

## Preached on 9/24/23 at GBC - Ruston

### "The Glory Of God, Pt.4"

### II Cor.4:5-7

Back over in II Cor.2:12-17 Paul wrote: *"Furthermore, when I came to Troas to [preach] Christ's gospel, and a door was opened unto me of the Lord, I had no rest in my spirit, because I found not Titus my brother: but taking my leave of them, I went from thence into Macedonia. Now thanks [be] unto God, **which always causeth us to triumph in Christ, and maketh manifest the savour of his knowledge by us in every place.** For we are unto God a sweet savour of Christ, in them that are saved, and in them that perish: To the one [we are] the savour of death unto death; and to the other the savour of life unto life. And who [is] sufficient for these things? For we are not as many, which corrupt the word of God: but as of sincerity, but as of God, in the sight of God speak we in Christ."* Unlike those "false apostles", those he vividly described by these words – *"For such [are] false apostles, deceitful workers, transforming themselves into the apostles of Christ. And no marvel; for Satan himself is transformed into an angel of light. Therefore [it is] no great thing if his ministers also be transformed as the ministers of righteousness; whose end shall be according to their works"*(II Cor.11:13-15) Paul and all who believe on God's Christ **DOGMATICALLY** and with **SIMPLICITY** go forth with the **SAME GOSPEL MINISTRY** – Read **Vss.1-4**. This is what **WE ARE HERE FOR**, and this is **WHAT WE ARE CALLED INTO** – **ALL OF US**, from the **PULPIT** to the **PEW**. Paul made it very plain that there are **MANY** who will never hear our words, those who will despise and even hate us for the truth's sake. **NONETHELESS**, our ministry of the Gospel is not a failure – *"For we are unto God a sweet savour of Christ, in them that are saved, and in them that perish: To the one [we are] **the savour of death unto death; and to the other the savour of life unto life.**"* To the non-elect (**those who are** "vessels of wrath fitted for destruction") the Gospel message of free grace is **THEIR CONDEMNATION**. That is such an awful thing to consider, but it is the truth of the Scripture. Remember what our Lord said to those **JEWS** – *"Why do ye not understand my speech? [even] **because ye cannot hear my word.**"*; *"He that is of God heareth God's words: **ye therefore hear [them] not, because ye are not of God.**"*(Jn.8:43,47) I don't know about you, but I can understand why when he considered the magnitude of this Scriptural reality Paul declared – *"And **WHO [is] sufficient for these things?"*** But thank God, the Spirit didn't stop moving Paul to write after this awful declaration.

Let's look at our text for today – **Vss.5-7**. Thank God for **Vs.5** – *"For we preach not ourselves, but Christ Jesus the Lord; and ourselves your servants for Jesus' sake."* Listen to **YLT** of this verse: **"for not ourselves do we preach, but Christ Jesus — Lord, and ourselves your servants because of Jesus."** Paul was always true to the words he wrote under Divine inspiration – *"And I, brethren, when I came to you, came not with excellency of speech or of wisdom, declaring unto you the testimony of God. For I determined not to know any thing among you, save Jesus Christ, and him crucified."*(I Cor.2:1,2) The reason for this was that the **SAME SPIRIT** that inspired him to write these words dwelt in Paul and all the Apostles, as well as all God's redeemed – *"But ye are not in the flesh, but in the Spirit, if so be that the Spirit of God dwell in you. Now if any man have not the Spirit of Christ, he is none of his."*(Rom.8:9) The words of our text reveal to us the reason why Paul boldly declared of himself and all God's ambassadors - *"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.*” Paul knew and understood that in this matter of God calling His elect to true faith and true repentance, **IT DOES NOT DEPEND** on the name, reputation, or delivery of the one sent of God, **BUT THE MESSAGE THEY HERALD** – “*the ministry of reconciliation.*” By these words Paul tells us that they (**himself and the apostles**) didn’t preach any doctrine of their own creation – they didn’t set themselves up as lords over faith and men’s consciences. They didn’t use the Gospel ministry as something by which they could profit themselves with earthly gain. They didn’t preach about sinners getting holier, more knew and improved with each passing day. They certainly didn’t preach that man had the power and ability to do anything spiritually good, or that a sinner’s justification and salvation were by works of righteousness. Remember what Paul told the elders at Ephesus before he departed – “[And] *how I kept back nothing that was profitable [unto you], but have shewed you, and have taught you publickly, and from house to house, Testifying both to the Jews, and also to the Greeks, repentance toward God, and faith toward our Lord Jesus Christ.*”(Acts 20:20,21) The “false apostles” couldn’t say any of this about their **METHOD** or their **MESSAGE**. Paul preached **CHRIST**, in both His person and His work, trusting God to be faithful to His promise to use His voice to call His sheep to Himself – “*And other sheep I have, which are not of this fold: them also I must bring, and they shall hear my voice; and there shall be one fold, [and] one shepherd.*”(Jn.10:16) We must follow Paul’s instruction and his example to “*preach not ourselves, BUT CHRIST JESUS THE LORD; and ourselves your servants for Jesus’ sake.*”. When we preached Christ Jesus the Lord, we must realize we are the servants of His church – “*ourselves YOUR SERVANTS for Jesus’ sake.*” The word translated “*servants*” means ‘a slave, metaph., one who gives himself up to another’s will, those whose service is used by Christ in extending and advancing his cause among men.’

