

An Exposition of Holy Scripture

The Devil's Blindfold

II Corinthians 4:1-6

**A Sermon
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Dedication

This exposition of Scripture is dedicated to the still faithful members of the church where this Scripture was first studied and then preached on a very cold January morning. That small group of Christians whom I love and remember with the fondest regard was always said to be the Church that was "at the end of the world," yet it was nevertheless known to Christ.

PREFACE

The devil's blindfold makes difficult any harmony between God's Sovereign choices and our responsibility to make a choice for Christ; but it is essential to obtain deliverance from Satan, our sin, and its inevitable ensuing death. The devil's blindfold is an enigmatic issue and when comprehended raises questions we must ask ourselves. What do we think of God's mercy toward sinners who are completely dependent upon that mercy for their salvation? Do we really believe that about salvation, and in His mercy, and in Him? On the one hand when confronted with our personal guilt, we realize that God is altogether fair to demand that we pay in full for our rebellion against Him. On the other hand we realize that if we are to be delivered from our sin, God's mercy towards us must be extended through Christ. Here is where faith comes in. When we believe simultaneously that we are beyond hope because of the overpowering element of our sin, and that God extends His mercy to us in His Son Jesus Christ, we are saved.

The devil's blindfold manifests our terrible desperation and complete powerlessness to do anything to free ourselves from satan and sin's grip. To reach that place before God is the best circumstance for a person to know. Then if we believe that God's mercy alone saves us because we cling to His Son, we demonstrate true saving faith. A belief in God's mercy through Christ's payment for sin saves us. We then possess an authentic and faultless forgiveness that God's loving favor provided only because we had undergone an inner spiritual impasse and stalemate caused by the devil's blindfold.

THE DEVIL'S BLINDFOLD

The devil is a great spiritual and intellectual power, whose innate resources of supernatural energy are surpassed only by the Persons of the Godhead. Even the most powerful *ministering spirits and flames of fire*, the Archangels of God, are not able by themselves to overcome his mastery and authority.

Yet Michael the archangel, when contending with the devil he disputed about the body of Moses, durst not bring against him a railing accusation, but said, The Lord rebuke thee. *Jude 9*

Even when Daniel, *a man greatly beloved*, continued in prayer and fasting for three weeks, and even had a vision of the Exalted Christ, and even though God responded and sent His angelic messenger *from the first day that thou didst set thine heart to understand*, yet God's messenger was hindered and thwarted from reaching Daniel by the power of satan.

And he said unto me, O Daniel, a man greatly beloved, understand the words that I speak unto thee, and stand upright: for unto thee am I now sent. And when he had spoken this word unto me, I stood trembling.

Then said he unto me. Fear not, Daniel: for from the first day that thou didst set thine heart to understand, and to chasten thyself before thy God, thy words were heard, and I am come for thy words.

But the prince of the kingdom of Persia [the devil] withstood me one and twenty days: but, lo, Michael, one of the chief princes, came to help me: and I remained there with the kings of Persia.

Daniel 10:11-13

There is no power in any other created being of God that equals the authority, strength, and intellectual adaptability of satan. No one but God can overcome his fortress of evil in every natural man. He is the embodiment of evil opposition to God's goodness and light. He is the epitome of darkness and obscurity concerning God's love and truth. And it is this opposition of darkness that seals and sets man in his innate blindness to God's love. Only the direct work of Jesus Christ can master the legions of demons who blind and maim men's hearts, minds and wills, and obscure the very light that shines the reality of Christ's deliverance. Christ's divine calling from the power of darkness into the everlasting Kingdom of light alone vanquishes the dark powers of the prince of darkness. All men are in abject slavery to sin and to satan, so that they never are able to rid themselves of his mastery without Sovereign intervention in their behalf.

Near the beginning of Jesus' ministry He announced to His hometown folk that *the Spirit of the Lord is upon me, because he hath anointed me to preach the gospel to the poor; he hath sent me to heal the brokenhearted, to preach deliverance to the captives, and recovering of sight to the blind, to set at liberty them that are bruised (Luke 4:18, added emp.). Christ early announced that His basic ministry dealt with this blindness to God's love and with satan's mastery over men's lives. The Apostle also taught that all men without exception are captives of the devil,*

In meekness instructing those that oppose themselves; if God peradventure will give them repentance to the acknowledging of the truth;

And that they may recover themselves out of the snare of the devil, who are taken captive by him at his will. [Added emp.] ***II Timothy 2:25-26***

Without doubt satan is in control of the masses of mankind since men *are taken captive by him at his will*. Jesus was confronted with this blind captivity to satan when certain superficial believers recoiled at the thought of their having been *taken captive* by satan to

do his will. The shallowness of their faith resulted from a blindness to their captivity by the devil, hence their self-denial before the Christ when He taught it.

