what they say. That is called "proof texting." It is "tampering" with the Word of God; and many people are being misled today by that kind of approach."

When Jesus walked the face of the earth He preached nothing but the Truth of God's Word and when He spoke many came to listen to what He had to say. The point is that just as we looked at in the introduction, God has a blue print for the church and it is for the Pastor and the teachers to teach the pure Word of God in the proper context.

Notice the words of Pink:

"The ministers of the New Covenant are described as those who had "renounced the hidden things of dishonesty, not walking in craftiness." Christendom today is infested with men who are full of deceit and hypocrisy, trimming their sails according to whatever direction the breeze of public opinion is blowing. "Nor handling the Word of God

deceitfully" (2Corinthians 4:2). The true servant of Christ holds back nothing that is profitable, no matter how unpleasant it may be unto his hearers. He is one who does not magnify himself, nor his denomination—but Christ—His wondrous Person, His atoning blood, His exacting claims."

Application:

This is what is needed in the churches today. People today have many questions and they are looking for answers. It is the Word of God which has the answers and when it is taught in an expository manner the Spirit of God is free to use it in the lives of the people who are in hearing distance.

Notice 2 Corinthians 4:2c

Here we see that Paul made his appeal to the highest human court and that is the conscience. When he preached the pure Truth of the Bible he knew that deep within his listeners their conscience testified that what He taught was True.

They did not always like what Paul taught and they often disagreed with his straight forward preaching but deep down within they knew it was the Truth.

Conclusion:

At the end of verse 2 we see that Paul always kept one thought at the front of his mind while he was teaching the Word of God.

Notice 2 Corinthians 4:2 again.

He was forever in the sight of God.

There are many things which a Pastor can become involved in but He must always remember that his first responsibility is to study the Word of God and then teach the Word of God. I must always remember that Jesus told Peter 3 times to FEED the flock.

The church grows when the Bible is taught. The church becomes prepared and equipped when they learn the Bible in the proper context.

2 Timothy 2:15

¹⁵ Study to shew thyself approved unto God, a workman that needeth not to be ashamed, rightly dividing the word of truth.