

The Transfiguration of Our Lord
February 11, 2024
Only Jesus Can Reveal It to Us
2 Corinthians 4:1-6

Today Paul tells us he has this ministry, a ministry that he is not ashamed of because they had received God's mercy. And because they had received God's mercy, they realized there was no reason to feel bad anymore.

Forgiveness of self, like Paul is alluding to, is not readily accepted these days. When someone makes a mistake the community around them generally will not forgive them as much as they may be ready to forgive themselves.

Full disclosure - this has been my personal problem nearly all my life. I can sin, recognize the sin, repent of said sin, and then...I can move on. "Not losing heart..." as Paul says today in our epistle lesson. And for that I am exceedingly grateful to God.

Some have suggested I am living in Marc's la-la land, and that's probably true. Some have been *angry* with me because I don't continue to feel bad. And some have suggested that I never repented of said sin at all.

The reality is I simply believe Jesus died on the cross for my sins - every sin I ever committed and every sin I will ever commit. I believe He paid for all my sins right there on the cross.

One of my best supporters in the ministry, and most helpful peer, always encouraged me with this saying, "We all make mistakes, just don't keep making the same ones."

I have always appreciated that sentiment because it helped me move on, even though I occasionally found ways of making new mistakes, as well. But I learned so much more from my mistakes than I ever did from my successes that I can really appreciate how God molded me and continues to spiritually form me through confession and absolution every day.

Paul dealt with this problem in the church in his day, but he was being accused of so much more as well. In chapter 1 verse 17, we see that "Opponents were accusing Paul of being fickle in his care of the Corinthian church." In chapter 10 verse 10 "...They falsely claimed that he was afraid to be bold in person. Paul ultimately defends not himself but the ministry of Jesus that comes in apparent weakness and foolishness."

(Lutheran Study Bible Study note 2 COR 1:17 Page 1982)

They also “had said that he used underhand methods, that he exercised an unscrupulous cleverness to get his own way, and that he adulterated the message of the gospel.”
(The Letters to the Corinthians, *The Daily Study Bible* Pg. 218; by William Barclay November 1962)

You know, from my message last week how often that has happened to me personally. So this week’s lesson comforted me greatly knowing that “When our own motives are misinterpreted, when our actions are misconstrued and when our words are twisted out of their real meaning, it is a comfort to remember that-that[sic] also happened to no less of man than Paul himself.”
(The Letters to the Corinthians, *The Daily Study Bible* Pg. 218; by William Barclay November 1962)

And I think we can understand Paul’s struggle in a similar way today.

How many of you have been judged by that friend or family member that says they know what Jesus means by love, but they have never even cracked a bible to see what the only record of who He is, says?

How many of us have been accused of being duped by mythology and made-up stories?

How many of us have lost family and friends who abandoned their faith in Christ to follow the whims of the pagan world?

I think we all have our stories and can tell them well with sorrow in our hearts but even more with confidence in Christ.

Well believe it or not, Paul’s message is as much for us today as it was for the Corinthians. For us in the church, Paul warns against the implied sin comparable to those that fell into captivity in Babylon for their limitless sins against God.

For sure, we can run into the temptation to recite His commands and worship correctly but then commit adultery, slander, and even theft. Adultery by lusting after that which God has not given to us, slandering, and misrepresenting our brothers and sisters in Christ and even robbing God in our tithes and contributions.

But we must remember what the real point of all these remonstrations are, lest we believe we can check a box and be found commendable before God. As Luther says, “Certainly God does not say this as if He really cared about tithes, etc. (slander, adultery) Rather He says it to preserve the ministry of the Word.” (AE 18:414)

This is all Paul cares about amid the church hustlers who seek to leach every resource possible to their own gain. He knows they are deceiving by the Word of God while he is preserving the Word of God. For those who are deceiving by God's Word, the Gospel is hidden from them because of their willful deceit. Deceiving their brothers and sisters as to their true intentions. Deceiving themselves into believing they're ok just the way they are. And assuming they can deceive God which they cannot! He knows their hearts and minds and thwarts their attempts to undermine the Gospel's proclamation.

After looking at the degradation of this world we may assume this present age is incurable, beyond help, an infection to the church and community that must be cut out. That because the entirety of this evil age is hostile to God in such unrepentant fashion, we must relegate ourselves to the ranks of monastic existence so they can't breach the walls of our closed society and potentially poison our spiritual well of life!

But a better understanding of what Paul is saying would be more like this: God has not abandoned them, nor are they beyond help. Everyone, regardless, is a child of God who need to know they are members of the Family of Christ and have a Savior from their sin. Indeed, many of them have abandoned God, and their actions have rendered them incapable of believing in Him anymore. But thanks be to God it never depended on their ability to believe to begin with.

For we all know that if we had any part in our faith leading to salvation when we break our faith breaks too, and we are lost. But, when God the Holy Spirit moves in our hearts through the Word, then we know we had no part in it, so we know it's always good because God put it there.

Through Jesus and the work of the Holy Spirit He sent, now we can see God and have full access to God. Without Jesus we are not looking to God at all.

As John 8:47 teaches us, "Whoever is of God hears the words of God. The reason you do not hear them is that you are not of God."

When God comes to us and makes His dwelling in us, we can hear Him and understand Him like no one else can!

To those who reject Jesus and His message of truth for salvation through His death and resurrection, a stern warning is imparted to them in John 5:37-42, "...the Father who sent me has Himself borne witness about me. His voice you have never heard, His form you have never seen,³⁸ and you do not have His word abiding in you, for you do not believe the one whom he has sent.³⁹ You search the Scriptures because you think that in them you have eternal life; and it is they that bear witness about me,

⁴⁰ yet you refuse to come to me that you may have life. ⁴¹ I do not receive glory from people. ⁴² But I know that you do not have the love of God within you.”

This is the word of our Lord...Thanks be to God.

So, the light that reveals God in our life is already kindled by the work of His Holy Spirit so that all may be saved and come to the knowledge of the truth.

The light that was separated from the darkness at creation was a precursor of the light that would remove the darkness from our hearts.

And the light that came into the world has established His eternal illumination in the City that does not need the sun or moon to shine on it, for the Glory of God gives it light, and its lamp is the Lamb. (Revelation 21:23)

So, Jesus is the light, Jesus is the path, and only Jesus can reveal it to us.

AMEN

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