

2 Corinthians 4:5-7 *The Power of Gospel (Christian) Ministry*

An illustration from the life of John the Baptizer – John 3:29-30

The power of Christian ministry is in the exaltation of Jesus Christ

1. The goal proclaimed
2. The goal defended
3. The goal secured

1. The goal proclaimed – 2 Corinthians 4:5

Paul proclaims his desire to preach Christ, and himself *our servants for Christ's sake*.

What makes a good servant? A good waiter or waitress?

Key: They provide you with what you need before you realize you need it.

What does this mean then for Christians? For deacons or elders? For pastors? Is it an idea that we 'tickle the ears' or serve at someone else's every whim?

No – Paul says he is *our* servant for *Christ's sake* (not our sake!)

Means there is a focus on the idea that Paul serves the church to provide for them not *felt* needs, but true needs, and those true needs match up with the focus of Christ (the glory of Christ and work of Christ in His people!).

Hence Paul focuses the idea of this service in saying he *preaches Christ Jesus the Lord*.

The term for Christ is helpful. In the Roman empire they had a saying, "Caesar is Lord." This spoke of how Caesar was in control of all that happened within the borders of Rome.

The early Christians had a contrary saying, "Christ is Lord." It is significant because it isn't just speaking of Christ crucified, but of Christ victorious! He rules over all. Yet the One who rules is the Saviour (Jesus) who is the Anointed (Christ) of God!

In Paul's declaration we see that there is only *one* Lord and only *one* Anointed. It is not Caesar...and it is not Paul. This is a very important concept to remember.

Pastor once said, "You can't impress people with Jesus and with yourself at the same time. People will either go away from a service saying 'What a great preacher' or they will go away from a service saying, 'What a great Saviour.'"

Need to consider this in our service to others in the name of Christ. Who is it our goal to show? And how do we go about showing Him?

Certainly, one of the important points of displaying Christ is to know how He would speak to the people we are serving! Are they downcast? Are they repentant? Are they proud? Struggling? Suffering?

One man once described the pastor as a sponge...what about us?

Goal proclaimed – **to proclaim Christ Jesus the Lord** – to exalt HIM.

2. The goal defended – 2 Corinthians 4:6

Why is this so important? Because Paul has first learned the power of this Saviour in his own heart.

How does verse 6 begin in its description of God? **The God who made light shine out of darkness.** What does that remind us of and teach us about? *General revelation* – the work of God in creating the world. It is an illustration to the sovereign power of God – He spoke and it occurred! He gave the word and it took place! The earth and seas and sky all came to be because of His awesome power!

Then the scope of our view is narrowed. This great sovereign God shone into *Paul's* heart.

Why does the Christian want to make much of Jesus? Why is that the goal? Why is it something we are called to die for (everyday!)?

The answer is that God has shone in *our* heart. He has revealed Himself not only in creation, but in us.

How has He done this? By giving us the *knowledge of His glory* in the *face of Jesus Christ*.

Is it speaking of the Damascus road? Yes, but more significantly the result of the Damascus road – the opening of the heart by the Holy Spirit to show us the things that the natural man cannot understand – to give us spiritual life.

What we gain is knowledge – but knowledge of God's glory! God's mercy, justice, love and wrath, power and compassion – and all is seen, all is understood, all is grasped (in a small way) in one place – the face of Jesus Christ! (DV, this will be opened up)

This is why Paul is a servant!

Consider Phil. 2! The same pattern is seen there in verses 1-4.

Why be nothing so Christ can be all? Why be a servant to exalt Christ? Why is this the most important goal of the Christian? Because this is the inevitable result when we learn of what Christ has done for us!

3. The Goal Secured

Original point title – the undeniable safety check.

God has chosen, in showing His glory in a fallen world, to use the results of sin in a very significant way – to ensure that the glory is always His. And He does this by putting the treasure of His glory (and His gospel and His knowledge) in jars of clay.

Illustration of John MacArthur.

God could have continued to show Himself through visions; Damascus road experiences. But He chose, already in Paul's day, to send the message through men like Paul! (Or Peter, or Barnabbas!) This was a very purposeful move, to use jars of clay.

R. Kent Hughes – Clay pots were the throw away containers of the ancient world! Comparable to fast food containers.

Not very complimentary...but certainly humbling, and most definitely significant, because God has used the weakness of His men and women in a very powerful way to show those we serve, and those we love, and those we minister to – that its really all about Him.

There is an important balance here. We don't want to ignore passages like Rom 10:15 (Is. 52:7). We know Paul told the Corinthians that they should, in light of his love and service to them, love him in return! YET he maintained that neither he (who planted) nor Apollos (who watered) were anything, but God who gave the growth.

But this doesn't just apply to apostles – the miracle workers of that day! IT applies to us all. To Christian parents who want always be around to teach their children in the things of God. To friends in the church who might not always be in a position to help us when we need it. To a husband or wife who might not always have exactly the right words to say – in the end we're just the jars of clay – and God not only *knows* this, but in His sovereign purposes *uses* this.

Because of it, Paul will say that he has learned to rejoice in weakness, for when he is weak, then he is strong!

What of us? Do we have the goal of exalting Christ?