

# 2 Corinthians 4

Sunday 5/20/2012

## I. The Biblical Standard of Church and Ministry

If you have your Bibles this morning, I want to invite you to turn to 2 Corinthians chapter 4. We started that chapter last week and we got into it right out of the shoot. We now know that we are dealing with the biblical difference, or really the biblical definition, of what a Bible-based New Testament church and ministry should be. This is all based on what Paul gives us in his opening remarks.

You have to remember that Paul was the apostle to the Gentiles. Every church on this planet that is a New Testament local church by the Bible standard was started and runs back through the line to Paul. Acts chapter 11 and Acts chapter 13 are two key places in your Bible where it really marked for us the model church, and that church is the church at Antioch. That is where in Acts 11 they were first called Christians. A little bit later on in Acts 13 you find where it really defines that church and what they are doing. The first Bible teachers are found there at Antioch. The first missionary trips are sent out from Antioch. Antioch really sets up the model for you and for me. You have heard me say it many, many times that that is the model that I use, based on the New Testament, for building this church because it is very clear from Paul's opening remarks that this is what a church should be.

When we talk about church ministries or churches, we are talking about people. Sometimes we get the idea that when we talk about churches we kind of lose the aspect of people. Churches are not buildings. We call it a church building. We meet at this building or, "Where is your church location at?" But there is nothing different about this building or any other church building other than any other building in the city. People are the church. They are made up of people just like you and me.

Churches, believe it or not, take on personalities. The longer you are in this, and the longer you deal with people and you get into the ministry and you see things, the more in time you see how that works. Churches take on personalities. Churches basically take on the spiritual personality or the spiritual mentality of the people in the church. It starts with the pastor. He is the one that molds the mindset for the people. You see it all the time. Churches will be just like the pastor that is there. You find some that have a good balance, some that have a bad balance.

I teach you in dealing with leadership and being a leader that everything rises and falls on leadership. There is no truer statement ever made than that. That is so absolutely fundamentally true. When I look at that statement, I understand that the success of this church or any church will be based on the leadership. That is why a pastor, the first thing he needs to do, is begin to scan the crowd for those that have any ounce of leadership ability and then begin to cultivate that and build that. That is what makes the strong base, but you do not always find that.

You find some churches that are very strong and are very militant. You find some that are very weak and very spineless. You find some that have grace, but they have no truth, and you find some that have truth, but they have no grace. You find some who try to ride the middle of the

road and try to avoid controversy as much as they can. You find some churches that are very political. They are always tied into political things. The church itself structure is a minefield of political rights and wrongs and dos and don'ts. You find some churches that find themselves right in the middle of the fight.

Pastors are the same way. You find some pastors that are absolutely politicians. That is how they operate. You find some pastors that are absolutely crooked as a dog's hind leg. I do not even know what to tell you. I know that most of you are pretty young in this and you have not been out and seen the real world of Christianity, but I have. I have had for a number of years. I can attest to finding that some of these guys, it is just a good old boys club, man, and they are as crooked as they can be.

I had a guy out of Montana one time that I preached in his church four or five times. The guy was always a weird guy. He always was. He believed that the King James Bible was the Word of God, and I enjoyed going out there. He had great people. I had another friend of mine in the ministry that was an evangelist. He was a pastor, but he had a ministry that he traveled around. Let me show you how these guys work it. Now this guy had a church that probably had, I do not know, 300 people in it, both the sides of our church, I guess. It was, if you got everybody together, it was a nice church, a very solid church, a great church to preach at. This guy was a tyrant. Boy, he held a line with them. He got into their world. He had to approve what tapes you listened to. He just got way overboard with it, but he was a weird guy anyhow. I mean, he really was.

