

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

The Glories of Gazing in the Face of Jesus

Scripture: 2 Corinthians 3:18-4:6

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Well, this is Service Number 12 this week for us at the conference. And we think we've been drinking from a fire hose. *(Laughter)* it has been just amazing. The ministry of the Word of God and the seminars and everything have made this such a rich and wonderful week. And worshiping the Lord together and hearing that magnificent music and even listening to that song that Cory and Jubilant were singing, and longing for that kind of fellowship with our great God and Creator, to love Him with a perfect love. What a thought. And yet to come in the glory that follows this life.

This is sort of a footnote on a great, great week. I cannot guild the lily. I cannot add to what has been said. But perhaps to set our thoughts in what is the most important direction of all, not just for those at the conference, but for all of us who are here. Life, for us as Christians, and ministry, for us as ministers, is not pain free. It is not without its difficulty.

And, in fact, the more devoted and the more obedient and the more faithful that we are to our great Shepherd, the more difficult life can be. The more bold we are in living the Gospel and proclaiming the Gospel, the more resistance we will get. "All that live godly," the Bible says, "will suffer persecution." "In this world," Jesus said, "you will have trouble." Keeping our perspective in the hard times is really a challenge. But it is necessary.

It's important for us to know our theology. It's important for us to know what we believe and why we believe it, and to faithfully proclaim it and fulfill the mandate of ministry and witness. It's important for us to understand what the Bible teaches. It's critical for us to know error when we see it and to be able to refute it, to protect the church and guard the truth. And it's important for us to grow up in the knowledge of sound teaching.

But beyond even that, and really at the very source of that, is the key that sustains our lives. And the key to sustaining our lives in all of the challenges that come, in all the good and the difficult times is to sustain a preoccupation with the Lord Jesus Christ. _____ of Hebrew said that we run this race, this faith race living the Christian life, fixing our eyes on Jesus.

When Paul was passing the mantle to Timothy and Timothy was waning and flagging and weakening because of the difficulties that were around him, both in the church and outside the church because of the threats against his life, as well as against his leadership, he was losing strength and he was ceasing to do what he should have done, the work of an evangelist and the preaching and teaching, using the gift that God had given him. He was even in danger of being ashamed of the Lord and ashamed of Paul and in danger of letting go of sound doctrine.

And the Apostle Paul wrote his last letter, the last of all his 13 letters in the New Testament to Timothy. Timothy was to pick up the ministry for Paul after he was soon to be beheaded and gone. And it would be Timothy's responsibility to lead the next generation. And Timothy was weakening. And so he gave him a letter full of exhortation to be a teacher and a soldier and an athlete who runs to the finish, and a farmer who never stops sowing and enjoys the harvest.

But above it all and beyond it all, he said this to him in 2 Timothy 2:8, he said, "Remember Jesus Christ. Don't ever take your eyes off Him." He is the model teacher, the model soldier, the model athlete, the model farmer. He is the model of endurance. He is the model of faithfulness. He is the model of power and wisdom and knowledge. He is the model of everything.

Remember, Jesus Christ -- no wonder Paul said he was determined to know nothing but Jesus Christ. No wonder the Apostle Paul said, "For to me to live is Christ." To live is Christ. Jesus Christ was his life. He didn't mean by that, "He's the source of my life, though He is." He didn't mean by that, "He lives within me, though He does." He didn't mean by that that his life was controlled by Christ, though it was. He doesn't mean that he submits to Christ's lordship obediently, though he does. It was beyond all of that life is Christ.

Everything is Christ from beginning to end. And that's how it has to be for us if we are to live triumphantly in our Christian experience. As the Psalmist said in Psalms 16, "I have set the Lord always before me. The Lord is always in my vision. My eyes are never off him, therefore," he said, "my heart is glad. I am not shaken. And I dwell securely." Paul said the experience of knowing Christ was far surpassing to every other experience, and he would gladly give up everything else to know Christ. Christ has to be our constant vision.

I have the opportunity from time to time to remind the students at the college who come there year by year to study the word of God, that they're getting their theology shaped and their learning what they need to believe and what they need to avoid. And they understand what the truth is and sound doctrine and what is heresy. And they're learning about ministry. And they're getting a Christian and a Biblical worldview. But in the middle of all of it, they have to continually ask themselves the question, "What is the condition of my relationship to Jesus Christ?" 'Cause it is in that vision of Jesus Christ that everything finds its appropriate place.