They answered him, We be Abraham's seed, and were never in bondage to any man: how sayest thou, Ye shall be made free?

Jesus answered them, Verily, verily, I say unto you, Whosoever committeth sin [everyone] is the servant [lit. slave] to sin.

And the servant [slave] abideth not in the house for ever: but the Son abideth ever.

If the Son therefore shall make you free, ye shall be free indeed. *John 8:33-36*

These men argued against both their captivity and their blindness because they were then under the devil's power and at the same time blinded to it. Their condition of blindness and captivity was evidenced by their arguments against their being either blind or captive (Cp. *John 9:39-41*).

The present day thwarting of the gospel among men is still accountable to satan's efforts to limit understanding of its emancipating and liberating power within men's hearts and minds and wills. He ever veils the minds of the lost—all lost men—so as to block the true gospel. This veil is actually the devil's blindfold. Our text presents details concerning its utilization and employment by the prince of darkness, and of the sovereign removal of it and its blinding effects. Only a spiritual and effectual call to sinners frees from satan's grip, and only because God has chosen to liberate them from the devil's blindfold.

We shall note in our text from Holy Scripture:

First, the **Need** for the Blindfold, *verses 1-2*

Second, the **Implementation** of the Blindfold, *verses 3-4a*

Third, the **Evil** of the Blindfold, *verse 4b*

Fourth, the **Remedy** for the Blindfold, *verses 5-6*.

I. THE DEVIL'S NEED TO BLINDFOLD MEN WAS EVIDENCED BY PAUL'S MINISTRY

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.

II Corinthians 4:1-2

Paul's Ministry was Divinely Sustained by Mercy

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

II Corinthians 4:1

To foil the power of the gospel the devil must blindfold men, because Paul was sustained by God's mercy. The gospel ministry is chiefly under consideration in this second epistle to the Corinthians, and our text is closely connected with the preceding section on the veiling of Moses' face (3:7-11), and the subsequent veiling of Israel's heart to the gospel (3:12-18). Paul contrasts his message of clear illumination of the truth with the *ministration of death* in the law, and then in our text shows that the problem lies not in the message or even in its bearer, but in the hearts of men. In this verse of our text, he means to show that the clear and elevated truths that he had received sustained him even though those same clear and elevated truths were not well received among most men. The words, *as we have received mercy*, might be removed in order to show more clearly Paul's meaning. It is, *Therefore, seeing we have this ministry, we faint not*. The words left out refer to the mercy of God by which he had thus far been sustained, giving all glory and credit to God, as was Paul's habit (Cf. *I Corinthians 15:10*).

The *Therefore* reaches back to *chapter three, verse eighteen*, where Paul had written of the full view of Christ's glory that is the privilege of New Testament believers.

But we all, with open face beholding as in a glass the glory of the Lord, are changed into the same image from glory to glory, even as by the Spirit of the Lord.

II Corinthians 3:18

Paul says that it was because of the *open face beholding the glory of the Lord* that he was sustained in his ministry and did not *faint*. It was because of the Lord's mercy that he gave not in to the evil opposition that had placed a devilish veil upon Israel's heart. God's revelation of mercy in Christ's gospel was the sustaining influence of his ministry. Paul never lost courage because he could see clearly the mercy of God in Christ's gospel. The devil could never count upon Paul's changing or becoming discouraged; therefore satan had to act upon his hearers. He used this veil upon their hearts and minds and wills to hide God's mercy and liberating power in Paul's message of the gospel, thus the need for the devil to blindfold men is evident.

Paul's Ministry was Humanly Commended by Conscience

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.

II Corinthians 4:2

To prevent the gospel's saving effect upon sinners the devil had to blindfold men's minds, because Paul was humanly commended to men's consciences. Paul's enemies in the Corinthian church had used trickery and deceit to elevate themselves and to debase Paul and his ministry of the true and pure grace of God. But Paul writes that since it is such a glorious

ministry in which he was engaged, it is so reinforced with Divine power, that there was no need for him to use deceit or any other improper act. Quite the contrary, he was open and honest since he proclaimed a salvation that by itself was commended to every man's conscience as the perfect and complete way of salvation. Paul's message was in itself an honest self-abasing presentation of what is plainly a message of self-emptiness and humility. Therefore, it commended itself and its presenter to every man's conscience as good.

First, Paul's ministry contained a negative commendation to men's consciences. He wrote, *But have renounced the hidden things of dishonesty, not walking in craftiness, nor handling the word of God deceitfully.* There was nothing in Paul's ministry that would obscure or hinder the plain understanding of his message of the gospel. He had refused "secret immoralities" (Lit. trans). He had spurned any walk in *craftiness*, or more literally, knavishness or cleverness. He had not handled the Word of God so as to adulterate it, or to corrupt it with error. Paul did not add human effort or response or human merit of any kind, form, or fashion; therefore the message which he preached was not hindered by a poor testimony of life, or by an ignorance of the pure grace of God. Its restriction was of another source; certainly it was not from Paul's life or personal ministry that some were not saved.

