

No Quitting!
2 Corinthians 4:13-15
Part 7

Today is Palm Sunday and next week will be Easter. Typically I would digress from whatever book study we might happen to be in to highlight some particular truth related to the resurrection of Christ. This year I will not have to do that. I will not have to do that because the text we are presently studying will do that for us.

So, what is that truth? Those who believe in the resurrection of Christ and His promise to them, that because He lives they will live also, have the potential of having their present lives transformed dramatically by this future hope if they would simply focus on it.

Why is this? It is because they will no longer view this world as the beginning, middle and end of all things but only as a stepping-stone to a wonderful and magnificent future with Christ in glory and will therefore adjust their lives accordingly. And if there is any doubt about this all we have to do is to consider the Apostle Paul.

And this brings us back to **2 Corinthians**. And where are we exactly within this study? We are presently in the midst of a 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,” he did so in a way that some within Corinth deemed improper. In other words, they felt he was too bold, that he was too harsh.

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 and the truths related to it.

Paul then, after laying down this foundation of biblical and theological truth, continued his defense of his boldness in **2 Corinthians 4:1-18** by

highlighting for his readers why quitting in respect to the bold prosecution of his ministry was not an option for him, no matter what might be thrown at him, no matter what he might have to endure. These are the verses that we have been examining for over a month.

So, what is the question that we have been seeking to answer? 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. So, what was the first thing that Paul told us that he had to endure?

The first thing that Paul endured that manifested his no-quit attitude was rejection (2 Corinthians 4:1-6). And where did we see this in the passage that we have been studying? We saw this in **2 Corinthians 4:1-6.**

And what was the second thing that manifested his no-quit attitude? The second thing that Paul endured that manifested his no-quit attitude was a variety of different sufferings (2 Corinthians 4:7-18). So how far have we gotten in this present section? We have gotten as far as **verse 12.**

The Apostle Paul had just explained to the Corinthians in **2 Corinthians 4:7-9** how his weakness had occasioned God's power so that even though he had been afflicted he had not been crushed, even though he had been perplexed he had not become despairing, even though he had been persecuted he had not been forsaken, and even though he had been struck down he had not been destroyed.

Paul then went on in **2 Corinthians 4:10-12** to point out to his readers that his experience of God's power being manifested in his weakness, as spelled for them in **2 Corinthians 4:8-9**, was in fact analogous to the death and resurrection of Christ and therefore should not have been a surprise but rather something that should have been expected since he himself, as an apostle of Christ, was seeking to walk in the footsteps of Christ and was in fact an extension of the life of Christ.

We are now ready to continue on in Paul's lengthy defense of his boldness. But before we move into the body of our message this morning I would like for us to consider for a moment **verse 13**, which is a transitional verse. So now let me read this for you. **“But having the same spirit of faith,**

according to what is written, ‘I believed, therefore I spoke,’ we also believe, therefore we also speak.”

Paul in this verse is continuing to his explain to his readers why he was choosing to speak as boldly as he had been speaking even though in speaking in this way he knew that he would suffer. And what was the reason? Paul told the Corinthians that it was because of what he believed, or in other words because of his faith.

So now let us look more carefully at this verse and see if this is not so. So how did Paul begin? He began by saying, **“But having the same spirit of faith.”** So, what exactly is this **“spirit of faith”** that Paul referred to? Paul’s reference to the **“spirit of faith”** is not a reference to the Holy Spirit, who is the one who provides us with faith, but rather it is a reference to the **“disposition”** or **“impulse”** of faith.

And what did Paul say to his readers about this **“spirit of faith,”** or in other words, what did Paul say about this **“disposition”** or this **“impulse”** of faith? He told the Corinthians that the **“impulse”** or **“disposition”** of faith that moved him to boldly proclaim the gospel of Christ was the same **“disposition”** or **“impulse”** of faith that King David, in **Psalms 116:10**, referred to when he said, **“I believed, therefore I spoke.”**

So, what was the context of his statement? David in **Psalms 116** was describing a time in his life when he, under intense opposition, was about to die, but believing God could deliver him he spoke to God and asked him for his help and God helped him.

So, what is Paul’s point? The same spirit of faith that moved David to speak to the Lord in the time of his need when he was facing death is the same spirit of faith that was moving Paul to boldly speak to the Corinthians and to others the gospel of Christ and the truths related to that gospel.

