Grace to You :: *Unleashing God's Truth, One Verse at a Time*

Looking at the Face of Jesus, Part 4
Scripture: 2 Corinthians 3:18-4:4
Code: 47-25

Well, we return finally after a bit of a break to 2 Corinthians chapter 4. We're in the midst of a series that I regret has been interrupted several times on "Looking into the Face of Jesus." Of necessity I've had to be gone, as you know, and so the series has lost its continuity a bit, but I trust the Lord will kind of get us back in the flow even though it's been a couple of weeks since we've addressed our attention to this great text.

The text that we're looking at in our on-going study of 2 Corinthians begins in chapter 3 with verse 18 and flows down in to chapter 4 of verse 6. I want to read those for you if I may starting in 2 Corinthians 3:18. "But we all with unveiled face beholding as in a mirror the glory of the Lord are being transformed into the same image from glory to glory just as from the Lord the Spirit. Therefore since we have this ministry as we received mercy, we do not lose heart but we have renounced the things hidden because of shame, not walking in craftiness or adulterating the Word of God but by the manifestation of truth commending ourselves to every man's conscience in the sight of God. And even if our gospel is veiled, it is veiled to those who are perishing in whose case the god of this world has blinded the minds of the unbelieving that they might not see the light of the gospel of the glory of Christ who is the image of God. For we do not preach ourselves but Christ Jesus as Lord and ourselves as your bondservants for Jesus' sake. For God who said light shall shine out of darkness is the one who has shone in our hearts to give the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Christ."

You'll notice that the theme here is clearly delineated for us in verse 18, it is looking at the glory of God...down in chapter 4 verse 4, looking at the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ..and the same thing is stated in verse 6. And so we have built this study around the theme, "Looking at the Face of Jesus." As we look at the face of Jesus we see the glory of God made manifest and that then becomes the path to sanctification, the path to spiritual maturity. No matter how difficult the problems of life, no matter how stressful the trials, how difficult the temptations, how deep the sorrows, looking into the face of Jesus Christ will allow us to focus on the glory of God revealed in Him and give to us the path of faith, the path of joy and the path of triumph. And so, we have been talking about how critical, how essential, how foundational it is to spend our Christian life looking at the glory of God revealed in the face of Jesus Christ, learning to look to Christ, learning to see His glory, learning to focus all our attention on Him.

Now lest I be misunderstood, let me just share with you something that I want to express as a clarification this morning. This look into the face of Jesus is objective and not subjective. That is to say it is historical and not mystical. When we say that as a Christian you live your life looking into the face of Jesus Christ, we're not saying that you need to find a vision somewhere or some kind of extra-terrestrial or super-human kind of experience, we're not asking you to chase an intuition or a fancy or a fantasy or some kind of emotional high or some kind of ecstatic moment. When we talk about looking into the face of Jesus we're talking about something objective, something historical.

You say, "What do you mean by that?" I mean this, that the glory of God is revealed in the face of Jesus and the face of Jesus is revealed in the Scripture. So a vision of the face of Jesus Christ is a look into Scripture...for therein is Christ revealed. Not only is the Lord Jesus Christ the theme of the New Testament but He is really the theme of the Old Testament starting in the book of Genesis and flowing through the whole of Scripture. The focus is on the Lord, the one who is coming, the one who comes, the one who has come. But most pointedly and most generously and most completely is the glory of God revealed in the face of Jesus Christ in the fullness of the New Testament.

And so, when we talk about looking at the glory of God revealed in Christ, we're not calling for an ecstatic experience or something subjective. We're talking about an objective look at Scripture so that in chapter 3 verse 18 when we behold as in a mirror the glory of the Lord, that mirror which reflects that glory is nothing more than the Bible itself. Christ is revealed to us through the Word.