Could you say that of your life? Is there no area of unfaithfulness to Christ in your life's activities and habits that perform a corrupting and adulterating and knavish effect upon the ministry of the church? Could it be said of every church and of its members that the only reason men are not saved is because the devil has hidden our message of light and life and love? Or is it because of the corrupting influences of unfaithfulness and secondary Christianity that hinders lost people from coming to see the glory of Christ? Paul was a true and sold-out disciple; therefore his only problem when presenting the glorious gospel of

Christ was the hardness of men's hearts, and the blindfolding of the same by the devil. May it never be said to us by Jesus at His Judgement Throne, "Your secret immoralities, your knavish wickedness, your corrupting influence of unfaithfulness to the preaching of the Kingdom of God, was the reason for some persons remaining lost."

Paul's ministry contained also a positive commendation to every man's conscience, *but by manifestation of the truth, commending ourselves to every man's conscience in the sight of God.* Paul was clear of any wrongdoing. He could commend himself to men's consciences and in the sight of God because he manifested the truth of the gospel of the grace of God, *by manifestation of the truth.* By plain statements of the truths of the gospel of the grace of God Paul had secured approval of himself before every conscience, as well as before God Himself. Paul was sure that the truth cleared him from any wrong motive and incorrect doctrine, so that no faculty of men's sense of right and wrong could ever find him to have been guilty of hindering the gospel truth from penetrating men's hearts. This left only the evil one to have been responsible for using the wickedness of men's hearts and minds and wills so as to resist successfully the powerful gospel of light, love, and life.

It is because of strong disciples like Paul that the devil must actively oppose the gospel of grace with his blindfold. If all disciples of Jesus were as dedicated to the message of the Kingdom of God as was Paul, then the devil's only recourse would be to oppose it with worldlings only, and he would never be able to disrupt and confuse and destroy men's lives through the weak testimony of professed but unfaithful disciples.

II. THE IMPLEMENTATION OF THE DEVIL'S BLINDFOLD

But if our gospel be hid, it is hid to them that are lost:

In whom the god of this world hath blinded the minds of them which believe not, lest the light of the glorious gospel of Christ, who is the image of God, should shine unto them. II Corinthians 4:3-4

The Persons Involved in the Devil's Blindfold

Paul refers to two persons or groups of persons who are involved in this veiling of the gospel. They are the person who veils and the ones who are blindfolded.

The ones blindfolded are the *lost* who remain just as they were when born into this world. The word, *lost*, means, "those who are perishing." All men are in a state of perdition, and are certain to perish forever because they are born *lost* when they enter into this world at birth. The universality of this lostness is a cardinal doctrine of the Bible. Every man is a doomed sinner at birth, and is destined for eternal ruin except God intervene in grace.

He that believeth on him is not condemned: but he that believeth not is condemned already, because he hath not believed in the name of the only begotten Son of God.

He that believeth on the Son hath everlasting life: and he that believeth not the Son shall not see life; but the wrath of God abideth on him. John 3:18, 36

In both these just quoted verses, a person has to do nothing whatever to be *condemned*, or to have the *wrath of God abiding on him*, except remain in his natural state of unbelief. *He is condemned already* without doing anything either good or bad.

Our text says *them that believe not* are blindfolded by the devil. These are the same persons as the *lost*, but underscores another side of lostness. All men are natural unbelievers. Adam's original sin was rooted in unbelief in the goodness and trustworthiness of God. Eve had decided that God could not be trusted to know the best for them as regarded what they should and should not eat. Instead of believing God and His instruction as the very best for them both, she rather believed the devil's doubts of God's veracity (*I Timothy 2:14*). Because of that original unbelief, all men are instinctive unbelievers at natural birth, to the devil's delight.

And the serpent said unto the woman, Ye shall not surely die:

For God doth know that in the day ye eat thereof, then your eyes shall be opened, and ye shall be as gods, knowing good and evil. ***Genesis 3:4-5***

Them which believe not are all mankind as they are born into this world. They are *lost, condemned already*, and under *the wrath of God* without doing anything good or bad. It is because they are *lost* and are those *which believe not* that the devil is able to *veil* them even further from the light of the glorious gospel of Christ. All men are ready participants in the deceptions of his *veil* because they are already *lost* and *unbelieving* from birth.

