

2 Corinthians 4:1- *Therefore, since we have this ministry, as we have received mercy, we do not lose heart.*

Paul tells us that we have been given the **ministry of reconciliation** (2 Corinthians 5:18). This is not a ministry we are waiting to receive in the future—it is one we have already received through Christ. As believers, we are called to help bring people into a restored relationship with God by sharing the message of the gospel.

Paul also reminds us that we have received **mercy**. Mercy is God withholding the judgment we deserve because of our sin. Instead of giving us what our sins deserve, God extends what we don't deserve. Because we have received such mercy, we do not lose heart or give up. We continue faithfully in the ministry God has entrusted to us.

2 Corinthians 4:2- *But we have renounced the hidden things of shame, not walking in craftiness nor handling the word of God deceitfully, but by manifestation of the truth commending ourselves to every man's conscience in the sight of God.*

Paul reaffirms what he emphasized in 2 Corinthians 3:5–6: his sufficiency and validation did not come from himself but from his dependence upon God. His ministry was not built on human wisdom, manipulation, or self-promotion. Instead, it was grounded in the truth of the gospel and empowered by God.

This verse also provides a warning against those who do the opposite. Paul identifies two characteristics of false ministers: they walk in craftiness and handle the Word of God deceitfully. Rather than presenting the truth plainly, they distort it for personal advantage. Scripture identifies Satan as "the father of lies" (John 8:44), reminding us that deception is not a minor issue. Lies often originate from selfish ambition, pride, or the desire for personal gain.

Paul addressed this reality in the book of Philippians, acknowledging that some preach Christ out of sincere love while others do so from selfish ambition and impure motives. The difference is not merely in the message proclaimed but in the heart behind the ministry.

Paul's purpose was never to build a platform for himself or gain personal recognition. If he were living today, his goal would not be to increase followers on social media or establish his own reputation. His passion was to point people to Jesus Christ. By openly proclaiming the truth, Paul entrusted his ministry to God and appealed to his hearers rather than attempting to manipulate them through deceptive means.

2 Corinthians 4:3- *But even if our gospel is veiled, it is veiled to those who are perishing,*

The Greek word translated *veiled* comes from *kalyptō*, meaning "to cover," "conceal," or "hide." Paul is not saying that the gospel itself is unclear. The message of Christ has been openly proclaimed. The problem is not with the gospel but with the condition of the heart receiving it.

Those who are perishing are unable to see the beauty and truth of the gospel because they have rejected the One to whom it points. Their spiritual perception has become hardened, and the

message remains veiled to them. As Paul explains in the following verse, the god of this age has blinded the minds of unbelievers, preventing them from seeing the light of the gospel of Christ.

This verse reminds us that the issue is not merely the presence of sin, for all people have sinned and fall short of the glory of God (Romans 3:23). The ones that are perishing are not those that sin but those who chose to reject the Person that made the payment for their sin.

2 Corinthians 4:4- *whose minds the god of this age has blinded, who do not believe, lest the light of the gospel of the glory of Christ, who is the image of God, should shine on them.*

This verse reveals that one of Satan's primary areas of attack is the mind. Paul explains that the "god of this age" has blinded the minds of unbelievers to prevent them from seeing the light of the gospel. The enemy understands that beliefs shape actions, and therefore he seeks to influence thoughts, perceptions, and understanding- all targeting the soulful realm.

The psalmist wrote, "For the enemy has persecuted my soul" (Psalm 143:3), showing that spiritual warfare often targets the inner person. Likewise, Paul teaches that people are delivered from deception through the knowledge of the truth. In 2 Timothy 2:25-26, he explains that as people come to the knowledge of the truth, they can come to their senses and escape the trap of the devil, who has taken them captive to do his will.

The antidote to deception is truth. Because of this, the battle of faith is in the arena of the mind. As believers, we have already been given everything we need in Christ, but our minds must learn to acknowledge, agree with, and act upon what God has said. Scripture repeatedly emphasizes the importance of renewing the mind and bringing our thoughts into alignment with God's truth (Romans 8:6; 2 Corinthians 10:5; Ephesians 4:23; Colossians 3:10; Colossians 3:2; Philippians 4:8).

This verse also reminds us of our role in helping others see the light of the gospel. We can pray for God to send laborers into the harvest, but we must also be willing to become the laborers He sends.

I remember praying for God to send someone to witness to a particular person. As I prayed, I sensed the Lord saying, "You are asking Me to send someone, and I have sent you." That moment was eye-opening. While we are not called to personally witness to every individual, we should honestly ask ourselves whether God may be calling us to step into the very assignment we are asking Him to give someone else. Sometimes the answer to our prayer is not another person—it is our obedience.

