

“Sent to Open Blind Eyes”

2 Corinthians 4:1-6

May 30, 2021

Scripture Reading: 2 Cor 4:1-7

One of my favorite things over the years has been my wife’s strawberry pie. It is so good! Fresh strawberries, flakey crust, and that sweet strawberry glaze. But imagine she decided that it was too time-consuming to make and so she just set all the ingredients out on the counter and suggested that we just eat each ingredient in succession rather than going to the trouble of putting it all together. The handful of strawberries wouldn’t be too bad, but then comes the ¾ cup of sugar followed by 2 tablespoons of cornstarch before a box strawberry gelatin. Probably not a real enjoyable desert because it doesn’t have the distinctive taste of strawberry pie when all the ingredients are working together.

Well, today’s passage has a lot of ingredients but rather than just describing each ingredient, I want to help us experience those ingredients in the context of the whole pie.

Key ingredients in 2 Corinthians 4:1-6:

- Vs. 1 – resilient courage
- Vs. 2 – integrity of truth and godliness
- Vs. 3 – veil of unbelief (blindness)
- **Vs. 4 – Satan’s blinding of unbelievers**
- Vs. 5 – Gospel proclamation
- **Vs. 6 – God’s enlightening unto salvation**

The two main ingredients are vss. 4 & 6. They represent Satan’s role of blinding unbelievers to the gospel and God’s role revealing the light of the gospel unto salvation. Notice that vs. 4 & 6 are parallel but opposites.

Vs. 4: The god of this world (Satan) has blinded the eyes of unbelievers

Vs. 6: The God of creation (who said, “let light shine out of darkness) has shone in (enlightened) the hearts of believers

Vs. 4: What is Satan blinding people to? “The light of the gospel of the glory of Christ, who is the image of God.”

Vs. 6: What is God revealing and opening people’s eyes to? “The light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Christ.”

Vs. 4: Light of the gospel of glory of Christ is image of God

Vs. 6: Light of the knowledge of glory of God in face of Christ

Here’s what Paul is helping us see in these parallels. Because Jesus bears the perfect image of God, His face radiates the perfect glory of God. Not merely a reflected glory, but an intrinsic glory because of His divine nature (Col 1:15; Heb 1:3). What the Father and the Son see in each other’s face is a reflection of their glory, not as through a mirror, but because they share the same substance and nature. And this light, this glory, is what Satan wants to keep people blind to. Why? Because when we are made to see the glory of God in Christ, it changes us! God uses the light of Christ to re-create us and continue transforming us into the image of Christ [3:18].

Vs. 6 describes how you were born again. You say, “I became a Christian because I heard the gospel, I believed, repented of my sin, and trusted Christ.” Yes, that’s what you did. But what did God do in saving you? He opened your eyes to the light of Christ. You see, our part (faith and repentance) is like planting seed. It doesn’t grow if you don’t put it in the ground. But what makes the seed come to life and grow? God! And what causes our blind eyes to be able to see and our dead hearts able to believe? God, shining Christ-revealing light in our hearts.

Paul’s own conversion was a living parable of this in Acts 9. Paul was a spiritually blind, deceived, religious, hostile enemy of God, persecuting the church. And on his way to Damascus, God arrested him. “Suddenly a light from heaven flashed around him; and he fell to the ground and heard a voice saying to him, ‘Saul, Saul, why are you persecuting Me?’ And he said, ‘who are you Lord?’ And He said, ‘I am Jesus whom you are persecuting, but get up and enter the city and it will be told you what to do’ (Acts 9:3-5).

Now you probably didn't see a physical, blinding light when you were saved, but the same light of the glory of Christ that blinded Saul's physical eyes is the same light of the glory of Christ that God used to illumine your heart and open your spiritual eyes to see the beauty and value of Jesus as the Son of God and Savior of those who trust in Him—just as he did in Paul's heart (2Cor 4:6).

I am not minimizing the essential need for repentance and faith. In fact, I'm saying that repentance and faith are immensely essential because God is at work to create sight and life in those who believe.

So here's what we've seen in 2 Cor 4. Satan is scheming to keep people blind to the light of the gospel of the glory of Christ (who He is and what He has done). God is revealing the light of the glory of Christ through the gospel so that people will be saved. But Satan and God are not the only two agents at work. God has also called His people to the essential work of proclaiming the very gospel that He works through to open blind eyes to the glory of Christ. In fact, listen to Jesus' commission for Paul in Acts 26—and listen holding vs. 4 in one hand and vs 6 in the other: *“I am sending you to **open their eyes** so that they may turn **from darkness to light** and **from the dominion of Satan to God**, that they may receive forgiveness of sins and an inheritance among those who have been sanctified by **faith** in Me...that they should **repent** and turn to God, performing deeds appropriate to repentance.”* (Acts 26:17-20).

So note here that evangelism is about calling people from darkness to light, from Satan to God, by calling them to repent and believe in Jesus. And this is so essential that Jesus says to Paul, go “open their eyes!” Wait! Doesn't 2Cor 4:6 say that God opens their eyes? So which is it? The evangelist (you) or God? The eye surgeon or God? The farmer or God **[1Cor 3:6-7]**?

Technically, only God can give sight, life, and growth. But God has ordained that He does this work through the gospel that He has entrusted to His people. And our sharing the gospel and His changing lives through the gospel are so tightly tied together, that He say things like, “go open their eyes.” How? Just simply set the gospel before them which contains the light of Christ so that God can open blind eyes through it! Plant the seed so God can cause it to grow!