The person who veils is *the god of this world*. This of course refers to satan, the devil, or *the prince and power of the air*, that is, the one in charge of the lower atmosphere. The word, *world*, is used in the Old English as we use the word, "age," and is in the original, aionios, "age." He is the god of this age, certainly not of this world. He does not control events except as God allows him certain latitude in order to accomplish His own will ultimately. It is the true and living God Who reigns as Supreme over all the affairs of the universe. His name is Jesus, and His title is Christ, and His position is Lord over all in heaven and in earth and under the earth. But the god of this evil age is satan as the opposer of God's eternal Kingdom. He reigns over a

vast empire of usurped domain. As the original keeper of the material order, he has, through the fall of Adam, wrested dominion from man. But the last Adam, Jesus, has overcome him, and will unseat him from his expropriated kingdom of darkness and evil. Until that day of Christ's final victory comes (*I Cor. 15:24-28*), God is using Satan's kingdom of darkness to further His Kingdom through the superintendence of it for the final good of His own sons as He limits the evil according to His eternal purpose in Christ.

The Actions Involved in the Devil's Blindfold

Two actions are connected with this blindfolding of the *lost* and *unbelieving*; they are veiling the gospel and blinding the mind.

This veiling the gospel is cited in the phrase, *But if our gospel be hid*. The *if* in the Greek is a first class subjunctive mood that is best understood as a reality, "*since* our gospel is hidden." Mr. Wuest translated it, "But if also, as is the case, of those who are perishing it has been covered." The word, *hid*, is the same in the Greek as what is translated *veil* in *3:13, 14, 15, 16*. This means that the unbelief in rejecting the Gospel is not caused by any unclearness in its message, but is due to the wickedness of its hearers as they allow the beauty of it to be veiled and obscured by the devil. Paul means for us to realize that the *veil* that still covers Israel as a nation (*3:15*) is not restricted to Jews, but is a universal bias of Gentile experience as well. As Paul wrote, *But the scripture hath concluded all [Jew and Gentile] under sin, Galatians 3:22*. "The hiding of the Gospel was both an evidence and a cause of their ruin, and if the Gospel did not find and save them, they were lost forever" (Henry).

Blinding the mind is the other action connected with the devil's blindfold, *the god of this world hath blinded the minds of them that believe not*. The word, *blinded*, literally is "stopped up," referring to blocked passageways within men that would otherwise collect and apprehend the marvelous light of the gospel of Christ. Hence, this veiling takes place in each person's *mind*.

The accountability of each person lies in each sinner's allowance of such abuse of God's beautiful grace in His Son's cross and its victory over sin and death. The *mind* is the area of perception, design, ideas, thought, concepts—in short, the thinking processes—going from premise to conclusion in a series of logical steps. This refers to the lost and unbelieving person's inability to gain a rational interpretation of the issue or problem of sin in order to attain a solution through the gospel. They experience—though not being at all conscious of it—stopped up thinking processes as regards spiritual truth. They are perishing because they are directly influenced and touched by their own sin as well as by the devil; consequently they are unable logically to reason out their dilemma. They cannot reason rationally about their condition under the wrath of God, or how they could escape all condemnation if they would just flee to Christ and His cross. Accordingly, the thinking minds of the lost are stopped up and blinded to the glorious gospel and to its logical conclusion—righteousness, sanctification, and redemption through believing—which is the wisdom of God in the gospel,

But of him are ye in Christ Jesus, who of God is made unto us wisdom, and righteousness, and sanctification, and redemption. I Corinthians 1:30

Howbeit we speak wisdom among them that are perfect: yet not the wisdom of this world, nor of the princes of this world, that come to nought:

But we speak the wisdom of God in a mystery, even the hidden wisdom, which God ordained before the world unto our glory:

Which none of the princes of this world knew: for had they known it, they would not have crucified the Lord of glory. I Corinthians 2:6-8

It is all just so much *foolishness* to these *lost, unbelieving, and mind-veiled* men, *For the preaching of the cross is to them that perish foolishness; but unto us which are saved it is the power of God (Cor. 1:18). But the unregenerate man of the*

highest intellectual attainments does not grant access to the things of the Spirit of God, for to him they are folly, and he is not able to come to know them because they are investigated in a spiritual realm. (I Corinthians 2:14) The Expanded Translation

They cannot reason it out as advantageous to become children of God through faith in Christ. This is why they must receive especial revelation from God if any are ever to be saved. The Holy Spirit must supernaturally draw them to Christ, *No man can come to me, except the Father which hath sent me draw him (John 6:44)*. This control of Satan over the human mind is comparable to the influence of one man over another. It is quite effectual among men when one intelligence greater than another rules over the other to one degree or another. Thus we can understand that this blindfold is perfectly consistent with the free agency and responsibility of all men. The devil stops men's minds from reaching the intelligent conclusion of the gospel that righteousness, peace, and joy is far superior to evil, wrath, and sorrow; and that these can be known only through trustful obedience to the glorious gospel of Christ Jesus. This blindness of mind takes on many forms. Out of these many forms, here are a few:

