

No Quitting!
2 Corinthians 4:1-2
Part 1

We are here in order to continue Christ's mission in this world as an extension of His life. In other words, we are here in order to seek and to save that which is lost and to build up His church according to His power, which mightily works within us. This is why we are here.

Unfortunately, as we seek to carry out this mission and to carry it out in a Christ-honoring way there will be many challenges, which if we are not careful could eventually overwhelm us and perhaps could even lead us to simply quit thus abandoning the front lines in order to take a nice, cushy spot in the rear while we pursue a life of rest and relaxation.

So let me ask you a question. Is this kind of response acceptable for those who have been chosen by God to be an extension of His Son's ministry in this world? God forbid that this would be our response.

And this brings us back to our study of **2 Corinthians**. And where are we exactly within this study? We are presently in the midst of a fairly lengthy defense by Paul of his apostleship, most likely precipitated by charges against him that when he confronted the Corinthians with their moral failures in the so-called "severe letter," a letter we have talked about, he did so in a way that some within Corinth deemed improper. In other words, they felt he was too bold.

Paul in response to this charge has been defending his boldness. He began his defense in **2 Corinthians 2:12** and continued his defense all the way up to **2 Corinthians 3:18**, which is the verse that we left off with three weeks ago.

In this section of verses Paul has been laying down a foundation of biblical and theological truths that he hoped would explain to his readers why he had been so bold in proclaiming and defending the message of the new covenant, which is the gospel of Christ.

Paul will now in **2 Corinthians 4:1-18** highlight for his readers his ongoing commitment to that very thing at the very beginning of this passage when he

declared in **2 Corinthians 4:1**, “**We do not lose heart,**” and then once again near the end of the chapter in **2 Corinthians 4:16** when he repeated that very same declaration.

Paul was not a quitter when it came to boldly proclaiming and defending the message of the new covenant and he was certainly not about to lose heart no matter what might be thrown at him.

And may this also be true for us as fellow servants of the new covenant. May we also like Paul, when push comes to shove, not be found to be quitters but rather let us by the grace of God be unrelenting in prosecuting the mission that has been given us, and may God use this message this morning to help us to do exactly that.

So, what is the question that we will be seeking to answer as we begin to examine this passage this morning? What things, according to 2 Corinthians 4:1-18, did Paul endure while boldly proclaiming and defending the message of the new covenant that manifested his no-quit attitude? This is the question that we will be seeking to answer. So, what is the first thing?

The first thing that Paul endured that manifested his no-quit attitude was rejection (2 Corinthians 4:1-6). We see this in **2 Corinthians 4:1-6**.

So let me now read these verses for you. **“Therefore, since we have this ministry, as we received mercy, we do not lose heart, but we have renounced the things hidden because of shame, not walking in craftiness or adulterating the word of God, but by the manifestation of truth commending ourselves to every man’s conscience in the sight of God. (3) And even if our gospel is veiled, it is veiled to those who are perishing, (4) in whose case the god of this world has blinded the minds of the unbelieving so that they might not see the light of the gospel of the glory of Christ, who is the image of God. (5) For we do not preach ourselves but Christ Jesus as Lord, and ourselves as your bond-servants for Jesus sake. (6) For God, who said, ‘Light shall shine out of darkness,’ is the One who has shone in our hearts to give the Light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Christ.”**

So where in these verses do we see Paul having to endure rejection? We see Paul alluding to this rejection in **2 Corinthians 4:3-4** when he said, **“And**

even if our gospel is veiled, it is veiled to those who are perishing, (4) in whose case the god of this world has blinded the minds of the unbelieving so that they might not see the light of the gospel of the glory of Christ, who is the image of God.”

Clearly within these verses we can easily see that even though Paul, as a servant of the new covenant, was speaking, or in other words was proclaiming the gospel of Christ, there were many people who were rejecting that message based on **2 Corinthians 4:3-4**. And this rejection on the part of so many was something that Paul certainly had to endure and it was something he did endure, day after day, week after week, month after month, and year after year and yet he did not lose heart, or in other words he did not quit.

So now let us go back and look more carefully at these verses as we consider this “rejection” that Paul endured that manifested his “no-quit” attitude. And I will warn you right now that we will not be able to completely examine all six verses. In fact, this morning we will only be able to examine the first two verses, but I would hope that as we do this that we might find ourselves being personally encouraged on many different fronts in respect to the mission that God has given us of seeking and saving that which is lost and building up His church according to His power that mightily works within us.

