

Preached on 9/10/23 at GBC - Ruston

"The Glory Of God, Pt.2"

II Cor.4:2

As I sought to show you in the last message, it is **ABSOLUTELY IMPERATIVE** that the redeemed children of God have an assurance of the "*hope that is in them.*" Paul told the saints at Rome – "*Now the God of hope fill you with all joy and peace in believing, that ye may abound in hope, through the power of the Holy Ghost.*" (Rom.15:13) **Paul stated it like this in our text:** "*Therefore seeing we have this ministry, as we have received mercy, we faint not.*" Paul's ministry, as well as the "*ministry*" of all God's elect is the **SAME MINISTRY** or **MESSAGE**. Paul called it "*the ministry of reconciliation*" – "*And all things [are] of God, who hath reconciled us to himself by Jesus Christ, and HATH GIVEN TO US the ministry of reconciliation; To wit, that God was in Christ, reconciling the world unto himself, not imputing their trespasses unto them; and hath committed unto us the word of reconciliation.*" (II Cor.5:18,19) Many try to say that by these words Paul was talking about the Apostle's responsibility, or God's preachers' responsibility in every generation to declare the Gospel, implying that he was not speaking of every individual redeemed sinner's responsibility as a witness of God's Gospel. But the Scriptures make it clear who the "**US**" **ARE** of whom Paul declares God "**HATH GIVEN TO US the ministry of reconciliation**" – **Turn over to Eph.4:11-16**. Those called as God's "*ambassadors*" of this "*ministry of reconciliation*", must like Paul grow in grace and knowledge of the truth to the point they "*faint not*", and with the same God-given faith Paul was given declare – "*For the which cause I also suffer these things: nevertheless I am not ashamed: FOR I KNOW WHOM I HAVE BELIEVED, and AM PERSUADED that he is able to keep that which I have committed unto him against that day.*" (II Tim.1:12) If you aren't **FULLY PERSUADED BY GOD** of the reality that you possess justification and eternal life, you are not equipped to "*faint not*", and the result is you can't be ready to give an answer to every man that asks you a reason of the hope that is in you. Like I said last time: **ALL OF US NEED TO BE WHERE PAUL WAS AT IN THE LIFE OF FAITH** – "*we faint not.*"

Notice his next words – "***But have renounced the hidden things of dishonesty, 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.***" Think about the implications of what Paul was moved to write. If he declares we "*have renounced the hidden things of dishonesty, not walking in craftiness, no handling the word of God deceitfully*", **ISN'T THAT AN ADMISSION AND CONFESSION** that before he met Christ on the road to Damascus, just like the false preachers he was warning these Corinthian believers about, **HE WAS GUILTY OF THE SAME EXACT THINGS?** That being the case, the Holy Spirit by the Apostle Paul's word shows us the manner and method of all those who "**FAINT NOT.**"

FIRST OF ALL: Paul renounced - "*the hidden things of dishonesty.*" A literal translation of "*the hidden things of dishonesty*" is 'hidden things of shame or concealment'. This is directed at the "*false apostles*", those Paul wrote this of in **II Cor.11:3,4** – "*But I fear, lest by any means, as the serpent beguiled Eve through his subtilty, so your minds should be corrupted from the simplicity that is in Christ. For if he that cometh preacheth another Jesus, whom we have not preached, or [if] ye receive another spirit, which ye have not received, or another gospel, which ye have not*