- #1. Satan produces a false philosophy, otherwise known as the wisdom of the world, *I Corinthians. 1:21*.
- #2. Satan encourages a wholly disproportionate view of the value of objects, *Luke 12:15*.
- #3. He uses and produces the blinding influences of passion and vice, *Romans 1:26-27*.
- #4. He blinds men's minds as to His delusive values, "Esteeming the temporal joys of the world greater than the eternal riches of Christ." The antithesis of *Hebrews 11:26*.
- #5. Satan deludes men's thinking processes to fool them into thinking that this life ends it all, *Luke 20:27-38*.
- #6. The devil delights in causing men to forget about tomorrow, and that one's own "today" is all important, *Luke 12:13-21*.

III. THE EVIL OF THE DEVIL'S BLINDFOLD

...lest the light of the glorious gospel of Christ, who is the image of God, should shine unto them.

II Corinthians 4:4b

Paul mentioned two different evils associated with this blindfold. Both are heightened evils because of the terrible subterfuge, and the atrocity of obscuring such transcendent and resplendent truth. This blindness, effected by the devil's stratagem, affects the Doctrine of Christ, the two most radiantly beautiful truths in all eternity. They are *the glorious gospel of Christ* and *the Christ Who is the image of God*. Because of the magnificence of what is veiled, there is great evil connected with this satanic suppression. The Doctrine of Christ is essentially the Person and the work of Christ. First there is the glory, honor, and esteem of God. He is the essence of Christ Who, being the Image of God, is indeed God. Second, similarly magnificent is the work of Christ, fundamentally the gospel. The facts of the gospel are Jesus' impeccable life, being God in the flesh, His death, burial and His bodily resurrection. But the truth of the gospel falls within the boundaries of the seemingly diminutive phrase, *for our sins*.

I declare unto you the gospel...how that Christ died for our sins according to the Scriptures.

I Corinthians 15:1a, 3b

Those three words form the truth of the gospel and what is of genuine value to men. *For our sins* make what Jesus did a deliverance for persons who otherwise were hopelessly and helplessly under the power of sin and satan. The fact that Christ is God, the fact that Christ died, was buried, and was raised from the dead, all important and even vital facts, but only facts except that they were *for our sins*. These two great truths, Christ's Person and work, are the veiled gospel and glory of God in Jesus Christ, hidden from sinners by the devil's blindfold.

The Veiled Glorious Gospel of Christ

That the devil should be able to obscure the most glorious work ever performed in all eternity is the evil of all evils. The *glorious gospel* is that work of redemption which was worked out from eternity past by the counsel of the Persons of the Godhead. In it is revealed as never before all the attributes of God, even all His beauties and wisdom. The thwarting of its revelation among any creatures of God is the most serious of affronts to God's true glory. God deserves all the glory that can possibly be ascribed to Him, and that is not enough. God is all wise in the gospel to overcome sin, yea, to use sin and rebellion against Himself in such a way as to glorify Himself as nothing else has ever before magnified Him. The stopping of the source of this very proper eminence and veneration is a criminal act of unparalleled proportions. It is the great evil of this blindfold to shut our what is the highest of the High about God, God died *for our sins*.

The Veiled Christ Who is the Image of God

The *Christ Who is the image of God* must similarly be exhibited to all God's creatures. To hinder the display of God Himself is the height of fiendishness because no other source of goodness or its display is to be found in the universe. It is Christ only Who is infinitely *the image of God*. From the very beginning—which was never a beginning at all—God is known and understood only through the Eternal Son,

No man hath seen God at any time; the only begotten Son, which is in the bosom of the Father, he hath declared him.
John 1:18

All things are delivered unto me of my Father: and no man knoweth who the Son is, but the Father; and who the Father is, but the Son, and he to whom the Son will reveal him.
Luke 10:22

He is the Eternal Word, the Image of God, Who alone expresses the unseen and invisible God to His creation. There is no one else through whom God shows Himself as He does through His Son; therefore when that manifestation is *hid*, it is as though there is no God to be seen. Oh! The gravity of hiding from men's view the *image of God*. That men are deprived of seeing and comprehending what to natural men is the incomprehensible and inscrutable greatness of the Lord is the most beastly villainy of the devil's blindfold.

Great is the Lord, and greatly to be praised; and his greatness is unsearchable.

All thy works shall praise thee, O LORD; and thy saints shall bless thee.

They shall speak of the glory of thy kingdom, and talk of thy power;

To make known to the sons of men his mighty acts, and the glorious majesty of his kingdom.

Psalms 145:3, 10-12

It somehow seems hopeless for men that such evil exists to harm men's souls by its deprivation of God's own Person in His Son to be seen and known. But such is the darkness of the evil in the blindfold, in the ones blindfolded, and in the one blindfolding. Evil in men's hearts and in the devil's purpose is of such great magnitude that its effect is far reaching from eternity to eternity and from the smallest of men to the mightiest of men. All men have at some time and to some degree known the evil of this blindness. All men experience these horrid and despicable evils of the devil's blindfold.

