

2 Corinthians 4

Good morning and once again welcome to Calvary Chapel, we're so grateful you came to worship with us this morning. Before we get into our study, today is a very special day as Marcus and Heather Jordan have asked to publicly dedicate their little girl, Lilly Jeanette Jordan.

Dedicating a child acknowledges God's sovereignty not only over the child, but also over Mom and Dad. During a dedication ceremony, parents present their child before God and His people, asking for grace and wisdom in carrying out their parental responsibilities.

Marcus and Heather also come praying that their child would one day trust Jesus Christ as Savior for the forgiveness of sin and be Lord of their life.

There are biblical precedents for dedicating a child. We are told in 1 Samuel 1 that Hannah presented her son Samuel to the Lord. In Luke 2 we read that Mary and Joseph brought their baby, Jesus to the temple in Jerusalem in order to present Him before the Lord.

In the same way, Marcus and Heather today bring their daughter, Lilly, presenting first themselves and then their daughter before the Lord our God.

Marcus and Heather, I call your attention to the commands of God recorded in the Bible.

Deuteronomy 6:5-7 tells us:

5 You shall love the LORD your God with all your heart, with all your soul, and with all your strength.

6 “And these words which I command you today shall be in your heart. 7 You shall teach them diligently to your children, and shall talk of them when you sit in your house, when you walk by the way, when you lie down, and when you rise up.

This vow of dedication, made to the Lord, is witnessed before the congregation, much like in a wedding. It then becomes the congregation’s duty to pray for and assist these parents in keeping this vow in the months and years to come as they raise this precious child.

Jordan family, c’mon up and we’ll pray for you. They’ve also got 1 other child, Micah.

Lilly was born on 11/13/2020

LET’S PRAY FOR THE JORDAN FAMILY, AND OF COURSE YOUNG LILLY.

Would you now please turn in your Bibles to 2 Corinthians 4? Chapter 3 ended with the emphasis on how much better it is that we are under the NC of Christ, rather than the OC of the law. And chapter 4 takes this intellectual head knowledge, and instructs us with what to do with it.

We’re going to participate in communion this morning.

This morning we’re only going to study verses 1-10, and the title of this morning's message is Keeping Perspective Pt 1
Let’s pray

Like an artist with a powerful paintbrush, the apostle Paul, inspired by God's HS, has just finished painting a moving picture of what it means to be a Christian.

And knowing what we know of the NC, of the death and resurrection of Christ, chapter 4 boils it all down to reality. What does all this mean for everyday life? Where do we go from here now that we know what we know about being a Christian? Again we're only gonna study verses 1-12 so we'll be camping out in some of these verses.

1 Therefore, since we have this ministry, as we have received mercy, we do not lose heart.

The phrase "not lose heart" in the original Greek can mean anything from not becoming discouraged, to not acting like a coward.

Think about all that Paul went through. Knowing all that he suffered, how did Paul have the ability to continue preaching Christ given all the trials and tribulations he faced? Paul didn't lose heart because his confidence was in God who never fails.

It's easy to lose heart in our day and age isn't it? Just watch the news for any length of time and you will be discouraged. I've lost count of the number of Christians that have told me they've found themselves in the throes of depression because of their constant watching of the news, and once they stopped, it lifted like a curtain. We live in dark times.

So how do we resist the overwhelming sense of dread that surrounds us? Perhaps the best way to not lose heart is to follow Paul's example here in verse 1. Allow ourselves to be awestruck with the fact that God's mercy empowers us, just like Paul, to be ministers of the gospel!

Knowing what we know about ourselves, and each other, can you believe God trusts us to share His truth with others?

While he was giving his testimony to King Agrippa in the book of Acts, Paul explained what he was like before he became a Christian. Paul had hunted down Christians, vowing to imprison them and destroy the early church. **Acts 26 9 "Indeed, I myself thought I must do many things contrary to the name of Jesus of Nazareth. 10 This I also did in Jerusalem, and many of the saints I shut up in prison, having received authority from the chief priests; and when they were put to death, I cast my vote against them. 11 And I punished them often in every synagogue and compelled them to blaspheme; and being exceedingly enraged against them, I persecuted them even to foreign cities.**

Despite Paul's anger and hatred of Christians, God showed him mercy didn't He? Paul's testimony continues...