But to show you, this other guy comes in and is going to hold services for him. Now the guy coming in needs to raise about five, ten, fifteen thousand bucks. So what he does is he tells the pastor, "Hey, look, I got a special message." When they start telling you, "You got a special message," you know that something in cahoots is going on here. And basically what he did was, to make a long story short, he got up and he preached where the Bible says that a pastor or a bishop is due double honor. And this guy was probably already making, you know, eighty, ninety thousand dollars a year. I mean, he had a pretty good salary and, you know, he should. He is pastoring the church. It was a good church. I am not fighting that. But what this guy did was he went in and they traded off. He said to him, "I will get your salary doubled if you give me the offering that I need to help me with my project." So he went into these good, godly people, who were good people. I preached there a number of times. They were good people. He sold them a bill of goods based on a misconstrued conception of the Bible where it says a pastor or a bishop is worthy of double honor. He beat those people up that they need to double that pastor's salary, whatever it was. They had a meeting that night at the end of the service and the deacons who felt shame, you know, they were not doing much right because this guy manipulated them, made a decree that, and they all voted on it, and they doubled that guy's pastor's salary. The pastor got his salary doubled. The guy coming in got his ten grand, fifteen grand, twenty grand, whatever it was, and everybody was happy. That is dishonesty, you see. But that is the way it works. It goes on all the time. All the time. There is nothing different.

Some are political. Some are weak and fearful. Some are so insecure that they are scared by their own shadow. Some get intimidated by everything and everybody. Some of them are just hired

servants. They are run by a committee someplace. They do not really have any say in it. There are churches in this city where the pastor really does not have a say in what goes on. It is all run by committee. Sometimes they call them elders. Sometimes they call them deacons. I call them the mafia. And what they do is that they, the pastor does not have any say in anything. The pastor gets up and preaches, but he preaches what they tell him to preach. He does what they tell him to do, and they run the church. You see it that way. And then you find some who are warriors who fight the good fight. And that is just the way it goes. I mean, I have seen them all my life and all my ministry. If I could take time this morning and reminisce with you, I could tell you horror stories or scores of situations that run down the line just like that.

The ministry, churches, pastors, and Christians, it is much like the military. It really is. And you have got people who are elite and they are professional and they want to be everything that God wants them to be. And you have that in the military. And then you have people in the military that are just doing their time. It looked like a good opportunity to get their education paid for. So they went in, they do not have any real love for it. They do not have any care for it. They are basically worthless. And that is the way it is in the military. That is the way it is in churches, unfortunately.

I told you this Thursday night, when they wanted to get Bin Laden and they wanted to kill Bin Laden, they sent in SEAL Team Six. They did not call the Oklahoma National Guard. It was a thing where they wanted the best, the very best, to get the job done. And when God has got something really special to do, He will not do it with ordinary Christians. He will reach down and He will grab the cream of the crop. He will grab the elite and that is what He will get it done with. And you do not find much of that today because that is not where churches are.

Last week we opened up and I read you, and I want to start there again today. We have got to kind of refresh our mind here what I said last week to look at what we are going to talk about this week. But I opened up here in 2 Corinthians chapter 4, verses 1 and 2. Let us look at it again. I will read it.

*2 Corinthians 4:1-2*

*Therefore seeing we have this ministry, as we have received mercy, we faint not;*

*But have renounced the hidden things of dishonesty, 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.*

Now Father, help us today to learn and grow from this. We love you. We pray Father, your blessings upon our time, your dear people here in this message that you have given me to preach. And we will thank you and praise you in Jesus' name for the sake we ask it. Amen.

Now you remember we broke in this passage and we broke it down into two sections, understanding the ministry and how it worked. Ministry in its basic fundamental form is the two sections. He breaks it down here. The first one we talked about was a doctrinal section. We talked about that last week, how and what you do with the Word of God and how you handle it and give it to your people. The second one is the practical approach, and we have not studied that

yet. We will get into that in a couple of weeks. And that is how to be to your people as a pastor, as a minister, and the right way to minister, the right motive behind it, and the right things to do. And those are the two aspects of ministry that you are going to find that really define what a church is.