Peter himself gives able testimony to this fact out of his own personal experience. Go back with me for a moment to Matthew chapter 17...Matthew chapter 17. And here Peter, along with James and John, did have a superhuman, supernatural vision. They saw the face of Jesus Christ and in that face marvelously, incredibly, miraculously the glory of God was revealed as that very face was transfigured before them. The account starts in verse 1, "Six days later Jesus took with Him Peter and James and John his brother and brought them up to a high mountain by themselves and He was transfigured before them." Literally transformed. "And His face shone like the sun." They looked into the face of Jesus and they did see the glory of God revealed, the glory of God revealed in manifest light shining and then His garments became as white as light. And to add to the immense spiritual drama, Moses and Elijah appeared to them talking with them...or with Him. Of course, Peter answered and said to Jesus, "Lord, it is good for us to be here." This is great. "If you wish, I'll make three tabernacles here, one for You, one for Moses, one for Elijah." The point was...let's stay, we'll just build a place and we'll just stay, this is tremendous. "While he was still speaking, behold a bright cloud overshadowed them and behold a voice out of the cloud saying, This is My beloved Son with whom I am well pleased. Listen to Him. And when the disciples heard this, they fell on their faces and were much afraid. Jesus came to them and touched them and said, Arise and do not be afraid. And lifting up their eyes they saw no one except Jesus Himself alone."

The glory was gone by them and the shining light had disappeared and they saw the face of Jesus familiar to them. It was a vision, verse 9 says. It was a vision of the glorified Son of Man. It was a vision of the glory of God in the face of Jesus. It was a remarkable vision. They not only had the privilege of looking into the face of the real human Jesus but they had the privilege of looking into the face of the real human Jesus and seeing the Shekinah glory of God...a great experience, an immense, overwhelming, overpowering experience. We know how overpowering it was because they fell on their faces into the dirt and were in shear terror. It's always a frightening thing to look into the face of God...to see His shining glory. They fell down and the Lord came and touched them and said, "Arise and don't be afraid."

There should be a healthy, holy fear anytime anyone has a vision of God in the face of Jesus Christ. And there was then. A parallel to that would be in Revelation chapter 19 where John had the vision of Christ and you remember when he saw that vision he had the very same response exactly that Peter had. "When I saw Him...he says in Revelation 1:17...I fell at His feet as a dead man." And Jesus did the same thing to John He had done to the disciples, He laid His right hand on them and said, "Don't be afraid."

It is always a terrorizing thing to look into the face of Jesus Christ and see the manifest glory of God...whether for them or for us, any vision of God like Isaiah's or their's or any vision of God of our's even this day in the face of Jesus Christ should produce a holy fear and a holy terror. So it is an immense and overwhelming experience to see the glory of God revealed in the face of Jesus on these several occasions. But as remarkable as it was for Peter here, in Matthew chapter 17 it was not really that on which his spiritual life and ours should turn, we don't need to look for such an experience any more than Peter would have given more significance to that experience than it ought to have had. In fact, he makes it very clear in his epistle, 2 Peter chapter 1, listen to what he writes starting in verse 16. "For we did not follow cleverly devised fables or tales when we made known to you the power and coming of our Lord Jesus Christ but we were eye witnesses of His majesty." When I write to you about the coming of Christ and about the glory of that coming, I want you to know that this isn't some speculation, this isn't some fable, I have seen with my eyes His glory revealed. And he's referring back to the mount of transfiguration. When he received honor and glory from God the Father such an utterance as this was made to Him by the majestic glory, "This is My beloved Son with whom I am well pleased." And Peter recalls that moment. And we ourselves heard this utterance made from heaven when we were with Him on the holy mountain. That was an immense marvelous miraculous supernatural experience. But Peter immediately adds, "We have a more sure word of prophecy to which you do well to pay attention." And that sure word of prophecy, that revealed Scripture is a lamp shining in a dark place. And he goes on to talk about the prophecy of Scripture. Scripture then is a more sure word. Peter wants to be sure that even the real experience of seeing the glory of God revealed in the face of Jesus Christ is not as sure a word as that which is written down.

That experience could be interpreted a number of ways. That experience resulted in them falling to the ground, therefore they must have missed some of the reality of it. They might not have even been good reporters of the fullness of that very experience itself. And the Scripture is a more sure word for it carefully word by word details everything that God wants revealed.

So when we talk about looking into the face of Jesus Christ and seeing the glory of God, we're not advocating a vision, we're not telling you there is some mystical, some intuitive kind of way in which you can perceive Christ on a spiritual level...we are simply saying to you there is an objective look at the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ as He is revealed on the pages of Scripture. And that is why the Bible in the New Testament in particularly is called the Word of Christ and why we are to let it dwell in us richly...richly.

