The People God Uses in Ministry

2 Corinthians 4:1-7

FBC's 50th Anniversary Service - 7-7-2024

Introduction:

**** Continue to Appreciate the Awesome Opportunity to be used in ministry by Christ!***

The People God uses in Ministry…

I. Are <u>Undeserving</u> of the Privilege (v.1a)

The People God uses in Ministry…

II. Are <u>Persistent</u> (they never give up) *(v.1b)*

The People God uses in Ministry…

III. Are <u>Sincere</u> with No Hidden Agendas (v.2)

The People God uses in Ministry…

IV. Are <u>Opposed</u> by Satanic Interference (v.3-4)

The People God uses in Ministry…

V. Are <u>Promoters</u> of Christ (not themselves) (v.5)

The People God uses in Ministry…

VI. Are <u>Successful</u> due to God's Sovereign Working (v.6)

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VII. Are <u>Weak Vessels</u> containing a Glorious Treasure (v.7)

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Galatians 6:9 - And let us not be weary in well doing: for in due season we shall reap, if we faint not.

Some encouragement for weary servants:

1. *Serving the Lord*…Returns the Greatest <u>Gratitude</u>

Hebrews 12:28 Wherefore we receiving a kingdom which cannot be moved, let us have grace, whereby we may serve God acceptably with reverence and godly fear:

2. *Serving the Lord*…Fulfills Life's Greatest <u>Purpose</u>

1 Cor. 15:58 Therefore, my beloved brethren, be ye stedfast, unmovable, always abounding in the work of the Lord, forasmuch as ye know that your labour is not in vain in the Lord.

3. *Serving the Lord*…Meets People's Greatest <u>Needs</u>

2 Corinthians 5:18 And all things are of God, who hath reconciled us to himself by Jesus Christ, and hath given to us the ministry of reconciliation;

2 Cor. 9:12 For the administration of this service not only supplieth the want of the saints, but is abundant also by many thanksgivings unto God;

4. *Serving the Lord*…Taps into the Greatest <u>Power</u>

Col. 1:29 Whereunto I also labour, striving according to his working, which worketh in me mightily.

5. *Serving the Lord*…Receives the Greatest <u>Honor</u>

John 12:26 If any man serve me, let him follow me; and where I am, there shall also my servant be: if any man serve me, him will my Father honour.

6. *Serving the Lord*…Pays the Greatest <u>Rewards</u>

1 Corinthians 3:14 If any man's work abide which he hath built thereupon, he shall receive a reward.

7. *Serving the Lord*…Fills the Heart with the Greatest <u>Joy</u>

1 Thessalonians 2:19 For what is our hope, or joy, or crown of rejoicing? Are not even ye in the presence of our Lord Jesus Christ at his coming?

John 15:11 These things have I spoken unto you, that my joy might remain in you, and that your joy might be full.

8. *Serving the Lord*…Brings God the Utmost <u>Pleasure</u>

2 Cor. 5:9 Wherefore we labour, that, whether present or absent, we may be accepted of him.

"Therefore seeing we have this ministry" – What ministry? The ministry of new covenant Gospel preaching (3:6); a Holy Spirit empowered ministry which gives life, liberty (3:17), and illumination to those who believe.

"Ministry" (v. 1 – *diakonian*) – service for Jesus Christ.

It's a privilege to serve Him!

We are saved to serve (Eph. 2:10).

**** Continue to Appreciate the Awesome Opportunity to be used in ministry by Christ!***

The People God uses in Ministry…

I. Are <u>Undeserving</u> of the Privilege (v.1)

Being a minister is the result of God's mercy. None of us deserves to have a ministry. Paul viewed himself as a minister by mercy

1 Timothy 1:12-13
And I thank Christ Jesus our Lord, who hath enabled me, for that he counted me faithful, putting me into the ministry;
Who was before a blasphemer, and a persecutor, and injurious: but I obtained mercy, because I did *it* ignorantly in unbelief.

The People God uses in Ministry…

II. Are <u>Persistent</u> (they never give up) *(v.1b)*

"We faint not" - lit. we do not give in to <u>bad</u> feelings; lose heart or quit. It is by God's mercy that the Christian minister keeps going through "thick and thin" (SEE: 4:8-9).

It is by God's mercy, that we do not lose courage and give in to defeat.