God shines His light through willing vessels. As we share the truth of the gospel, He uses us to help remove the veil and point people to Jesus Christ, the image of God.

2 Corinthians 4:5- *For we do not preach ourselves, but Christ Jesus the Lord, and ourselves your bondservants for Jesus' sake.*

Paul's message was simple: he preached Christ. As he wrote elsewhere, "Him we preach" (Colossians 1:28). The focus of his ministry was never his own accomplishments, credentials, or reputation. His desire was to point people to Jesus.

This same thread is seen in the ministry of Philip. When he went down to Samaria, he preached Christ to them (Acts 8:5). As the people heard the message and witnessed the miracles God performed through him, they paid close attention. Unclean spirits were cast out, the lame were healed, and great joy filled the city. The power was not in Philip himself but in the person he proclaimed.

Once again, Paul emphasizes that Jesus was the foundation and center of his calling. In this short verse, Paul mentions Jesus twice, highlighting where his attention and affection

Paul also identifies himself and his fellow workers as bondservants for the sake of others. This reveals the humility that characterized his ministry. He did not view people as a means to advance himself; instead, he viewed himself as a servant for their benefit and spiritual growth.

This Christ-centered perspective helps explain how Paul endured the many trials, persecutions, and hardships he faced. He had died to self and was living for a greater purpose. As he declared in Galatians 2:20, "It is no longer I who live, but Christ lives in me." Because Paul's life was no longer centered on himself, circumstances could not easily shake him. His identity, purpose, and strength were found in Christ alone.

The more ministry becomes about self, the more vulnerable it becomes to discouragement, pride, and offense. But when Jesus remains at the center, the focus shifts from personal success to faithful obedience. Paul's example challenges every believer to ask: Am I promoting myself, or am I pointing people to Jesus?

2 Corinthians 4:6- For it is the God who commanded light to shine out of darkness, who has shone in our hearts to give the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ.

When God spoke the world into existence, He commanded light to shine out of darkness. The only way to penetrate darkness is to bring light. This goes right along with the previous verse, which speaks of people's minds being blinded by the enemy.

Just as God brought physical light into the world at creation, He brings spiritual light into the hearts of those who believe. The light of the gospel reveals the glory of God through Jesus Christ. While the enemy seeks to blind minds, God shines His light into hearts so that people can know Him.

2 Corinthians 4:7- But we have this treasure in earthen vessels, that the excellence of the power may be of God and not of us.

The earthen vessels refer to our physical bodies. We now have a treasure in us, which is Christ in us (2 Corinthians 13:5), and our sufficiency is not of ourselves but from the One who lives in us.

Notice throughout Jesus' ministry that He did not glorify Himself but the Father. In John 14:10, Jesus said that the Father does the works. Jesus continually put the focus and emphasis on the Father (Acts 10:38).

This is amazing because we too should place all our boasting in Who is in us, not in anything we do externally. God now dwells in us, and apart from Him we can do nothing (John 15:5). The treasure is not the vessel itself but the One who lives within it. Therefore, the power and glory belong to God and not to us.

2 Corinthians 4:8- *We are hard-pressed on every side, yet not crushed; we are perplexed, but not in despair;*

I love how Paul does not simply say he is pressed but uses the phrase *hard-pressed*. The Greek word for pressed is *thlibō*, which means to be afflicted, troubled, or under pressure.

At first, this verse may seem a bit out of place. Paul was just speaking about the light of the gospel and the treasure we now have in Christ, and now he shifts to the reality of the hardships he faced. However, the context of this second letter to the Corinthians is very relational and focused on restoration. Paul is showing that although we have Christ in us, that does not eliminate the difficulties we face in this physical body.

What makes Paul so relatable is that he does not present a version of Christianity that is free from problems. Many people become discouraged when they hear only messages about victory while facing real struggles themselves. Paul acknowledges both realities: we have Christ in us, yet we still encounter opposition.

The message Paul preached opened a great door for ministry, but it also brought many adversaries (1 Corinthians 16:9). His hardships were not evidence of failure but proof of his commitment to the gospel. He continued pressing forward despite affliction because of his love for Christ and his concern for others, especially the Corinthians.

Paul was hard-pressed, but not crushed. Though he faced intense pressure from every side, God's grace sustained him. His life demonstrates that believers can experience genuine hardship while also experiencing God's faithfulness in the midst of it.

2 Corinthians 4:9- *persecuted, but not forsaken; struck down, but not destroyed—*

The Greek word for *persecuted* is *diōkō*, meaning to be mistreated or to suffer persecution on account of something. The persecution Paul faced was because of the gospel. Anytime there is opportunity, there will also be opposition. Paul was willing to endure harassment and suffering because he was dead to himself and focused on the gospel being proclaimed (Acts 20:24).