Acts 26 12 "While thus occupied, as I journeyed to Damascus with authority and commission from the chief priests, 13 at midday, O king, along the road I saw a light from heaven, brighter than the sun, shining around me and those who journeyed with me. 14 And when we all had fallen to the ground, I heard a voice speaking to me and saying in the Hebrew language, 'Saul, Saul,

why are you persecuting Me? It is hard for you to kick against the goads.' 15 So I said, 'Who are You, Lord?' And He said, 'I am Jesus, whom you are persecuting. 16 But rise and stand on your feet; for I have appeared to you for this purpose, to make you a minister and a witness both of the things which you have seen and of the things which I will yet reveal to you. 17 I will deliver you from the Jewish people, as well as from the Gentiles, to whom I now^[fn] send you, 18 to open their eyes, in order to turn them from darkness to light, and from the power of Satan to God, that they may receive forgiveness of sins and an inheritance among those who are sanctified by faith in Me.'

Even though Paul was once a self-admitted enemy of Jesus, God was patient with him. Christ himself stopped Paul on the road to Damascus, rescuing him from eternity in hell.

Paul deserved none of this, and he knew it. Only God's kindness allowed him to serve.

And isn't this the case with each of us? **Ephesians 2:4** 4 But God, who is rich in mercy, because of His great love with which He loved us, 5 even when we were dead in trespasses, made us alive together with Christ (by grace you have been saved

2 But we have renounced the hidden things of shame, not walking in craftiness nor handling the word of God deceitfully, but by manifestation of the truth commending ourselves to every man's conscience in the sight of God. The Greek word translated "deceitfully" was commonly used to describe those who tampered with merchandise in order to make it more profitable. Some first

century merchants would cheat their customers by diluting wine or changing the accuracy of scales.

See the false teachers who had come to Corinth after Paul had left were doing the same thing-they were diluting God's Word, they were twisting it to serve their own selfish purposes.

But Paul emphatically states that's not how he handled God's word. Paul never resorted to trickery or deception when giving the gospel.

Because Paul's preaching and motives had been repeatedly called into question by the Corinthians, he encourages them to evaluate his behavior. Paul was confident that if they fairly judged him, he would be found innocent of all of the accusations against him.

We must remember that the gospel is the best deal ever! This is why we should never preach the Gospel like we're trying to sell used cars. You don't have to stretch or twist the truth, or bully any listener. Our job is to be truthful with people and faithful to God, and trust His word will do its work.

Paul always remembered the spiritual realities that were behind his ministry. When he preached the truths of God's Word, he knew that no matter what the response from the people was, he was preaching it before God. Because God was always watching him, Paul was careful to preach for the right reasons.

The end of verse 2 gives us a critical reminder of the ministry the Lord entrusts to us. Look carefully at the end of verse 2 says 'in the sight of God'.

Often times when a group of pastors get together, inevitably the question comes up in the conversation "so, how big is your church" I gotta tell you, few things infuriate me more than this question. Sadly, this even happens sometimes within Calvary chapel.

As if success in ministry is based upon the number of people in attendance?? The world judges success based on numbers, but that's not how God judges success! Jeremiah preached 42 years without a single convert-are you telling me that Jeremiah was a failure? Noah preached for 120 years and no one outside his family got saved-are you telling me Noah was a failure?

It's absolutely tragic when people say in a downtrodden fashion 'well there's only 20, or 30 or whatever number'. Listen no pastor or teacher deserves a single person, let alone multiple!! How dare we minimize the impact of God's Word by thinking it insufficient if only 1 hears it.

Have Christians in America been so indoctrinated by the world we forget the power of the gospel in the life of 1 listener? Is one person not worth the effort and the hardship, and the cost of proclaiming God's word?

Please understand I'm not trying to be legalistic here. Numbers are certainly an important matter with logistics-number of

bathrooms, square footage, number of available seats. For sure we can't ignore these things.

But the common temptation is to compare the attendance of one ministry with another, and then determine if that ministry is a success or a failure based upon the numbers in that comparison. Then folks get down on themselves, discouraged, and think about throwing in the towel.

PRAISE GOD that's not how He judges.

No matter what ministry you are involved in, remember it's in the sight of God. He sees, He knows. And if you're finding yourself becoming discouraged or disgruntled, remember **Colossians 3:23**
And whatever you do, do it heartily, as to the Lord and not to men,
24 knowing that from the Lord you will receive the reward of the inheritance; for you serve the Lord Christ.

