

# 2 Corinthians 4

## Day 1

### Paul's Integrity in Ministry. Read 2 Corinthians 4:1-4

1. As Paul persevered (4:1), in what ways did he show integrity in his ministry? 4:2. (This verse is interesting to read in different translations.)

**Distort/adulterating/handling deceitfully** *doloō* Strong's NT:1389, primarily signifies "to ensnare"; hence, "to corrupt," especially by mingling the truths of the Word of God with false doctrines or notions, and so handling it "deceitfully."  
- Vine's Expository Dictionary of Biblical Words

2. What do you think these claims might indicate about accusations against Paul or the character of his adversaries?

**FYI:** "In any self-defense, self-commendation must play some part. But Paul's self-commendation was distinctive. He commended himself, not by self-vindication at every point, but simply by the open declaration of the truth (in particular, the gospel and its implications). His appeal was not directed to a partisan spirit or the prejudices of men but 'to every man's conscience.' His self-commendation was undertaken with God as onlooker."  
- Expositor's Bible Commentary

3. If people weren't understanding the message of the gospel, what was the problem? 4:3,4 (Compare John 8:47)

**FYI:** "The god of this age/world" refers, of course, not to God the Father, but to Satan regarded as 'the prince of this world' (John 12:31) or as the one whom this age has made its god."  
- Expositor's Bible Commentary

#### 4. Underline Satan's power/work, attributes and titles in:

- Ephesians 2:1-2 As for you, you were dead in your transgressions and sins, 2 in which you used to live when you followed the ways of this world and of the ruler of the kingdom of the air, the spirit who is now at work in those who are disobedient. NIV
- 1 John 5:19 We know that we are of God, and that the whole world lies in the power of the evil one. NAS
- John 8:44 "You are of your father the devil, and you want to do the desires of your father. He was a murderer from the beginning, and does not stand in the truth because there is no truth in him. Whenever he speaks a lie, he speaks from his own nature, for he is a liar and the father of lies. NAS
- John 12:31 "Now judgment is upon this world; now the ruler of this world will be cast out. NAS
- Revelation 12:9 the serpent of old who is called the devil and Satan, who deceives the whole world NAS

5. Underline how the Lord protects us from Satan's power.

- Heb. 2:14-16 Since the children have flesh and blood, he too shared in their humanity so that by his death he might destroy him who holds the power of death—that is, the devil— and free those who all their lives were held in slavery by their fear of death. NIV
- James 4:7 Submit therefore to God. Resist the devil and he will flee from you. NAS
- 2 Thessalonians 3:3 But the Lord is faithful, and He will strengthen and protect you from the evil one. NAS
- 1 John 5:18 We know that anyone born of God does not continue to sin; the one who was born of God keeps him safe, and the evil one cannot harm him. NIV
- Colossians 1:13 For he has rescued us from the dominion of darkness and brought us into the kingdom of the Son he loves NIV

6. What does spiritual blindness prevent people from seeing? 4:4b  
(See John 12:46)

***Digging Deeper***  
Why do people, in a sense, choose to be blind? John 3:19,20

- How might this explanation of blindness affect the way you think about speaking with or witnessing to an unbeliever?

***FYI: The image of God*** "Christ is the visible and perfect representation of the invisible God (Col 1:15; cf. John 1:18), the precise expression of the unseen God." - Expositor's Bible Commentary (See also Hebrews 1:3)

7. What does Paul's use of the words "*blinded, veil upon their heart, dishonesty, craftiness, deceit*" contrasted with "*liberty, truth, light*" say about the nature of the battle that Paul was facing with those who were rejecting or attacking his message? (See Ephesians 6:12)

***Applying the Word:*** Why do you think some people would rather "live in an illusion than have the veil lifted to reveal the reality of biblical truth" (Swindoll)? Can you remember a time when God's truth shattered an illusion/blindness in your life?

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## Day 2

Paul's Christ Centered Ministry. Read 2 Corinthians 4:5-9

8. Who was the focus of Paul's preaching? 4:5 (See 1 Corinthians 2:1,2)

9. What was Paul's role (4:5b)? (See 1 Cor. 9:19)

- What had Jesus taught? Matthew 20:25-27

10. How did God reveal himself to us? 4:6 (See John 1:14)

See how  
Jesus is  
connected with  
light in John  
1:4,5; 8:12;  
12:46.

