

Darkness Overcome By Light

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[0 : 00] Let's turn for a little to the chapter we read, 2 Corinthians chapter 4, and if we could look again, verses 3 and 4.

2 Corinthians 4, verse 3. And even if our gospel is veiled, it is veiled only to those who are perishing. In their case, the God of this world has blinded the minds of the unbelievers to keep them from seeing the light of the gospel of the glory of Christ, who is the image of God.

As we know, the gospel of the Lord Jesus Christ is the most glorious news that any person could ever hear in this world.

We may hear many wonderful things in our lifetime, many things that are life-changing in our experience, but we will never hear anything that is of more value to our eternal souls than the news of the gospel of Jesus Christ.

What you do with the gospel is another thing. Some people grasp it, some people lay hold upon the truth and embrace Jesus, but others neglect it. Others choose to turn away from it.

[1 : 25] What we do with it is another thing. And on the one hand, when the gospel of Jesus Christ is being preached, the way of salvation is opened up, the beauty of Christ is set out before people, the wonders of being a Christian are laid out before us, the future is set out before us.

But what we have also got to remember is that while that is taking place, there is also a war going on, a battle for your soul, for my soul.

Because our text here shows us that there is an enemy going about, and he does not want us to see the way, he does not want us to understand the truth, he does not want us to lay hold upon Jesus, He wants to cloud all that in mystery, he wants to veil in such a way that we never see that we don't see.

So there is this war going on over every single person, the great war between the kingdom of God, the kingdom of light, and the kingdom of darkness.

And Paul here, as he is presenting the gospel and preaching the gospel, he recognizes that it is a wonderful privilege, he is given this wonderful privilege.

[2 : 50] And so it is for every single person who preaches the gospel of Jesus Christ. It is the most wonderful privilege in the world. And it is the most wonderful privilege to share the gospel. You do not need to be a preacher of the gospel, you can share the gospel, you can tell people.

And we all get opportunities when somebody will ask you, what is it you believe, and why do you believe that? That sort of thing is asked sometimes at work.

You might get hassle over it. But sometimes people out of genuine curiosity will say, well, why do you do it that way? And you are able to tell them something of what the gospel of Jesus Christ is.

And that is a wonderful privilege that we have. But as we said, there is on the one hand, it is the most wonderful privilege. But it is also sometimes the most difficult thing that we can do.

Because we have opposition. We have an enemy who is always going about. Who will try to spoil, to hinder, to hamper. The whole way of sharing and declaring the gospel of Jesus Christ.

[4 : 02] But Paul, he is recognizing that it is tough going. Because he mentions at the beginning, therefore having this ministry by the mercy of God, we do not lose heart.

Which indicates that there is a possibility, there is a potential of losing heart in the work of the gospel. And I am sure every single one of us knows something of that.

Because there are discouragements. There are struggles. There are battles. There are times you feel you are losing. There are times you feel you are not making your way. Not only with regard to sharing the gospel and witnessing.

But with regard to your own personal way of following the Lord. So, the apostle is saying though, that there is, while there is a potential of losing heart, he says, we do not lose heart.

Therefore, having this ministry by the mercy of God. And Paul is showing here how it is by mercy that he received this gospel. Remember, just a couple of weeks ago, we were looking at the martyrdom of Stephen and what followed on from there.

[5 : 15] And you remember that the apostle Paul, who was then Saul of Tarshish, as they were stoning Stephen, the men put down their clothes. In order to stone Stephen all the better, they put down their clothes at the feet of Saul.

And Saul was in total agreement with what they were doing. And from the stoning of Stephen, it seemed to, something seemed to ignite in the heart of Saul.

And he thought, this is it. He devoted his life to persecution. That was what it, he was committed to obliterating the name of Christ. That was his passion in life.

Imagine having that as your aim. What motivates you? Oh, destroying the Christian faith. And I believe that there are people like that today. It's their aim.

That's what motivates them. And they can be in any strand or sphere of society, in education, in politics. They can be in finance. They can be anywhere.

[6 : 16] But that's their aim. It's to eradicate the Christian faith from society. Well, that was Paul's aim. Saul, back in the day, that was Saul's great aim.

I am going to obliterate, remove, eradicate Christianity from off the face of the earth. And his very breath was slaughtered against the church until the Lord Jesus met with him on the way to Damascus.