IV. THE REMEDY FOR THE DEVIL'S BLINDFOLD

For we preach not ourselves, but Christ Jesus the Lord; and ourselves your servants for Jesus' sake.

For God, who commanded the light to shine out of darkness, hath shined in our hearts, to give the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ.
II Corinthians 4:5-6

Paul knew a sure remedy for this blindness; it was the message that he preached. The *For* which begins *verse four* means to show the reason why the devil found it necessary to use his blindfold. It was needful because Paul did not preach himself but Christ Jesus as Lord. This preaching is God's only redress for satanic blindness.

The Remedy of the Message is Christ Jesus the Lord.

For we preach not ourselves, but Christ Jesus the Lord; and ourselves your servants for Jesus' sake.
II Corinthians 4:5

Paul first presents a remedy that concerns a negative necessity, *we preach not ourselves*. Paul regarded himself sent to make known Another, the Savior. He considered himself as bound by all means to promote His cause and to imitate His character always. The preacher is not the principal in the ministry of the gospel, but he is only an agent for Another—the Lord Jesus Christ. Who could find fault with Him? If a preacher preaches of himself, could he possibly find any poorer or disgusting topic than that? Furthermore, it is because of the message that Paul brought as not being about himself, that he could claim as he did in *verses one and two* his freedom from dishonest acts and trickery. He had not been as the false teachers at Corinth, who sought to aggrandize themselves at the Apostle's expense. It was just because Paul and his associates went forth to make known Jesus as Lord that they

avoided all such dishonest arts and artifices (Barnes). He is saying in effect, “We are not principals in this business, and do not dispatch it as a business of our own, but we transact the gospel as agents of the Lord Jesus Christ; and we feel ourselves bound, therefore, to do it as He did it Himself. As He was free from all deceit and dishonest acts, we feel bound to be also.”

Secondly, Paul presents the positive remedy, namely his preaching of *Christ Jesus [as] Lord*. The literal translation would suggest an “as” in the phrase. Paul preached Christ Jesus as the Lord to all men. He exalted him as the rightful Sovereign of all creation. Therefore, the message was properly preached. To Paul that was all that was necessary to assure quality and excellence in his ministry. “The great end of Paul’s preaching, therefore, was to bring men to receive and acknowledge Jesus of Nazareth as the Messiah and as the supreme Lord, the maker of heaven and earth. This is the only proper end of preaching” (Hodge).

Thirdly, Paul found a remedy for the devil’s blindfold in the associate position he took in their behalf as a servant, and ourselves your servants for Jesus sake. This associate position of servanthood denotes submissiveness to God for ministering the gospel to blindfolded men. Only as Paul took the humble position of a slave to Jesus Christ could he have benefited the Corinthians in ministry. Only a submissive servant knows the intuitive leadership of the Holy Spirit so that his ministry will coincide with Christ, and hence be so fiery with Divine power that it burns truth through the devil’s blindfold. Only such captivity to Christ as is exemplified in *ourselves your servants for Jesus’ sake* could have been empowered by Christ to get through to the stopped up minds of the Corinthians. Paul’s chief good for the Corinthians materialized as he loved Christ and served them. A regard for the glory of Christ and an urge empowered by a love for Christ will result in *ourselves your servants for Jesus’ sake*. A high regard for Christ precedes a high

love for sinful men, and the former is the only true source of the latter. The motive that influenced Paul to devote himself to the service of the Corinthians was the love of Christ, shown in his love for them in the service rendered to them in the power of the Holy Spirit.

For the love of Christ constraineth us; because we thus judge, that if one died for all, then were all dead.

II Corinthians 5:14

This is a most dangerous motive to satan. To be thus compelled by Christ's love endangers the foundations of his evil empire, hence the necessity to hide the gospel by blinding men's evil minds from the truth of Christ's love in the gospel. Mere goodness saves no one, but the message of Christ's love presented by a person whose life manifested a servant's heart of corresponding love shakes the institutions of satanic influence in men's minds.

The Remedy in the Message is the face of Jesus Christ.

For God, who commanded the light to shine out of darkness, hath shined in our hearts, to give the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ.

II Corinthians 4:6

Even though satan was able to blind men's inner perception of the glory of Christ and His cross, and even though the devil stopped men's minds to its rationale, Paul's inspiration to continue preaching the gospel was the promise and certainty of God's enlightenment of some men to His glorious gospel truth. It was God alone Who could defeat satan's devices to stop the power of the gospel. Its message would indeed be understood and believed by some to whom God would supernaturally reveal it. That process is spoken of as an effectual call.