11. Note the contrasts in 4:4 and 4:6.

(4:4) *the god of this world has* \_\_\_\_\_

*so that they cannot see* \_\_\_\_\_

(4:6) *For God...is the One who has* \_\_\_\_\_

*to give* \_\_\_\_\_

**FYI:** "Paul here draws a beautiful analogy of our new creation in Christ to His primeval creation of the world. Both the world and we were initially born in darkness—we in spiritual darkness, through innate sin, and the world in physical darkness (Genesis 1:2). Then, as God called for physical light to "divide" the darkness (Genesis 1:3-5), so He has divided the darkness in our hearts, by the spiritual illumination of Him who is "the light of the world" (John 8:12)."  
- Henry Morris

"The good news of salvation...is not only a deliverance from relentless bondage and a cleansing from guilt, but also a rescue from blindness and darkness...Only in this way can mental and spiritual darkness be removed. Sinners have not sufficient ability or power to rescue themselves from such a terrible condition. Only the power of the risen Savior can do this as He is personally received and trusted."  
- Stuart Allen

### **God's Enabling**

12. How does God showcase His great "treasure"? 4:7 Why? (CR 3:5)

**FYI:** "Literal jewels of beauty are usually encased in an equally lovely setting, but the opposite is found with this jewel of God, for He sets it in frail human vessels, men and women who are failing creatures, subject to infirmity and weakness. One thing this striking paradox makes clear is that the gospel is no product of human cleverness or lofty intellect, but is a revelation of God in His power and sovereign grace. He condescends in His great love and mercy to place this treasure in frail earthenware vessels to demonstrate, among other things, that His strength is made perfect in weakness (2 Cor. 12:9)."  
- Stuart Allen (214)

13. Record the contrasts Paul gives in 4:8,9.

- *Afflicted/hard pressed* but not (See Acts 9:24,25)
- *Perplexed* but not
- *persecuted/pursued* but not (See Acts 16:23-26)
- *struck down* but not (See Acts 14:19,20)

**hard pressed/afflicted/troubled** Strong's NT:2346 *thlibo*; to crowd (literally or figuratively):  
**crushed** Strong's NT:4729 *stenochoreo*; to hem in closely, i.e. (figuratively) cramp:  
**perplexed** Strong's NT:639 *aporeo*; to have no way out, i.e. be at a loss (mentally)  
**despair/crushed.** Strong's *exaporeo* NT:1820 "to be utterly without a way" (*ek*, "out of," *poros*, "a way through")..."to be quite at a loss, without resource, in despair." - Vine's Expository Dictionary of Biblical Words

14. What picture do these *paradoxes in 4:8,9* give of God's protection and control?

- What had Paul learned through his suffering? Philippians 4:13

**FYI:** "Paul lists all the weakness of the clay jar of our humanity...But each time our human clay is broken and its weakness is displayed, the power of God is released."  
 - Ray Stedman (309)

**Applying the Word:** *When have you seen God use an impossible situation in someone's life to display His amazing power and grace and love?*

### Day 3

Christ's Life in Us. Read 2 Corinthians 4:10-14

15. What circumstances did Paul live under? 4:10a,11a (See Galatians 6:17)

- How did God work that to the good? 4:10b,11b

**FYI: given over to death for Jesus' sake** "Paul in a sense, was always under the sentence of death. 'Often in danger of death', he writes later on in the epistle (11:23)... In this he closely followed the Savior in His earthly life, Who experienced the relentless hatred and persecution for His religious opponents." - Stuart Allen (216)

"Paul knew the power and victory of Jesus in his life because he was continually in situations where only the power and victory of Jesus could meet his need."  
 - David Guzik

16. How would you explain the kinds of *death* and *life* Paul was talking about?

17. Underline what Paul connected with *death* and *life* in the following.

- Galatians 2:20 "I have been crucified with Christ; and it is no longer I who live, but Christ lives in me; and the life which I now live in the flesh I live by faith in the Son of God, who loved me and gave Himself up for me. NAS
- Galatians 5:24-25 Now those who belong to Christ Jesus have crucified the flesh with its passions and desires. 25 If we live by the Spirit, let us also walk by the Spirit. NAS
- Galatians 6:14 May I never boast except in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ, through which the world has been crucified to me, and I to the world. NIV
- Romans 6:1-2,11 Are we to continue in sin so that grace may increase? 2 May it never be! How shall we who died to sin still live in it?...11 Even so consider yourselves to be dead to sin, but alive to God in Christ Jesus. NAS
- Romans 6:6-7 For we know that our old self was crucified with him so that the body of sin might be done away with, that we should no longer be slaves to sin- 7 because anyone who has died has been freed from sin. NIV

18. What did Paul's sacrifice mean for the Corinthians? 4:12 (See Philippians 2:17)

**FYI:** "Paul knew the spiritual riches that he brought to the Corinthian Christians came in part through the death-like suffering he endured in ministry... Here is the irony. The Corinthian Christians despised Paul because of his great sufferings...They did not see that their lives of victory were only possible because God made Paul such an effective servant through suffering."  
- David Guzik