Open your Bible to 2 Corinthians 3 for just a meditation that I trust will add a final explanation point to the great word that has gone forth from this pulpit this week. In 2 Corinthians 3, I want to read Verse 18, just the last verse and then the first six verses of Chapter 4. I've been signing Bibles and books all week and frequently use a portion of this text as a verse written under my name.

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 receive 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 His 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 your bondservants for Jesus' sake. For God, who said, 'Light shall shine out of darkness,' is the one who has shown in our hearts to give the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Christ."

Here's a vision of Christ. Here's Paul telling us that he has an unveiled face, looked into the face of Jesus Christ, the glory of God manifest in Christ. He says it in Verse 18. He repeats it in Verse 4 and again in Verse 6. Here is his stirring vision of Christ, the glory of Christ, who is the image of God, or the glory of God shining in the face of Christ.

If you were to read this letter through you would find that things in this church of Corinth were very dismal from Paul's perspective. His heart was breaking. It could all really be summed up without going into all the detail in his words in Chapter 11 and Verse 3. "I am afraid. Lest as the serpent deceived Eve by his craftiness, your minds should be led astray from the simplicity and purity of devotion to Christ."

That was the sum of it. They got their eyes off Christ. Life had lost its spiritual simplicity, its spiritual purity which was Christ centeredness. And it was heart crushing what came out of that, sin. In fact, he was so concerned that when he got there he was going to have to clean up the place of all the inequity that would be present among a people who had taken their eyes off Jesus Christ.

And not only sin and sins of immorality that he mentions in Chapter 12, but heresy. False teachers having a heyday. And not only heresy, but terrible confusion, chaos, and discord. Everything that can go wrong does go wrong when people lose their focus on Christ. Here is Paul at the hardest time of his life. The champion he is, indeed, of all the church, in the thick of trouble. And it's not trouble of

his own making.

And yet, the middle of it in Verse 1, he says, "We do not lose heart." And the question that jumps out of that text to me is, "How do you not lose heart when this kind of disappointment, discouragement, and disaster is going on among the people to whom you've given your life?" False teachers had come in. They'd been successful in a campaign to destroy the people's trust in Paul. People bought into it, turned against Paul.

Turning against Paul, they turned against the only source of apostolic truth, divine revelation, and were beginning to believe the lies. His person had been assaulted, his judgment, his discernment, his character, his honesty, his teaching, his authority, his morality, in a word, his spiritual integrity, as well as his teaching. He had loyally and faithfully, at great cost to his own life, great peril, exalted Christ, preached the new covenant Gospel unwaveringly, lived a godly life. And he's being treated like this. He's being attacked unjustly.

This is the deepest pain you will ever know, because the people you love the most, have the greatest potential to inflict the deepest pain. And yet he can say, "We do not lose heart." Another way to say that, in the original sense, would be, "We have not become faint-hearted cowards." We're not veiling on this. And so the question is asked, "How do you deal with this kind of difficulty? How do you deal with the downs of life? How do you deal with the massive disappointments that come and not lose heart?"

The answer to the question is the key to the whole treasury of sanctification truth for every Christian. The answer's pretty simple. He kept his gaze on Christ. He kept his gaze focused on the glory of Christ. And that is what sustained him. He looked into the face of Jesus Christ, and there he saw God revealed. The great miracle of salvation had turned on the light for Paul, even though it shown so brightly initially that it made him blind.

The light of the soul went on and he saw Jesus Christ differently than he had ever seen Jesus Christ before. He says to the Corinthians, "I once had an opinion about Jesus in the flesh. And I thought He was an illegitimate claimant to the Messiahship. I thought He was a phony and a deceiver. And I thought anybody that followed Jesus was a blasphemer and ought to be put in prison or executed."

But then the light of the glory of the Gospel shown unto Paul. And he said, "I now know Christ no longer in the flesh." That is to say no longer from a human perspective. In fact, he says, "I don't even know anybody else from a fleshly perspective. The whole world has changed for me now that spiritual reality has broken into my darkness." He saw the Lord. He saw the God he thought he served. He saw the true and living God shining in the face of Jesus Christ.