Last week we looked at the three areas of verse 2 in a doctrinal section. And we saw the fact that the Bible says that Paul tells us that in ministry, we have a ministry, therefore, seeing we have this ministry. We have a ministry, this church. You renounce the hidden things of dishonesty. You do not walk in craftiness, and you do not handle the Word of God deceitfully. And I showed you this is what the Church of Jesus Christ is all about today in 2012. We follow, as I said, the pragmatic approach, the philosophy that the end justifies the means. And certainly, if anything describes the Church of Jesus Christ today perfectly, it is those three words: dishonesty, craftiness, and deceitfulness. And that pretty well sums it up as you find it.

## II. The Danger of Lost Comparison

You will also remember – I want you to turn back to Haggai chapter 2. I want to go back to what I said last week, and I want to show you something else about it. You will also remember I gave you the great principles of the book of Haggai chapter 2. And how important this is of getting your comparison. And this was the problem back in Israel's day. This is the problem today. The reason why people put up with the God-awful churches and pastors and preachers and the sick ministries that are out there is because they do not know what the real thing is. They have no comparison. This was Israel's problem. And I showed you that if you go back to Haggai chapter 2. Here is what he says.

*Haggai 2:3*

*Who is left among you that saw this house in her first glory? and how do ye see it now? is it not in your eyes in comparison of it as nothing?*

Now I told you last week that what he is doing here is this: They have just come back from this seventy years captivity. They have lost everything. God is gone. They have no power in their life. They are a captive nation. They have lost the vision of God in every way, shape, or form. And right there at that point in time, the Nation of Israel is a picture of the church age for you and I we live in right now. The church age today has lost the power of God, lost the Word of God, lost the vision of God, and they have nothing that compares with it. I am going to show you something that is pretty astounding here in just a moment.

Now they rededicate this temple. They rebuild this temple. And this temple now had been destroyed in 606 B.C. by Nebuchadnezzar. And now Cyrus, king of Persia, is king. Nebuchadnezzar is gone, so he allows them to go back. They rebuild the temple. It is a picture of what we are trying to do today or somebody trying to rekindle a ministry in a dead area where they kicked out God and everything about God. And this is what happens. And they build this temple the second time and the old men, the men who came out of that captivity or went into that captivity, the old ancient men who were in their eighties and their nineties who actually saw the temple when it was in its glory. They see now this pitiful way that they are trying to re-jumpstart

it. How absolutely pitiful it was compared to what the glory of Solomon when God was there. And the Bible says the old men who had a comparison, who saw what was real and now saw what was never going to be the glory of God again in their time, they wept.

But I want to show you something. Look down here at Ezra chapter 3, verses 12 and 13.

*Ezra 3:12-13*

*But many of the priests and Levites and chief of the fathers, who were ancient men, that had seen the first house, when the foundation of this house was laid before their eyes, wept with a loud voice; and many shouted aloud for joy:*

*So that the people could not discern the noise of the shout of joy from the noise of the weeping of the people: for the people shouted with a loud shout, and the noise was heard afar off.*

I think that is one of the most telling passages in the Bible of where we are at today. It is an incredible thing. The old men are weeping. You know why they are weeping? Because they had a comparison. They knew what the real deal was and they saw what they were doing now and how far it fell short of what the real one was. You see, the young ones, they never saw it. They had no comparison and they are shouting for joy. It reminds me of churches today. They are shouting for joy at a period of time when honestly, folks, there is nothing to shout about.

If you know Psalms 78, you know that the kingdom of heaven is gone. You know that that temple will never be viable again. It will not work again. There is no reason for it. God is not going to be in it anymore. The tabernacle is gone. The Holy of Holies is gone. Everything has changed now. There is absolutely nothing to be shouting about and that is the way it is today. People go to church, they get excited. There is nothing to get excited about today. They get all hopped up about this and that and they do not even understand like these people here. They have never figured out that God was no longer in their presence. They are an empty shell and God's people today for the most part are happy, whooping around, and they have no idea that God is no longer in their presence, but they have no comparison. The old men, they knew what was real and when you see the real deal and you see something that is a pitiful attempt like they are doing in Ezra, it is no wonder they wept, but it is the young people who never saw the real thing. It is the young people who never learned their lessons in history. It is the young people who never found out the great glory of Solomon in his day. They had the same books that the old men had. It talked about the 200,000 sheep. It talked about the 400,000 this and the 20,000 this. You would think that somebody would read that and say, "Wow, they did 200,000. We did 200." They would think that that building was over-graced with gold. It is nothing compared. That is what Christianity is today.