"Had Paul not been willing to risk death to bring the gospel to Corinth, the Corinthians would not have received eternal life."  
- The Nelson Study Bible (1949)

19. Underline what Peter, James and Paul said about the good that can come out of suffering.

- 1 Peter 1:6-7 In this you greatly rejoice, though now for a little while you may have had to suffer grief in all kinds of trials. 7 These have come so that your faith-of greater worth than gold, which perishes even though refined by fire-may be proved genuine and may result in praise, glory and honor when Jesus Christ is revealed. NIV
- James 1:2-4 Consider it all joy, my brethren, when you encounter various trials, 3 knowing that the testing of your faith produces endurance. 4 And let endurance have its perfect result, so that you may be perfect and complete, lacking in nothing. NAS
- Romans 5:3-5 Not only so, but we also rejoice in our sufferings, because we know that suffering produces perseverance; 4 perseverance, character; and character, hope. 5 And hope does not disappoint us, because God has poured out his love into our hearts by the Holy Spirit, whom he has given us. NIV

20. What two reasons did Paul give for preaching the gospel in spite of hardships? 4:13,14 (Compare Acts 4:20)

**4:13 as it is written.** See Psalm 116:10. The comfort of the psalmist in his afflictions was faith in God's Word, and Paul testified the same of himself."  
- Henry Morris

21. What kind of heavenly presentation do we look forward to? Colossians 1:22; Ephesians 5:27

**Applying the Word:** *How do you keep a focus on future glory as well as a focus on present? How are they connected?*

## Day 4

A Heavenly Focus. Read 2 Corinthians 4:15-18

22. Instead of judging or doubting Paul because of the difficulties he faced, what did the Corinthians need to understand? 4:15a (CR 1:4-6)
- How did Paul express this in 2 Timothy 2:10?
23. What else was being accomplished? 4:15b (How would you describe the sphere or magnitude of the perspective Paul had for what he went through?)

**FYI:** "That is the nature of the body of Christ. We share His life with one another, as we lose ourselves in costly service, His life becomes visible in other people. His saving resurrection grace spreads from one person to the next."  
- Ray Stedman (312)

24. How did knowing that his trials (vv.1-12) brought glory to God (vv.10b-14) and salvation to many (vs. 15) impact Paul? 4:16a (CR 4:1)
- What had Paul written about this earlier in 1 Corinthians 15:58?
25. What eternal hope did Paul express? 4:16b Write down the things contrasted. (Note the other terms Paul used to refer to mankind's physical body in 4:7,11.)

**Digging Deeper**  
See how David expressed this hope in Psalm 73:26.

26. What things are compared in 4:17? (See Romans 8:18)

- What did Jesus say in Luke 6:22,23?

**FYI:** "Paul meant this especially about his own life and ministry. In the world's eyes, Paul's life was an incredible failure. At the height of a career that would reach much higher, he left it all for a life of hardship, suffering and persecution, with eventual martyrdom. Paul recognized that the world only sees the outward, not the unseen eternal things."  
- David Guzik

"Paul's afflictions were hardly "light" by human standards (e.g., II Corinthians 11:23-33). These were only momentary, however, in the scales of eternity, and were "light" in comparison to the "weight" of glory yet to come (Romans 8:18)."  
- Henry Morris

27. What things are contrasted in 4:18?

*Things seen/*

*Temporary/*

**Look/fix our eyes** Strong's NT:4648 *skopeo*; to take aim at (spy), (figuratively) regard: KJV - consider, take heed, mark

"to look at, consider" (Eng., "scope"), implying mental consideration" - Vine's Expository Dictionary

28. How do you think we can in effect "fix our eyes on the unseen"?

- How do you think that helps make our troubles "light" and "momentary"?
- How did Peter express this? 1 Peter 1:13

29. What can happen to our attitude and feelings if we only look at difficulties through the here and now?

**Applying the Word:** *Even though finite minds cannot truly comprehend or picture eternity, what is one of the best ways you have to think about its limitlessness or vastness?*

**Memory Verse:**

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2 Corinthians 4:7 But we have this treasure in earthen vessels, so that the surpassing greatness of the power will be of God and not from ourselves; NAS

Or

2 Corinthians 4: 17-18 For momentary, light affliction is producing for us an eternal weight of glory far beyond all comparison, 18 while we look not at the things which are seen, but at the things which are not seen; for the things which are seen are temporal, but the things which are not seen are eternal. NAS