So let us begin with **verse 1** and how does it begin? It begins with these words, **“Therefore, since we have this ministry.”** So, what is this ministry that Paul is referring too?

When Paul referred to “this ministry” that they had received, he was referring to the ministry of the new covenant that he had been speaking about throughout 2 Corinthians 3.

In speaking about this new covenant ministry, Paul described the greater glory of the new covenant ministry in **2 Corinthians 3:7-11** and the surpassing effects of the new covenant ministry in **2 Corinthians 3:12-18**. It is **“this ministry,”** this new covenant ministry with its greater glory and surpassing effect, that Paul is telling us that they had received in **2 Corinthians 4:1**.

So, what exactly according to Paul in **2 Corinthians 3** is the greater glory and surpassing effect of the new covenant ministry over and against the ministry of Moses under the old covenant? The ministry of Moses under the old covenant could not lift the veil of hard-heartedness. The ministry of Moses under the old covenant could not provide a new heart nor could it begin the process of transformation that will ultimately culminate in us being transformed into the very image of Christ when we stand before Him in glory. But the ministry of the new covenant, unleashing the power of the Holy Spirit through faith in Christ and His gospel, certainly can do these things.

And it is this ministry that Paul and his associates had been given, and it is this same ministry that we ourselves have been given when we by faith embraced Christ as our Lord and Savior and became servants of the new covenant. What an awesome and overwhelming responsibility! What an awesome and overwhelming privilege!

And now let me make this perfectly clear. Let us not ever think that we have received this ministry, this awesome responsibility as well as privilege, because we deserved it. Let us continue to read the verse. **“Therefore, since we have this ministry, as we have received mercy.”**

Paul made it very clear that this ministry that they had received was not received because they deserved it but rather they had received it as an act of God’s mercy (1 Timothy 1:12-13). From the very moment of his conversion on the road to Damascus, when he was knocked to the ground by the flash of Christ’s glory and commissioned to go to the Gentiles, he knew that he had received this ministry, not because of who he was or what he had done but rather in spite of who he was and what he had done. In other words, he understood that he had received it as an act of God’s mercy.

Let me read for you the words of Paul in **1 Timothy 1:12-13**. **“I thank Christ Jesus our Lord, who has strengthened me, because He considered me faithful, putting me into service, (13) even though I was formerly a blasphemer and a persecutor and a violent aggressor. Yet I was shown mercy because I acted ignorantly in unbelief.”**

Did Paul believe that he deserved this ministry that had been given to him, this new covenant ministry whose message is the gospel of Christ that makes

it possible for the veil of hard-heartedness to be lifted, for hearts to be transformed, and for people to be conformed to the image of Christ? No, he did not believe this. He believed that this ministry was given to him as an act of God's mercy.

So let me ask you this question. How do you believe that this made Paul feel? Do you believe that he was filled with a sense of gratitude, an overwhelming sense of gratitude in receiving something of such great value, which he knew he truly did not deserve? Absolutely! The thought in his mind, I believe, would be something like this, "Lord, why me! Why have you blessed me with such an important and life-changing ministry when I have sinned so greatly against you? Your mercy that you have poured out upon me is too great for me to comprehend. Truly, You are a great and awesome God worthy to be praised and worthy to be served."

So in light of this I don't believe that it is difficult at all for us to appreciate his next statement in **2 Corinthians 4:1**. So let us once again read the verse. **"Therefore, since we have this ministry, as we received mercy, we do not lose heart."**

Because Paul believed that he, by an act of God's mercy, had received a ministry of such great splendor, it prevented him from thinking that he had the option of quitting. In other words, in light of the things he had mentioned, the thought of quitting for Paul was unthinkable. What did he say? He said this, **"We [in light of having been given a ministry of such splendor by an act of God's mercy] we do not lose heart."**

The reason why any professing believer, who has become a servant of the new covenant, might lose heart in pressing forward with the ministry he has been given is because they have forgotten what they have received and have forgotten how they received it. If this describes you then I would encourage to confess your sin and to once again remind yourself of what you have received and to remind yourself of how you received it. And if you will do that I believe that you will once again make yourself available for the life of Christ to fill you and for His life to be lived out through you.