So knowing the importance, and the power of the gospel, why don't more people respond to the gospel? Verses 3-4 explain why...

3 But even if our gospel is veiled, it is veiled to those who are perishing, 4 whose minds the god of this age has blinded, who do not believe, lest the light of the gospel of the glory of Christ, who is the image of God, should shine on them. When we tell people the good news that their past, present, and future sins are paid for if they'll embrace the free gift of salvation; that in this life they will have a Friend who sticks closer than a brother, a Warrior-King who will give them victory, a Bridegroom who will truly love them;

that when they die they will be ushered into heaven where they will live eternally—we wonder why wouldn't everyone become a Christ follower?

The Bible tells us here it's because the god of this world has blinded the eyes of those who don't believe. This happened when Adam and Eve chose to believe the lies of Satan rather than to walk in obedience to the Father.

To be clear it doesn't mean that people are innocent victims of Satan's blinding work. Satan's work upon them isn't the only reason they are blinded.

John 3:19 19 And this is the condemnation, that the light has come into the world, and men loved darkness rather than light, because their deeds were evil. 20 For everyone practicing evil hates the light and does not come to the light, lest his deeds should be exposed. 21 But he who does the truth comes to the light, that his deeds may be clearly seen, that they have been done in God.”

Though men love the darkness, and choose the darkness, Satan still works hard to keep them blinded to the glorious gospel of light and salvation in Jesus.

Probably the most common false philosophy Satan uses to blind people is the belief that people can earn God's favor by a certain act or acts. In almost every false religion, meriting God's favor or earning eternal life is a predominant theme.

But the bible tells us that mankind cannot work to earn God's favor; eternal life is a free gift **Ephesians 2:8-9** **8 For by grace you have been saved through faith, and that not of yourselves; it is the gift of God, 9 not of works, lest anyone should boast.**

Satan is so clever because he tempts mankind through our pride which naturally resists God's grace. It's no wonder that Scripture calls Satan a liar **John 8:44** **"You are of your father the devil, and the desires of your father you want to do. He was a murderer from the beginning, and does not stand in the truth, because there is no truth in him. When he speaks a lie, he speaks from his own resources, for he is a liar and the father of it.**

There is a significant and real sense in which Satan "rules" this world. Not in an ultimate sense, because, the earth is the LORD's.

Yet, Jesus didn't contest Satan's claim to rule over this present age, because there is a sense in which Satan is the "popularly elected" ruler of this age.

Are we really all that surprised when the unbelieving world acts as they do-they're blinded by Satan!

This is why we need to pray for our lost and unbelieving world. Remember you declare war on the enemy, you don't declare war on the hostages! People are hostages, how we need to pray for them!

5 For we do not preach ourselves, but Christ Jesus the Lord,
Pause here. Paul didn't preach programs, principles, or

procedures. Nor did Paul preach the ten steps, 15 ideas or latest way to get friends and influence people. No the only thing Paul preached but Jesus Christ singularly.

From time to time I get questioned why I don't spend much time speaking on current world events from the pulpit. 'Brian-you didn't mention the supreme court overturning Roe v Wade. Or you didn't talk about the covid vaccine. I don't talk about the Chosen series, the Jesus revolution movie or the 'He gets us Campaign'. What gives? I understand these comments.

Every one of us has 168 hours in a week. At best I have 1.5 hours a week with you if you listen both Sunday and Wednesday, for most it's less than 1 hour.

There are plenty of churches that will talk about all those things I just mentioned, and that's fine if that's what the Lord has directed them to do. But what the Lord has directed me to do from this pulpit in the limited time each week I have with you is that which Paul echoed in **1 Corinthians 2:2 For I determined not to know anything among you except Jesus Christ and Him crucified.**

There's a very real danger in sharing my political or social opinions and views with you, because Christian ministry should be void of self-promotion. It's a very dangerous thing for anyone to walk out of here saying 'well Brian said'.

Nobody can promote themselves and magnify Jesus simultaneously. The spotlight only shines on one person at a time

- and if it's on me, or it's on you, that means Jesus is being overlooked!

Isaiah 42:8 I am the LORD, that is My name;
And My glory I will not give to another,
Nor My praise to carved images.

Let's read all of verse 5

5 For we do not preach ourselves, but Christ Jesus the Lord, and ourselves your bondservants for Jesus' sake. But notice another role we're supposed to have in verse 5...

We are "bondservants for Jesus' sake." What is a bondservant—it's a slave.