Isn’t that what the **verse** in essence says? Let me read me read it for you one more time and see if this is not so. **“But having the same spirit of faith, according to what is written, ‘I [King David] believed, therefore I spoke,’ we [Paul and his associates] also believe, therefore we also speak.”** It is therefore clear, based on the words of Paul, that he saw a kinship with David in their speaking in that both were motivated to speak in the context

of dying by the “spirit of faith.” But there was a marked distinction between them as well.

And this now brings us to the heart of the message this morning and to a very important question.

What did Paul believe that allowed him to speak the gospel so boldly, even though speaking the gospel so boldly caused him to be continually delivered over to death (2 Corinthians 4:13-18)? This is the question that we will begin to answer this morning as we now move on in our study of **2 Corinthians 4:13-18**.

And what is my hope for this message as we seek to answer this question? My hope for this message this morning is that even though we know that the foundation of our faith is in the past, we, through the message this morning, might come to have a growing appreciation of the importance of keeping the focus of our faith on the certainty of certain future events, and I would hope that this morning’s message will help the importance of this particular focus to come alive for us.

We will begin by reading **2 Corinthians 4:13-15**. **“But having the same spirit of faith, according to what is written, ‘I believed, therefore I spoke,’ we also believe, therefore we also speak** [So, what did he believe that led him to speak so boldly? Now listen carefully.] **(14) knowing that He who raised the Lord Jesus will raise us also with Jesus and will present us with you. (15) For all things are for your sakes, so that the grace which is spreading to more and more people may cause the giving of thanks to abound to the glory of God.”** So let me ask you something. Was Paul’s focus on the past or the future in these verses? It was the future, just as it will be once again on the future in **2 Corinthians 4:16-18**, which we will consider next week on Easter Sunday.

So in a general sense, based on these verses, what is the answer to the question that we have posed concerning what he believed that moved him to speak as he did? Based on 2 Corinthians 4:13-18, Paul spoke the gospel boldly, even though speaking the gospel boldly meant that he would be continually delivered over to death because of what he believed about the future. This is what strengthened Paul for battle and fortified him to speak as boldly as he did in every circumstance. Or in other words, it is what he

believed about the future as an “impulse” or “disposition” of faith that caused him to speak what he spoke and how he spoke it. Therefore, even though Paul shared with King David the same spirit of faith rooted in their confidence in God, the specifics of their faith were different. For David his focus was on what God could do for him in the present, for Paul his focus was on what God was going to do for him and others in the future.

And hopefully the same thing would be true for us as well. Hopefully believing the same things as the apostle Paul about our future and the future of all other true believers will also strengthen us for our battle and fortify us to speak as boldly as he did in every circumstance. But what did Paul specifically believe about the future?

Paul believed in the future resurrection of all true believers that would result in them being presented to Christ (2 Corinthians 4:14-15). Let us begin by looking at **2 Corinthians 4:14** and see if this is not so. **“Knowing that He who raised the Lord Jesus will raise us also with Jesus and present us with you.”**

When the world looks at their future they see it limited to the here and now and not to the hereafter. Therefore they tend to try to squeeze out as much as they possibly can out of this life for that is as far as they can see for them. Their life will end at the grave. But that is not true for us. Certainly it was not true for Paul. For him life was just the beginning, or in other words just a stepping-stone to greater things, and this belief affected him and his choices.

Unfortunately for many professing Christians their belief in their future resurrection and presentation is distant, fuzzy even, with no relevance for today. They don't see it as the grand cosmic certainty that they will actually share with Christ. And they don't believe it with the intensity of Paul.

How, in what terms, we conceive of the future is a decisive question. For most Christians, the contemplation of retirement trumps the contemplation of their ultimate destiny. For most professing Christians, the word eschatology (the study of future things) is defined by a single word—retirement. They spend far more time, energy and thinking about their final 20 years of earthly existence than to their eternal existence. Clearly, in light of the example of Paul, this is not a good thing.

So now let us take a look at a couple of phrases in these two verses just to help us to understand what Paul is saying a little bit better. First of all, let us take a look at the phrase, **“with Jesus.”**

So, what does this phrase mean? Certainly it does not mean that Paul believed that he and other true saints would be raised simultaneously with Christ for the simple reason that Christ, the first fruits of the resurrection according to **1 Corinthians 15:20**, has already been raised. So if Christ had already been raised, how could Paul speak of their future resurrection as being raised “with Christ?”

