

Let's take a look at the connections between 4:1-6 and the surrounding passages:

1. Ministry (4:1) as well as 3:8, 5:18, 6:3<sup>1</sup>
2. Strong Heart (4:1) as well as 4:16<sup>2</sup>
3. Conscience (4:2) as well as 1:12 and 5:11
4. Corrupted Word (4:2) as well as in 2:17
5. Perishing and Blind ones (4:3-4) as well as 2:15 and 3:14
6. Gospel (4:4) as well as 2:12
7. Glory (4:4) as well as 3:7-11; 3:18 and 4:6, 15, & 17.

#### 4:1

**Therefore, since we have this ministry, as we have received mercy, we do not lose heart.** The tender and compassionate Father—the one we learned about in chapter 1—allows us to find continual strength in a life-giving God and find a cheering influence that does not allow us to lose heart (1:8-10). I am amazed at myself, to be honest, that such paltry things take my heart: a singular angry member; a singular home-owners' issue; a singular glitch in my schedule...

#### 4:3-4

**3 But even if our gospel is veiled, it is veiled to those who are perishing,** Only those who are lost are blind to the glory. There is no middle group: There are none who are unsaved, but seeing. This is why the victory parade is the “smell of death” to many (2:14-16). Let me take it one step further: Those who can see the glory of God in the face of Christ will be saved. There are none who “can see but simply won't believe.” No, all those who behold the glory of God in the face of Christ will be saved... otherwise, verse 3 is incorrect: There would be those who are lost, but to them the Gospel is not hidden, it is merely ignored.

**4 whose minds the god of this age has blinded, who do not believe, lest the light of the gospel of the glory of Christ, who is the image of God, should shine on them.**

#### **Never underestimate the darkness of the human heart.**

1. The problem is not the light. It is the very glory of God, as it says in our passage today and that glory is found, not in the face of Moses (chapter 3), but in the face of Christ (4:6).
2. The problem is not the message.
  - a. The Gospel is just as plain as it has been (“light of the Gospel”).
  - b. Christ is just as pure as He has been (“who is the image of God”).
3. The problem is not the required response. Anybody can believe, it seems (“who do not believe”).

#### 4:5

**For we do not preach ourselves, but Christ Jesus the Lord, and ourselves your bondservants for Jesus' sake. This work of God through, primarily, the preached Word of the minister.** This minister must also be concerned with the nations<sup>3,4</sup> Then, notice our share in the labor.<sup>5</sup> The difference we make. (4:5)

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<sup>1</sup>Which, of course is the Greek word for “deacon” and has a number of considerations: 1. This word is more than an “office.” 2. The deaconing that is taking place is the “deaconing”/serving up of spirit (3:8), light (3:9), and the Gospel (4:4).

<sup>2</sup>In the spirit of Galatians 6:9.

<sup>3</sup> Oddly, those who devalue God's declaration that some will not perish (verse 3) are only those who know there is a reality of people perishing! The very people that have been graced with a knowledge of Christ are often the most critical of the One Who graced him/her when it should make them the more thankful and eager to take this saving work to the world. Perhaps this is you. Might I ask you to spend your energy on spreading grace instead of being angry that you have the grace to begin with?

<sup>4</sup> *God did not make known his ways or reveal his glory or display his marvelous works for you alone, or for your ethnic group alone. He did it with a view to the nations—all the nations, not political states, but nations like the Cherokee Nation, the Navaho Nation, the Waorani Nation. “Peoples” the Psalm calls them; John Piper, A Holy Ambition: To Preach Where Christ Has Not Been Named (Minneapolis, MN: Desiring God, 2011).*

How do we, mortal people with normal vocabulary, open any person's eyes to see any light in the midst of any darkness? Yet, Paul, of all people knew this when he said at a "day in court."

*Acts 26:15 So I said, 'Who are You, Lord?' And He said, 'I am Jesus, whom you are persecuting. 16 But rise and stand on your feet; for I have appeared to you for this purpose, to make you a minister and a witness both of the things which you have seen and of the things which I will yet reveal to you. 17 I will deliver you from the Jewish people, as well as from the Gentiles, to whom I now send you, 18 to open their eyes, in order to turn them from darkness to light, and from the power of Satan to God, that they may receive forgiveness of sins*

We don't control the blindness according to 4:3-6, but we do control how much we preach. 4:5 also teaches us that we should **never underestimate the power of this same Gospel in our own lives:** The way in which the Gospel drives us to serve others (4:5). "Ourselves" is the emphasis in the Greek phraseology (being used in the contrasting phrase, first in the sentence) and Paul is saying that "we don't preach ourselves [only], but rather preach Christ [and because of that] we preach ourselves as your servants." The "Life Application Bible's" note says "Paul willingly served the Corinthians church even though the people must have deeply disappointed him... Being Christ's follower means serving others, even when they do not measure up to our expectation."<sup>6</sup> That is, a surrendering Savior teaches us to serve others at our expense... to suffer the wrong.<sup>7,8</sup>

We will always feel the choices available to human beings in verse 2, and this is why "Christian moralism" will never, ever work. We are driven by the Gospel ("not ourselves), but Christ [His Gospel] and ourselves your servants in His stead."

#### 4:6

**For it is the God who commanded light to shine out of darkness,** Or, as the ESV states, "For God, who said, 'Let light shine out of darkness' has shone into our hearts..." **who has shone in our hearts to give the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ. Never underestimate the necessity of the working of God in the darkened heart.** You could pull back 2<sup>nd</sup> Corinthians and see Genesis: Jesus, in verse 4, is the perfect crown of God's Creation<sup>9</sup> in the Great fulfillment of Genesis 1:26.<sup>10</sup> So, knowing that the Genesis talk is on the author's mind, consider that he speaks here of the person's lighted heart in the same way that He speaks of the first light being turned on in Creation week (Genesis 1:3). If you had nothing to do with Creation week, you had nothing to do with your spiritual birthday. Your faith, therefore, must be a gift dispensed through the preaching of the Gospel.

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<sup>5</sup>In view of my respect for the sovereignty of God, I would never speak of a such responsibility or role if it were not for certain Scriptures like 1 Corinthians 3:9 where we are called "fellow laborers of God."

<sup>6</sup>Note on 2 Corinthians 4:5 from 1991 publishing.

<sup>7</sup>as 1 Corinthians 6:7 says in answer to the lawsuit question.

<sup>8</sup>Or as the Puritan prayed, "If thy mercy had bounds, where would be my refuge from just wrath? But thy love in Christ is without measure. Thus, I present myself to thee." Arthur Bennett, ed., *The Valley of Vision, A Collection of Puritan Prayers and Devotions* (Carlisle, PA: Banner of Truth Trust, 2014), 226.

<sup>9</sup>This is the analogy that, sure enough, causes trouble for those of the Arian persuasion who believe that Jesus is created. Being called the "firstborn of creation" (Revelation 3:14). See "Kill the Dragon, Get the Girl?" "Ultimate Exodus" (depending on the edition) and commentary on Revelation 3:14 or listen to this: <http://www.sermonaudio.com/sermoninfo.asp?SID=12912921181> [accessed 9-26-16].

<sup>10</sup>More can be found by reading the contrasts of Paul in Romans 5 or 1 Corinthians 15. There are some clear references to this in Revelation 5 as well (see the commentary in above note) or listen here: <http://www.sermonaudio.com/sermoninfo.asp?SID=1131365752> [accessed 9-26-16].