Look at **Vss.6,7**. It’s of interesting note that the word translated “*for*” at the beginning of vs.6 is a different word with a different meaning than the word translated “for” in Vs.5. The word Paul wrote in this verse means ‘because or since’. It is kind of like when the Apostles used the word “*therefore*”. In other words, Paul is giving us the **CAUSE** for the great change in the **METHOD** and **MINISTRY** of himself, the apostles, and all who would believe through the preaching out of God’s Gospel. **Here’s a great question:** What made the difference between Saul of Tarsus headed down the road to Damascus, and Paul the Apostle? What makes the difference in all of those who formerly were “enemies of God”, and now are His servants? **Here’s the Scriptural answer:** “*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.*” Notice how he puts all the **EMPHASIS** on the true and living God. Think about the **first part** of this verse – “*For God, WHO COMMANDED THE LIGHT TO SHINE OUT OF DARKNESS.*” This carries us all the way back to eternity past when God sovereignly determined to speak everything we see and know into existence. Paul singles out “*light*”. Turn to **Gen.1:1,2**. Now read **Vs.3** - “**God SAID, LET THERE BE LIGHT: AND THERE WAS LIGHT.**” God spoke while all was dark and void, and immediately **THERE WAS LIGHT**. It didn’t take minutes, or hours, or years. **At His command LIGHT came out of darkness.** By way of comparison, the Apostle Paul states that the same God who commanded the light to shine out of darkness, “**HATH SHINED IN OUR HEARTS.**” He doesn’t try to shine in the hearts of sinners, nor does He send a small glow their way in hope that they’ll respond. Keep this in the context of what Paul has already said in the previous verses. The Gospel light “*is hid to THEM THAT ARE LOST*”, i.e., to every reprobate sinner. But to those all those whom God “*hath shined in their hearts*”, those who are called of God: “*Christ the power of God, and the wisdom of God.*”(I Cor.1:24) John Gill wrote these words on this verse – “For as

