

The Task To Which We Are Called

2 CORINTHIANS 4:1-10

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INTRODUCTION

There is little or no doubt that we are living in troubled times.

A time when the rights of the common man is trampled day by day!

A time when men call wrong right and right wrong!

We are living in a time when even the Church has begun to take its cue for how it is to live and what it should be doing from the world. We are living in a time when the world is simply caving into what it sees to world do and we say that the times have changes and we ae living in a different era.

The Bible, the Word of God has for some become a book of suggestions rather that godly commands on how we should live and what we as the Church ought to be doing.

As the Church, we complain and express our dismay about the things we see happening around us, as if the problem belongs to the other fellows in our society and excludes us.

Well, we need to understand that it is not the other fellow's problems, it is our problem because God has called us out of the world to be change agents in the realm where He has placed us. We have an obligation as Christians to seek to correct the ungodly things that meet at our doorsteps time and again.

A. The text

This letter, as noted from the text as stated, was written by St. Paul to a Church that he knew, and we know from history was made up of some of the most notorious of individuals from various walks of life.

Historians tell us that religion played a part in the immoral and corrupt condition that existed in Corinth. Certainly not Christian culture, but fertility cults that glorified sexual perversion and magic as a part of their worship.

In the city of Corinth was the temple of Aphrodite, the goddess of love at one time had 1,000 sacred prostitutes within its confines. As a matter of fact, to be told that one lived like a Corinthian denoted loose and immoral conduct.

The apostle was not writing to the holy city, he was not writing to a people whose morals were a picture of godliness. He was writing to a body of believers who knew what it meant to be corrupt to the core. But also to a body of believers who knew what a difference coming to know Jesus as their Lord and Saviour has made in their lives and should be willing to tell those who yet followed the cults and idols, and to those who were still being influenced by the corrupt teachings of those passing through Corinth seeking to corrupt the gospel of Jesus Christ.

To a great extent our society is becoming more and more like the situation we see in the text today. Certainly we don't see temples dedicated to idols, we don't have widespread harems of sacred prostitutes, but more and more men have developed idols of their own; we see a society where the physical assets of individuals are the most important things in their lives. We see a society where it seems that man is overcome with the notion that everything that is good and fulfilling in life has its impetus in or with sexual activity.

With these things in front of us we as Christians might wonder 'what is our role in the whole scheme of things', just what are we supposed to do about it? Paul, in the text before us tells the Corinthian Christian what is expected of them in the Church and what is expected of them in their realm of influence.

As we consider "The Task to Which We are Called", there are three things that I hope to focus upon in this message, the first is that we as a Church must recognize our calling.

I. RECOGNIZING OUR CALL VS 1-2

The first verse of our text Paul says, *“Therefore, since we have this ministry, as we have received mercy, we do not lose heart. ² But we have renounced the hidden things of shame, 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.”*

There are two points that we as Christians may gather from these two verses. First, we have an assigned ministry that we are expected to carry out as followers of Jesus Christ. The Corinthian Christians were not called out and granted forgiveness of their sins that they may continue living in sin and doing their own thing.

They were not shown the mercy of God that they might remain an island where only the saved existed, but rather, they were granted mercy and forgiveness of sins that they might share the good news of the gospel with those around them who had not seen the light of Jesus Christ.

We as the Church have an assigned ministry, that is, we are called out to tell and to show those around us how they are to walk before the Lord, in holiness and righteousness! We can’t do that by caving in and following the ways of the world.

We can’t do that if we compromise the gospel of Jesus Christ in the way we live among each other and the way live before those of the world.

Most of us here are here because we were a part of a body that in many ways forgot who they were called to be or how they ought to be; we were a part of a body that believed that the Word of God needs to be changed in order that it might conform to the mores of society.

We have to remember that we come here to join together in fellowship through corporate worship that we might be strengthened by each other and by the presence of God through His Holy Spirit that we might reach out beyond the four walls of Christ’s Church.

I don’t know about your Bibles, but mine tells me that the Word of God is eternal; it tells me that the Word of God is good for all times and all situations in life. It tells me that, though heaven and earth shall pass away, His Word shall never pass away. We as the Church have an assigned ministry; we have an obligation to tell the world around us that the Word of God is eternal and does not change!

And certainly, we can’t carry the ministry to which we are called by coming to God’s house on Sunday mornings and various time during the week and go home satisfied that we have worshipped God and thereby have fulfilled our obligations to Him.

We need to tell the world that there is a better way and that that way in in and through Jesus the Christ who died on the cross of Calvary for their sins!

Secondly, Paul tells them that there is a requirement on their part that if they are going to be successful in reaching the lost there are thing that they must do. They must renounce the shameful things that they see happening all around them. But more importantly, they must, in their speech and in their walk before men, renounce the shameful things that they once did. Their walk before the Lord as well as the unsaved must be such that men will see Christ in them. They must not use their so called salvation as a cloak to do wrong or to deceive men. It is a sad thing when the Church uses the Word of God in order that it can fleece all men for the good of a few.

II. RECOGNIZING THE SOURCE OF THE PROBLEM VS 3-4

The second thing that I hope we will see in this message is that as the Church we might recognize the source of the problem that exists within the society in which we are called to carry out the ministry.

In the 3rd and 4th verses Paul writes, *“But even if our gospel is veiled, it is veiled to those who are perishing, ⁴ whose minds the god of this age has blinded, who do not believe, lest the light of the gospel of the glory of Christ, who is the image of God, should shine on them.”*

First of all, the reason why many will not come, the many who will not yield their lives to God lies in the fact that they cannot understand the gospel. In the book of Acts, chapter 8, Luke tells us that on one occasion Phillip, led by the Holy Spirit encountered an Ethiopian Eunuch reading from Isaiah, who did not understand what the prophet was saying. He read it but did not understand what it meant. Luke doesn’t say that he didn’t have the Word, nor that he could not read, but that he didn’t understand what he was reading. Phillip climbing onto the chariot interpreted, expounded and explained what the prophet Isaiah was saying. Not only did the man understand what he read but was so moved by it that he demanded that he be baptized. He heard and understood and became a member of Christ’s Church, because there was one there to help him understand what the Word of God was saying to him.

