

## “For We Preach Not Ourselves ...”

“... but Christ Jesus as Lord, and ourselves as your servants for Jesus’ sake. Seeing it is God that said Light shall shine out of darkness, who shined in our hearts, to give the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ” (2 Cor. 4:5-6).

These verses begin with “for,” an assignment of reason for what he is about to say. What he is about to say is that Jesus is Lord and that is because of the revelation of Jesus and his work in the gospel. Paul might refer to the gospel as “our gospel” (which he does in 4:3) but it is “our gospel” only in the sense he preached it: the central core of the gospel centered around Jesus and His Lordship — God had made Him Lord because of the things He suffered for man’s redemption, which coronation Peter announced on Pentecost (Acts 2:36).

Along with preaching Jesus as Lord, Paul preached himself (and all other apostles) as servants (slaves) for them to whom they ministered; doing this for Jesus’ sake: aiding, abetting the advancing of the cause of Christ at whatever cost might accrue to them personally. Just as in the world’s formation the darkness that hovered over the mass our world originally was, was broken by illuminating light when God said, “Let there be light” (Gen. 1:3): so now the darkness of ignorance and sin has been shattered by the message from God through His apostles: God’s glory can be seen by looking at Jesus — His work; His life and death; His resurrection; His exaltation, His Lordship. Philip said, “Shew us the father and it suffieth us” and Jesus responded, “Have I been so long time with you and dost thou not know me, Philip? he that hath seen me hath seen the Father” (Jn. 14:8-9). But, as the previous verses reveal, the “god of this world blinds the minds of the unbelieving that the light of the gospel of the glory of Christ who is the image of God should not dawn upon them” (2 Cor. 4:4).

“But we have this treasure in earthen vessels that the exceeding greatness of the power may be of God and not from ourselves ...” (2 Cor. 4:7). There are two significant truths to be learned from this verse. First (and the design and thrust of the passage), the great worth of the gospel (the treasure of which the apostle speaks) eclipsed the earthen vessels (the apostles and ministers who faithfully proclaim the message). The worth of the gospel and the frailty of man extol the mighty, majestic power of God!

There is also a second truth to be drawn from the statement, although not perhaps the intent of the writer, and that is that although the message originated with God and concerns His Son Jesus, the message is passed to man through human instrumentality. The angel could easily have explained to the Eunuch the significance of the Isaiah passage he was reading but an earthen vessel (Philip) was sent to tell him the passage’s significance and preach the gospel to him (Acts 8:26). God could have answered Saul’s questions and told him the requirements for him to be saved, but an earthen vessel (Ananias) was sent to him to do that (Acts 9:11-12; 22:10). The angel could have revealed to Cornelius the words he and his house needed to hear to be saved, but he was told to send to Joppa for an “earthen vessel” who would share to him that message (Acts 10:6; 11:13-14). So, when someone tells you that an angel has

appeared to them, telling them they are saved, you will do well to bear with them, especially when that supposed angel told them something different than what God's "earthen vessel" revealed on the pages of His Word: "Though we, or an angel from heaven, should preach unto you another gospel other than what we preached unto you, let him be anathema" (Gal. 1:8).

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