accepted, ye might well bear with [him].” In Vss.13-15 he writes of them – “For such [are] false apostles, deceitful workers, transforming themselves into the apostles of Christ. And no marvel; for Satan himself is transformed into an angel of light. Therefore [it is] no great thing if his ministers also be transformed as the ministers of righteousness; whose end shall be according to their works.” Several commentators think these “hidden things of dishonesty” refer to the Law, which in a way I can see that, seeing that Paul had formerly THOUGHT and TAUGHT salvation by one’s law keeping. Other commentators seem to think the expression means the vain show of these false teachers by which they tried to elevate themselves before these Corinthians. **I think** the expression is referring to all the disguises these false apostles used to adulterate the pure beauty and simplicity of the Gospel of salvation through and by Christ’s righteousness imputed ALONE. I like what John Calvin wrote in his commentary on this phrase – “For as chaste and virtuous women, satisfied with the gracefulness of natural beauty, do not resort to artificial adornings, while harlots never think themselves sufficiently adorned, unless they have corrupted nature, so Paul glories in having set forth **the pure gospel**, while others set forth one that was **disguised, and covered over with unseemly additions.**” Paul dogmatically declares of HIMSELF, and all God’s redeemed – “But **HAVE RENOUNCED** the hidden things of dishonesty.” The Greek word translated “have renounced” means ‘to forbid or to give up’. It’s the **ONLY TIME** it is used in the NT. That’s exactly what Paul and all God’s elect **FORBID** or **GIVE UP** – “But what things were gain to me, those I counted loss for Christ. Yea doubtless, and I count all things [but] loss for the excellency of the knowledge of Christ Jesus my Lord: for whom I have suffered the loss of all things, and do count them [but] dung, that I may win Christ, And be found in him, not having mine own righteousness, which is of the law, but that which is through the faith of Christ, the righteousness which is of God by faith: That I may know him, and the power of his resurrection, and the fellowship of his sufferings, being made conformable unto his death; If by any means I might attain unto the resurrection of the dead.”(Phil.3:7-11); “But after that the kindness and love of God our Saviour toward man appeared, **Not by works of righteousness which we have done, but according to his mercy he saved us, by the washing of regeneration, and renewing of the Holy Ghost; Which he shed on us abundantly through Jesus Christ our Saviour; That being justified by his grace, we should be made heirs according to the hope of eternal life.**”(Tit.3:4-7)

SECONDLY, Paul was no longer “walking in craftiness.” The Greek word translated “craftiness” means ‘cunning’ or ‘a **SPECIOUS** and false wisdom’. I had to look up the meaning of ‘SPECIOUS’, so if you don’t know the meaning, here it is – “having a false look of truth or genuineness’. Listen to Paul’s use of the **SAME WORD** – “For the wisdom of this world is foolishness with God. For it is written, He taketh the wise in their own **craftiness.**”(I Cor.3:19); “But I fear, lest by any means, as the serpent beguiled Eve through his **subtilty**, so your minds should be corrupted from the simplicity that is in Christ.”(II Cor.11:3); “That we [henceforth] be no more children, tossed to and fro, and carried about with every wind of doctrine, by the sleight of men, [and] cunning **craftiness**, whereby they lie in wait to deceive.”(Eph.4:14) This “craftiness” that Paul (**Saul Of Tarsus**) walked in **BEFORE** regeneration and conversion had to do with the **DOCTRINE** or **TEACHING** he set forth concerning salvation – “Whosoever transgresseth, and abideth not in the doctrine of Christ, hath not God. He that abideth in the doctrine of Christ, he hath both the Father and the Son. If there come any unto you, and bring not this doctrine, receive him not into [your] house, neither bid him God speed: For he that biddeth him God speed is partaker of his evil deeds.”(II Jn.9-11) Listen to Paul’s emphatic words to those at Galatia – “But though we, or an angel from heaven, preach any other gospel unto you than that which we have

preached unto you, let him be accursed. As we said before, so say I now again, If any [man] preach any other gospel unto you than that ye have received, let him be accursed.”(Gal.1:8,9) No matter how eloquent in speech, impressive in knowledge and understanding, **OR UPRIGHT IN THEIR CHARACTER AND CONDUCT**, if they do not declare the “*simplicity*” which is found in salvation by Christ’s accomplished death alone, they are “*walking in craftiness*”, seeking to impress men and women with their words and their ways.

