

A Beacon of Hope in Absolute Darkness

2 Corinthians 4:1-7

I'm sure you've been in complete darkness before! Unfortunately, hurricane season is around the corner, so storms always bring the fear of the loss of power. When you are in the dark, the slightest gleamer of light, such as a phone screen, a candle, or a key chain flashlight makes the largest impact!

In 2 Corinthians 4, the Apostle Paul is writing to a church surrounded by darkness. The culture is spiritually devoid of Christ. Yet, in the midst of the chaos, Paul is not hopeless, he is celebrating. Why? Because in the darkness, a brilliant light has broken through. The light of the gospel. We celebrate the light of the gospel! Paul tells us that this light isn't just a concept; it is the very glory of God shining into our hearts, and it brings with it the knowledge of Jesus Christ.

I. The Reality of the Light (vv. 3-4)

Paul begins with a serious reality: *"And even if our gospel is veiled, it is veiled to those who are perishing"* (v. 3). The unfortunate reality is that not everyone will experience the light of the gospel, but everyone is accountable. Listen to Romans 1:18-20: ***"For the wrath of God is revealed from heaven against all ungodliness and unrighteousness of men, who by their unrighteousness suppress the truth. 19 For what can be known about God is plain to them, because God has shown it to them. 20 For his invisible attributes, namely, his eternal power and divine nature, have been clearly perceived, ever since the creation of the world, in the things that have been made. So they are without excuse."*** This is known as general revelation. Specific revelation is when we share the gospel, and that person hears, repents and believes.

- **Here is The Problem of Blindness:** Paul explains that "the god of this world" (Satan) has blinded the minds of unbelievers. They cannot see the beauty, the majesty, and the value of the gospel. Luke shared this very similar same thing in the parable of the Sower and the seed. Listen to Luke 8:12: ***"The ones along the path are those who have heard; then the devil comes and takes away the word from their hearts, so that they may not believe and be saved."***
- **What About The Unveiled Glory:** But for those who believe, the veil is removed. We looked at this last week, specifically in 2 Cor. 3:16. The blinders are off, freedom through the Holy Spirit is given! We are not just looking at facts about Jesus; we are seeing the "light of the gospel of the glory of Jesus Christ, who is the image of God" (v. 4).
- **Application:** Celebrating the gospel means celebrating that God opened our eyes. We didn't find the light; the light found us. **What do we do about it?** I'm so very glad you asked! We help them (**others**) see the light of Jesus Christ! Yes, success in sharing the gospel isn't whether someone comes to Christ, success is our faithfulness to share.

Listen to Romans 10:13-15: "13 For "everyone who calls on the name of the Lord will be saved." 14 How then will they call on him in whom they have not believed? And how are they to believe in him of whom they have never heard? And how are they to hear without someone preaching? 15 And how are they to preach unless they are sent? As it is written, "How beautiful are the feet of those who preach the good news!" Verse 15 is quoted from Isaiah 52:7 but has the word mountains in it. We had t-shirts made that had this verse when I did mission work in Vermont. We were in the Green Mountains sharing the gospel! Vermont is such a beautiful state, but has more unchurched people per capita out of all the American states!

II. The Radiance of the Light (vv. 5-6)

According to verse 6, the light begins from God, who shines it into believers' hearts, similar to how He commanded light into existence during creation recorded in Genesis. This light reveals the knowledge of God's glory through Jesus Christ, emphasizing that salvation is God's work. With this light received, Paul states in verse 5 that believers should proclaim Jesus Christ as Lord and see themselves as servants for His sake, rather than promoting themselves.

Allow me to remind us of just a few verses in the gospel of John that refer to Jesus as the light. John 8:12: "Again Jesus spoke to them, saying, 'I am the light of the world. Whoever follows me will not walk in darkness, but will have the light of life'".

John 9:5: "'As long as I am in the world, I am the light of the world'".

John 1:4-9: "In him was life, and the life was the light of men... The true light, which gives light to everyone, was coming into the world".

John 12:46: "'I have come into the world as light, so that whoever believes in me may not remain in darkness'".

III. The Act of Rejoicing in the Light (vv.6-7)

As verse 1 reminds us, having received this ministry by God's mercy, we should rejoice! We carry the treasure of God's glory in our "jars of clay" (v. 7). We celebrate this light and our call to reflect His glory to a dark world. What does this statement "jars of clay" mean? We, like a jar, are easily broken into pieces without the power of Christ holding us together! Christ alone holds us together! We celebrate that fact daily, or we should!

Let me ask this one question? Do you care that people sit in darkness? Shine the light of Christ, share the gospel, may they hear and be joyous! If they go to Hell they will have at least heard how not to by you!