In the new covenant, Gospel has allowed every believer to have that same privilege, to look fully into the face of Jesus Christ and see the revealed glory of God. I'm not talking about having your own private vision. I'm talking about being able to open the precious word of God and it's all about Christ. Jesus even said, "The Old Testament is the Scripture that speaks of Me." How much more does the New Testament speak of him? We have the unveiling of God in perfection, "An exact reproduction of God," Hebrews 1 says, "in Jesus Christ."

The new covenant then has indeed, the new covenant Gospel has allowed every believer to have the same privilege that the apostle Paul had, to look fully into the face of Jesus and see the unveiling of the glory of God. No matter how dark the night once was, when the light broke and we were redeemed, we saw the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ. There will never be anything more wonderful.

As yet, as we live our Christian lives, how easily do we turn our eyes away from Christ to some other thing? How can the disappointed, discouraged, and assaulted preacher? Or how can the Christian who struggles in his life with all of the trials and issues? How can we maintain our joy? How can we hold onto our confidence? How can we hang in there faithfully ministering in the midst of the things that come our way? And the answer is by never taking our eyes off Jesus.

You know how inveterately I am devoted to that. It comes down to the very practical reality of looking into the text that reveals Him. If I never preached a sermon in my entire life, I would thank God for all eternity for the privilege of studying His Word. If I never said a word to anybody about it, just because it is the glory of God shining through the face of Jesus Christ. And it has brought to me all the benefits that come from the Christ-focused life.

When you look at the face of Jesus, what kind of a look is it? First of all, it is a clarifying look. It is a clarifying look. So many mysteries in life, so many things hard to understand, but I would call you to Verse 18. We all; all of us who are in Christ, with unveiled face beholding as in a mirror or glass the glory of the Lord. All Christians have full access, full access to God's glory revealed in Jesus Christ. In the Old Testament that wasn't true.

In the Old Testament, things were veiled. They were covered. From the prior section, He talks about Moses going up into the mount and he wanted to see God. And God put His glory into a cave and only allowed Moses to pass by and see the afterglow of it. And Moses came down with the glory of God reflected off his face and put a veil over it to symbolize the fact that this was only veiled revelation of God.

In fact, the veil in Verse 15 is still over the heart of everyone who reads the Law of Moses but doesn't know about Christ. But Verse 16 says, "Whenever a man turns to the Lord the veil is taken away." We see God in blazing glory in the face of Jesus Christ.

All you need to know about God, all God wants to disclose about Himself, all the beauty of His character, all His attributes, communicable and incommunicable, all His love and loyalty and mercy and grace and power and wisdom, and all His compassion and sympathy and care, all His saving purpose, all His ability to supply everything we could ever need, all things necessary to save us, all things necessary to empower us, all things necessary to console and comfort us, all things necessary to equip us, all things necessary to prepare us for service and for glory, everything we need is unveiled in Jesus Christ.

If you want to know what God is like, look at Jesus. "You've seen Me, you've seen the Father," He said. Never before Christ was there such a clear view of God. That's why at the end of the 11th Chapter of Hebrews, that great chapter of the heroes of the faith, it says, "But God had provided something better for us." As great as their lives were, and as great as the expressed power of God was, on behalf of all the heroes of the faith up until the New Testament era, there's something far better for us. And that is the clarity of the vision of God that comes in the face of Jesus Christ. And all believers have full access.

1 Corinthians 2:16 says, "We have the mind of Christ right here in this book. The mind of Christ is revealed." New life in Christ then gives us clarity about who God is. The mystery, as Al Molar was saying the other day, "The mystery is unfolded. It is _____. It is revealed. It is disclosed. It is made manifest. But in New Testament text, the New Testament is the mystery hidden in ages past and now revealed. And you can look into the New Testament verse by verse by verse, chapter by chapter, book by book, and you will see the glory of God shining in the incarnate Jesus Christ.