Sometime in your life I hope you study two great churches in church history and there are seven periods of church history on our chart up there. We have talked about it many, many times. But one of them is the church the Bible calls of the open door. That will be the Philadelphia church. That is the church where God opened the door and no man could shut it. The second one is the church of the closed door. That is the church that God closed the door and no man could open it. Those two churches fill up the last 600 years of our history. For 400 years we had the church of

the Philadelphia church age, the church of the open door. In 1900 that door got slammed shut when American Christianity dumped the Word of God. And I will show it to you today. I am going to talk to you today about the seven things you lose when you lose your Bible. When you walk out of here today you are going to have a much better understanding of why things are the way they are and you are going to get something that these young guys could not get back here. You are going to get a perspective. You are going to get something from an old man that saw the real deal and now telling you what is out there today is phony. Phony as a three dollar bill.

*Revelation 3:8*

*I know thy works: behold, I have set before thee an open door, and no man can shut it: for thou hast a little strength, and hast kept my word, and hast not denied my name.*

And then he tells you down in Revelation 3:10 the reason why it is the open door, "you have kept my word." That word will be a King James 1611, Authorized Version.

*Revelation 3:20*

*Behold, I stand at the door, and knock: if any man hear my voice, and open the door, I will come in to him, and will sup with him, and he with me.*

This is Jesus Christ standing at his own church door, kicked out of it, knocking on the door of the church to get back in. One is the church of the open door, this one is the church of the closed door. You and I are living at the end before the rapture of the church or the church of the closed door. And I want to talk today about the seven things you lose when you lose your Bible. I will show you today along with the last couple of weeks exactly what happened and why. We are in the church of the closed door today and we are in the mess that we are in.

### III. Seven Things You Lose When You Lose Your Bible

Now the first thing I want you to go to, we are going to go to seven places in your Bible this morning and I am going to show you how this thing breaks down. And you will have all your questions answered by why we are done today, of what the problem is and why Christianity is in the mess that it is.

- 1.) The Furnishings for Your Life
- 2.) The Effectual Working Within You
- 3.) The Biblical Ability to Love God
- 4.) Biblical Definitions and True Worship
- 5.) Power in Your Prayer Life
- 6.) Power in Preaching
- 7.) Your Inheritance

## IV. The Consequences of Losing the Bible

Now, seven things you lose.

- 1.) You lose your furnishings.
- 2.) You lose the ability for God to work in you.
- 3.) You lose your ability to love God.
- 4.) You lose your ability to worship God.
- 5.) You lose your ability to have power in your prayer life.
- 6.) You lose the ability to have power in your preaching.
- 7.) And now you lose your inheritance.

And we wonder why God's people are in a mess today. Those are the things that you lose when you lose your Bible. Now, let me take it one step further. I will tell you seven other things they lead to that you are going to lose with your inheritance.

- 1.) At the judgment seat of Christ, you are going to lose your crowns.
- 2.) At the judgment seat of Christ, you are going to lose your robe of righteousness.
- 3.) At the judgment seat of Christ, you are going to lose your shoes. You are supposed to have your feet shod with the preparation of the gospel of peace.
- 4.) Oh yeah, and you are going to lose your undergarments. You better go back and study the Old Testament priest when he went out of there. He had special undergarments on and you are going to lose them.
- 5.) You are going to lose your rewards.
- 6.) You are going to lose your fine linen.
- 7.) And you are going to lose your inheritance.