And as we do this, as we allow the life of Christ to be lived out through us so that He might continue his mission of reaching the lost and building His church, we will find ourselves set apart from other so-called ministers who

rather than being servants of Christ and ministers of the new covenant are apostles of darkness who are bent on serving their own fleshly appetites. And in what ways will we be set apart from them?

True servants of the new covenant will renounce the things hidden because of shame. Let us go back to **2 Corinthians 4:1** and see if this is not so. **“Therefore, since we have this ministry, as we received mercy, we do not lose heart, but we have renounced the things hidden because of shame.”** This will not be true of apostles of darkness who are bent on serving their own fleshly appetites, but it will be true of those who have in fact received the ministry of the new covenant from the hand of God as an act of mercy.

So, what did Paul mean when he said that he and his associates had renounced the things hidden because of shame? When Paul spoke of renouncing things hidden because of shame (AISCHUNE) he was speaking of the kind of things people are willing to do in secret but would find personally shameful if exposed. This is what I believe he meant.

True ministers of the new covenant do not live double lives, one that is seen and another that is hidden. This is not to say that life of a true minister of the new covenant is perfect or without sin, it is simply saying whether you are with them or not with them they will be striving, as best as they can, even in the midst of their weakness, to live their lives pleasing to the Lord rather than choosing to practice things that if exposed would be shameful.

What is another way that true ministers of the new covenant will be set apart from apostles of darkness?

True ministers of the new covenant will renounce craftiness. Let us go back to **2 Corinthians 4:1-2** and see if this is not so. **“Therefore, since we have this ministry, as we received mercy, we do not lose heart, but we have renounced the things hidden because of shame [and then what does it say? It says this] not walking in craftiness.”**

So, what did Paul mean by this? Someone who practices craftiness (PANOURGIA) is unscrupulous, willing to do anything to achieve his goals. It is a cunning readiness to adopt any device or trickery for the achievement of ends, which are anything but altruistic. This is Machiavellian cunning in which “the end justifies the means” regardless of the means employed. Such

cunning will stop at nothing. The means vary but the same self-interest always pervades.

I once received a brochure that featured numerous pictures of a self-styled evangelist designed to instill confidence in his power. It featured photos of him praying by a waterfall and praying with his hands on a pile of letters asking for prayer. Another photo showed him holding a baby. But what really got my attention was the offer of a specially blessed handkerchief that had been dipped in the Jordan River and that, if prayerfully applied, would bring healing. The cost? Twenty-five dollars! Such conduct was anathema to Paul and certainly is not at all consistent with true ministers of the new covenant.

What is another way that true ministers of the new covenant will be set apart from the apostles of darkness?

True ministers of the gospel will renounce the adulteration of the Word of God and will therefore speak the truth of God's Word plainly and forthrightly. So let us once again go back to **2 Corinthians 4:1** and see if this is not so. **“Therefore, since we have this ministry, as we received mercy, we do not lose heart, but we have renounced the things hidden because of shame, not walking in craftiness (and then what does it say? It says this...) or adulterating the word of God, but by the manifestation of truth commending ourselves to every man's conscience in the sight of God.”**

So, what did Paul mean by this? Paul meant that when it came to his ministry of being a servant of the new covenant he did not falsify or water down what the Scriptures teach.

This is certainly something I would hope that you would see in what we are doing here in this church. This is one of the reasons why we do not pick and choose popular topics that might tickle the ears of this congregation but rather topics that our laid out for us as we systemically go verse by verse through the Scriptures.

In commenting on what Paul is saying here in this verse, I believe it would serve us well to consider the words of Paul to Timothy in **2 Timothy 2:15**. Let me now read that verse for you. **“Be diligent to present yourself**

approved to God as a workman who does not need to be ashamed, accurately handling the word of truth.”

The phrase “accurately handling” the word of truth is based on the Greek word “ORTHOS” meaning straight. In other words, Paul was challenging Timothy to impart truth without deviation, straight, and undiluted, to get it straight and to give it straight. And this is exactly what every true servant of the new covenant will want to do.

Knowing that God has mercifully given us the ministry of the new covenant, may He also give us the grace to carry out that ministry in a Christ-honoring way no matter what happens.