The ministry can be discouraging. It's discouraging when . . .

1) <u>Sin</u> grabs hold of God's people

2) People <u>defect</u> from church attendance or their ministry

3) The work is <u>slow</u> or <u>difficult</u>
(harvest is at times slow)

4) <u>Opposition and persecution</u> strikes out at the minister

Proverbs 20:6 Most men will proclaim every one his own goodness: but a faithful man who can find?

The People God uses in Ministry…

III. Are <u>Sincere</u> with No Hidden Agendas (v.2)

"Renounced" – to disown or do away with the shameful sins of our past.

"Hidden things of dishonesty" = secret shameful practices. Paul resolved to never again do something that would cause embarrassment if found out. He determined to never again engage in a hidden sin that would bring disgrace if discovered.

"Not walking in craftiness" - not living a life of all kinds of tricks. Someone who is crafty is someone who has all kinds of tricks up his sleeve.

"Craftiness" - *pan + ergon* – to <u>work all kinds</u> of practices with the goal of gaining a crowd.

Paul was not a man-pleaser. He didn't' fall into the trap of having a "seeker-friendly" ministry that employed all means available to suit all tastes or accommodate all preferences. He sought to glorify God.

"Nor handling the Word of God deceitfully" – Paul did not "bait" people with God's Word as the lure

Luring with bait is okay for fishing for fish, but <u>not</u> for fishing for men.

There are many hucksters, who in the name of Christianity misuse God's Word so as to deceive the unsuspecting.

ILLLUS: Harold Camping's twisting of Scripture to draw away disciples after himself.

Beware: Satan knows the Bible (Mt. 4:5) and he will take God's Word out of context so as to deceive.

"By manifestation of the truth" - Paul presented a <u>clear, open, easy to see</u> message of truth.

Beware of those whose message is communicated with vague, philosophical verbiage. Beware of those who seek to impress with their hundred dollar words or with their tear-jerker stories. Straightforward witnessing and preaching is vital to sincere ministry.

"Commending ourselves" – to introduce our message to people honestly so that it reaches the <u>conscience</u> (not merely the emotion or intellect).

God is watching all ministry; may we perform all as in His sight. Practice the presence of God in your ministry.

The People God uses in Ministry…

IV. Are <u>Opposed</u> by Satanic Interference (v.3-4)

v. 3

Any hiding of the Gospel would not be Paul's fault. And no one who preaches a clear message of Gospel truth can be blamed for some "not getting it." If people don't get it, it does not mean we alter our message to suit the tastes of the public. It simply means that people are blinded by our adversary.

"Hid" – veiled; the same word used in 3:13-16.

"Lost" - those who are in a state of spiritual ruin and doom. Those perishing souls who have never had the darkness of spiritual blindness removed.

Who are the lost? Answer: Those who can't see.

Why can't they see? SEE: v. 4

v. 4

"The god of this world" - The strong one of this present age. The word "world" (lit. "age" – *aion*) refers to that "floating mass of thoughts, opinions, maxims, speculations, hopes, impulses, aims, aspirations, current in the world at any time" (Trench, <u>Synonyms</u>, p. 217).

"Of them which believe not" – "The fault that leads to their destruction is <u>their own</u>" (Barrett, cited by Reinecker, p. 399).

"The image of God" – to see Christ is to see God; to remain blind so that you don't see Christ is to not see God.

He that hath seen me hath seen the Father" (Jn. 14:9).

"Blinded the minds" – People can have "eyesight" but not have "mind sight." To not know the glorious Gospel is to not "see the kingdom of God" (Jn. 3:3).

Until one believes on Christ, they remain spiritually blind.

All men prior to regeneration are blind as to ----

Their need
Their destiny
The love and grace of God
The urgency of salvation

--The Gospel is "<u>light</u>" - it is illumination or enlightenment regarding sin's penalty being paid in full by Christ at Calvary.

--The Gospel is "<u>glorious</u>" – in contrast to the Law which was fading glory (3:7-11)

--The Gospel is "Christ's Gospel" – He gave it and it is about Him

The People God uses in Ministry…

V. Are <u>Promoters</u> of Christ (not themselves) (v.5)

Paul's preaching had absolutely nothing to do with self-promotion or self-advancement, but it had everything to do with the promotion of the Messiah, Yeshua, the sovereign Master of the Universe.**"**

"Servants" - (*douloi*) slaves (for the cause of Christ)

The People God uses in Ministry…

VI. Are <u>Successful</u> due to God's Sovereign Working (v.6)

The God of creation is the God of the new creation.