there was darkness upon the earth before there was light, so there is a natural darkness in the minds of men, before any spiritual light is infused into them; and as light was the first production out of the dark and unformed chaos, so light is the first thing that is struck into the soul in conversion; moreover, as light was the effect of almighty power, so is the spiritual illumination, or the opening of the eyes of the understandings of men, who are naturally born blind; and **as light was a creation of that which was not before**, so the work of grace on the soul **is not an increase of, or an addition to, or an improvement of the light of nature, but it is a new light, created in the understanding.**” Paul makes it very clear what this **SHINING OF GOD** is to the “*them that are saved*” – “*to [give] the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ.*” I love the YLT of this verse – “because [it is] God who said, Out of darkness light [is] to shine, who did shine in our hearts, for the enlightening of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ.” The **first thing** I gain from Paul’s words is that since men by nature are in **SUCH SPIRITUAL DARKNESS**, they must be **MADE “LIGHT” IN** and **BY** the Lord, or they will never be fit or qualified to declare Him who is “the *light of the world*” to others. In other words, God shines His light into the hearts of His elect, creating faith in them, and they in turn hold forth that same light to others. We see examples of this glorious change in those who are made light throughout the Scriptures, **e.g., the woman at the well; Saul of Tarsus, etc.** . The **second thing** I gain is that this “*light*” that is given is all about “*the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ.*” The word translated by the phrase “*of the knowledge*” means ‘the deeper more perfect and enlarged knowledge or understanding’. Here’s the same word used concerning John’s ministry and Christ our Savior – “*And thou, child, shalt be called the prophet of the Highest: for thou shalt go before the face of the Lord to prepare his ways; To give knowledge of salvation unto his people by the remission of their sins, Through the tender mercy of our God; whereby the dayspring from on high hath visited us, To give light to them that sit in darkness and [in] the shadow of death, to guide our feet into the way of peace.*”(Jn.1:76-79) **Listen to John’s words in his epistle:** “*And we know that the Son of God is come, and hath given us an understanding, that we may know him that is true, and we are in him that is true, [even] in his Son Jesus Christ. This is the true God, and eternal life.*”(I Jn.5:20) This “*knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ*” concerns **HOW** or **ON WHAT BASIS** God is Just to **JUSTIFY** the ungodly. Satan, the God of this world blinds the reprobate to God’s **GLORY** in Christ, but to those that are God’s by electing, redeeming, saving grace, **THIS LIGHT SHINES** by His Holy Spirit through His glorious Gospel into the hearts of His people, causing them to rest and cling to Christ **ALONE** as “*the LORD our righteousness.*” **Does that make sense?** That’s the Gospel ministry and message: “*Therefore if any man [be] in Christ, [he is] a new creature: old things are passed away; behold, all things are become new. And all things [are] of God, who hath reconciled us to himself by Jesus Christ, and hath given to us the ministry of reconciliation; To wit, that God was in Christ, reconciling the world unto himself, not imputing their trespasses unto them; and hath committed unto us the word of reconciliation. Now then we are ambassadors for Christ, as though God did beseech [you] by us: we pray [you] in Christ’s stead, be ye reconciled to God. For he hath made him [to be] sin for us, who knew no sin; that we might be made the righteousness of God in him.*”(II Cor.5:17-21) As the redeemed of the Lord, we are **NOT ASHAMED** of this glorious Gospel, knowing that **IT ALONE** is the “*power of God unto salvation*” to all God’s elect – **Quote Rom.1:16,17**. Salvation is through Christ, by Christ, and **IN CHRIST** – Salvation is truly “*of the Lord*”.

Let's quickly look at **Vs.7** - Paul calls "*our Gospel*" a "*treasure*". The word translated "*treasure*" actually refers to a **COFFIN** or **CASKET**. What is placed in a coffin or casket? The meaning of the word "*treasure*" is 'the place in which good and precious things are collected and laid up'. What precious things are collected and laid up in "***OUR GOSPEL***"? Every rich and precious truth the Lord is pleased to use to call His redeemed sons and daughters out of darkness into His marvelous light. As His ambassadors, His ministers, Paul says we "*have this treasure in earthen vessels, that the excellency of the power may be of God, and not of us.*" We are so weak, and so easily broken, but God has chose the weak and foolish things of this world to confound the wise, so that in the salvation of sinners, **GOD RECEIVES ALL THE GLORY** - "*For ye see your calling, brethren, how that not many wise men after the flesh, not many mighty, not many noble, [are called]: But God hath chosen the foolish things of the world to confound the wise; and God hath chosen the weak things of the world to confound the things which are mighty; And base things of the world, and things which are despised, hath God chosen, [yea], and things which are not, to bring to nought things that are: That no flesh should glory in his presence. But of him are ye in Christ Jesus, who of God is made unto us wisdom, and righteousness, and sanctification, and redemption: That, according as it is written, He that glorieth, let him glory in the Lord.*" (**I Cor.1:26-31**) I'll close with this: Every redeemed, justified, regenerated and converted sinner would not desire for it to be any other way!

We'll stop right there.