He arrested him. Remember how Saul fell to the ground. He was confronted. Why are you doing this to me? And we know the story of how Saul then became the Apostle Paul.

Became one of the greatest missionaries ever. And the energy and the zeal and the passion that he had seeking to destroy the Christian faith. That same energy and zeal he now used in order to promote the Christian faith.

But the thing Paul never got over was God's mercy to him. You'll find that right throughout Paul's writings. He just couldn't get over that God had been merciful to him after what he, Saul, had done to the name and the cause of Jesus.

[7 : 31] It was something that overwhelmed him. And so you'll find that you'll find throughout Paul's writings so often, God was merciful to me. And so he says he received this ministry by the mercy of God.

He never forgot the cost. He never forgot what was involved in it. And neither should you or I. Are you here today and you've kind of forgotten what it cost for your salvation?

You wouldn't be here today were it not for God's great love in sending his Son. And for the Spirit's great love in applying that work into your soul, into your heart.

You'd still be in darkness. You would be, as we will see in a minute, you would be perishing.

Because the gospel was veiled to you. Do you remember a time when it was veiled? You couldn't see.

You couldn't understand what are all these Christians all fussed about. It doesn't make sense to me. You can come to church and it doesn't make sense to you. You can hear the gospel.

[8 : 35] It doesn't make sense to you. Because there's a veil over your eyes. We'll see that in a minute. And Paul knew that and that's why he couldn't get over God's mercy to him.

And if you're a believer today, continue to thank the Lord for his mercy. Because that's when he, it was through his love, his grace, his mercy. That he touched you. He opened your eyes.

Because it's a glorious gospel. It's a gospel of glory. The light of the gospel. That's what Paul says in verse 4. The light of the gospel of the glory of Christ.

You see, this gospel begins in glory and it ends in glory. Begins in glory. Comes down here into this world and back up into glory. This glorious gospel shines into people's hearts.

With the result that the glory of Christ begins to shine within your heart. And then you will be taken up into glory to be there forever and ever. In the fullness of that glory.

[9 : 37] So it's all glory. Paul knew the power of this gospel. That's why he said elsewhere. He said, I'm not ashamed of the gospel of Christ. Do you know, it's funny, there is a shame in the gospel, isn't it?

Of all the religions in the world, there's some, there's just an inbuilt shame about the gospel. It's incredible how sin twists everything.

Well, Paul says, I'm not ashamed of it. I'm not ashamed of the gospel of Christ. Because it's a power of God unto salvation. It blows apart the stubbornness of our heart. The inbuilt resistance that is there. As we've said it so often, that word, the power is dunami. Which is the dynamite. And that's what dynamite does. It blows a hole. Blows in. That's what the gospel has done. That's what the light has done. It's shone into your heart. Penetrated right in.

[10 : 36] And all of a sudden you were able to see what you never saw before. You saw sufficient of the way of salvation. So that you were able to cry to the Lord and say, Lord, be merciful to me.

Lord, save me. Lord, help me. That's all you needed to see was sufficient to know. And so Paul is talking about the light of the gospel of the glory of Christ.

You see, this gospel is a light. It's shining. Today it's shining. Shining here. Just as the sun shines down on everybody. Everybody who is out and about there.

The sun is shining. We can see it. It's in the sky. And the light of the sun of God is also shining down. That's happening.

But the impact of that, of course, can be different. And that's why the Christian faith really is like nothing else in this world.

[11 : 36] Because the Christian faith, when you think about it, God has shown us, this is where the Christian faith is. God has shown us who he is.

He is the creator of this world. He has shown us how he's made the world by the word of his power. He spoke into being. He has shown us that it is in him that we live, we move, we have our being.

He has shown us that he upholds all things by the word of his power. And he has shown us that he's there to save us. And he shows us that he wants a relationship with us.

Now, you look at the other religions of this world. Which one is able to declare all these great and glorious truths? And that this almighty God who brought the world into being and upholds the world by the word of his power wants a personal relationship with you.

Isn't that incredible? And yet so many people say, oh, I don't want that. Why would I want that? I don't believe that. So you see, while there's this wonderful, glorious gospel, yet it tells us here that people are perishing.

[12 : 54] And even if our gospel is veiled, it is veiled to those who are perishing. And it's here we have this issue, this problem. Because today people are perishing.