I recently planted some wildflower seeds and I'm waiting to see if God will cause them to grow. I don't know if they are still good because they've been sitting on the shelf in my garage for years. If you were to ask me, “what kind of flowers are you growing,” I would not look at you suspiciously, I would just say, “wildflowers.” We talk that way because planting is so essential to the growth process. But technically I don't grow anything. I plant, I water, I fertilize, I wait for sunshine and hope God causes them to grow. But I can't expect God to cause them to grow on the shelf in the garage. We must take the gospel off the shelf and simply explain from the Bible to people who Jesus is and what He has done.

Ok, we've seen the ingredients and stirred them up quite a bit. Now, let's grab our forks and see if we can get the flavor of pie in every bite.

Verse 1: “Therefore, having received *this* ministry...” What ministry? The ministry he has just described in chapter 3:

- The *life-creating* ministry of the gospel (3:6)
- The *Spirit-granting* ministry of the gospel (3:3,6)
- The *righteousness-producing* ministry of the gospel (3:9)
- The *heart-changing* ministry of the gospel (3:14-16)
- The *liberating* ministry of the gospel (3:17)
- The *transforming* ministry of the gospel (3:18)
- The *eye-opening* ministry that delivers from darkness to light, from Satan to God, yielding repentance, faith and forgiveness (Acts 26).

Because of *this* ministry that we steward according to God's mercy and to no credit of our own, “we do not lose heart” (resilient courage). The sense here is not merely fighting discouragement but not losing his boldness to courageously preach the gospel (see 3:12).

With a ministry like that, why would Paul grow discouraged? He faced afflictions of every kind, he had been slandered in Corinth, and faced the resistance of Satan in those who rejected the gospel. But instead of wallowing in discouragement, Paul did everything he could to maximize the effectiveness of the gospel in **[vs. 2]**.

The sense of vs. 2 is that as Paul holds out the light of the gospel, he is doing everything he can to keep his life clean so that nothing will hinder the light (like a glass globe around a candle).

- *Renouncing the things hidden because of shame* – purging one’s life of sin
- *Not walking in craftiness or adulterating the word of God* – not being deceptive; not using or abusing God’s word for selfish gain
- Rather Paul is modeling truth so that his life is one of transparency before people knowing he is ultimately accountable to God.

[Vs. 3-4] The flow of thought from vs. 2-4 is that those who are rejecting Paul’s message of the gospel are doing so not because Paul is hoarding sin in his life, or because Paul is mishandling God’s word and obstructing its truth or offending people or hindering God’s favor. If Paul were doing those things, it could certainly hinder his ministry, but the reality is that those who reject the gospel do so because Satan has blinded their eyes.

How does he blind them? He deceives them, just like Eve, into thinking that there are other things more satisfying than God Himself. He feeds their pride, he entices them to love the things of this world, and to love themselves supremely.

Satan’s deception is enough to content without adding sinful pollution to our own lives and witness. Not all of us are preachers or teachers but all of us are called to share the hope of the gospel in our neighborhoods, community, workplace, church, and homes. One of the reasons that Satan works so diligently to keep you tangled up in sin, selfishness, and so many vain pursuits, is because he wants to keep your children blinded to the satisfying, liberating, life-giving power of the gospel that could be put on display in your life.

So what does Paul do in light of the reality that Satan has blinded unbelievers and only God can ultimately give them sight through the light of the gospel of Jesus? He preaches the Christ! **[vs. 5-6]** Paul sets before them the gospel which is the light of Christ that God uses to give spiritual sight. Vs 5 (gospel witness) is the only link between satanic blindness (vs. 4) and God-given sight (vs 6).

The thrust of vs. 5 is this: ***We serve Christ by serving people in such a way that they too might serve Christ.*** We promote not ourselves, but Jesus as Lord. And as we serve people, it is not for our own benefit nor is it to please them, but to see Jesus magnified in them so that He is glorified, and they are satisfied.

Let me summarize what we have seen in vs. 1-6: ***We can courageously share the gospel without yielding to discouragement because the gospel is the means by which God opens blinded eyes with the light of the glory of Christ.***

This morning I urge you to turn and see the beauty and the supreme value of Jesus as the Son of God who *is* perfect wisdom, infinite power, perfectly pure, holy and good with no flaw or shadow of sin, deserving of all the honor of God as our Creator and source of our purpose—see Him giving His life in self-sacrifice out of unspeakable love, mercy, and grace to bear the just wrath of God for your sin to extend forgiveness to you, eternal life, and the joy of God’s favor.

You were never meant to be satisfied with the little pleasures of this world. You were meant to know God, to experience His lovingkindness in your life, to delight in Him as the source and giver of every good gift, so that these hors d’oeuvres whet your appetite for the superior delights of heaven where His loving presence is the pinnacle of joy.

Jesus alone can secure your hope for eternity.

He alone clears your guilty conscience.

He alone promises to never leave you or forsake you.

He alone can turn your trials into servants of grace for your ultimate joy.

He alone can give your earthly life eternal significance.

He alone can supply peace that overcomes every fear.

He alone can meet your every need.

He alone can give you reason to say, “to live is Christ and to die is gain.”

“Lord, open our eyes! Cause the light of the glory of Christ to illumine our hearts. And send us to share the gospel with those whose eyes you are about to open, in Jesus’ name!”