How many here today work with or are associated with individual that you know are living unholy or ungodly lives because they can’t understand what the Word of God is saying to them?

Note that I didn’t say those who are drunks or adulterous or evil livers, but those who are unsaved! What are you doing about it; what do you talk to them about? They are blind and cannot understand what the word is saying to them because Satan has blinded them. Their every endeavor is to enjoy the things of the world because for them these things bring them joy.

The sadness of that is the fact that the joy they experience only last for a little while. One day they must face the reality of death, then what. My parents, two of my sons, my father and mother-in-law lived here on this earth for a while but one day their names were called and the joys they had in this life are no more. I am so grateful that they knew the Lord for their joys are now fulfilled and everlasting. My point is simply this, there are a lot of people with whom we associate daily who can't understand what the Word is saying to them because Satan, through the things of this world, has blinded their spiritual eyes that they can't see and understand what the Word means to them.

It is Satan's desire that man not see the light of Christ and receive Him in his heart. He will use every means available to him that will help him win his fight against God. As I stated earlier, in a sense the Church, or rather those who say they are the church, contributes greatly to the work of Satan. There are those who preach a prosperity message saying that it is God's intention that all might be rich. If we are observant we will realize that the only ones getting the wealth are the ones preaching the idea of earthly riches.

I agree that that is God's intention for His children to experience great wealth, but I disagree that it is in the wealth that the world offers. Rather it is the fact that Jesus has paid the price for my transgressions, He has made a way for my eternal destination.

Because of that I am rich beyond measure; the wealth He has given me is far beyond all that I could ever achieve in this life. These things Satan uses to keep men from seeing the light of Christ enabling them to yield to Christ's bidding to come to Him that they might find true riches and have eternal life.

III. RECOGNIZING THE SOURCE OF OUR MESSAGE AND STRENGTH VS 5-10

The third thing that I hope that we might reap from this message is that we might recognize the source of our message and our strength. Paul writes in the 5th and 6th verses, *"For we do not preach ourselves, but Christ Jesus the Lord, and ourselves your bondservants for Jesus' sake. ⁶ For it is the God who commanded light to shine out of darkness, who has shone in our hearts to give the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ."*

There are times when we become discouraged as we witness to those around us and we see no apparent results. We think that all hope is lost as we try to witness to family members and fear that our loved ones will be lost as we see them continue in their old ways. We must remember, however, that we are merely agents trying to sell a lost society the greatest insurance policy that has been and will ever be offered. It is one that benefits the insured rather than the beneficiary. The one who enforces it and insures it is the Lord Himself.

He is the one who brings conviction on the hearts of men. We sow the seed, but we are not the ones who causes it to germinate, we are not the ones who cause it to grow! It is God who works in His time and causes the Word to take root in the hearts of men. We have the responsibility to sow; we have to be determined no matter how many or how few we may see yielding to our proclamation of the gospel message. Be determined when men laugh in your face, be determined when no one appears to hear the message you preach and let God bring about the results that He deems appropriate.

The other thing that we must remember it that we must be consistent and constant in our efforts to reach the lost. Paul writes in the 6th-9th verses, *"For it is the God who commanded light to shine out of darkness, who has shone in our hearts to give the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ. ⁷ But we have this treasure in earthen vessels, that the excellence of the power may be of God and not of us. ⁸ We are hard-pressed on every side, yet not crushed; we are perplexed, but not in despair; ⁹ persecuted, but not forsaken; struck down, but not destroyed."*

Paul in no way gives the impression that the task before them will be an easy one. He uses his own experiences to point out that it is an arduous one, but one that has to be done and must be done consistently and constantly. They are not to be dismayed, but must remain steadfast in their efforts.

The consistency is more important than constancy. You see we can be constant and not consistent in the way we represent the Word of God. Consistency deals with the way we walk before the Lord. We have to be Christ like in all that we do. In other words, we can't carry water one hand and fire the other; we can't live like Christ one day and Satan the next, we must be like Christ in every situation we find ourselves in daily. We can't lay down our religion in order to combat the evils we encounter in the world.

Then finally Paul reminds them of the source of their strength. In the 10th verse he writes, *"Always carrying about in the body the dying of the Lord Jesus, that the life of Jesus also may be manifested in our body."*

Their strength is in Jesus if He is manifested in them. It is the Spirit of Christ that enables them to persist; it is the Spirit of Jesus that gives them the stamina they need to continue the fight that is before them as they witness to those who don't even want to hear the Word of the Lord. It is the Spirit of Jesus that encourages them when it seems that all hope is lost! It is the Spirit of Jesus that carries them when they become weary in the battle! It is the Spirit of Jesus that is their battle axe when the forces of Satan stands against them!

If Jesus is in them then that will make the battle become easier.

CONCLUSION

- A. WE HAVE THE MESSAGE
- B. WE HAVE THE AUTHORITY TO GO TO THEM
- C. WE HAVE AN OBLIGATION TO GO TO THEM
- D. THEY WON'T KNOW THE WAY UNLESS WE TELL THEM

The task to which we are called is to represent Christ Jesus before a fallen and degenerate world.

- E. ARE YOU WILLING TO STEP OUT ON THE WORD AND PROMISES OF GOD TO REACH NORTH AMERICA WITH THE GOSPEL OF JESUS CHRIST?