

"1 Therefore seeing we have this ministry, as we have received mercy, we faint not; 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. 3 But if our gospel be hid, it is hid to them that are lost: 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. 5 For we preach not ourselves, but Christ Jesus the Lord; and ourselves your servants for Jesus' sake. 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." (2Co 4:1-6)

The great Apostle John said in his first epistle, "God is light, and in Him is no darkness at all." The first few verses of Genesis one set the plate for the entire Bible, and we would do very well to give earnest heed to them, as well as the other Scriptures, lest we let them slip. We will come back to I John 1 a little later in this sermon, but I wanted to make the point that God was doing far more on that first day, when He separated the light from the darkness, calling the light day, and the darkness night than simply giving an account of historical fact. He made a difference between light and darkness to reveal something very important about Himself and about us. He is the Author of all things and is the Creator of all things; we will never know His mysteries, but in this world we are to be children of the light and not walk in darkness.

We do not need to unlock the mysteries of God; we should follow the counsel of the Apostle Paul, in his compliment to the Roman church: "For your obedience is come abroad unto all men. I am glad therefore on your behalf: but yet I would have you wise unto that which is good, and simple concerning evil." [Romans 16:9] There is a difference between light and darkness, between God and the devil, between doing good and doing evil, and it is possible to know the difference.

This is the reason that the Apostle Paul, perhaps, summarized his ministry in Ac 26:18 "To open their eyes, and to turn them from darkness to light, and from the power of Satan unto God, that they may receive forgiveness of sins, and inheritance among them which are sanctified by faith that is in me." Salvation lies in the light, in the day, and we are to be children of the light.

The sun, moon, and stars are for this world and are for the benefit of poor creatures like us, to not be fools but wise, using our days and our times and seasons to seek wisdom and understanding, as the Psalmist says. In heaven and eternity, there will be no need of such things and they will not be in heaven.

When heaven was opened to the Apostle John on the Isle of Patmos he marveled: Re 21:23 "And the city had no need of the sun, neither of the moon, to shine in it: for the glory of God did lighten it, and the Lamb is the light thereof. 24 And the nations of them which are saved shall walk in the light of it: and the kings of the earth do bring their glory and honor into it. 25 And the gates of it shall not be shut at all by day: for there shall be no night there."

No night there: no darkness of the mind; no darkness of the soul; no night of the emotions, of depression, discouragement, weariness of mind. No darkness of sin and misery. For God shall wipe away all tears. Think of the glory of these words: "There shall be no night there!" How could there be night in heaven? The Father is Light; the Son is Light; the Holy Spirit is Light. Amen and Amen.

But let us look at our text: 2Cor. 4:1-6 I would say three things this morning: 1. The Gospel is Light; 2. Man's Old Heart is Dark; 3. The New Heart is Light.

- I. The Gospel is Light: vs. 1,2. "1 Therefore seeing we have this ministry, as we have received mercy, we faint not; 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.
 - A. Paul contrasted the ministry of the Apostles with Moses and the Law. Chapter 3.
 1. Christ has removed the veil of the Temple: He did this by the offering up of His body and blood to God; when His flesh was torn, the veil of the Temple was torn.
 2. Unlike the Jew, reading the Old Testament, we in the reading of the Gospel we see the face of Jesus Christ and are transformed into the image of Christ. 2:18
 - B. This Gospel was committed to the Apostles: vs. 1,2
 1. The ways of darkness are rejected: dishonesty, deceit, manipulation.
 2. The target of the Gospel is the consciences of men. The Gospel must not only reach the ear of the flesh, but it must reach the ear of the soul.
 3. The earthly creation enables us to see and hear the words of the gospel. The sun enables us to see with our physical eyes; the vibrations in the air enable us to hear the words.
 4. Paul speaks of a different kind of seeing and hearing: the seeing and hearing of the soul, the inner man. The inner man is heavily fortified against the truth, and only the Gospel can penetrate to the inner man. Hence, there must be no deceitfulness in the ministry of the word; the entire Gospel must be preached, for God is light and in Him is no darkness at all.
 5. People may lie and be successful in selling cars, or real estate, or insurance, or books, or all manner of the stuff of this world, but the merchandise of heaven cannot be sold by deceit and lies and manipulation.
 6. If you tailor the Gospel to appeal to the desires and lust of men, you will not penetrate to the hearts of man, but only to the flesh. Be very careful what you are "selling" when you teach your children and bear witness to the world. Very often we sell what we do not intend to sell.
- II. Man's Old Heart is Dark. Vs. 3-5. "But if our gospel be hid, it is hid to them that are lost: 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. 5 For we preach not ourselves, but Christ Jesus the Lord; and ourselves your servants for Jesus' sake"