The same God who created light (Gen. 1:3) is the One who illuminates our hearts to God's glory through Christ.

Note: We know God's glory through Christ and through Christ alone!

The People God uses in Ministry…

VII. Are <u>Weak Vessels</u> containing a Glorious Treasure (v.7)

"Treasure" – that which is valuable and expensive

"This treasure" - the treasure is the Gospel ministry
This treasure is the "light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ" (i.e. the Gospel message – cp. 4:3).

"Earthen vessels" = clay containers

"Earthen" - made of clay, earthenware, pottery. Corinthian pottery was well known in the ancient world ((Strabo, Geography, 8:6, 23; Martin; ABD, 1:1136); Paul may have been referring to the small pottery lamps which were cheap and fragile or he may have referred to earthenware vases or urns. The point seems to be that the valuable treasure is contained in weak, fragile, and valueless containers (Hughes; SB, 3:516; NW, 2, ii:436:38; Thrall; Furnish). The ending of the world signifies material out of which something was made ((MH, 359). (Reinecker, p. 399)

“Earthen vessels” - Clay jars (our fragile human bodies).

God puts a glorious treasure inside of a weak container and pours out that treasure into the lives of others, so that in the end it is the treasure that is glorified and not the vessel.

The extraordinary power is from God and not our flesh.

Work performed in the flesh will wear us down to the bone. But work done by His power will never diminish.

To be effective in ministry, we must ask God for His power and strength everyday. As Paul said: “I can do all things through Christ which strengtheneth me.”

God is not desperately "looking for millionaires or famous athletes or entertainers or statesmen" as if He needed their money, fame, fortune, or talent to get His work done!

The Lord specializes in converting simple folk, common people, the under-privileged, the down-and-outers, the project kids, and other looked-down-upon groups.

Some might say: "That's because they are the only ones dumb enough to believe the Bible."

No, actually, they are the only ones humble enough to believe!

Jesus said, *"I thank Thee, O Father, Lord of heaven and earth, that thou didst hide these things from the wise and understanding, and didst reveal them unto babes."* (Mt. 11:25).

God delights in taking a Sarah who could not bear children and making her the mother of one of the largest races on earth (Gen. 18:14, 32:12)

God delights in taking a humble slave like Joseph and elevating him second to Pharaoh over Egypt (Gen. 41:38-44).

God delights in enlisting 300 soldiers of Gideon to fight and conquer 120,000 Mideanites (Jud. 7:2, 7, 12; 8:10) (NOTE: 400 to 1 odds).

God delights in utilizing a Samson to destroy 1,000 wicked Philistines with a jawbone of a donkey (Jud. 15:16).

God delights in using a red-headed, freckle-faced, baby-faced (I Sam. 17:42) shepherd boy named David to wipe out a 9'9" fully armored Philistine named Goliath (I Sam. 17).

God delights in providing adequate food for a poor widow of Zarephath who only had a few drops of oil and a handful of grain (I Ki. 17:9ff).

God delights in using three Hebrew youths to show up King Nebuchadnezzar of Babylon (Dan. 3).

God delights in using as His mouthpiece a John the Baptist, "who had no formal education, no training in a trade or profession, no money, no military rank, no political position, no social pedigree, no impressive appearance (or diet!)" (MacArthur, p. 51). Yet Jesus said, *"Truly I say to you, among those born of women there has not arisen anyone greater than John the Baptist"* (Mt. 11:11).

God delights in taking a boy's lunch consisting of two sardines and five bite-size biscuits to feed 5,000 men besides women and children (Mt. 14:17-19).

"Little is much when God is in it." -- Conversely, much is little, if God is not in it!

God delights in taking unlearned, ignorant, dumb fishermen from Galilee and turning them into the most bold and influential mortals ever to spread the Gospel message (Acts 4:13).

“Ministry takes place when divine resources flow through human channels to the glory of God” (Jack Palmer).

Conclusion: v.15 – Christian ministry is OTHERS Focused
Christian ministry is For the GLORY of God