So, we're talking then about looking into the face of Jesus which means looking into the Scripture which is the mirror in which the face of Jesus is revealed to us, manifesting the glory of God. Remember now, Paul when he wrote this was in the most heart-breaking circumstances ever up until this point in his life and he was looking to the Lord for triumph, he was turning to the Lord looking at the face of Jesus Christ to find what he needed for strength in this hour of difficulty. He had learned in any condition to be content. He had learned that everything was his in Christ in spite of all the onslaught, all the terrible physical attacks against him that tried to kill him, the plots of the Jews against all of those who would have taken his life, all of those efforts that were made against him to destroy his credibility, to assault and assassinate his character, to undermine his churches...all of that was going on in a massive onslaught at this particular time. And in the midst of it all, he looks to Christ and he finds in Him all he needs. He had plenty of reason to look at the Lord, and when he looked there he found all that he could have ever hoped for.

And so, we've been looking at this sort of look at the face of Jesus and seeing the components of it. And we remind you, first of all it was a clarifying look and it is for us as well. We all, verse 18 says, with an unveiled face, beholding as in a mirror the glory of the Lord. The veil is off. No hindrance is there. Nothing to obstruct us. God is on display in the face of Jesus Christ. As we look at the glory of Christ we will see God revealed. And so, as Christians obviously our whole Christian life and growth is predicated on understanding our God and He is never better understood, never more clearly understood than in the face of Jesus Christ. So it's a clarifying look.

Secondly, we spent some detail time examining the fact that it is a transforming look. And the middle of verse 18 says, "We're being transformed into the very image to which we look, from level of glory to the next, and that's the work of the Lord, the Spirit or the Holy Spirit." Secondly then, this look causes us to become like the Lord. It clarifies who our God is therefore strengthening our faith in Him. It transforms us into the very character of Jesus Christ, making us more like Him.

Thirdly we noted it is a strengthening look. Verse 1 says we do not lose heart. No matter what comes the privilege of new covenant ministry, the privilege of new covenant salvation is so immense we can never surrender to cowardice or weariness or laziness...we never lose heart. It is a strengthening look. One look into the face of Jesus Christ, seeing there the glory of God revealed infuses strength into the weak and weary soldier.

Fourthly, we said it is a purifying look. Paul says we have renounced the things hidden because of shame and are not walking in craftiness. Whenever you look into the face of Jesus Christ and see the glory of God revealed, there will be an overwhelming sense of sinfulness. We saw it with Isaiah and certainly that was part of the terror that afflicted the disciples at the transfiguration and part of the horror that caused John to fall over like a dead man when he saw the vision of Christ in Revelation 1...an overwhelming sense of shame and guilt and remorse and exposure as a sinner. And so the Apostle Paul says that any look into the face of Jesus Christ should cause you to renounce the hidden shame of your life. Certainly that had been his experience when he saw Christ.

And then fifthly we said it is a truth-loving look. Paul says we do not adulterate the Word of God but by the manifestation of truth, commending ourselves to every man's conscience in the sight of God. Anyone looking at the face of Jesus Christ and seeing the glory of God revealed will love the truth, will have a passion for the truth and will begin to live in a world of truth.

And then number six, and this is where we left off last time, we'll pick it up, it is a limited look...it is a limited look. A clarifying, transforming, strengthening, purifying, truth-loving look and now a limited look.

Now let me just review briefly what I said a few weeks ago. I think...I can't remember all that I said because I can't recall it and I didn't have time to listen to my own tape. Sometimes I do that, you'll be amazed to know, just to remember what I said to you. But when the Apostle Paul concerned himself with the Corinthian situation, his concern with it was that he was being attacked by false apostles. We've gone over that, chronicled that a number of times. Apparently one of the blows that these false apostles were rendering against the Apostle Paul was to accuse him of having a defective methodology in his ministry. That is to say he was too open, too plain, too direct, too simple, too straightforward. It was just sin, repentance, faith, the cross, that was it. Very plain, not at all mystical, not at all the kind of thing that would appeal to the Greek who wanted some kind of highly elevated gnosis, some secretive knowledge, who wanted something that you would have to reach a point of initiation to comprehend. They were into the higher knowledge, the deeper knowledge, the secret things, the mysteries. And Paul's message was plain, straightforward, simple, open, uncomplicated. He determined to know nothing among them except Jesus Christ and Him crucified, and that involved sin and repentance and the meaning of the cross and that was it. And a wayfaring man though he be a fool need not error and a little child could even understand it. And it didn't appeal to the pride and

