

WE PREACH NOT OURSELVES, BUT CHRIST JESUS THE LORD

2 CORINTHIANS 4:5 • TV102B

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2 Corinthians 4:5

“For we preach not ourselves, but Christ Jesus the Lord; and ourselves your servants for Jesus’ sake.”

I’m going to read for my text today from the book of **2 Corinthians, the 4th chapter**. Let’s read **verse 5**. Now, what I would like to do, if you have a Bible convenient, I wish you would take it and open it and follow along with me.

In this message, I’m going to cover **verses 1 through 7** and make some comments about each one of these verses. So, if you will take your Bible and there by the television and follow with me as I read.

But for my text; this is my subject: **“WE PREACH NOT OURSELVES BUT CHRIST JESUS THE LORD.”**

That’s my subject and the text is found in **verse 5** in which Paul says: *“We preach not ourselves but Christ Jesus the Lord and ourselves your servants for Jesus’ sake.”*

Now, this is something that Paul repeated several times. He often said this, *“We preach Christ; we preach Christ and him crucified.”* Even when he went down to Corinth, to that city of

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knowledge, wisdom, debate, and so forth, and politics and power, he said: *“I’m determined to know nothing among you save Jesus Christ and him crucified.”*

Was it because he couldn’t have known anything else? No, that’s not the reason. Paul was, perhaps, one of the most well-educated men of his day, one of the most well-read men of his day. But he said: *“I’m determined to know nothing among you save Jesus Christ and him crucified. We preach Christ, not ourselves but Christ.”*

Now, look at the text. Let’s go back to **verse 1** and read some of these verses and see what the apostle Paul has to say to us here.

First of all: In **verse 1 of 2 Corinthians 4** the apostle says: *“Therefore seeing we have this ministry.”*

Now, contrary to what most people are saying today; this is not a word only for preachers, every believer is in the ministry. I wish I could get that across; every believer is in the ministry. This is Paul writing to you, the church there at Corinth; he says to these people. *“Therefore seeing we have a ministry.”*

And every believer whether he is in the pulpit or whether he is praying in the pew or whether he is witnessing in the home or whether he is witnessing in the shop or whether he is supporting those who are preaching or praying for those who are preaching; we all are in the ministry of Christ. We are all the body of Christ!

And if you will read **1 Corinthians 12** you will find that the body of Christ is revealed or expressed in this way; Christ is the head and we are the body. And as the body has many members; here’s a hand, an arm, feet, legs, and different members of the body.

Even so, the body of Christ has different members and different functions and different people. We have different gifts, we have different talents, but we are all in the ministry: *“Seeing we have this ministry.”*

Our Lord said: *“He that’s not with me is against me,”* and I believe by that he that is not against Christ is with Christ. So, we have a ministry, it’s our ministry. It’s not mine, it’s our ministry. I wish we could understand that. I wish we could see how important this is.

Actually Paul, in **1 Corinthians 12** talks about some of the members that aren’t so prominent and some who are quite insignificant, being the most important and the ones upon whom we depend the most.

So, don’t gauge a man’s importance in the ministry of Christ or in the body of Christ by the fact that he has seen more or heard more; that’s not it at all. *“God looks not on the outward countenance but on the heart.”*

Secondly: This ministry which we have is not a ministry of law; it’s a ministry of grace!

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We are not preaching: do this and live; we are preaching believe and live; *“believe on the Lord Jesus Christ and thou shalt have eternal life.”* We are not preaching a ministry of do good and God will bless you; we are preaching a message for sinners, a message of hope for lost people and for everybody.

I’ve got a message for everybody who will listen to me. I’m not preaching just to the righteous and to the good and to the holy and to the moral; I’ve got a message for every son of Adam. It’s not a message of law; it’s a message of grace.

It’s not a message of flesh; it’s a message of Spirit. *“It’s the Spirit that quickeneth; the flesh profiteth nothing. That which is born of the flesh is flesh; that which is born of the Spirit is spirit.”* It’s a spiritual message.

It’s a message of grace, it’s a message of hope, it’s a message of mercy, not merit, mercy, and it’s a message of Spirit, not flesh. Somebody gave a definition of grace and mercy some time ago; he said; “Grace is God giving us what we don’t deserve and mercy is God not giving us what we do deserve.”

