

2 Corinthians 4:3-6

And even if our gospel is veiled, it is veiled to those who are perishing. 4 The god of this age has blinded the minds of unbelievers, so that they cannot see the light of the gospel of the glory of Christ, who is the image of God. 5 For we do not preach ourselves, but Jesus Christ as Lord, and ourselves as your servants for Jesus' sake. 6 For God, who said, "Let light shine out of darkness," made his light shine in our hearts to give us the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Christ.

Dear Friends in Christ,

We've heard today about the glory of God, both in the case of Moses who saw God's glory and covered his face while the reflection of that glory was still fading, and in the account of Peter, James and John who were so enthralled by the glory of Jesus that they lost all thought of returning from the mountain to the life below. They wanted to stay and enjoy the glory.

Just for an example this morning I've placed this folded sheet in front of us with the message: By God's grace, through Jesus Christ, we have complete "Forgiveness, Life and Salvation."

**THE GOD OF THIS AGE has blinded the minds of unbelievers
They cannot see the light of the gospel
God made his light shine in our hearts**

As the Corinthians were reading this letter, those with a Jewish background would understand that the apostle Paul was referring to the lesson that was our OT reading for today, when Moses asked to see the glory of the God and it was so bright that he had to cover his face when he came back from the mountain where he had seen God. Those who knew the stories of Jesus' ministry, death and resurrection also knew that Paul was making reference to our gospel lesson for today when Jesus' glory was revealed for a time to Peter, James and John. But Paul makes a separate application of the picture to false preachers of the day who were trying to convince the Corinthians that their forgiveness came from something other than the gospel.

Just for an example this morning I've placed this folded sheet in front of us with the message: "By God's grace, through Jesus Christ, we have complete 'Forgiveness, Life and Salvation.'" This message of the gospel is so wonderful, so glorious, because it is free of any extra requirements for salvation since those who believe the message are saved only by the merits and the blood of Christ. But, in effect, the false teachers placed a veil over the glorious message of the gospel of Jesus Christ which says, "Complete forgiveness, salvation and eternal life come only in Jesus Christ." (Place a veil over the card)

Paul continues to describe the sad and troublesome work of preaching this good news to people who don't want to hear it, who refuse to believe it.

*If our gospel is veiled, it is veiled to those who are perishing. **The god of this age has blinded the minds of unbelievers**, so that they cannot see the light of the gospel of the glory of Christ. vv 3, 4*

The "god of this age" may be recognized in many different ways, but there is only one source of all this spiritual confusion, unbelief and rejection. This is the work of Satan.

We can list a multitude of sinful attitudes and activities and ascribe them to the schemes of Satan, and we could spend the rest of our sermon time denouncing them. The work of the Devil is seen in the sinful attitudes and the actions associated with greed, envy, jealousy, dissatisfaction, selfishness, arrogance, anger, envy, sensuality, revenge, dishonesty, lying, cursing, and blaspheming God; thoughts and actions that are rebellious, rude, uncaring, unforgiving, resentful, wasteful and insincere. Such sinful attitudes are the work of only one enemy of God, Satan. Talking about such sins would not necessarily help us, instead let's consider how Satan used such attitudes and actions to veil the beauty, the gospel of the glory in the lives of God's people.

We'll pass over Adam and Eve in the Garden of Eden because that lesson is so pointed and evident. Instead let's consider the life of Noah. God said of him,

Noah was a righteous man, blameless among the people of his time, and he walked with God. (Gen 6:9)

After his faithful and heroic act of building the ark and preserving God's creatures, after God by grace saved Noah and his family, we read that when the occasion presented itself, Noah didn't apply good judgment and as a result provided an opportunity for his son, Ham, to sin.

Noah, a man of the soil, proceeded to plant a vineyard. When he drank some of its wine, he became drunk and lay uncovered inside his tent. (Gen 9:20, 21)

Or consider Jonah, a prophet chosen by God, who downright, outright refused to obey God and willfully did just the opposite of what God had commanded him.

2 "Go to the great city of Nineveh and preach against it, because its wickedness has come up before me." 3 But Jonah ran away from the LORD and headed for Tarshish. (Jonah 1:2,3)

Next we remember David

So Samuel took the horn of oil and anointed him in the presence of his brothers, and from that day on the Spirit of the LORD came upon David in power. (1 Sm. 16:13)

But we read later of David

David wrote a letter to [his general] Joab and sent it with Uriah [David's mistress's husband]. 15 In it he wrote, "Put Uriah in the front line where the fighting is fiercest. Then withdraw from him so he will be struck down and die." (2 Sm. 11:14,15)

From examples like this we learn that Satan, the "GOD OF THIS AGE" not only works on unbelievers to prevent them from seeing, knowing *the gospel of the glory of Jesus Christ*, he also works to cover up forgiveness and the love of God from believers.

