

THRU THE BIBLE EXPOSITION
2 Corinthians: God's Pattern For Victory Over Severe Ministry Opposition
Part VI: Relying On God's Power To Offset Human Weakness In Ministry
(2 Corinthians 4:1-15)

I. Introduction

- A. Doing God's will, the "ministry" of every Christian, takes far more power than mere human motivation, for believers are in a spiritual war zone with the angelic conflict, Ephesians 6:10-12.
- B. Paul knew this, and reflected on it in 2 Corinthians 4:1-15, so we view it for our application (as follows):

II. Relying On God's Power To Offset Human Weakness In Ministry, 2 Corinthians 4:1-15.

- A. The challenges Paul faced in performing God's assignments as an apostle were humanly overwhelming:
 - 1. The **physical** demands at times made him despair of life, 2 Cor. 1:8; Bible Know. Com., N. T., p. 562.
 - 2. However, the **spiritual** demands were also enormous and humanly very debilitating, *Ibid.*:
 - a. Paul candidly admitted in 2 Corinthians 7:5 that his ministry team once faced trouble "at every turn -- fightings without and fear within," 2 Corinthians 7:5 ESV.
 - b. Sometimes these troubles were instigated by the believers Paul disciplined (2 Corinthians 2:4) and at other times the troubles arose from "those he opposed," 2 Corinthians 2:5; *Ibid.*
- B. Even if such trials produced a great temptation for Paul's ministry team to "faint" (2 Cor. 4:1b KJV), to "give up" (the same verb appears in Luke 18:1 to mean "lose heart", *Ibid.*), Paul claimed he recalled that his team had received "mercy" from the Lord, 2 Corinthians 4:1.
- C. To explain this reception of "mercy," Paul described how God sustained his ministry team, making it effective regardless of their human weaknesses, 2 Corinthians 4:2-15 (as follows):
 - 1. For **their** part, Paul's team focused on ***maintaining personal TRANSPARENCY in living***, renouncing secret, shameful ways involving deception and distortions of the truth that they might present God's Word candidly, commending themselves to every man's ***conscience***, 2 Corinthians 4:2 NIV.
 - 2. Now, the truth of the Gospel was still said to be hidden, for Satan, the god of this world, had blinded the minds of the unsaved lest the light of the truth of Christ's Gospel illumine them, 2 Cor. 4:3-4.
 - 3. Yet, Paul and his team did not preach themselves as being important, but Christ Jesus the Lord, and themselves as servants of their listeners for the sake of Christ, 2 Corinthians 4:5.
 - 4. This ministry had resulted from God's having shone into Paul and his team to reveal His truth unto them that they might be saved and in turn minister that truth unto others, 2 Corinthians 4:6.
 - 5. What had then made Paul and his team effective was the ***stark CONTRAST between their WEAK HUMANITIES***, what Paul termed "earthen vessels," and the ***TREASURE of the Gospel truth they presented***, 2 Corinthians 4:7a KJV. That ***CONTRAST*** revealed ***God's excellency, not any greatness in the humanity of Paul and his team, that God's surpassing power might be honored***, 2 Cor. 4:7b.
 - 6. In 2 Corinthians 4:8-15, Paul illustrated **HOW** this vast **contrast** between his team's **human weaknesses** and the **manifestations of God's great power** was made **VISIBLE** to all (as follows):
 - a. Though "afflicted" in every way, they still were "not crushed", 2 Corinthians 4:8a ESV.
 - b. Though "perplexed" as weak mortals, they still were "not driven to despair," 2 Cor. 4:8b ESV.
 - c. Though "persecuted", they still were "not forsaken," 2 Corinthians 4:9a ESV.
 - d. Though "struck down", they still were "not destroyed," 2 Cor. 4:9b ESV. (Acts 14:19-20)
 - e. They thus always carried evidence in their humanity of the human dying experience of Christ, that the resurrection power of God in Jesus might be seen in their amazing survivals, 2 Cor. 4:10-11, 12.
 - f. Accordingly, Paul concluded that his team spoke the Gospel by faith in God's power to be effective, trusting that God Who had raised Jesus Christ from the dead would one day resurrect them and bring them with Paul's believing readers into His heavenly presence, 2 Corinthians 4:14-15.

Lesson: Paul's team faced humanly overwhelming trials that they might rely on God so that HE might REVEAL HIS SURPASSING POWER in them OPPOSITE their WEAKNESS to GOD'S GLORY. Thus, Paul RELIED on GOD to minister, and he served God with TRANSPARENCY before others.

Application: (1) May we face overwhelming trials by RELYING on GOD and staying TRANSPARENT! (2) That way, GOD'S WILL to CONTRAST HIS POWER with OUR WEAKNESS can be ACHIEVED!