This is our ministry, this is our message. *“Therefore, seeing we have this ministry,”* you have it; I have it, and every believer does. We have this ministry and it’s a ministry of grace, a ministry of mercy, a ministry of Spirit, and a ministry for sinners.

Oh, we have good news for you, good news for you who need Christ, who are lost, who cannot help themselves!

Then, notice the **2 verse**; he said: *“We have renounced the hidden things of dishonesty.”* Now, I’m sure the apostle had a two-fold motive in his ministry. I’m as sure of that as I am standing here.

I know the *“secret things belong to God and the revealed things belong to us who believe.”* And I know there’s much in God’s Word that I don’t understand and there’s much the word of Paul and the message of Paul and the ministry of Paul. I’m not the apostle Paul. As John the Baptist said: *“I not worthy to unlace the shoelaces of the Master.”*

I don’t feel that I could lace the shoelaces of the apostle Paul. But, I do know this about it and I do share this in common with him; the apostle Paul had a two-fold objective in his ministry:

First of all: He preached for the glory of God!

That was his one object, the glory of God. He said: *“Whatever you do in word or deed, whether you eat or drink; do it for the glory of God.”* If you can’t do it for the glory of God; let it go, do all that you do for the glory of God.

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Paul wanted people to be saved. He said: *“I have a burning desire. My prayer to God is for Israel is that they might be saved.”* He said something I can’t say; I wish I could, he said, *“I could wish myself accursed from Christ for my brethren, according to the flesh.”*

Secondly: Paul preached for the good of his hearers!

Paul wanted people to be saved. He said: *“I have a burning desire. My prayer to God is for Israel is that they might be saved.”* He said something I can’t say; I wish I could, he said, *“I could wish myself accursed from Christ for my brethren, according to the flesh.”*

In other words, it sounds like to me, and I know the theologian tries to run this out somewhere and explain it away, but it sounds like to me he is saying: *“If I could take their place under the judgment of God and let them have my place I would do it.”*

And somebody said, *“Well, he couldn’t; loving God and knowing God, he couldn’t want to be separated from God.”* Well, Christ did. Our Lord was under the wrath of God and under the judgment of God and under the condemnation of God for our sin.

He loved us that much; maybe Paul did share in common something in intercessory prayer with the Master. But, these two things are true. He preached for the glory of God and he preached for the good of his hearers.

And something needs to be said and I want to read to you what I wrote down here. Something needs to be said in this day. Somebody needs to say something about what’s going on today under this disguise of religion and under the cloak of religion.

It makes the heart of every true believer weep when he beholds the entertainment, the covetousness, the materialism, the legalism, the fleshly methods, gimmicks, and the exultation of the flesh that’s going on today in churches, over the television, special meetings, and tent meetings in the name of God.

I tell you; Paul said this, *“They are making merchandise out of you.”* They are religious hucksters and you are nothing in the world to them but a means and a way to get the things of this world that their hearts covet and desire.

They are using the ministry as a cloak for their covetousness. Religion is their cloak for covetousness and materialism; their desire is for filthy lucre. It’s a shame; it’s such a terrible, terrible, shame *“handling the Word of God deceitfully.”*

Paul said, *“We have a ministry, but we have renounced the hidden things of dishonesty.”* And they are hidden; they are under a cloak of religion and they are hidden under a cloak of righteousness, and a cloak of prayer and all of this sort of thing, you know.

Paul said: *“We renounce the hidden things of dishonesty; we don’t handle the Word of God deceitfully.”* We preach the Word of God for the glory of our Lord.

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Sometimes, when I see all of this foolishness, I picture the apostle Paul and I ask myself; would he do that, would he put on a show like that?

Would he go around with a microphone stuffed in his mouth with fancy shirts and diamond rings and take up offerings in washtubs and break crutches over backs of seats and push wheelchairs down the aisle and put on all of this show of emotionalism, and fleshly entertainment? Would Paul take part in things like that?

You say, “I can’t imagine Paul doing that.” Then why would you want to do it? Why would you want to do it? Do you think Paul was interested in numbers, statistics, personal fame, putting on a show, and having his name in the lights? Do you think he would be interested in that?

