

No Quitting!
2 Corinthians 4:3-4
Part 2

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 the mission that we have been given thus leading us to abandon the front lines in order to take a nice cushy spot in the rear where we might be able to live a less complicated and less difficult life.

God forbid that this would be our response, but rather I would hope that our response would be like the response of the Apostle Paul, who when challenged became even more resolute in prosecuting the mission that he had been given in the strength that Christ supplied.

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**.

In this section of Scripture Paul has been laying down a foundation of biblical and theological truth 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 and the truths related to it.

Paul is now in **2 Corinthians 4:1-18** continuing on in his defense of his boldness by declaring to his readers that no matter what might be thrown at him and his associates in the prosecution of the ministry that they had been given that their boldness would not be diminished and that they certainly would not lose heart. We see this declaration at the very beginning of this passage in **2 Corinthians 4:1** and we see this same declaration near the end of this passage in **2 Corinthians 4:16**.

Paul was not a quitter when it came to boldly proclaiming and defending the message of the new covenant, which is the gospel of Christ, nor was he a quitter when it came to boldly proclaiming and defending the truths related to that message. Losing heart was not an option for Paul.

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 once again use this message this morning, as we continue our examination of **2 Corinthians 4:1-18**, to help us to do exactly that.

So, what is the question that we began to answer last week in respect to this passage of Scripture? 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 began to answer last week. And this is the question that we will continue to seek to answer this week. So, what was the first thing that Paul endured that manifested his no-quit attitude?

The first thing that Paul endured that manifested his no quit attitude was rejection (2 Corinthians 4:1-6). Paul spoke of this rejection in **2 Corinthians 4:1-6**. So how far have we gotten in our examination of these verses? We have only gotten as far as **verses 1-2**.

So what did these verses say? **“Therefore, since we have this ministry** [And what was that ministry? It was the new covenant ministry, whose glory and whose effects far surpassed the glory and effects of the old covenant. And then what did he say? He said this.], **as we received mercy** [And what did this communicate? It communicated very loud and clear that Paul knew that he had received this new covenant ministry not because of who he was

or what he did but rather in spite of who he was and what did. And where did this understanding lead him? Let us continue to read the verse.], **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.** [This is where it led him. Paul, knowing that he by an act of God's mercy had received the ministry of the new covenant, renounced the self-seeking and self-serving behaviors that characterized the apostles of darkness in order to proclaim Christ's gospel and the truths of Christ accurately and forthrightly, "cutting it straight and giving it straight" thus commending himself to every man's conscience in the sight of God. In other words, thus validating his message and ministry.]

We are now ready to move on in our study to the next two verses, or in other words to **2 Corinthians 4:3-4**, which will explain to us how Paul's message and ministry, which had been validated by his behavior, was so easily rejected by so many people.

And why would it be so important for us this morning to pay close attention to this explanation? It is important for us to pay close attention to this explanation so that when we as servants of the new covenant find our message and ministry being rejected we are not overwhelmed by that rejection thus leading us to hide the message of the gospel of Christ or to dilute the message of the gospel of Christ from those to whom we have been sent. But rather may we in light of any rejection we might experience prosecute our mission with even greater vigor.

And this is my hope and prayer for this morning's message, that God might use it to turn whatever rejection we might experience into an even greater determination as servants of the new covenant to proclaim the message of the new covenant, which is the gospel of Christ, boldly and completely.

So now let me read these next two verses for you. **"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."** Paul, in 2 Corinthians 4:3-4, highlights two different factors to explain to his readers why so many people were rejecting his message. And why did Paul do this? Paul did this in order to impress upon his readers that

even though there were people rejecting his message, even perhaps many people, it was not because either his message or ministry was flawed but rather because of the factors that he introduced to his readers here in **2 Corinthians 4:3-4**. So, what was the first factor?

The first factor that Paul highlighted to help his readers understand why so many people were rejecting the gospel message was that the gospel message was veiled to those who were perishing (2 Corinthians 4:3).

If the gospel message had not been veiled to those who were perishing, and they were therefore able to see how faith in that message could deliver them from sin and all of its consequences, thus opening a door to infinite and eternal riches beginning in this life and culminating in the next life, then certainly they would not have chosen to remain in their sin. But they did choose to remain in their sin because the gospel message was veiled to them. So, what does that mean? What does it mean that the gospel message was veiled to them?

When Paul spoke of the gospel message being veiled to those who were perishing in 2 Corinthians 4:3, he was once again alluding to the veil of Moses that was used in a figurative way in 2 Corinthians 3:14-15 to picture a state of hard-heartedness.

So there we have it. Paul in seeking to give his readers an explanation for why there were so many people that had rejected his message and ministry had now given them the very first factor for that rejection. It had nothing to do with some kind of deficiency in Paul's message or ministry, but rather it had a whole lot to do with a deficiency within those to whom he had been sent. They were hard-hearted. They at their very core loved darkness rather than light.

So let me ask you this question. Should we expect something different than Paul in terms of rejection? And of course the answer would be no! We, like Paul, have also been sent out into this world as a servant of the new covenant to those who are perishing, whose hearts are hardened, who at their very core love darkness rather than light.

So, what should we expect when we go to the world with the gospel of Christ? We should expect rejection! This is what we should expect! This

will be the rule not the exception. And therefore hopefully it will not discourage us when that rejection comes knowing that the rejection is not about us and our ministry but rather about them and their hard-heartedness, assuming of course that we are in fact living a life consistent with the message that we are proclaiming and are not raising barriers to the gospel of Christ by our own bad behavior.