the ego of the Greek who worshiped his intellect. There were no mysteries. There was nothing to be attained. And so they were saying his preaching was offensive and ineffective to the Gentile. And probably also it was equally offensive and ineffective with the Jew because he had eliminated Moses and circumcision and the law.

The whole point was he just offending everybody. He was offending the Greeks with the simplistic character of this thing. And he was offending the Jews with a stripped down version in which Moses and circumcision and the law had been eliminated. And the reason he was getting rejected was he just was not sensitive to his audience. He needed a better marketing plan to overcome consumer resistance if he was going to sell the gospel effectively. In fact, this kind of thinking is fairly popular today. It's sort of the idea that, it's a heretical idea, but it's the idea that anyone can and will respond to the gospel if it's presented in a clever enough way. And that's not true. Paul just gave this simple, straightforward preaching. "I'm

not ashamed of the gospel of Christ for it's the power of God unto salvation to everyone who believes." And he just put it out as simply, as plainly as possible. To those who were perishing, it was foolishness, but to those who were being saved it was the power of God.

But, you see, these false apostles were accusing Paul of this simplistic kind of thing of not really taking into account his audience. And that's why most people rejected what he said and people try to kill him and stone him and throw him out of town and plotted to take his life. And he just alienated people because he really wasn't very tactical in overcoming consumer resistance. And so he answers that in verses 3 and 4. Any look into the face of Jesus Christ is going to cause you to react in the very same way. He said this, verse 3, "Even if our gospel is veiled, it is veiled to those who are perishing, in whose case the god of this world has blinded the minds of the unbelieving that they might not see the light of the gospel to the glory of Christ who is the image of God."

He says, "Look, if our gospel is veiled, and admittedly it is, if people cannot understand it, cannot comprehend it, and that does happen, it is not the fault of the message and it is not the fault of the messenger. The problem is it is veiled to those who are perishing, it is the condition of the hearer." Those who are headed for inevitable doom and damnation apart from divine intervention, those people are the problem. The hindrance is not the preacher, it's not better methodology that we need. The hindrance is not the fact that we're not oratorical enough and we're not clever enough, we're not innovative enough, creative enough or manipulative enough. The problem is not that the message is too plain and too simple and too unappealing to human intellect or human effort that man would like to think that he needs to have an exalted mind to grasp this or that he needs to achieve something in his life to earn this. That's not the problem. Lack of innovation or participation or intellectualization or marketing skill, none of that is the problem. The problem is the condition of the people who are hearing. And that is absolutely essential to any comprehension of evangelistic effort. "The natural man understandeth not the things of God, they are foolishness to him," 1 Corinthians 2:14 says. He

cannot know them because they are spiritually appraised. It's all foolishness to him because he is the problem. They are perishing. They are on the road to damnation. They are veiled from the truth. And you can't educate them into Christianity and you can't manipulate them into Christianity and you can't emote them into Christianity and you can't rationalize them into Christianity and you can't ceremonially induct them into Christianity. It is an issue of blindness that is beyond the preacher, that is beyond the method. The preaching of the simple truth is the means. But only God can remove the veil and only God can turn the light on in the darkness.

So Paul is saying if they don't respond to the gospel, it's because they are perishing. And they are perishing because they do not believe. And they do not believe because they will not believe because they love their sin. I think back in John 3 Jesus laid it out as straightforwardly as it could be. This is judgment that light has come into the world and men love the darkness rather than the light for their deeds were evil. For everyone who does evil hates the light and does not come to the light lest his deeds should be exposed. So they love their sin therefore they hate the light therefore they will not believe therefore they do not believe therefore they are in the dark and perishing.