And as you gaze into that glory, you will know the true and living God. Someday you'll see Him face to face and be like Him, 1 John 3. And there is a sense in which that will be the ultimate and perfect clarity. But even now, the veil is off. There is nothing to obscure God. There is nothing to hide Him from us. There is no more curtain in front of His dwelling place. So as you look at the face of Jesus Christ, as you look into the Scripture and see Christ here and there and everywhere on the pages of Scripture, God becomes clear and you know your God, and you know his character. And you know who you worship and who you can trust and why you can trust Him.

And that's why when you come together on a Lord's Day like this, and we sing a hymn about God, we sing at the top of our lungs. We about burst in singing of the glory of our God because we know our God through Jesus Christ. This is a clarifying look. And nothing is more important to be clear than to see the glory of God shining in the face of Jesus.

When I started preaching as a young guy, I used to go into churches, and they used to have little signs in a lot of churches said, "Sir, we would see Jesus." Sir, we would see Jesus. Just a little reminder about what the subject ought to be when you're up there. I want to hold up a big sign so

many times when I hear preachers preach. "Enough of that, we would see Jesus." Where is Jesus in all of this? This is a clarifying look. I want to know my God. I don't want to know your ideas about how to deal with my pain. I want to know my God.

I don't want your ideas about how to be more successful. I want to know my God, and He is revealed in my Christ. This is a clarifying look. And it's secondly a transforming look. It says in Verse 18 that we are at the same time as we are beholding, looking intently at the glory of the Lord revealed in Scripture. We are at that time being transformed. God acts on us as we are Christ-focused. We are being transformed into the same image. That is into the very image of Christ.

How do you become like Christ? By being consumed and preoccupied with Him. And as you gaze at Him, you are being transformed into the very same image from one level of glory to the next. And frankly, you could add as many glories as you want and you wouldn't obscure or alter the point. There aren't just two steps from glory to glory. The idea is from glory to glory to glory to glory to glory. Just put the word "glory" in front of an infinite number of mirrors.

And this work is done by the Lord the spirit. And this is done by the Holy Spirit. As you focus on Christ, as you're preoccupied with Christ, and this, of course, is why -- and the people here at Grace Church know this -- I have a very hard time letting go of teaching the Gospels or teaching the Book about Christ or another book in the New Testament that focuses particularly on Christ because there is no greater vision. There is no other necessary vision.

I can't wait, really, to finish Luke. We're nine years in and we're in 16. *(Laughter)*we'll be there a few more years. You can do the math. We'll speed it up a little bit. But soon as we're done with Luke, I'm going right back to Mark if I'm still around. And I want to go right back and start all over again on the glory of the Lord Jesus Christ for all our sakes.

Because it is, as we gaze at His glory and see the glory of God shining in the face of Jesus Christ unveiled on the pages of Scripture, we are by the Holy Spirit being transformed supernaturally into His very image from one level of glory to the next to the next to the next. There's a third way to look at Christ that gives us strength so we don't lose heart. And I think it's so important. It's a grateful look. It's a grateful vision.

You look at Christ and all you can do is be overwhelmed with gratitude. First of all, it's a clarifying look. Secondly, it's a transforming look. And it's also a grateful look. Look at Verse 1, therefore, since we have this ministry, "As we received mercy, we did not lose heart."

Easy to be in the ministry and say, "Oh, this is too much. This is too difficult." Some of you are just living your Christian life, "this is too much. Too much is expected of me. They want too much service. The Lord's asking too much. This is over my head. I can't do this. I'm discouraged,

disheartened." Many pastors feel that way. "My church is too small. My congregation is too meager. They aren't getting it. You got people fighting me all the way." Then the, "I deserve better than this." No you don't. (*Laughter*)No we don't. We deserve Hell. Let's get that straight. That settles all arguments.

We deserve Hell. Everything is a mercy, including your ministry. Look at Verse 1 again. We have this ministry as we receive mercy. Whatever it is you have is mercy. I'm not here because I deserve this. You're not where you are because you deserve it. You're there by mercy. It is a mercy and nothing else. Apostle Paul knew that. He didn't lose sight of that. Listen to what he said, 1 Corinthians 15, "I am the least of the apostles. Not fit to be called an apostle, because I persecuted the church of God. But by the grace of God I am what I am."