Now, a lot of people will say, you know, the message of the gospel is a message of love. And it's a message of peace. Well, it is. But you know, what's also important.

Is that people are told that they're perishing. Do you know, it's no kindness to tell people, to leave people who are perishing. And not to tell them.

If you were passing and you saw a house on fire. Would it be a kindness to say, I better not go in there. Better not waken them. They won't want to be wakened. Of course you wouldn't.

You would try and raise the alarm. To make them realize that they're in a situation where they're perishing. And that's what the word of God is telling us.

[13 : 56] The word of God is telling us, listen. There is a battle going on over your soul. The kingdom of God and the kingdom of darkness. They are in conflict for you.

Now that's, this is serious stuff. And the God of this world has blinded the minds of those who don't believe.

That's, that's what's happening. And so, it's important that people be told. You know, part of the message of the word of God is. That in the penetrating light of the gospel, there is pain.

Because people say, oh, you mustn't hurt people. Don't tell people about lostness. You don't want to, you don't want to disturb people. But God does disturb us.

You think back, before you came to peace with God. You were disturbed, weren't you? God went underneath your life, your situation.

[14 : 58] He shook your foundations. He showed you what was happening. And that unless you found peace in him, you were lost. We've all been hurt.

God's spirit, you remember the times when you were pushed right into the very depth of your being. But he hurt you in order to heal you. That's what he does.

He hurts in order to heal. And so, it's important. If you have never come to faith in Jesus Christ, that today you say to the Lord, Lord, please, show me what I need.

Show me where I am. Show me the way of salvation. Now, as we said, we see that there is this awful problem. Because the God of this world has blinded the minds of those who are perishing. The God of this world has blinded the minds of the unbelievers to keep them from seeing the light of the gospel. Satan is termed the God of this world. Because Satan receives allegiance.

[16:05] He receives homage from so many people. Right at the very beginning, remember how Adam and Eve in the garden. And there was set out for them the course of obedience.

And if they had followed in that, things would have been so different. But they didn't. They listened to the God of this world. They listened to Satan. They preferred to believe the lie rather than the truth. And from that moment on, this world went down a road of chaos and carnage.

Because that is the result of sin. Sin, the wages of sin is death. Death has been brought into this world. And we're all under it. We're all under its power, its influence.

And behind it all, there's Satan. He's at work. When you look at all the cares and the carnage. And all the breakup and the illness and the brokenness of this world.

That's all came about. Because of the fall. Because we chose the lie rather than the truth. Because we chose Satan's way rather than God's way.

[17:13] And while God is still in control over everything. There is an element in which he has allowed the God of this world, Satan, a freedom in this world.

And he goes about rampaging. Patrolling this earth. Causing as much damage as he can. And be quite persuaded of this. His aim for every person isn't that they become the most violent murderer or thief.

It is simply that they don't believe what God is saying. That's all he needs to do. If a person becomes a violent murderer, as far as Satan is concerned, that's a bonus.

But that's not his aim with everybody. It is just to keep people's minds away from the truth. That's all he has to do. Has God said?

You know, it's amazing. You can be sitting in church and you hear the truth. And you say, oh, oh my. I better respond to that. And straight away there's this voice saying, oh come on.

[18:20] It's not really like that. Do you really believe that? Think, look at all them hundreds and thousands of people who don't believe that. Surely they're not all wrong.

Straight away he's got you. He's blinding your mind. And that's the awful situation of it. That's what he's doing.

Because you see his whole purpose and his whole aim is to mar and to spoil and to ruin the glory of God. That's what he did at the very beginning. Right from the very start when God said over his creation, Ah, do you know, it's all very good.

It's all good. All good. All good. Very good. Satan then comes straight in the scene. And now here is the great work of salvation.

But you know, this is a wonderful thing that God does. That even when Satan overstretch himself, as so often he does, God will turn it around.

[19:19] The supreme moment of that is with regard to the death of Jesus Christ. Remember how the arrest of Jesus begins? Satan entered into the heart of Jesus.

That's it. Judas, I've got a plan. You betray Jesus. Because these men, the chief priests, the elders, they have a job getting hold of Jesus.

But you can betray him. There's money in it for you. And so Satan got to Judas. That was the beginning of it. Because Satan was wanting to destroy Jesus.

But in the very destruction of Jesus, it paved the way for the world's salvation. And that's why God, where God will still work everything and turn everything for good.