The supernatural character of this call to blinded sinners led Paul to confirm it as an analogous act to creation's regeneration.

We learn from the words, *for God, who commanded the light to shine out of darkness*, that only one act in God's recorded Word ranks with the supernatural display of this effectual call. It alone illumines Christ's unobstructed radiance into men's minds unhindered by the devil's blindfold. The only comparable act to God's supernatural enlightenment of the sinner is when He spoke to the darkness that was *upon the face of the deep*.

And the earth was without form, and void; and darkness was upon the face of the deep.

And God said, Let there be light: and there was light.

And God saw the light, that it was good: and God divided the light from the darkness. Genesis 1:2-4

That God spoke to produce this light is significant. He spoke the light into being within that darkness. In Christ's effectual call through the gospel, there is a revelation of the glory of God to which there is nothing comparable or analogous except the original creation of light out of darkness which took place in a fallen creation's regeneration at the beginning of man.

Verse six is in manifest antithesis to *verse four*. There, the god of this world did his work of blinding and making dark the minds of the lost; but here, the true God called light out of the evil-produced darkness. The occasion was the re-construction process after Lucifer's fall. The darkness of *Genesis Chapter one, verse two* was caused by satan's evil (*I John 1:5*). In his rebellion he ruined the earth as he ruins men's minds with his powers of darkness. The same power of God that overcame satan's darkness in the beginning overcomes satan's power in some men's minds, according to the election of God. The same almighty omnipotence that corrected a satanic ruin and destruction on earth breaks through the blindfold of satanic darkness in men's minds. They now are as free from his darkness as was the creation when God said, *Let there be light*.

Therefore, the gospel as the power of God is the true authoritative remedy for the devil's blindfold. In *Genesis* darkness originally brooded over chaos until God said, *Let there be light* and there was light chasing away the darkness of satanic dominion, but not until God spoke. In a similar fashion spiritual darkness broods over the minds of all lost men until God initiates His enlightenment. He must speak personally to bring His light to bear upon the lost in a spiritual *draw* to the light (*John 6:44*). He must speak through the gospel to the darkened minds of sinners, *Let there be light. Let there be understanding. Let there be knowledge of the glorious gospel of Christ Who is the image of God. Let it shine unto them. Let it convert their souls. Let my Spirit of love and light and life regenerate them into an affinity to My Kingdom of Light.*

The same omnipotent God Who spoke the light into existence at creation's regeneration in *Genesis Chapter one, verse three* similarly performs the completed act of our regeneration as related in the words, *hath shined in our hearts, to give the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ*. The *hath shined* is an aorist in Greek, which means a pinpoint in time, a definite completed act, the time of actual conversion or regeneration. Paul here references the Holy Spirit's first work of illumination into the heart; that includes without fail the regeneration of the spirit in the sinner. He is born again. Not all men receive this effectual call from him, but only his own Elect for whom He died substitutionarily.

I have manifested thy name unto the men which thou gavest me out of the world: thine they were, and thou gavest them me; and they have kept thy word.

John 17:6

This *shining in the heart* indicates the truth of the gospel understood and embraced. The *heart* is the seat of affections, intentions, and purposes. It is the place where abide likes and dislikes. But when *the light of the glorious gospel of Christ Who is the image of God shines* into this seat—into the place where man's desires are determined—no man can look away unchanged.

of Jesus Christ, but so had many others who saw not what Peter saw. Peter saw with spiritual discernment *the glory of God*, because Christ's Father which is in heaven hath revealed it unto thee. The Father had spoken to Peter's darkened mind, and had shined Christ through the satanic blindfold that was upon Peter's heart. With regard to Peter's darkened mind, God said, *Let there be light* and there was light. Peter saw, and he believed because he saw (Luke 5:8). When anyone looks into the *face of Jesus Christ*, they receive no fading glory as did Moses, but receive the full affect of God's radiant glory forever. They are forever changed into a spiritual likeness to the One they see.

The Devil's Blindfold in II Corinthians 4:1-6 in Summary

Verse 1 Therefore, seeing we have this ministry, as we have received mercy, we faint not.

The clear and elevated truths that Paul had received sustained him, and kept the holy Apostle from giving up because their quality was in itself the strength and encouragement to present them simply as they are. The fact that they were so plainly evident as compared with the law meant that he had no need to coerce, force, or falsify anything in his ministry.

Verse 2 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.

Since it is such a glorious ministry, and it is so exhilarating, Paul had no need to use deceit or any other improper act. Consequently, Paul was open and honest since he proclaimed a way of salvation that by itself commended itself to every man's conscience as the perfect and complete plan of God.

