

# Day 102, 2 Corinthians 4

by David Servant

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*The sermon highlights the heart and ministry of the apostle Paul, emphasizing his servanthood, steadfastness, and willingness to suffer for Christ, and encourages listeners to imitate his example.*

**Scripture:** 2 Corinthians 4:2-18, 1 Peter 2:11

**Topics:** "Suffering And Ministry", "Christian Discipleship"

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## Description

David Servant preaches on the heart and ministry of the apostle Paul, emphasizing the importance of imitating Paul's servanthood, steadfastness in suffering, and commitment to preaching Christ as Lord. He highlights the correlation between suffering and ministry fruitfulness, explaining how Paul's endurance in hardships contributed to the Corinthians' spiritual growth. Paul's focus on eternal rewards and his unwavering faith despite sufferings serve as a powerful example for all Christians to follow, reminding them that true discipleship comes with a cost and requires a willingness to endure hardships for the sake of the Gospel.

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## Transcript

This chapter offers a glimpse into the heart and ministry of the apostle Paul that should have touched the hearts of the Corinthian believers as they considered the price he paid for their sakes. Paul's intent, I suspect, was to subtly contrast himself with the false teachers who had infiltrated Corinth, men whose motives were selfish.

Every minister, and every Christian for that matter, who reads this chapter should be inspired to imitate Paul's servanthood and steadfastness in the midst of suffering. Because of his calling to ministry, Paul recognized that he must be holy, and so he "renounced the things hidden because of shame" (4:2). Every minister needs to understand that his calling to ministry is, first of all, a calling to holiness, because the goal of every minister is to make disciples who obey all of Christ's commandments.

Along these same lines, a second characteristic of Paul's that is worthy of every minister's imitation was his conviction to "preach...Christ Jesus as Lord" (4:5). That should be the heart of all preaching, but not just as a worn-out and meaningless cliché, but as the most fundamental and vital doctrine of true Christianity, so that listeners understand that Christ should be ruling every aspect of their lives.

Not only did Paul live and preach Christ's lordship, but he consequently considered himself to be a servant of all, which would only be right for one whose Lord is Christ, since Christ taught us to be servants. The

word "minister" does not mean "little king" as you might think from observing some modern ministers, but is actually a synonym for "servant." Paul's willingness to serve motivated him to endure continual physical hardship and persecution, which he described as "always carrying about in the body the dying of Jesus, so that the life of Jesus may also be manifested in our body" (4:10). The wider context seems to indicate that he was referring to the inseparable correlation between his sufferings and the fruitfulness of his ministry. Just as Christ's death resulted in new life for others, so Paul's sufferings (even to the point of being stoned and left for dead) contributed to the new life that the Corinthians enjoyed. "So death works in us, but life in you" (4:12), he wrote.

That knowledge helped to keep Paul from losing heart in his sufferings. Not only that, but he knew there was a reward waiting for him one day. "Momentary, light affliction is producing for us an eternal weight of glory far beyond all comparison" (4:18). So Paul kept his eyes, not on the temporary and visible, but on the eternal and invisible. So should we. Contemporary "Christianity," however, sadly lacks this perspective, and books with titles such as, *Your Best Life Now*, become best-sellers. When you follow Christ, there is a price. At the very least, you will find yourself misunderstood and alienated. We should not be surprised, however, since we are aliens on this earth (1 Pet. 1:1; 2:11)!

So be encouraged today. Chances are, your sufferings for Christ are minimal compared to Paul's. That should also be an encouragement to be willing to suffer more and make greater sacrifices, as we know that those who suffer more will be rewarded more in the end.

Today's reading includes a short passage that is sometimes extracted from its greater context in order to encourage unscriptural practices under the banner of "spiritual warfare." Paul wrote that his gospel was veiled to "those who are perishing, 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" (4:4). Notice Paul did not go on to recommend "binding demons in the atmosphere in order to release people from Satan's blinding them." From reading the rest of Scripture, we know that Satan's blinding is a secondary cause for people's rejection of the gospel. The primary reason is the hardness of their hearts. Satan simply supplies the lies that hard-hearted people love to believe, giving them excuse to continue in their sin and violate their consciences. Satan can't stop anyone from humbling himself and believing.

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