And so we're told here that if our gospel is veiled, it is veiled to those who are perishing. And you might be saying to yourself today, oh well, you know, that leaves me in a bad situation.

[20:27] Because right now, I have to confess, I'm not a Christian. I come to church, I hear what's being said, I believe a lot. But I've never come to personal faith in the Lord Jesus Christ.

Does that mean I'm perishing? Does that mean I'm lost? Well, here's the good news. Jesus came for you. Remember what the Bible says.

God so loved the world that he gave his only begotten Son that whosoever believeth in him should not perish. That's it. The perishing.

No, you don't have to. Jesus also said the Son of Man has come to seek and to save those that are lost.

Are you lost? Well, Jesus has come for you. And that's the wonder. That's why it is a glorious gospel. That's why, as we said, it begins in heaven and ends in heaven.

[21 : 27] And today, if you today are in darkness, if today you're saying, you know, I can't feel my way. I'm not sure about what's what. But I, you go to the Lord and say, Lord, you've come for the likes of me.

I'm kind of lost here. And you know, if you're, if a person is lost in the natural world, when you're lost anywhere, where you don't know where you are, there's always a bit of fear.

A bit of uncertainty. A bit of panic. A bit of, there's all kinds of confusion going on. It's a horrible position to be in if you're lost. You don't know where you are.

Well, it's equally true spiritually. There's fear. There's confusion. There's uncertainty. Jesus said, I'll get rid of all that for you. I'll show you the way.

I'll show you myself. You don't need to be lost. You don't need to be perishing. And that's why Paul was so excited about this gospel. That's why he didn't lose heart.

[22 : 28] That's why he went, was ready to die and to proclaim it. Because it's liberating for people's lives. And I pray that today that you will know this gospel within your own heart.

Because that's why he goes on to say in verse 5, for we proclaim it not ourselves, but Jesus Christ as Lord. And verse 6, for God who said, let light shine out of darkness, has shone in our hearts to give the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ.

Paul is really using the image. Of right at the very beginning. In the darkness, in the void, in the nothingness, God said, let there be light.

And there was light. Paul is saying, the Lord can do the exact same for you. Into the darkness of your heart, he can shed that light.

That's what you're to do today. Ask him. So that the light, as it says here, the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ will shine into your heart.

[23 : 41] Will you ask him to do that for you? Let's pray. Lord, we pray to bless us. We give thanks for this great gospel, a glorious gospel. We pray that the light of this gospel may shine into every heart today.

Reach into us, Lord, we pray. Open our eyes. Open our hearts. That we may see and hear and receive you. Bless us and do us good. And we pray, Lord, to bless a cup of tea, coffee in the hall afterwards.

And we pray to bless all the children, the prize giving that will take place. And that your presence and peace may be with us. And take us to our home safely eventually. Take away our sin in Jesus' name we ask it.

Amen. We're going to conclude singing in Psalm 43. The 43rd Psalm. Psalm 43.

This is from the Scottish Psalter. It's on page 264. And the tune is Spore. Psalm 43.

[24 : 51] From verse 3, 264, page. O send thy light forth and thy truth. Let them be guides to me. And bring me to thy holy hill, even where thy dwellings be.

Then will I to God's altar go, to God my chiefest joy. Yea, God, my God, thy name to praise. My harp I will employ. Why art thou cast down my soul?

What should discourage thee? And why with vexing thoughts art thou disquieted in me? Still trust in God. For him to praise good cause I yet shall have. Ye of my countenance is a health.

My God that doth me save. Psalm 43, 3 to the end. The tune is Spore. O send thy light forth and thy truth. O send thy light forth and thy truth.

Let them be guides to me. And bring me to thine holy hill, in where thy dwellings be.

[26 : 12] Then will I to God's altar go, to God thy chiefest joy.

Yea, God, my God, thy name to praise. My harp I will employ.

Why harp I will be with thee. Why harp thou then cast down my soul?

What should this upraising? And why with thee? And why with thee?

And why with thee? Sing, though, sartal. Is quieted in me.

[27 : 23] Still trust in God. Still trust in God. For him to praise. Good cause I yet shall have.

Ye of my cup. And Israel. Thy God that doth me save.

Now may the grace, mercy, and peace of God the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit rest and abide upon each one of you now and forevermore. Amen.