

No Quitting!
2 Corinthians 4:5-6
Part 3

John MacArthur twenty years ago wrote a book entitled “The Gospel According to Jesus.” This is a book that I would highly recommend for you to read.

In this book MacArthur, after studying the words of Jesus for many years, came to the conclusion that the so-called gospel being proclaimed from so many pulpits today is in fact a false gospel. It promises sinners that they can have eternal life while continuing to live in rebellion against God. Or in other words, it promises sinners that they can receive the gift of life by receiving Christ as Savior without bowing before Him as Lord.

This belief, based on the words of Jesus as well as the teachings of the New Testament, is a false gospel. And I believe that this will be supported by our study this morning.

And this brings us back to **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 laid 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. 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 to help us to do exactly that.

So, what is the question that we have been seeking to answer in our current study? 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 have been seeking to answer and will continue to seek to answer this morning. So, what was the first thing that Paul endured?

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**. And these are the verses that we have now been examining over a period of three weeks.

The first week we examined just verses **1-2**, which in essence explained to his readers why he, in having received the ministry of the new covenant with its greater glory and surpassing effects by an act of God's mercy, was determined not to lose heart but to continue to boldly prosecute the ministry he had been given with integrity thus validating his ministry and message even in spite of the rejection that he so often times experienced.

The second week we examined verses **3-4**, which in essence explained to Paul's readers why he, after having his ministry and message validated to every man's conscience according to **verses 1-2**, was so often times rejected. And what was his explanation? Paul explained that his rejection was not about a deficiency in his ministry or in his message but rather it was about deficiencies in those to whom he was sharing that prevented them from seeing the light of the gospel of the glory of Christ, who is the image of God.

And what were those deficiencies? Their hearts were hard thus serving as a veil to the gospel of Christ and their minds had been blinded by the activity of Satan. These were the deficiencies that explained the very frequent rejection that he had to endure. And it explains the rejection that we also as ministers of the new covenant must frequently endure. We are now ready to move on and conclude this section.

So now let me now read for you **verses 5-6**. **“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.”**

As we examine these last two verses Paul will again focus his readers’ attention on his no-quit attitude even in spite of rejection, and as he does this he will again make the point that any rejection he may have experienced was not because of a deficiency in either his message or ministry but rather because of deficiencies within those to whom he was sharing; deficiencies that he had just spelled out in **verses 3-4**, and in doing so Paul will highlight for his readers and for us the critical, vital, and necessary role that the Lordship of Christ has in any true gospel presentation.

So let us now begin to look at these **verses 5-6** more carefully and see if the things I just shared with you are not so. And we will begin by looking at **verse 5**.

So how does **verse 5** begin? **“For we do not preach ourselves but Christ Jesus as Lord.”** When Paul used the word “for” (GAR) at the beginning of 2 Corinthians 4:5, he in effect is continuing his argument that those who reject his ministry are not revealing his insufficiency but their own “blindness,” a blindness that he had spoken about in verses 3-4. And then what does Paul say? **“For we do not preach ourselves but Christ Jesus as Lord.”**

Paul and His associates, when proclaiming the gospel, did not present themselves as the foundation and object of faith but rather they presented Christ the Lord as the foundation and object of faith.

Would this statement by Paul have surprised the Corinthians? No! It would have resonated with them. Paul and his associates had continuously emphasized to the Corinthians that Christ is alone Lord, both over the church and over the world (1 Corinthians 1:2,3,7; 5:4; 6:11; 8:6; 9:1; 11:26-27).

What does 1 Corinthians 1:2 tell us? **“To the church of God which is at Corinth, to those who have been sanctified in Christ Jesus, saints by calling, with all who in every place call on the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, their Lord and ours.”** And then what does it say in **1 Corinthians 1:3?** **“Grace to you and peace from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ.”** And this theme of Christ’s Lordship continues on throughout Paul’s letters to the Corinthians.

So let me ask you a question. Did Paul preach Christ as Lord to the Corinthians or did he not? And what is the answer? Paul and his associates faithfully and repeatedly proclaimed from the very first day that they interacted with the Corinthians until the day Paul wrote this epistle that Jesus was in fact Lord, Lord over the church and over the world.

And if this were true, then those coming to Christ by grace through faith for salvation in Corinth would have had to come to Christ on bended knee in light of what Paul was preaching. Isn’t this true? Absolutely! And why would we have to consider this to be true?

We would have to consider it to be true because it is consistent with the heart of new covenant ministry since the heart of new covenant ministry is communicating the truth about Jesus Christ and hoping and praying that those who hear the truth about Christ will respond accordingly. Let me read for **Romans 10:17** and see if this is not so. **“So faith comes from hearing, and hearing by the word of Christ [or in other words, by the word “about” Christ or by the word “concerning” Christ].**

No one can come to faith in Christ and be saved apart from the truth “about” or “concerning” Christ, as He is revealed in the Scriptures. And what is the truth about or concerning Christ as He has been revealed to us in the Scriptures? It is this. He is both Savior and Lord and this is how any person must come to Him whether that was in Corinth in the time of Paul or even today here in the Antelope Valley, since the truth about Christ has not

changed and proclaiming this truth about Christ is the heart of new covenant ministry.

