

Kamloops Conference 2014

Bible Reading: II Corinthians 4

Ian Gibson June 2014

II Corinthians: Overview of Epistle & Breakdown of Chapter 4

1v1-11 Opening Salutation & Thanksgivings

1v12 - 7v16 Vindication of Paul's Actions

- **1v12 - 2v13** Personal explanation of Paul's movements; forgiveness of the offending brother enjoined, leaving for Macedonia
- **2v14 - 7v4** Character of the apostolic ministry concerning the risen Christ
 - **2v14 - 3v5** Savour of the ministry & sufficiency for the ministry
 - **3v6 - 4v6** Excelling glory & enlightenment of the ministry of the New Covenant
 - **3v6-18** Superior blessings of the ministry; contrast with the law / Moses
 - **4v1-6** Communication of the ministry by God & His servants
 - **4v1-5** Character of the servants communicating the ministry
 - **4v6** Sovereignty of God in communicating the ministry
 - **4v7 - 5v10** Vessels that God uses for the ministry
 - **4v7-9** Cost of the ministry to the servants
 - **4v10-15** Consecration of life to the ministry
 - **4v16-18** Continuance in the ministry in view of future eternal glory
 - **5v1-10** Confidence in the ministry in view of future resurrection
 - **5v11 - 7v4** Apostolic devotion to the ministry of reconciliation
- **7v5-16** Arrival in Macedonia; Paul's personal rejoicing

8v1 - 9v15 Liberality & Ministering to Saints

10v1 - 13v10 Vindication of Paul's Apostleship

13v11-14 Closing Salutation

II Corinthians 4:

v1-5: Character of the servants communicating the ministry of the New Covenant

v1: A spirit of steadfastness & continuance, “... ***we faint not***”, spiritual strengthening in view of the greatness & glory of “***this ministry***”, and the associated supply of divine mercy.

v2: Apostolic responsibilities linked with the ministry; a necessary moral integrity of their lives. There could be nothing secretive, shameful or deceitful in their handling of divine truth or God’s Word.

A spirit of transparency & honesty, “***by manifestation of the truth***”, lives wholly consistent with the truth, so that they would have moral power in their service before God & men.

v3: Apostolic identification with the message they preached, “***our gospel***”, indicating total commitment to the proclamation & defence of the truth of the gospel of the glory of Christ.

The truth of Christ’s glory & saving power “***is hid*** (veiled, JND) ***to them that are lost***”, i.e. the minds of individual lost sinners are veiled by the activity of the evil one (v4).

This is in contrast to the national veil God in judgment has placed upon Israel (II Cor 3v14-15).

v4: Satan, “***the god of this age***”, seeks to oppose & obstruct the communication of this glorious ministry of Christ, by blinding the minds of unbelieving men, acting to keep “***the radiancy of the glad tidings of the glory of the Christ***” (JND) from dawning in men’s minds & hearts.

v5: A spirit of selflessness, “***we preach not ourselves***” and a spirit of servitude, “***and ourselves your bondservants for Jesus sake***”, in this ministry declaring “***Christ Jesus***”, the exalted risen Man at God’s right hand, and Him “***as Lord***” (RV) of our lives.

v6: Sovereignty of God in communicating the ministry

OT picture – Divine sovereign intervention in the physical creation; the God of creation “***commanded the light to shine out of darkness***” (Gen 1v3), i.e. a miracle of divine power.

In new creation, the same God of salvation “***hath shined in our hearts, to give the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ***”, i.e. a miracle of divine grace, mercy & love. God actively moves to dispel the darkness of unbelief from the human heart, and to impart the very light of His glory, light that can never be extinguished, the knowledge of divine glory in the Person of Christ alone.

v7-9: Cost of the ministry to the servants

v7: The “***treasure***” of the ministry of the risen & glorified Christ has been committed to fragile “***earthen vessels***” that are easily broken, but we can reveal the surpassing excellency of divine power, in the measure that we humbly display Christ in our lives.

OT picture – Gideon & his men breaking their pitchers (Judges 7v15-23).

v8-9: A spirit of contentment, the enjoyment of the Lord’s presence with His servants, despite tremendous mental & physical trials, pressures, bodily sufferings & difficulties, that keep God’s servants broken & humble before Him. God is always faithful to meet every need, He never abandons His servants, and so we must serve in close fellowship with Him.

v10-15: Consecration of life to the ministry

v10-11: A spirit of continual martyrdom, “**Always bearing about in the body the dying** (putting to death, Newberry) **of Jesus**” (v10, JND), “**always delivered unto death for Jesus' sake**” (v11).

They lived always at the point of death, all for the cause of the lowly, despised & rejected Man “**Jesus**” who was here on this earth.

Our mortal flesh can manifest the “**life also of Jesus**” (v10-11). All the bodily sufferings & trials are ways in which we can be identified with the Lord Jesus, living out His selfless & sacrificial life today, as a continuation of the earthly ministry & service of the Man “**Jesus**” (see Gal 6v17, Phil 1v20).

OT picture – Israel bearing the bones of Joseph (see Gen 50v24-25, Ex 13v19, Josh 24v32).

V12: The process of physical dying in the servants, “**death worketh in us**”, resulted in “**life in you**”, i.e. spiritual life & blessing for others (v12), i.e. truly the selfless & sacrificial spirit of Christ.

v13: We are following the same pathway of faith as others who have been similarly afflicted, and so we follow their “**same spirit of faith**”, and we are emboldened to speak up for God & Christ, “**we also believe, and therefore speak**” (quoting from Ps 116v10).

In Psalm 116, the Psalmist is appreciating the faithfulness of God to His servants, that He is always gracious, kind & merciful, to deliver us from all affliction & difficulty, and even from danger of death.

v14: If speaking for Christ leads us to death, we have the certainty of bodily resurrection, “**Knowing**” that our Lord Jesus has been raised, and He is the Firstfruits in resurrection (see I Cor 15v23).

Our association with the risen Lord Jesus gives us the same certainty of future bodily resurrection; “**shall raise us also with Jesus**” (JND).

In resurrection, there will be a glorious presentation of the saints, “**and shall present [us] with you**”.

v15: Further expression of that selfless spirit of servitude; any present sufferings are for the benefit of fellow saints, and with the divine supply of “**abundant grace**”, can be for “**the glory of God**”.

v16-18: Continuance in the ministry in view of future eternal glory

v16: Again a spirit of steadfastness, “**For which cause we faint not ...**”.

Our physical bodies, the “**outward man**”, are perishable items, subject to decay & degeneration; but our spiritual “**inward man**” can be renewed daily, in view of the grand prospect of glory before us.

V17-18: We must put everything in relation to the present into an eternal context.

Obvious contrasts between present sufferings & future compensation (see also Rom 8v18):

- present “**light affliction**” versus future “**far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory**”
- “**but for a moment**” versus an “**eternal weight of glory**”
- “**the things which are seen are temporal**” versus “**the things which are not seen are eternal**”

The very essence of faith in Christ is not to be occupied with the visible & temporal things all around us, but to lift our gaze to a different horizon, to be occupied with the unseen, heavenly & eternal things linked with our Lord & Saviour (see also John 20v29, II Cor 3v18, Heb 2v9, Col 3v1-2, Heb 11v1).