Yet sadly in our consumer oriented culture, even Christians want to be served, rather than to serve.

Could it be that our unbelieving world is so skeptical of Christians because so many of us have forgotten what it means to be a bondservant of Jesus?

6 For it is the God who commanded light to shine out of darkness, who has shone in our hearts to give the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ. We break the darkness that has a hold on this world not by talking about ourselves, or complaining about our politicians, but by shining God's light! It's the knowledge of Jesus that drives out the darkness.

And how do we give the light of the knowledge of the glory of God? By being the light! Matthew 5:16 "Let your light so shine

before men, that they may see your good works and glorify your Father in heaven.

Verse 7 builds upon this:

7 But we have this treasure in earthen vessels, that the excellence of the power may be of God and not of us. In Paul's day, clay pots had many uses. **SHOW PIC** Made cheaply, these pots held everything from food to fuel. They could be seen just about everywhere—in window openings, near cooking fires, and in marketplaces. These clay pots were fragile and common. If they broke—and they broke easily—they would be discarded **CLOSE PIC**

At first glance verse 7 contains a strange metaphor - who puts a treasure in clay pots? People keep treasures in safety deposit boxes and vaults.

But not God! He places His glorious treasure—the message that frees people from sin and grants eternal life—in fragile, cheap, and ordinary clay jars. Why God doesn't trust the gospel to a legion of trustworthy angels zooming across the sky boggles my mind.

But He doesn't. He trusts the gospel to us, to share and make disciples.

Think for a moment about clay pots. Clay pots leak, they chip, they aren't always very attractive. That fittingly describes a lot of us doesn't it?

Often, we get discouraged by our imperfections. Feeling inadequate, we feel like we can't be effective. This verse reminds us that our imperfections are no hindrance to God's holy purpose.

See just like a clay pot, a person's flaws, scars, chips, and cracks allow the presence of an all-sufficient God to shine through! Never forget the lost world will see Christ in you and be drawn to Him because they relate more easily to someone who isn't perfect.

God works through the weak and powerless so that it's clear that this extraordinary power belongs to God and does not come from people **1 Corinthians 2:3-4 3 I was with you in weakness, in fear, and in much trembling. 4 And my speech and my preaching were not with persuasive words of human[fn] wisdom, but in demonstration of the Spirit and of power, 5 that your faith should not be in the wisdom of men but in the power of God.**

DL Moody was the Billy Graham of the 1800's. He was an evangelist who was used by God in mighty ways. Yet Dwight Moody was uneducated. Neither did he have a pleasing appearance. His voice was nasally and high-pitched. Once, a reporter was sent to analyze Moody's success. He wrote, "I see nothing whatsoever in DL Moody to account for his marvelous work."

Think about this fellowship for a moment. Would this location be your first pick? A bar on one side, county mental health HQ on the other side, 6 other churches within 300 yards. But isn't the

Lord doing some really amazing things here? It's not cuz of the building, or the pastor, or the leaders, it's cuz of Jesus.

8-9

8 We are hard-pressed on every side, yet not crushed; we are perplexed, but not in despair; 9 persecuted, but not forsaken; struck down, but not destroyed—

Paul's life was hard, and it was hard because he was a bondservant of Jesus. Yet look at the triumph in Paul's life: not crushed... not in despair... not forsaken... not destroyed.

This is why Paul said in **Philippians 3 13 Brethren, I do not count myself to have apprehended; but one thing I do, forgetting those things which are behind and reaching forward to those things which are ahead, 14 I press toward the goal for the prize of the upward call of God in Christ Jesus**. Paul didn't dwell on the failings of the past, nor did he dwell on the pain in the present. His eyes were on Jesus.

We'll end our study by looking at verses 10

10 always carrying about in the body the dying of the Lord Jesus, that the life of Jesus also may be manifested in our body. Does this mean we have to carry around a cross, and wear a crown of thorns? Of course not. As Christians we want Jesus to radiate from our lives don't we? But there are there are some aspects of God's great work in our lives that only happen through trials and suffering. That's what the rest of chapter 4 discusses that we'll tackle next week.

And this brings us to the communion table.

Luke 22:19 And He took bread, gave thanks and broke it, and gave it to them, saying, "This is My body which is given for you; do this in remembrance of Me."

Luke 22:20 Likewise He also took the cup after supper, saying, "This cup is the new covenant in My blood, which is shed for you."