But hard-heartedness, the willful choice of individuals to walk in darkness rather than light because that is what they at their core truly love, is not the only factor that Paul supplies his readers to explain why so many people were not responding to his message and ministry. There was another factor. So, what was this second factor?

The second factor that Paul highlighted to help his readers understand why so many people were rejecting the gospel message was that the minds of the unbelieving had been blinded by the god of this world (2 Corinthians 4:4). Is the world, because of the hardness of heart, willfully choosing to walk in darkness? Yes! But it is also true that there is another force that is at work to make sure that they remain in that darkness. And what is this other force? The god of this world is this other force.

Let me now read for you **2 Corinthians 4:4** and see if this is not so. **“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.”** So clearly we now see another factor that is involved when people, in spite of our best efforts, reject our ministry and message.

So who is the god of this world? The god of this “world” (AION), or in other words more literally the god of this “age,” is Satan (Matthew 4:8).

Satan has a great deal to say about what happens in this present age. We see this clearly in **Matthew 4:8** when Christ, being tempted in the wilderness by Satan, was taken to a very high mountain and offered by Satan all the kingdoms of this world. Why was Satan able to do this? He could this because he is “the god of this age.” He has clout!

Even though Satan has a great deal to say about what happens in this present age, and therefore can in a sense be called “the god of this age,” it is more an

illusion than a reality (1 Timothy 1:17). Let me read for you **1 Timothy 1:17**. “**Now to the King eternal [or more literally the king of the ages], immortal, invisible, the only God, be honor and glory forever and ever. Amen.**”

There is only one God and He is the king of all ages: past, present and future. There is no other God. Therefore even though Satan may be called “the god of this world,” or in other words “the god of this age” in **2 Corinthians 4:4** because of the extensive authority that have been given him by the one and only true God, the authority that he has been given him is neither absolute nor eternal. The unbelieving may serve him as if he is in fact their god but their willing service does not make him a God.

But even though Satan may not be God, he certainly can be referred to as “the god of this world” because of the extensive authority he has been given by the one true God. And what is he doing with that authority? He is using that authority to blind the minds of the unbelieving through the manipulation of the thoughts, ideas, philosophies and false religions of the world, and by doing so he is providing the unbelievers of this world, in their hard-heartedness, with the stones, bricks and mortar to erect fortresses in which they can barricade themselves against what? Against the light of the gospel!

Let us once again go back to **2 Corinthians 4:4** and see if this is not so. “**So that they [the unbelieving whose minds have been blinded by the god of this world through the means that I have just shared with you] might not see [What?] the light of the gospel.**”

Satan, the god of this world, that Paul called the “prince of the power of the air” in **Ephesians 2:2** and that the scribes called the ruler of demons, a designation that Christ himself did not dispute in **Mark 3:22**, is not our friend. He is our enemy and he is opposing our mission by attempting to keep those who are walking in darkness in that darkness so that they would not see the light of the gospel.

So why were so many people according to Paul rejecting his ministry and the message that he was proclaiming? It had nothing to do with a deficiency in Paul’s ministry or message but rather it had to do with the fact that those who were rejecting his ministry and message were hard-hearted. In other words they loved darkness more than they loved light, and then on top of

that Paul told his readers that the god of this world, or in other words Satan, was doing all that he could through the manipulation of thoughts, ideas, philosophies and false religions to keep them in that darkness.

But even so, just because Satan is committed to blinding the minds of those who have chosen to walk in darkness so that they might not see the light of the gospel of Christ, he cannot put out that light! And why is this?

Let us go back to **2 Corinthians 4:4** and read a little bit further. **“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.”** So why can't Satan put out the light of the gospel?

The light of the gospel is a manifestation of the glory of Christ (2 Corinthians 4:4). When we share the gospel and explain to people the love, the grace and mercy of Christ, we, in our gospel presentation, are manifesting the glory of Christ, which is the light of the gospel.

And not only is the gospel a manifestation of the glory of Christ, but it is a manifestation of the glory of God since Christ is the very image of God.

Let us go back once again to **2 Corinthians 4:4** and see if this is not. **“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.”**

Christ being the image of God is something that the Scriptures clearly teach. What does **Colossians 1:15** tell us? **“He is the image of the invisible God.”** And what does **Hebrews 1:3** tell us? **“And He is the radiance of His glory and the exact representation of His nature.”** This is why the Apostle John concluded his introduction with these words, **“No one has seen God at any time; the only begotten God who is in the bosom of the Father, He has explained Him.”** And later in the same gospel John records for these words of Jesus, **“He who has seen Me has seen the Father.”**

Can Satan put out the light of the gospel? No! But can he continue to blind the minds of those who have chosen to walk in darkness so that they according to **2 Corinthians 4:4** might not see the light? Yes!

So, what can we do about this? Can we lift the veil that covers the hearts of the hard-hearted? No! Can we keep Satan from continuing to blind those who are hard-hearted through the manipulation of the world's thoughts, ideas, philosophies and false religions? No! We cannot do either of these things! But God can if we, as the faithful ministers of the new covenant, continue to shine the light of the gospel on those who are choosing to walk in darkness and on those whose minds have been blinded by the god of this world.

Therefore let us, the ministers of the new covenant who experientially know that God can indeed lift this veil through the light of the gospel, continue to shine the light of the gospel of the glory of Christ, who is the image of God, upon those who are in such desperate need of it even in spite of how many times we might be rejected because of the hard-heartedness of those we are seeking to reach and Satan's continuing efforts to keep them blinded and in darkness.

May God give us the grace to shine the light of the gospel of Christ into the darkness of men's hearts and minds no matter how many times we may have been rejected.