- A. The only obscurity of the Gospel lies in the heart of the unbeliever. Those who reject the Gospel, reject it because they are lost, not because of any deficiency in the Gospel.
- B. This obscurity is the work of the devil, who hates the light.
1. Satan loves darkness: he was a liar from the beginning and abode not in the truth.
 2. Where there is ignorance, sin, rebellion, unbelief, and stubbornness, there you will find the devil, for this is His work.
 3. Satan has no power over the elect, but is given power over the sons of darkness.
 4. The darkness of their minds is constituted unbelief in vs. 4. They do not believe because the Prince of Darkness has power over them. They cannot deliver themselves.
- C. Paul's instruction to Timothy:
1. 24 And the servant of the Lord must not strive; but be gentle unto all men, apt to teach, patient, In meekness instructing those that oppose themselves; if God peradventure will give them repentance to the acknowledging of the truth; 26 And that they may recover themselves out of the snare of the devil, who are taken captive by him at his will. [1 Timothy 2:25,26]
 2. Christ is the image of God, and we will find God nowhere except in Christ
 3. Christ is found only in the glorious Gospel, which was committed to the Apostles.
- D. Read: 1 John 1:1-6
1. John and the other apostles didn't make the Gospel up: it was revealed to them: It was manifested. Vs. 1,2
 2. The Apostles preached what they saw and heard to create a fellowship; a fellowship of the Gospel. Vs. 3
 3. They wrote their message down, so that it would last throughout history. Vs. 4
 4. We have fellowship with Jesus Christ only through this fellowship of the Gospel.
 5. The message: "God is light, and in Him is no darkness at all. Vs. 5,6.

III. The New Heart is Light. Vs. 5,6. Several things here: 5 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.

- A. Self-preaching my ministers will make the Gospel of no effect. 5 For we preach not ourselves, but Christ Jesus the Lord; and ourselves your servants for Jesus' sake.
1. That which arises from the world can only have worldly results.
 2. That which is born of the flesh is flesh.
 3. Ye must be born again.
- B. "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."
1. The light that gives the knowledge of God does not originate on the earth, in the wisdom of men.
 2. The sun, moon, and stars are not the source of their own light: They were created on the Fourth Day; Light and Day and Night on the First Day.
 3. If you ever become of Christian it will be because you have received light from beyond yourself.

- a. Hear the words of your God: "Bow down thine ear, and hear the words of the wise, and apply thine heart unto my knowledge. 18 For it is a pleasant thing if thou keep them within thee; they shall withal be fitted in thy lips. 19 That thy trust may be in the LORD, I have made known to thee this day, even to thee. 20 Have not I written to thee excellent things in counsels and knowledge, 21 That I might make thee know the certainty of the words of truth; that thou mightest answer the words of truth to them that send unto thee?" --Proverbs 22:17-21
- b. Again: Proverbs 3: "Trust in the LORD with all thine heart; and lean not unto thine own understanding. 6 In all thy ways acknowledge him, and he shall direct thy paths. 7 Be not wise in thine own eyes: fear the LORD, and depart from evil."
- c. The Gospel is the dazzling light of the truth of God in Jesus Christ; the apostles didn't make it up; we are not to contaminate it with our own vain thoughts. The creation did not create its own light, and the Christian has not invented his; the light comes from God alone.

Application: Paul put it this way to Titus: "1 Paul, a servant of God, and an apostle of Jesus Christ, according to the faith of God's elect, and the acknowledging of the truth which is after godliness; 2 In hope of eternal life, which God, that cannot lie, promised before the world began; 3 But hath in due times manifested his word through preaching, which is committed unto me according to the commandment of God our Savior;" (Tit 1:1-3)

1. The faith which saves is the faith of God's elect.
2. We do not invent the truth: we acknowledge it.
3. The acknowledgement of this truth is the way of holiness.
4. Our light originates in heaven, and was promised before the world began.
5. This light is manifested in the world by the preaching of Paul and the other Apostles.
6. We do not preach ourselves, but the Gospel that was given to the Apostles, for the church is built upon the foundation of the Apostles and Prophets, Christ Himself being the chief stone of the corner.
7. Let us open our hearts to the light, that we may be children of the light.

May God bless you.