Well, why do they do it? This is what bothers me. We can’t stop and visualize our Master taking part in a farce like this and not telling people the truth, it is dishonesty.

God will take care of His ministry and His work. God will supply our needs. We don’t have to beg. We don’t have to sell records, pictures, books, and deceive people and give away special offers. We don’t have to do that; God will pay His bills if He’s in it.

The reason we have to resort to this trickery and gimmick is because God’s not in it and it’s a shame and disgrace and it makes the heart of believers weep. It’s making merchandise of the souls of men, handling the Word of God deceitfully. Paul said, “We ought not to do that.”

But look at **verse 3**: *“If our gospel be hid it is hid to them that are lost.”* What is our Gospel? Paul is talking about the Gospel that we preach in this ministry being hid, *“It is hid to them who are lost.”* What is our Gospel?

First of all: Our Gospel is the Gospel of God!

It’s not the Baptist Gospel or the Catholic Gospel; it’s God’s Gospel. It originated with God; He planned it, He executed it, He applies it, He sustains it, and He will perfect it. It’s God’s Gospel.

That’s what he said in **Romans chapter 1:1**: *“Paul, a servant of Jesus Christ, (a bond-slave), separated to the gospel of God.”* We are not preaching what the Baptist’s believe; we are preaching what God says.

This is the thing if we could just dedicate ourselves to God’s Gospel! It’s the Gospel of God. It’s the ancient Gospel. He said: *“It’s the gospel which he promised before by the prophets through the Holy Scriptures.”*

You take the Bible and go through it and you will find Christ all the way through. In **Genesis**, He’s the woman’s seed. He’s Abel’s sacrifice.” In **Exodus** He’s *“the Passover Lamb.”*

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In **Leviticus**, He's the great atonement. In **Numbers**, He's the brazen serpent lifted up. All the way through, He's Rahab the harlot's scarlet line. He's Ruth's "*kinsmen redeemer*." He's David's Shepherd. He's Isaiah's substitute.

All the way through the Bible it's the Lord Jesus Christ: "*To him give all the prophets witness.*" The Old Testament is Christ in picture; the New Testament is Christ in person. And it's not only God's Gospel and the Gospel concerning His Son and the ancient Gospel; God has never saved anybody but by one way and that's through Christ.

You see, when Able brought that sacrifice; the blood of that animal couldn't put away man's sin. An animal can't die for a man. That's no substitution. That animal's blood represented the blood of God's Lamb that would come, the Lamb of God, Christ Jesus.

And all the way through the Old Testament the priest, when he went into the Holy of Holies and put the blood on the mercy seat over the broken law, well, that blood of that animal over that law written on tables of stone wouldn't justify a sinner before the presence of God; it represented something. The atonement made by Christ.

And the Lord's Table is the same thing now. You take the broken bread and the poured wine; it represents Christ. We don't hope by bringing that bread and breaking and eating it that we are being saved by eating that bread and drinking that wine but we are saved by the broken body and shed blood of Christ.

So, the same thing in the Old Testament; those types, pictures, and symbols point to Calvary and baptism and the Lord's Table point back to Calvary and we believe on Christ. "*It's the Gospel concerning his Son.*" It's the Gospel of God's grace. It's the Gospel of substitution. It's the Gospel of eternal life.

Now **Verse 3** says: "*If our Gospel be hid;*" it talks about it being hid, what does it mean by that? Well, here's what it means by that; the natural man, the man who is not taught by the Spirit of God; the natural man does not understand the Gospel, he just doesn't!

In **1 Corinthians Chapter 2** it says this: "*Eye hath not seen, ear hath not heard, neither hath it entered the heart of man the things that God's prepared for them that love him: But he has revealed them unto us by his Spirit.*"

What you need to pray my friend is this; you see; the natural mind does not understand God. The natural mind is enmity. The natural mind cannot understand spiritual things; it has to be revealed.

That's the reason Christ said to Nicodemus a man's got to be born again to understand the kingdom of God, to understand the Gospel. A man by nature does not understand substitution; he understands, do and live; we will swap this to God for something in return. He understands that kind of talk.