THIRDLY, Paul was “*not handling the word of God deceitfully.*” The original word translated “*handling*” means ‘to ensnare or to corrupt’, and it is the **SAME WORD** translated “**DECEITFULLY**” in this phrase. What Paul is plainly declaring is that he and all God’s children **DO NOT** corrupt the word of God with human doctrines or mix and blend it with philosophy. They simply and dogmatically preached Christ and Him crucified – “*For I determined not to know any thing among you, save Jesus Christ, and him crucified. And I was with you in weakness, and in fear, and in much trembling. And my speech and my preaching [was] not with enticing words of man’s wisdom, but in demonstration of the Spirit and of power: That your faith should not stand in the wisdom of men, but in the power of God.”(I Cor.2:2-5)* According to Paul’s own words concerning his preaching, he didn’t conceal or ever hold back anything that was profitable to the elect of God – “*Serving the Lord with all humility of mind, and with many tears, and temptations, which befell me by the lying in wait of the Jews: [And] how I kept back nothing that was profitable [unto you], but have shewed you, and have taught you publickly, and from house to house, Testifying both to the Jews, and also to the Greeks, repentance toward God, and faith toward our Lord Jesus Christ.”(Acts 20:19-21)* Paul told the young preacher Timothy – “**PREACH THE WORD**; be instant in season, out of season; reprove, rebuke, exhort with all longsuffering and doctrine.”(II Tim.4:2) **ONE MORE** – “*But God forbid that I should glory, save in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ, by whom the world is crucified unto me, and I unto the world. For in Christ Jesus neither circumcision availeth any thing, nor uncircumcision, but a new creature. And as many as walk according to this rule, peace [be] on them, and mercy, and upon the Israel of God.”(Gal.6:14-16)* Those false teacher **COULD NOT** and **WOULD NOT** “*preach Christ.*”

FOURTHLY, Paul’s method and manner of preaching the Gospel was “*by manifestation of the truth commending ourselves to every man’s conscience in the sight of God.*” The **THREE PREVIOUS** statements concerned things Paul and all God’s redeemed **NO LONGER** did when it came to their work as “*ambassadors for Christ*” in their testimony before men. In this part of the verse we see the **POSITIVE SIDE** of what the grace of God moves His people to honestly set forth. Those truly sent of God to preach the Gospel do just that – they preach the **TRUTH**. The original word translated “*manifestation*” means ‘to make manifest or visible or known what has been hidden or unknown’. We can preach the Gospel with sincerity and simplicity to every person who can hear us with their **PHYSICAL EARS**, but we **CAN NOT** accomplish this work of “*manifestation*”. This is the work of God the Holy Spirit **ALONE**. **Listen to Paul** – “*Whereof I am made a minister, according to the dispensation of God which is given to me for you, to fulfil the word of God; [Even] the mystery which hath been hid from ages and from generations, but now **IS MADE MANIFEST** to his saints: To whom God would make known what [is] the riches of the glory of this mystery among the Gentiles; which is Christ in you, the hope of glory.”(Col.1:25-27)* The false apostles could not make visible or reveal what was previously hidden by their words or their methods, because that pointed sinners to what was a false hope. We as God’s children **CAN’T MAKE** men and women see the Gospel, but we **CAN** and we **MUST**

with simplicity preach out the **ONLY RIGHTEOUSNESS** by which God is just to justify the ungodly to all who will listen, presenting Christ and His righteousness alone before their consciences, and **LEAVE IT THERE**. I like what John Gill wrote in his commentary concerning Paul's responsibility and ours – "They with all plainness and evidence clearly preached the truth as it is in Jesus, presenting it to, and pressing it upon the consciences of men; where they left it, and to which they could appeal; and all this they did, in the sight and presence of the omniscient God, to whom they knew they must give an account of themselves and their ministry." Here's a great illustration of doing exactly what Paul declared to those at Corinth by these words – "*Then Paul stood in the midst of Mars' hill, and said, [Ye] men of Athens, I perceive that in all things ye are too superstitious. For as I passed by, and beheld your devotions, I found an altar with this inscription, TO THE UNKNOWN GOD. Whom therefore ye ignorantly worship, him declare I unto you.*"(Acts 17:22,23) Turn over to **Acts 24:10-25**. This is **HOW** you know whether or not the man who stands before you and preaches is truly called and sent of God – **DOES HE PREACH FAITHFULLY AND DOGMATICALLY CONCERNING SIN, RIGHTEOUSNESS, AND JUDGEMENT TO COME?** If he **DOES NOT**, he is to be avoided and marked. But if **HE DOES**, he is to be listened to and followed, trusting that the message of the Gospel will call all God's elect to true faith and true repentance in God's appointed time and according to His sovereign will. I love this verse – "*Now when they saw the boldness of Peter and John, and perceived that they were unlearned and ignorant men, they marvelled; and they took knowledge of them, that they had been with Jesus.*"(Acts 4:13) Their **GOSPEL MESSAGE** commended them to every man's understanding in the sight of God, and **OUR MESSAGE SHOULD AS WELL**.

We'll stop there and pick up with vs.3 next time, Lord willing.