And the Bible says, 2 Corinthians 5:3, "If so be that being clothed we shall not be found naked." The Word of God is behind everything we do. You are going to have guys that want thousands of people to Christ, build the biggest churches, build the big missions program out there, and just literally responsible for thousands, hundreds of thousands of millions of people to come to Christ. And at the judgment of Christ is going to lose it all because it was not based on the book. That is hard. That is hard for God's people to grasp today. And the reason why it is hard is because you have got no comparison. You have never seen the real thing. You have never seen the real thing.

## V. Conclusion and Future Study

Now I want to leave you with two verses. And you better get these down. While you are turning there, let me say this to you. Next week, I am going to add a bonus to it. Everybody is pretty much here. Everybody needs to know we are already in this passage where we are at. Next Sunday, I am going to take, before we finish out the last half of this, I am going to take next Sunday, and I am going to lay it out in a layman's term, how you got your Bible. I am going to give you the terminology that you need to know and understand that when you are done and you get what I do next week, and you get it out and work out, put a few things together, you will be able to go toe to toe with anybody out there that asks you. You know why? Because they know

absolutely nothing. You will be an expert compared to them because they are so stupid. They do not even know what day it is. But I am going to bring you through, and I am going to give you a concise layman's concept where anybody could grab it. If you have just been saved a week, you will get it. And I am going to show you that this whole thing is built on about learning seven or eight concepts, terms. And when you get that and you put some history to it, the rest takes care of itself. I am going to show you how you got your Bible. I do not want my people not knowing. And I know we do it here, do it here, do it there. We did it in church history that all 12 of you came to. But the bottom line is simply this. Next week, we will take one shot and we will get it done, and then we can put the pieces together in Bible study from there if you want to take it any farther than that.

Now, two verses. First one is Nehemiah 9:5. I want you to get that in one hand, and I want you to get Psalms 138 in the other. We will go to Nehemiah first. Talk to you about the Word of God. Show you this thing in the final phase, what you have got. That Bible is the most important thing you have ever had in your life. It is the most important book you will ever have. Post-piece of literature that ever graced this planet. It is God's absolute. It is God's heart. It is God's mind. It is everything that God is. When God replaced Himself and went back to Heaven, He gave you Him low in a volume of a book. I realize I should have gave you Nehemiah 9:5 before we started the sermon that way you could have found it by now. Nehemiah 9:5 in one hand, Psalms 138, verses 1 and 2 in the other. Go to Nehemiah 9:5 first. Here it comes.

*Nehemiah 9:5*

*Then the Levites, Jeshua, and Kadmiel, Bani, Hashabniah, Sherebiah, Hodijah, Shebaniah, and Pethahiah, said, Stand up and bless the LORD your God for ever and ever: and blessed be thy glorious name, which is exalted above all blessing and praise.*

You see that verse? That verse says that the name of Jesus Christ is blessed and is glorious and is exalted above all blessing and praise. Philippians 2 says that at the name of Jesus, every knee will bow and every tongue will confess that Jesus Christ is Lord. Acts 4:12 says, "Neither is there salvation in any other: for there is none other name under heaven given among men, whereby we must be saved." That verse tells you that there is nothing higher, nothing higher, and all the blessings and all the praise, nothing is exalted more above His name. You all got that? You all see that? All right, Psalms 138. Here it comes. Psalms 138, verses 1 and 2.

*Psalms 138:1-2*

*I will praise thee with my whole heart: before the gods will I sing praise unto thee.*

*I will worship toward thy holy temple, and praise thy name for thy lovingkindness and for thy truth: for thou hast magnified thy word above all thy name.*

We talk about praying in the name of Jesus, loving Jesus, and how great it is to love Jesus. He just told you He exalted His word above His name. What do you do with that book? There it is right there. There is the problem right there. The problem is that God exalted that book above His own Son's name. We will not take that exaltation, and we want to exalt Jesus, but we dump the book. And its verses like that will just kill you. All right, let us pray. Next week.