These cheap peddlers, these hucksters of the gospel, these adulterators of the Word of God, these kapelos, con men mentioned in chapter 2:17 with their secret knowledge and their clever manipulation were mocking the clear simple preaching of Paul. They said he couldn't halt the perishing and neither could they. Nobody can halt the perishing because the power of depravity in them is greater than the power of any preacher, be he true or false. And he goes on to define the problem. Verse 4, "In whose case the god of this world has blinded..." it's not enough to have a veil but they're also blind and now the metaphor deepens. They're veiled by their unbelief which is the result of the love of their sin and now on top of being veiled, they're blind. Their view is obstructed externally and now it's obstructed internally in their blindness. "In whose case" refers to the perishing, the lost. "The god of this world has blinded the minds of the unbelieving." The perishing and the unbelieving are the same. Anybody unbelieving is perishing, anybody perishing is unbelieving, anybody not perishing is not unbelieving. The conclusion of that little syllogism is that nobody could be an unbelieving Christian...as some would like to think. Perishing and unbelieving are synonymous. And people who are perishing are perishing because they're not believing and they're not believing because they love their sin and hate the light. And because they're not believing, their veil is compounded because the god of this world has blinded their minds.

Now the god of this world, or the god of this aion, the word aionmeans age. The god of this age. Well what does that mean? Well whoever the god of this age is, he is in control of this age. What age? Man's age, today in our world. The god of this age is the one who controls the thoughts, the ideas, the opinions, the ideals, the maxims, the hopes, the impulses, the aims, the goals, the views current in the world, the one who reigns in the world's philosophies and the world's psychologies and the world's education and the world's commerce and the world's labor and the world's sociology. In every enterprise he is the monarch.

Who is this? Who is this god of this world? Back in Matthew chapter 4 we start to get an answer to that, verse 8, the devil takes Jesus to a very high mountain, showed Him all the kingdoms of the world in their glory and said to Him, "All these things will I give You." Now you can't give what you don't have, right? So there you have the devil possessing the kingdoms of the world. It's none other than the devil himself who is the god of this world. In John chapter 12 verse 31, chapter 14 verse 30 and chapter 16 verse 11, three times Satan is called the ruler of this world. Ephesians 2:2 he is called the prince of the power of the air. He is the one who rules the atmosphere of demonic habitation that surrounds the earth. In 2 Timothy 2:26 he is the devil who has captivated the senses of men. In 1 John 5:19 the whole world lies in the lap of the evil one.

By the way, as a footnote, that's a verse to choke an amillennialist. And if you're wondering why, come tonight and I'm going to explain it. But not this morning, you have to come tonight to hear it.

Satan has blinded the minds of the unbelieving. How has he done it? Does he get inside your head and mess around with you? No. He's created...he's created the society in which you live that has this massive influence. All the ideologies, as I said, the thoughts, ideas, opinions, ideals, maxims, hopes, dreams, impulses, aims, goals, views, everything in the world as we know it is under the control of the god of this age. And it's not enough that people are dead in their trespasses and sins. It's not enough they're veiled from the truth because they hate the light and love the darkness and therefore they are unbelieving and on the road to damnation, compounding that problem Satan has created a system in this age that panders to their depravity and deepens the darkness. And so it can be said of them by Jesus in John 8:44, "You're of your father the devil." The blind perishing unbelievers follow Satan's system.

And again I say to you, listen, it's not that Satan gets into your mind and plays with you individually. It's that he has created an ethos that exists in the world that elevates sin and iniquity. I mean, you look at the world and you wonder why is it the way it is. It's because Satan is in charge of all of it and his demons are carrying out this whole operation. And you wonder why there's crime and hatred and animosity and bitterness and anger and why there is injustice and inequity and unfairness and why there's an unceasing war on every front, individually and between nations and why nothing seems to get fixed and everything gets worse and worse and why rampant escalating immorality and pornography and abortion and you name it, homosexuality, whatever else you want, hostility, hatred, all these things. Why? Because this is all a working out of the agenda of the God-hating entity named Satan. This personality created originally as an angel by God Himself who fell and took a third of the demons with him is currently the god of this world...the ruler of this age.