Paul could speak of his future resurrection and the future resurrection of all true saints as being “with Christ” because they, through faith in Christ, had been joined to Christ (Ephesians 2:4-6). What did Paul tell us in **Ephesians 2:4-6**? **“But God, being rich in mercy, because of His great love with which He loved us, (5) even when we were dead in our transgressions, made us alive together with Christ (by grace you have been saved), (6) and raised us up with Him.”**

Therefore in light of this fact Christ’s resurrection and our resurrection, because of our identification with Him, could be viewed as one. And this is why Paul in **2 Corinthians 4:14** could view his future resurrection and the future resurrection of other true believers as certain as the resurrection of Christ Himself. Therefore this phrase, **“with Christ,”** is an important phrase and helps us to understand Paul’s great confidence in his future resurrection and the future resurrection of all true believers.

This confidence I believe was well captured on the three-hundred-year-old tombstone epitaph for a man named Isaac Greentree. So let me read it for you. “Beneath these green trees rising to the skies, the planter of them, Isaac Greentree, lies; the time shall come when these green trees shall fall, and Isaac Greentree rise above them all.” Would Paul have loved the bold confidence of this tombstone? Absolutely! He shared that same confidence. In fact, he was so confident that the “spirit of faith” working within him moved him to preach the gospel boldly, even in spite of the difficulties that it caused him personally.

But there was also another confidence that Paul also enjoyed in conjunction with his confidence in the resurrection. So, what is this second confidence?

Paul also anticipated that all true believers would be immediately, in conjunction with their resurrection, presented to Christ (Colossians 1:21-22). And where do we see this second confidence in **verse 14**? We see it in another phrase, **“and present us with you.”**

So, what exactly is this presentation referring to? We see Paul speaking of this particular presentation in **Colossians 1:21-22**, and what did Paul say? **“And although you were formerly alienated and hostile in mind, engaged in evil deeds, (22) yet He has now reconciled you in His fleshly body through death, in order to present you before Him holy and blameless and beyond reproach.”** And when will this presentation take place? This presentation will take when all true believers, in conjunction with the resurrection, are presented to Christ, holy, blameless and beyond reproach very much like Ephesians tells us as a bride adorned for her bridegroom.

Our resurrection and presentation is a really big deal, for it is the culmination of God’s redemptive plan on behalf of His church.

And again, did these confidences effect how Paul lived his life? Absolutely! This is the whole point in **2 Corinthians 4:13-14**. He, though being continually delivered over to death because of his ongoing and bold proclamation of the gospel, continued his bold proclamation because of his belief, his strong and unwavering belief in the resurrection and the presentation that would accompany that resurrection.

So where do we see ourselves? Is our belief in the resurrection and our future presentation just a distant fuzzy event, or is it a sharing with Christ in a grand cosmic event that God’s eternal redemptive plan has been pointing to? If it is the latter then our lives will certainly be impacted. And what is one of the ways that our lives will be impacted based on these verses? Our speech will be impacted and impacted dramatically knowing that as we speak in this manner that more and more people potentially will be joining us in praising God for all that he has provided us to the glory of God.

So let us read **2 Corinthians 4:15** and see if this is not so. **“For all things are for your sakes, so that the grace which is spreading to more and more people may cause the giving of thanks to abound to the glory of**

God.” So why was Paul’s speech so dramatically impacted? Why had Paul’s speech, in light of these future events, become so bold?

Paul’s hope in boldly proclaiming the gospel of Christ, in light of the dynamic certainty of the resurrection and the presentation that would accompany it, was that thanksgiving might abound to the glory of God (2 Corinthians 4:15).

Those who believe in the resurrection of Christ and His promise to them, that because He lives they will live also, have the potential of having their present lives transformed dramatically by this future hope.

Why is this? It is because they will no longer view this world as the beginning, middle and end of all things, but only as a stepping-stone to a wonderful and magnificent future with Christ in glory.

And therefore Paul no longer lived for this world. Rather than setting his affections on things of this world he set his affections on things above, which made it possible for him to give up the pleasure and the comforts of this world as he in his bold proclamation of the gospel embraced a life of dying so that God through his faithful proclamation of the gospel might be praised by more and more people and be glorified.

May God give us the grace to believe so passionately in the resurrection that it will cause us to proclaim the gospel of Christ boldly and persistently.