Where can we turn when we are hard-pressed, perplexed, or persecuted? Paul has already given us the answer in the previous verses: Christ in us and the treasure we possess through Him. We have all the fruit of the Spirit within us to withstand the attacks of the enemy.

Are you in the middle of a marital crisis or a divorce? Maybe you are dealing with opposition at work, or perhaps sickness is attacking your body. These situations can certainly weigh a person down. But God.

I believe one of the most powerful things a believer can do during opposition is choose to remain at peace. "But Neresa, how can I be at peace when all this is going on?" Peace is a decision, not a feeling.

Think about the eternal reward that awaits us. Set your mind on things that are true, lovely, and of good report (Philippians 4:8). The enemy will always attempt to discourage and distract us, but we do not have to accept his lies as truth.

During persecution, it can appear as though God has forsaken or abandoned us. Nothing could be further from the truth. We must allow God's Word to dominate our thinking rather than our circumstances. Scripture reminds us that God is for us (Romans 8:31) and that He will never leave us nor forsake us (Hebrews 13:5).

Paul's testimony was not that he avoided persecution but that he endured it. He was persecuted, but not forsaken; struck down, but not destroyed. God's presence sustained him through every trial, and the same is true for believers today.

2 Corinthians 4:10- *always carrying about in the body the dying of the Lord Jesus, that the life of Jesus also may be manifested in our body.*

Victory in the Christian life begins when we come to the end of ourselves—this is when we come to the beginning of God. Freedom for a believer is found in being dead to self.

Paul embodied this when he said, "For to me, to live is Christ, and to die is gain" (Philippians 1:21). When we carry our cares and become consumed with our problems, it reveals that we are still operating in self. You cannot hurt or bother a dead man.

I like to say in our household, "You cannot hurt me." That is not to say that things do not happen, but our family's goal is not to allow the enemy to occupy our minds with the issues of life and become permanent tenants. Jesus lived an unbothered life, and we can too.

2 Corinthians 4:11- *For we who live are always delivered to death for Jesus' sake, that the life of Jesus also may be manifested in our mortal flesh.*

This may not sound like an invitation you would want to receive—that walking with Jesus means being delivered to death constantly. The truth is, there are two types of opposition: when you are in the will of God and when you are outside of God's will.

If you are in God's will, this connects back to what the apostle Paul says in 2 Corinthians 1:3. Remember, he speaks about comfort throughout the first chapter. It is God's grace that kept him in a place of rest and enabled him to comfort and sustain others. You are not alone in your trials, and God is not the author or sponsor of them.

In our trials, we can show the world the peace we possess and the fruit that we are able to draw out and release. We are able to have our mortal body release the life within. The world must live from the outside in, but we draw from the inside out.

2 Corinthians 4:12- *So then death is working in us, but life in you.*

If any of you are in ministry and reading this, I believe we can draw from what Paul used to keep going for the sake of the gospel. Are you experiencing a church split, or have members of your ministry left to serve elsewhere? Paul reveals here that what kept him going was others.

Even in the midst of opposition, there are still people who are depending on you and the message you carry. The enemy has an assignment to dismantle and discourage you, but when our focus shifts to others, it becomes a vehicle that drives us forward.

Paul understood that his sufferings were producing life in those he ministered to. That perspective gave him strength to continue.

2 Corinthians 4:13- *And since we have the same spirit of faith, according to what is written, "I believed and therefore I spoke," we also believe and therefore speak,*

This is a quotation from Psalm 116:10.

Faith speaks, but notice that believing comes before speaking. It is impossible to truly believe something and not speak about it. As Jesus said, "Out of the abundance of the heart the mouth speaks" (Luke 6:45).

All that Paul spoke was rooted in his belief system. Is it possible that believers are sick, worn down, in poverty, and experiencing strife because we have accepted the system of the world? Right believing will always produce right living.

We may go through the same things as the rest of the world, but we do not have to respond like the world. We can move while we are mourning and grow while we are grieving.

2 Corinthians 4:14- *knowing that He who raised up the Lord Jesus will also raise us up with Jesus, and will present us with you.*

Paul's attention was on an eternal reward. This is what enabled him to endure situations that brought him close to death. Our attitude will always affect our altitude.

Paul was convinced that God raised Jesus from the dead, and that at the end of his earthly life, he too would be raised. This assurance fueled his perseverance and gave him strength to continue.