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But pure grace he doesn't understand. Unmerited favor he doesn't understand. Pure mercy he doesn't understand. Sovereign love he doesn't understand. Divine substitution he doesn't understand. God being just and justifying the ungodly through the merits of His Son; he doesn't understand, it has to be revealed.

One day our Lord said to His disciples, "*Whom do men say that I am?*" Here he was: "*The Word was made flesh and dwelt among us.*" God took on Himself a human body, God incarnate; He became the virgin's Son, the Messiah, David's son, standing on this earth.

"He was in the world and the world knew him not. He came unto his own and his own received him not." He was the fulfillment of every Jewish sacrifice, every Jewish promise, every Jewish prophecy, every Jewish type, and yet they didn't recognize Him; His own didn't know Him.

And He said to the disciples: "Well, what are they saying out there; who do they say I am?" Who do you say that Jesus Christ is, some reformer like Confucius or Buddha or Muhammad? Is He some failure or is He another messenger God sent that didn't work either?

Who is Jesus Christ? "Well, the disciples said they are saying different things Lord. Some of them believe that you are Elijah who's come back from the grave. There are some who even believe that you are John the Baptist. And they are saying you are a great prophet."

But he said, "*Whom do you say that I am?*" And Peter said, "*Thou art the Christ, (thou art the Messiah, and thou art that prophet of whom Moses wrote. Thou art the Redeemer of Israel) thou art the Christ the Son of the living God, (God in human flesh).*"

And our Lord looked at Him and He said: "*Blessed are you Simon Barjona; flesh and blood did not reveal that to you.*" A man doesn't know that by nature. He doesn't understand that by nature. He can't comprehend that by nature. He doesn't see the necessity of it by nature.

"Flesh and blood didn't reveal that to you but my Father which is in heaven." That's how it comes; our Gospel has to be revealed. And to whom; "*the gospel is hid to them that are lost?*" The Gospel has to be revealed!

Look at **verse 4**: What happened to him? Well, "*The God of this world hath blinded them.*" Who is the god of this world? That's Satan; that's who that has to be, "*the god of this world,*" Satan. He's called the "*god of this world.*" He's called the, "*adversary.*" He's called, "*the deceiver of men.*"

The Scripture says, "*And if it were possible he would deceive the very elect.*" Do you know how Satan blinds men? It says, "*The God of this world hath blinded the minds of them (the natural man). Satan hath blinded the natural man.*

Do you know how he blinds men? He blinds men with pride, "*Pride goeth before destruction, a haughty spirit before the fall.*" We are a proud people.

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You see, salvation and eternal life is a gift of mercy and we are just not the type that thinks we need mercy. We want what's coming to us. Well, that's what we are going to get some day, what's coming to us.

We don't want what's coming to us. We don't want justice; we want mercy. You don't want what's coming to you. *"The wages of sin is death"* and that's what's coming to you. That's payday someday but you want mercy.

But your pride won't let you come to the backdoor of mercy and say: "Lord; I surely would be much obliged if you would do something for me. By your grace you don't have to but I wish you would."

Then, he blinds men with a false concept of God. There are many men who say, "Well, this is the way I see God." Well, how does the Word of God reveal God? Now, that's how we better see God and understand God and know what we know about God as He's revealed in the Scriptures.

"No man hath seen God at any time save the Son and he to whom the Son will reveal him." And Satan blinds men with a false concept of God and a false concept of sin and he blinds men with self-righteousness.

The Pharisee said; *"Lord, I thank you I'm not like other men, (I'm this and I'm that and I'm the other)."* He blinds men with pleasure, he blinds men with materialism, and he blinds men with a false religious profession. He's the great deceiver and he's the great imposter.

And Paul wrote to the church at Corinth in **chapter 11:3 of the 2 epistle**; he said: *"I fear, I'm afraid."* Paul wasn't afraid of many things. He wasn't afraid of men. He wasn't afraid of prison and persecution but Paul feared this, *"I fear lest by any means, as the serpent beguiled Eve, through his subtlety,"* he is a crafty and subtle deceiver. You are not dealing with another man; you are dealing with the great imposter, the great deceiver and he's an expert in deceiving human flesh.