This means that people cannot come to Christ to receive the free gift of salvation from Him by grace through faith unless they come to Him to receive that gift on bended knee recognizing His right to rule over their lives and are willing to surrender their lives to that rule.

So let me now go back and once again ask this question. Did Paul's statement to the Corinthians in **2 Corinthians 4:5** that he and his associates did not preach themselves but Christ Jesus as Lord surprise the Corinthians? And the answer is no! This had always been Paul's message and this was the message that Corinthians had embraced and it was their proper response to this message and to the gospel of Christ as a whole that had brought salvation to the church at Corinth.

But even though Paul's declaration that he and his associates preached Christ as Lord may not have surprised the Corinthians, Paul's declaration that he and his associates also preached themselves as the Corinthians bondservants may have. And where do we see that he had in fact done this? Let us continue to read **2 Corinthians 4:5**. **“For we do not preach ourselves but Christ Jesus as Lord, and ourselves as your bond-servants.”**

So did Paul in addition to preaching Christ as Lord also preach that he and his associates were the Corinthians bondservants? And the answer is yes he did!

And why might this have been surprising for the Corinthians? It would have been surprising not because Paul said it, but more so because this was so different than the message of Paul's opponents who were much more about taking from the Corinthians than giving to the Corinthians. But even though this message preached by Paul stood in stark contrast to the message of his opponents, it certainly did not stand in contrast to Christ nor the message that Paul preached concerning Christ which I believe Paul highlights at the very end of **verse 5**.

So let me now read **verse 5**? **“For we do not preach ourselves but Christ Jesus as Lord, and ourselves as your bond-servants for Jesus’ sake.”** So, what did Paul mean by this phrase, **“for Jesus’ sake?”**

When Paul said that he and his associates had declared themselves bondservants of the Corinthians “for Jesus’ sake,” he was simply saying that this declaration was exactly what Jesus their Lord would have expected from them.

Let me read for you the words of Paul in **Philippians 2:3-8**. **“Do nothing from selfishness or empty conceit, but with humility of mind regard one another as more important than yourselves; (4) do not merely look out for you own personal interests, but also for the interests of others. (5) Have this attitude in yourselves which was also in Christ Jesus, (6) who, although He existed in the form of God, did not regard equality with God a thing to be grasped, (7) but emptied Himself, taking the form of a bond-servant, and being made in the likeness of men. (8) Being found in appearance as a man, He humbled Himself by becoming obedient to the point of death, even death on a cross.”**

So was Paul’s declaration that he and his associates were bondservants of the Corinthians something that they would have believed that Christ would have wanted them to declare? Certainly! How could they not declare this in light of who Christ is and what He has done? In fact, how could we not declare this same thing about those to whom we have been sent and for the very same reason?

So, what has Paul done in **verse 5**? Paul has continued to explain to his readers how the rejection that he has experienced has nothing to do with a deficiency in his message or ministry but rather has everything to do with their own spiritual blindness. But Paul is not done. He will now offer up a message of hope in **verse 6**, a message of hope that he himself was very personally acquainted with.

Let me now read for you **verse 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.”**

Notice how the verse begins. It begins with a reference to **Genesis 1:3** when God in the midst of physical darkness said, **“Let there be light; and there was light.”** Paul, in referencing Genesis 1:3, wanted his readers to understand the physical darkness that preceded God’s creative activity could not have been overcome apart from His intervention.

And the same thing is true in respect to spiritual darkness. In order for the veil and blindness of sinful hearts to be taken away, God must sovereignly say, “Let there be light.”

We cannot remove the veil and the blindness from sinful hearts. I don’t care how effective or trustworthy we might be as a minister of the new covenant. This work of removing the veil and the blindness from sinful hearts is beyond us. It is only God who can do this by shining His light into the darkness of unbelieving hearts and certainly Paul knew this from his own personal experience.

Let us continue to read verse 6 and see if this is not so. **“For God, who said, ‘Light shall shine out of darkness,’ is the One who has shone in our hearts.”**

So now let me ask you this question. When God shines His light into the darkness of a sinner’s heart, what is that sinner able to see? What was Paul able to see when God shined His light on Paul’s heart?

Let us again continue to read the verse. **“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.”**

When God shines His light on a sinner’s heart they are able to see the Light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Christ. So what exactly does this mean?

When God shines His light on a sinner’s heart they are able to see Christ as God incarnate, the visible expression of the invisible God, thus leading them to embrace Him as their Savior and Lord.

May God give us the grace to continue to share the gospel, even when we are rejected, knowing that God's light can penetrate the darkness of the darkest heart if He so chooses.