It's about grace and about mercy. He said when he was writing to Timothy, he said, "Look, I thank Christ Jesus our Lord because He considered me faithful, putting me into service. I give Him all the credit. Why? Because I was formerly a blasphemer and a persecutor and a violent aggressor and I was shown mercy. And the grace of our Lord was more than abundant. And here I am the foremost of all sinners who found mercy." And when you understand that your salvation and your calling is a mercy, then you're gonna go through your calling just overwhelmed with gratitude.

I'm not saying, "Hey, I deserve better than this." No you don't. It's a mercy. Your ministry is a mercy. It is a divine concession. It is a willingness of a kind and loving and gracious God to give to us a responsibility of which we are not worthy.

We're all in the room in seven categories with Paul, "Oh wretched man that I am. And what am I doing here? And what are these people doing here listening to me?" It is a mercy. It will always be a mercy. Even when you're good at it, it's a mercy. Maybe when you're good at it, it's even more of a mercy because of pride. Ministry is mercy like everything else.

Paul is saying, "Look, I know my ministry is full of difficulty. It's full of blessing in amazing ways. But it's full of difficulty, pain, suffering, persecution, eventually, of course, martyrdom." For him, the ministry could have been just the worst. If you read 2 Corinthians all the way through, you will have a litany of categories of suffering and abuse that this man took. And he could have complained.

At some point, he could have said, "I don't get enough appreciation out of anybody to make this worthwhile." Even as he told the Philippians -- when he's in prison, other preachers are saying he's in prison because somehow, he's corrupt and God put him on the shelf, and they wanted to add pain to his chains. But because his perspective was always that the ministry is a mercy -- "It's a mercy that I don't deserve," he didn't lose heart.

God gave it to him as a mercy. And it would always be a mercy. And that's the way he would hold it. He was not concerned that his preaching had to be fashionable, that it had to be admired, that he had to show some clever secret insight. He just wanted to preach Christ, be faithful, whatever God gave him, God gave him. And all that was good and all that was beneficial was a mercy. It was all a mercy and nothing other than that. It is a clarifying look to look always into the face of Christ. It is a transforming look. And it is a grateful look.

Fourthly, it's a purifying look. Verse 2, he says, "We've renounced the things hidden because of shame." I'll tell you this, if you look into the face of Jesus Christ continually, continually, and you are seeing clearly the glory of God, and you are being transformed into the very image of Christ, and your heart is overflowing with gratitude, your life is gonna be pure. And there aren't gonna be two of you. There isn't gonna be the one that all the Christians know and all the church knows, and then the other one, hidden one, the shameful one.

He says, "We've renounced that, the things hidden because of shame." From the start, when the chief sinner was saved, when he saw the glory of God shining in the face of Jesus Christ, he says, "We renounced any secret hidden life of shame." And he was faithful to that to the very end. He kept saying over and over, "My conscience is clear. My conscience is clear." His defense to the Corinthians when they accused him of having a secret life of shame was, "My conscience is clear."

He says that in Chapter 1 and Verse 12. In fact, he says it such strong language, "Our proud confidence is this, the testimony of our conscience that in holiness in godly sincerity not in fleshly wisdom, but in the grace of God we've conducted ourselves in the world, and especially toward you. We've conducted ourselves in holiness and godly sincerity so that we do not have an accusing conscience. My conscience is clear. Accuse me if you will. My conscience is clear. We have renounced any hidden life of shame."

And we are all profoundly harmed and hurt and heartbroken when some minister who proclaims Christ openly has some other life and it comes out and it's crushing to his congregation and to the cause of Christ. We are all heartbroken when that occurs in the church. Somebody who comes, a friend of yours, a family member, somebody that you fellowship with that you know and they appear to be a believer and then a horrible reality becomes apparent that there is a hidden life of shame. This is heartbreaking. Paul says, "Look, there are no secret devices. There's no deception. There's no corruption." He's not saying he's perfect.

Romans 7, "Oh wretched man that I am, but I am who I am and there's not another me hidden somewhere out of sight." Shame is _____. It's ugly, disgraceful, vial. There are no secret immoralities. This is not the hypocrite. What drives that out is the vision of Christ, the vision of God shining in the face of Jesus Christ.