Verse 3 But if our gospel be hid, it is hid to them that are lost:

The brilliance of the gospel was not tarnished because some did not see and receive it, but contrariwise, the fact that they did not

see and receive it is proof that they are lost. Indeed, the fact that there were still some lost was not the fault of the gospel. It had to be hidden from them else they would believe Christ and receive its truth.

Verse 4 In whom the god of this world hath blinded the minds of them which believe not, lest the light of the glorious gospel of Christ, who is the image of God, should shine unto them.

The glorious gospel, presenting as it does the image of God, was clear, open, and plain, and might be easily understood; and since some are lost, it was to be traced to the maligning influences of the devil, the god of this evil age, and not to the gospel.

Verse 5 For we preach not ourselves, but Christ Jesus the Lord; and ourselves your servants for Jesus' sake.

Therefore, the purpose of the ministry is not to show forth the preacher, but he is to take the place of a slave to the people because of Jesus, and because of the great love of Christ. The ministry of Christ's servants is to preach Christ Jesus as Lord, and God will take care of the devil's blindfold. The story and truth about Jesus the Savior will burn through the devil's blindfold with this basic of all truths of the gospel of grace: The One now Exalted is the same One Who was humiliated on a cross for the removal of the sins of all who believe.

Verse 6 For God, who commanded the light to shine out of darkness, hath shined in our hearts, to give the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ

The reason why Paul did not preach himself, or need to adulterate the Word of God, or need to coerce or bribe, was because of the tremendous light within the supernatural and effectual calling of God in the gospel. It reveals in *the face of Jesus Christ* an illumination of such intensity that only the original calling of light by God to smother the darkness of Lucifer's ancient fall is comparable. The gospel when accompanied by the calling of God destroys the devil's blindfold, and frees men from his captive blindness and his unavoidable peril.

CHRIST AND THE SANCTIFIED REASONING OF THE CROSS

Since Paul clearly states that the devil does indeed stop the minds of the lost, and that he does keep lost men from understanding the gospel, it also should be clear that God is the only one who can free any man from this devilish blindfold and from his blindness to the beauty of the gospel. Since no man can match the power of the devil, and since there is no truth in him (*John 8:44*), and since he has absolutely no good, or any inclination to do good to any man, it reasonably remains that only by the direct intervention of God is any man freed from this blindness.

The devil does not decide who will be saved. He does not suddenly in a turn of empathy towards some poor-suffering sinner, release his hold on the sinner's mind. Salvation of no man depends upon the devil's mercy, because he has none whatever. The devil has no compassion for the suffering of any man, but he delights in the suffering and torment brought to God's rational creatures at his design. Just as Paul said elsewhere, men are in *the snare of the devil, who are taken captive by him at his will (II Timothy 2:26, see p. 2)*.

Therefore, let it be assuredly known, for the Bible throughout declares it in no questionable terms, that the devil's will is never anything but evil towards all of God's creation continually. And let it be understood that the Sovereign and Almighty God and His Savior Son, the Lord Jesus Christ, and His Blessed Holy Spirit would never allow satan to select who it is that shall be enabled to see and understand and acknowledge and appreciate and accept and love Jesus and His work in the Gospel. Only the election and calling of God determines that. Heaven and the Kingdom of God will be populated only at the determining purpose of the Triune God, and not by satan.

*Knowing, brethren beloved, your election of God
For our gospel came not unto you in word only,
but also in power and in the Holy Ghost, and in much
assurance.* *1 Thessalonians 1:4-5*

**Christ is the Only Hope of Deliverance from
Satan's Blindfold**

Heaven is God's domain. He alone populates its borders with His creatures. God chooses who will spend eternity within its confines and who shall not. However, it is critical from our point of view that we understand that God's Sovereign choices are not to be our primary concern. Our particular concern must be to see our plight without the Savior. God has for our good hope and encouragement given us another way that He uses to determine just who shall populate heaven. We who deserve no place in heaven have been given hope in Christ. We must apply to God for His mercy towards us in His Son, Jesus Christ. God commands us to seek Him as Savior by calling upon His death on His cross for us sinners. God gives us each and every one assurance of salvation in two little words, *believe* and *whosoever*,

Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and thou shalt be saved.

Acts 16:31

**For whosoever shall call upon the name of the Lord
shall be saved.**

Romans 10:13

God in His infinite wisdom and mercy does not leave us in this despairing dilemma with no expectation except eternal ruin in perdition with the devil. God has given us His Son Who when trusted and called upon grants us a place in heaven. Our acquaintance with and comprehension of the devil's blindfold causes us to realize our utter hopelessness, and causes us to cry out to Jesus for rescue. To *believe* is to trust Jesus' death as the payment for our blind sinfulness. To *call upon the name of the Lord* is to put into God's mercy our final prospect of freedom from the desperate plight of our captivity. Only that kind of "end-of-the-tether" terminal faith in Him gains salvation and a deliverance from the devil's blindfold. Amen!

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