And you look at the world today and it reflects him. That's why in some sense it's such a...it's such a waste to try to politically alter his system because man is subject to his supernatural power. And whatever we may endeavor to orchestrate on a sort of a political level or a social level to try to

change things, you've got to...you've got a whole culture of unbelieving people who hate the light and love the darkness, are perishing, refuse to believe, are veiled from the truth and blinded by Satan and dead in their sins. And they're going to follow the system that panders to their depravity. Now that's enough of a thought to choke a post-millennialist. I'll explain that tonight, too.

If you want to understand the kingdom of Christ, the thousand-year millennial kingdom which we're going to talk about tonight, if you want to understand the thousand-year millennial kingdom of Christ, all you have to understand really to capture that idea is to understand what the world today is like as a reflection of the god of this age who rules it being completely reversed. Because in the millennial kingdom Satan is bound in chains for the whole thousand years, all his demons are bound with him and the entire world over, the agenda of the ruler who is the Lord Jesus Christ will be executed. In other words, the whole world will take on completely opposite character because everything going on in the world will be a direct reflection of the will of the ruler who is the Lord Jesus Christ and it will be implied at all points by those who rule and reign with Him. And it will be the absolute opposite of what we experience today, the very opposite. And we're going to define that tonight. But that's what the kingdom is. It is the opposite of a system orchestrated by Satan and his demons, it is a system orchestrated by Christ and His holy ones and those who belong to Him.

So Satan through the system panders the fallen flesh and people choose blindness and they love it. Certainly Paul understood that when he was called to preach. You remember he gives his testimony in Acts 26. He says the Lord said I'm sending you, verse 18 of Acts 26, to open their eyes that they may turn from darkness to light and from the dominion of Satan to God. I'm going to use you as the tool. I'm going to do the...I'm going to do the enlightening but I'm going to use you as my instrument.

So, you see, this is a limited look that we enjoy. Being able to look into the face of Jesus Christ is not because of something we achieved intellectually, it's not because of something we achieved religiously. It's not some works we did or some concepts we comprehended. It's not because somebody was very clever and made the gospel believable for us. It's not because somebody was very creative and innovative and made it east to accept. It's not for any of those reasons that we're saved. The fact of the matter is we are engulfed in such deadness with such a veil over our eyes, so totally blinded by Satan himself that it's impossible for us to ever see the light unless God intervenes. And down in verse 6, we'll look at this one next time, it says the same God who said light will shine out of darkness at creation is the one who is shone in our hearts to give the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Christ. Only God can turn the lights on.

So Paul is saying don't criticize me for being too simplistic in my preaching. This is not something that any man can do by his cleverness. Men are blinded by the god of this world, and they are blinded, back to verse 4, to the degree that they might not see the light of the gospel of the glory of Christ who is the image of God. That's the problem. They're so blind that they can't see the light of the gospel...the gospel which is revealing the glory of Christ who is the image of God. It's the

gospel...he summarizes the gospel as God incarnate in Christ. God's glory in Christ revealed through the cross and the resurrection. But they can't see it. And no amount of cleverness and no amount of manipulation and no amount of softening up or entertaining of sinners can open blind eyes, it can't be done...it can't be done. Paul gives the gospel another name. He sometimes calls it the gospel of Christ, sometimes the gospel of God, here he calls it the gospel of the glory of Christ. It's the gospel, the good news in which the glory of Christ is revealed since He is the very icon, the very expression, replica of God Himself. Jesus Christ is God revealed. In Him is God revealed. In Him dwells the fullness of the godhead bodily, Colossians 2:9 says. In Him are hidden all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge. He, according to Colossians 1 and verse 15, that tremendous testimony to Him, is called the image of the invisible God. And in Hebrews 1:3, the radiance of God's glory, the exact representation of His nature.

So this vision of Christ in which the light goes on and you see the glory of God shining in the face of Christ and you know that Christ is God and you understand why He came, why He died, why He rose again, all of that is not available except to a very limited few. It only is available to those for whom God turns on the light. Verse 6 again, God is the only one who can shine in our hearts to give the light.