When you look into the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ, that salvation, you came in a repentant attitude, did you not? Repentance is necessary for salvation. You came repenting. So you were unveiling the true corruption of your heart at the moment of your salvation. We all did. And it is true that at that point we did renounce all those things that are hidden, because they're so ugly they can't be brought to the surface. We renounced that. But such things may creep back into our lives through the flesh.

How do we fight them off? By that constant looking into the face of Jesus Christ in His Word. Paul says, "Look, I'm not a deceiver." He further says in Verse 2, "I'm not walking or living in craftiness, conurgia, shrewd, unscrupulous means." You can't look into the face of Jesus and be a hypocrite. Somebody professes Christ, falls into horrible sin; that's not the beginning of anything. It's the end of a long looking away from Christ.

There's a fifth element in this look. It is a truthful look. It is a truthful look. It's a clarifying look for sure, a transforming one. It is a merciful, merciful gift. So it's a grateful look. It's a pure look. And it's a truthful look. Verse 2, One thing you can't do if you're looking into the face of Jesus is adulterate the Word of God. You show me a heretic and I'll show you someone who doesn't know Christ, who's not looking into His face. You can't separate the incarnate word from the written word.

The written word is only a manifestation of the divine word which is also manifest in Christ. Christ is revealed in the Word of God. So, the one who truly is looking into the face of Jesus does not adulterate the Word of God. It is a part of accountability. It is a part of devotion. It is a part of worship. It is a part of communion with Him to be faithful to His Word. Adulterating is an interesting term. It's the verb "delao." And it's only here in the New Testament. But the noun is ofishook. It has the idea of deceiving someone. Delao is used in some of the extra biblical sources in the Greek language to speak of diluting wine.

What people did who sold wine to make more money was to dilute it inordinately with water so they were selling supposedly a certain percentage of wine, but in reality, a lot less? Watering down something is the idea. Paul says, "Look, I will not water down the Word of God. I don't water it down. I don't dilute it with any other material. It's the Word of God." Our little motto at Grace Two, "Unleashing God's truth one verse at a time." We don't want to dilute it with any other worldly elements.

He says, "Look, somebody looking into the face of Jesus Christ and seeing the revealed glory of God, someone who is devoted to the truth incarnate and written incarnate in scriptured, someone with the vision of Christ is going to be committed to the pure truth. People may want clever subtitles. They may want teachers who tickle their ears and tell them fancy things that appeal to their carnality." But Paul will preach the pure, uncluttered, untampered, undiluted Gospel of grace and nothing else,

nothing else. No deception, no cunning. He says it will be the manifestation of truth.

And thereby, and thereby alone can we commend ourselves to every man's conscience in the sight of God. God knows what we're doing. And the only way to commend ourselves even to man, who have a conscience, is to be faithful to the Word of God. The one who is truly looking into the face of Jesus has a love for the truth, and faithfully and relentlessly proclaims that truth; a clarifying look, a transforming look, a grateful look, a purifying look, a truthful look.

But there's just a few more things maybe to mention to you. And this is very, very important. It is a privileged look. It's a privileged look. There are lots of things that could be said about Verses 3 and 4. I just want to draw this one thought out of it, 'cause our time is limited. If our Gospel is veiled, it is veiled to those who are perishing. In his 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.

Apostle Paul says, "Look, most people don't see it. Most people can't see the shining glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ. Most people have a Gospel still veiled." They are perishing, Verse 3. They are unbelieving, Verse 4. Their unbelief is compounded by the God of this world who has Satan further blinding them. This is how people live. It's like Peter, who said, "If you have tasted the kindness of the Lord, if you know what the Lord can do at your salvation, why would you not long for the Word like a baby longs for milk?"

You've tasted it. If you know what it is to be so privileged as to be delivered out of your blindness, out of your darkness, out of your unbelief; if you know what it is to have been given the light of the Gospel of the glory of Christ, then you must be overwhelmed with the privilege.

Just a footnote to this, there are a lot of people who think, "Well, the reason people don't respond to the Gospel is because we're preaching this archaic message. We're doing it from these ridiculous places called 'pulpits,' by these funny people who preach these expositional messages. Don't you get it? People aren't gonna respond to that kind of archaic stuff. They need a better strategy to reach people. This isn't any good."