You and I also must recognize who the "god of this age" is. It doesn't make a difference whether we're talking about 60 and 70 year olds, or middle aged parents, or young people. In every age group Satan, who IS the "god of this age," is working and he's working among believers as well as among unbelievers.

Be self-controlled and alert. Your enemy the devil prowls around like a roaring lion looking for someone to devour. (1 Pet 5:8)

You may not have plotted a murder like David did; you may not drink too much like Noah or ignore the obvious messages of God, like Jonah. Wait. . . let's think about Jonah and that

disobedience regarding what God has said. Do you disregard what God commands and do just the opposite? Are you a thief? When you drive out of a parking lot and the attendant is gone and the sign says, "Drop your fee in this slot," are you tempted to drive away because "No one will know?" Or, do you think, "I've paid to park here lots of times. I deserve a freebie?"

That's the work of "**THE GOD OF THIS AGE.**" He works among us so that we too may not, "*see the light of the gospel of the glory of Christ.*"

We've all learned in catechism class, Sunday School, Bible Classes or sermons what the God of the Bible expects of us. And yet in our day-to-day lives we talk ourselves out of how God wants us to be. At best, if don't think through the circumstances of a situation we are about to get in or perhaps are already in, at best, we might say that we don't understand what the moral problem is with our situation. But we should honestly consider the question: Is it that we really haven't thought about it and we don't want to see ourselves as breaking God's command? Christians, young and old alike, in fact, entire Christian church bodies, even many who call themselves Lutheran ask, "Why be judgmental about people living together without marriage? Why make a big deal about couples or individuals having children without being married. They ask, "What's the difference if some man wants to marry another man? They have the right to be happy, don't they?" God's Word is ignored. Passages that that speak of sin are disregarded. The truth of God's Word is veiled and even Christians find themselves covering the light of the truth and living *in the darkness.*

Satan has a thousand ways to keep us in the dark. Some of his greatest plans are deception and distortion. Thousands of preachers who claim to speak for God, distort the Word of God. Satan has deceived people who will do anything, even change the message to please the hearer. Haven't you wondered how anyone can read their Bibles and still defend gay marriages in spite of God's Word?

(1 Cor 6:9,10) *Do you not know that the wicked will not inherit the kingdom of God? Do not be deceived: Neither the sexually immoral nor idolaters nor adulterers nor male prostitutes nor homosexual offenders 10 nor thieves nor the greedy nor drunkards nor slanderers nor swindlers will inherit the kingdom of God.*

Satan blinds the hearts of unbelievers. Paul wrote to the Romans about stubborn sinners. *They exchanged the truth of God for a lie. (Romans 1:25)*

Paul warns the Corinthians and we are warned about false teachers who use the Bible as a "guide," not a source of truth. They speak of God's Word and describe it like a map that tells you how to go, but then they also teach "you can chose alternative ways." That's not accurate. "*Your Word is truth.*" Speaking of the devil Jesus says,

... there is no truth in him. When he lies, he speaks his native language, for he is a liar and the father of lies. (John 8:44)

Perhaps we ask the question, not in judgment because we think we're better than they, but "What's wrong with this world?" Why can't people see that the loss of discipline, morality have destroyed the orderliness we so desire to have in our world. This is the darkness. This has come by believing the lies. And even though some have known the truth, at times, to justify their own wrong choices they have convinced themselves that the lies were true. They live in darkness; they don't understand what's right or true, because the light, the truth is veiled.

The apostle Paul continues,

5 We do not preach ourselves, but Jesus Christ as Lord, and ourselves as your servants for Jesus' sake. 6 For God, who said, "Let light shine out of darkness," made his light shine in our hearts to give us the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Christ.

By *Amazing Grace*, those of us who "once were blind" now can see. Paul rightly credits God who *made his light shine in our hearts to give us the light of the knowledge of the glory of God.*

Through the working of the Holy Spirit, God brings light to our sinful hearts. Our past actions, shame, guilty consciences, veil the glorious message of the gospel, forgiveness through Jesus. But God lifts the veil and "*made light shine in our hearts.*" (Remove the veil)

This message of the gospel is so wonderful, so glorious, because it is free of any extra requirements for salvation since those who believe the message are saved only by the merits and the blood of Christ. The glorious message of the gospel of Jesus Christ says, "Complete forgiveness, salvation and eternal life come only in Jesus Christ."

We close with the words of Jesus,

"I am the light of the world. Whoever follows me will never walk in darkness, but will have the light of life." (John 8:12)

Amen