2 Corinthians 4:15- *For all things are for your sakes, that grace, having spread through the many, may cause thanksgiving to abound to the glory of God.*

Grace will always produce thanksgiving because it is not only God's unearned favor, but also His power and ability to do what we could never accomplish in our own strength. This is what Paul depended on, and through it he was able to press forward for the sake of others.

This same model is found in Jesus. Paul was not simply copying Jesus, but allowing Christ to live through him rather than merely living alongside him. It was for the joy of mankind being reconciled back to God that Jesus endured the cross (Hebrews 12:2). Jesus was focused on us and not Himself, and this reveals a major key to a victorious life: humility expressed in being Christ-centered rather than self-centered.

There is freedom when we come to the end of ourselves, because it is there that we truly begin to experience the life and strength of God.

2 Corinthians 4:16- *Therefore we do not lose heart. Even though our outward man is perishing, yet the inward man is being renewed day by day.*

Why don't we lose heart? The reason we do not lose heart is because of the grace that is placed within us. A believer has everything they need pertaining to life and godliness (2 Peter 1:3). Any situation or circumstance we face is never hopeless; therefore, we should not lose heart. We should leave hopelessness for the unbeliever, not the saint.

The phrase *lose heart* (or faint) in Greek is *ekkakeō*, meaning to be utterly spiritless, wearied out, or exhausted. We do not faint first in our bodies, but in our minds (Hebrews 12:3). A person will always lose mentally before they ever fail physically.

Paul's outward man is growing older, but that does not mean we have to go through life weakened or defeated. Our youth can be renewed like the eagles, and as our days are, so shall our strength be. What kept Paul going was the grace within him—the inward man.

If all believers have this grace, why are not all experiencing victory at the same level? This is because what we have within must be worked out (Philippians 3:12–13).

2 Corinthians 4:17- *For our light affliction, which is but for a moment, is working for us a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory,*

Wait—Paul just said that he was hard-pressed, perplexed, and persecuted, facing death daily, and then he calls it *light affliction*. Would to God that we would describe our problems like this.

We become upset when the escalator is out and we have to walk up the stairs, or when our coworker who does not even attend church or tithe just got married and we are still single.

I believe the sum total of a person's life—whether they are happy or sad, experiencing victory or defeat—will often come down to perspective. Paul's perspective was the recipe for endurance and success. He viewed his troubles as light.

What situations in your life have you placed a label of defeat on, and how can you shift that today? If you were just fired from your job, let us praise God that there may be a higher-paying career ahead that also provides more time for your family. If you left home to go to the grocery store and found that it was closed, instead of complaining, can we thank God that we had legs to walk and a car to get us there?

Your life will begin to change the moment your mind and perspective change. The children of Israel did not enter into what God had for them (the Promised Land) due to their ingratitude and complaining. I do not want to miss out on all that God has for me because of a negative outlook. Unlike Israel, Paul maintained a perspective of faith and endurance, even though he suffered more than many of us ever will (see 2 Corinthians 12).

Paul also says it is “for a moment,” and the reason he says this is because he is comparing present suffering to eternity—and there is no comparison. In 2 Corinthians 4:14, he already spoke of resurrection, and now he ties suffering to eternal glory. It would help us greatly if we truly believed that nothing we are going through will last forever.

To all things there is a season (Ecclesiastes 3:1). If you are in a difficult marriage, don’t worry—there is no marriage in heaven. If you are currently living in poverty, paycheck to paycheck, and you have believed on Jesus, then there is hope—you will one day live in a place where streets are paved with gold. What will ignite abundance in your life is choosing gratitude by saying, “This too shall pass, and this is not forever!”

2 Corinthians 4:18—while we do not look at the things which are seen, but at the things which are not seen. For the things which are seen are temporary, but the things which are not seen are eternal.

The Greek word for *look* is *skopeō*, meaning to fix one’s eyes upon or direct one’s attention to. An important ingredient for not walking in defeat in the midst of pressure is choosing not to fix our attention on what is seen.

Romans 8:6 tells us that to be carnally minded is death, but to be spiritually minded is life and peace. To be carnal means to be governed by what everything around you is saying. Are you willing to forfeit your future simply because you choose to be dominated by what is happening in the natural realm?

Paul would have never arrived at his destiny or fulfilled all that God had for him if he had lived from a carnal perspective. God told Noah to build an ark, even though Noah had never seen rain—he had to refuse being ruled by the natural. Abraham and Sarah were past childbearing age, yet he could not focus on his body being “as good as dead” in order to receive the promise (Romans 4:17).

What are you facing today that seems impossible or challenging, where your thoughts are being shaped only by what you see in the natural? Jesus never measured truth by the natural realm over eternal truth or what the Father had spoken.

“The word *temporal* in Greek is *proskairos*, meaning seasonal or temporary.”