People who argue like this are trying to make Christianity analogous to a marketing strategy. You have the product. That's the Gospel. You have the consumers. That's the unbelievers. And the preacher is the salesman. So you just have to figure out how to overcome consumer resistance. That's really an utterly useless analogy, because I can't overcome anybody's consumer resistance. They're blind. They're dead. They're unbelieving. They're captive to darkness and to Satan.

The truth of the matter is I can do one thing, perhaps. I can expose their formidable darkness. I can expose their resolute impenetrability. And if anybody believes, they have been privileged to believe.

They have been regenerated and awaked from the dead and the light has shown into their darkness.

I don't save anybody. I can't sell the Gospel to anybody and either can you. That's not my job. Preach it, yes. How will they hear without a preacher? My cleverness and my methodology have nothing to do with it. My technique cannot break the bonds of sin. My technique, my style, my cleverness, my stories, my illustrations cannot bring the sinner to salvation. They cannot awaken the dead. They may exalt the pride of the preacher, but they cannot result the unregenerate.

So much modern evangelism is built on the heretical idea that anyone will respond to the Gospel if it's presented in a clever enough way. It's not true. All of us know that if we've ever seen the light, we are among the privileged. And the vision we have is a privilege. What a privilege to look into the face of Jesus Christ and see the savior and the redeemer. And if it was the privilege of all privileges as it is that our salvation, it is still a glorious privilege. And we ought to take every advantage of it now. Keep your eyes on Jesus Christ.

Two more. It is a humbling look. It is a humbling look. Paul says in Verse 5, "We do not preach ourselves. How could we do that?" But Christ Jesus is Lord and ourselves as you were bondservants for Jesus' sake. We're just here to serve. We can't preach ourselves, can't preach our own message. Self-promotion has no place. Personal authority has nothing to do with it. We just preach Christ Jesus as Lord.

Listen, let me tell you what preaching is. Preaching is information about Jesus Christ and the Gospel. That's what preaching is. It's information. It's biblical truth interpreted and disseminated. You must understand this truth with your mind. Why He came. Who He was. What He did. And God will, when He chooses, use that, to His glory through the salvation of sinners. We're just bond slaves, servants.

Any real true look into the face of Jesus Christ will humble a person. You see some proud self-promoting person walking around parading his own name, he overestimates his value. We're just slaves called to a duty. And the duty is pretty simple, preach not yourself, but Christ Jesus as Lord, and let everybody know you're a slave of Jesus.

Where there's a real look at Jesus, there's humility. Where there's no humility, there's no real look at Him. One last, this makes sense of all of it. The vision of Christ is all from God. It's a sovereign look. It's a sovereign look. Verse 6, "For God said," -- this is why we are humbled by the way. This is the connection. This is why we're so humbled. "Light shall shine out of darkness." God said that. He's talking about creation. There was a day, as we heard in that song when God created. And He spoke light into existence.

"For God who said, 'Light shall shine out of darkness.'" Nobody prompted Him. Nobody was around. God, on His own, uninfluenced spoke light into existence. God creates _____ out of nothing. The 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.'" The only reason you see the glory of God shining in the face of Christ is because God turned on the light. Sovereign salvation.

There's no sense of preaching yourself. There's no sense in exalting human wisdom, ingenuity, technique, et cetera. Preaching one's own cleverness is absolutely ridiculous for God, the creator is the only one who can turn on the light. If anyone is in Christ, he is a new what? Creation. And who alone is the creator? God. Spiritual darkness will cover the minds of men just like darkness covered the face of the deep until God speaks light into existence. God alone can dispel the darkness of sin and ignorance into which people will continue to be led deeper and deeper until they perish forever.

God alone sovereignly shines Gospel light. You see that when you look into the face of Jesus. Here's the essence of your life as a Christian. The essence of your life as a servant of the Lord, a vision of Christ, a clarifying, transforming, grateful, purifying, truthful, privileged, humble, sovereign view of Christ. And that will lead you to Verse 1. "We do not lose heart." Looking at the eternal glories of Christ is the reason you will never lose heart.

Father, we thank You for the time this morning to look at this precious gem of a text which we have lightly touched, but none the less, which has borne to us a profound and rich benediction of truth. Seal it to our hearts, Lord. Seal it to our hearts. Draw us ever to Christ.

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