He knows more about human nature than anybody but God. He's been in the business of deceiving men for 6,000 years. And Paul says: *"I fear lest Satan through his subtlety should corrupt your minds from the simplicity of Christ."*

Then he comes to our text, **verse 5**; *"We preach not ourselves. We have this ministry; we preach not ourselves but Jesus Christ the Lord."*

Let me ask you a question and I want you to think about this a few minutes; when can it be said that a man is preaching himself? Now, let's think about this. Paul said and this is very emphatic here, *We preach not ourselves; we preach Christ."* When can it be said that a man is not preaching Christ but he is preaching himself?

Could I offer some suggestions?

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First of all: We preach ourselves when we preach what we think instead of what God says; that's right, we preach ourselves when we preach what we think instead of what God says.

Second: We preach ourselves when we preach what men want to hear instead of what God wants them to hear or what they ought to hear. Does that ever go through your mind (if you are a preacher, or a deacon, or a Sunday school teacher); do you preach what men want to hear or want you to preach or do you preach what men ought to hear? We preach ourselves when we take the offense out of the cross and seek to please men. Paul said, *"If I please men I'm not the servant of Christ."*

Third: We preach ourselves when we set up ourselves up as authorities over the heritage, over the conscience, and over the people of God.

I turn you and point you to Christ. Now, I see in this world, those who claim to be authorities, and those who receive worship to themselves and receive followers to themselves and have men called by their names.

Now, we are preaching ourselves when we set ourselves up as authorities over the consciences, over the free spirits, over the liberty and hearts of other men. Don't you look to me; you look to Christ the Lord; we just minister.

People say, *"Well, I am of Paul."* They said in Corinth: *"I am of Cephas, I am of Paul."* Paul said, *"Who are these men? They are nothing but ministers by whom you received the gospel or heard the gospel."*

"I planted, Apollos watered; God gives the increase." He that planteth, he is nothing. He that watereth; he is nothing. See if you can get that preacher that you listen to, to say that he is nothing and turn your eyes away from him to Christ.

Fourth: We preach ourselves when we seek to impress men with our wisdom and intellect and our piety. Am I trying to impress you with what I know about the Bible; then I'm preaching myself? Am I trying to impress you with my education, intellect, my piety, or my goodness? I wish we would quit saying, "you" and start saying "we" when we are preaching.

We are sinners; it's not you are a sinner, and you need God. I need God as much as you need God. I'm a sinner just as much as you are a sinner.

Fifth: We preach ourselves when we try to impress people with our wisdom, knowledge, our theology and our intellect. We are not preaching Christ; we are putting on a show, that's what we are doing.

Sixth: And we preach ourselves when we get ambitious! Preachers get ambitious, did you know that? They want to boast of great numbers. They want more than they had last Sunday. I don't

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know why; they didn't do anything with that bunch they had last Sunday, I don't know why they want more.

You know, a fellow said to Spurgeon one time: "Why should we sing, 'Oh for a Thousand Tongues to sing my great Redeemer's praise' when we aren't using the one tongue that we have to sing our great redeemers praise?"

Why should he give us a thousand? Why should we want more hearers when we are not telling them anything? When we go to boasting of our converts and building great monuments to the flesh; we are preaching ourselves, that's what we are doing, we are not preaching Christ.

Seventh: We preach ourselves when we fear men!

Do you fear men, court their favor, court their friendship, and court their approval, at the expense of the truth? "*What should it profit a man if he should gain the whole world and lose his soul?*" We preach as those "*that must give an account*" and not to men. We are not going to be tried before the tribunal of human flesh; we are going to stand before the King of kings and the Lord of lords."

Eighth: We preach ourselves when we preach salvation by any other means than the grace of God through the blood of Jesus Christ!

Ninth: We preach ourselves when we preach for any other reason or any other reward than the glory of God!

Paul said: "*We preach not ourselves.*" What do we preach? We preach Christ the Lord. He is very God of very God. He's the Surety of the eternal covenant. He's man; our representative in the flesh.

He's our sin-offering and sacrifice. He's our risen Redeemer. He's our only Mediator between God and men:

**"My hope is built on nothing less
Than Jesus' blood and his righteousness
I dare not trust the sweetest frame
But wholly lean on Jesus' name."**