Well what does God use to give the light? He uses a human voice. How shall they hear without a preacher? And He uses a message about Christ. Faith comes by hearing and hearing by the Word of Christ. God uses the simple, plain preaching of the gospel from a simple plain preacher who is not required to embellish it with some kind of grandiose human genius but simply to speak it openly and clearly and God Himself will turn on the light as He sees fit to do it. The vision of Christ then is limited to those whom God in mercy gives sight. It's very much like Luke 24:45, it says of Jesus, "He opened their minds to understand the Scripture." He opened their minds to understand the Scripture.

Can I talk about the word "mind" for a minute, in whose case, verse 4, the god of this world has blinded the minds...the minds, noemais the term. It literally means the ability to reason. Unregenerate people can't think, they can't reason. They have what Romans 1:28 calls a reprobate mind, a non-functioning useless mind. So what good is it going to do for you to come with your cleverness of human wisdom, with your well thought out extremely well prepared presentation of Christianity and think by that you're going to bring this person to his senses to comprehend truth when in fact his mind doesn't work? It's useless. Can't function. It's blind, veiled, dead, dark.

You say, "Well now how then can people respond?" Only when God turns on the light...only when God turns on the light. Satan is not really a true God. It's a small "G". And the reason he's called the god of this age is because he's running it, he's a creature who has become god to his followers. The theologian Hodge wrote, "This age in rebelling against the one true God and submitting to Satan offers homage to one who is aptly though ironically called the god of this age, even though he is in fact a no God and himself a rebellious creature under the judgment of almighty God. He's a phoney

god but his powerful influence on fallen hearts has deadly results so that they might not see the light of the gospel of the glory of Christ who is the image of God."

When I think about all of that and I realize, first of all, we've talked about how important it is to understand that in our preaching and witnessing, it's not our cleverness, it's the power of God that turns the light on. The second thing that comes to my mind is not only a lesson on being effective in witnessing by being clear and just presenting the truth, but the overwhelming sense of gratitude I have to God for Him turning on the light in me. Don't you feel that way? What a merciful thing for God to do. I have no idea and never perhaps will in this life and perhaps not even in the life to come why He would choose to turn the light on in my life, but I praise Him and thank Him. First John 2:8 says the true light is shining. But it's limited. It's limited.

Looking into the face of Jesus then is a clarifying, transforming, strengthening, purifying, truth-loving and limited look. And those of us who have been given that privilege should hold it so precious and so treasured as to keep our gaze on Him at all times and therein lies the hope of our sanctification. Now, there are two more points that I thought I might get to this morning but I didn't and I'm going to give them to you next week, two more marvelous features about looking into the face of Jesus Christ. The seventh one is it is a humbling look. You might initially think that this is a reason to be proud. Just the opposite. It is a humbling look. And then lastly, it is a sovereign look. It is a sovereign look as verse 6 indicates, only God can give it. It comes from heaven to earth, not initiated on earth. And we're going to look at those next time.

Back to where we began. When we talk about looking at the face of Jesus and seeing the glory of God revealed, we're not talking about some mystical experience, we're talking about looking into the Word of God, reading and understanding that truth about Jesus Christ which makes God known to us and God being made known to us equips us to be what He wants us to be.

Father, thank You for our time this morning. What a joy to worship. Thank You for the echo of the songs and hymns, the praise. O Father, how our hearts have been lifted and drawn to You, how we've been convicted about our sin and our fallenness and our disobedience and our indifference. Lord, quicken our hearts and make us all You would want us to be. We pray for those who don't know our Christ. We pray, O God, that You would turn the lights on, that You would shine in their hearts, that they would believe, that they would turn from their wicked way, that they would turn against the love of sin which keeps them blind. We know how it all starts, they love sin and so they hate the light. And because they hate the light they won't believe. Because they won't believe, they're veiled and then they're made blind by Satan. O Lord, go back to the beginning and break that will to sin and produce repentance in every heart and to desire to come to the light. And then, Lord, we ask that You would just turn that light on that they might see Your glory in the face of Christ and start on the path of sanctification. For those of us who are there, keep us looking at Christ so that we can become more like Him. We pray for His glory. Amen.

Available online at: http://www.gty.org
COPYRIGHT (C) 2014 Grace to You
You may reproduce this Grace to You content for non-commercial purposes in accordance with Grace to You's Copyright Policy (http://www.gty.org/connect/copyright).