

THIS WEEK'S MESSAGE

MAY 4TH–5TH, 2024 // 2 CORINTHIANS

BLINDNESS FOR LIGHT (2 CORINTHIANS 4:1–6)

THE WHY

Paul understands what it feels like to have been on the outside looking in when it comes to following Jesus. He was so far from God that Jesus Himself needed to appear to Paul to get him to turn to Christ. This was a merciful gift from God to Paul. **In response Paul will not give up sharing the gospel with others.**

THE TRUE GOSPEL

Paul's conscience will allow him to preach only the true gospel. He won't compromise the message to appease the demands of the culture, nor will he add to the gospel to make it more appealing.

- **We must fight the impulse to make the gospel more attractive lest we empty it of the power to save.**

WHAT'S THE MESSAGE AND METHOD?

Paul couldn't judge motives, but he could judge the message and the methods (Philippians 1:15–18). Some made salvation a secret path that only some could follow. Others distorted the gospel.

- **The true gospel is clear and simple and depends on the Spirit, not clever tricks.**

BLINDED

Paul recognizes that spiritual warfare accompanies the sharing of the gospel. From hardened hearts who love the world to hearts blinded by satanic influence, people can't see the beauty of Christ without God's help.

- First Corinthians 3:6 **"I planted, Apollos watered, but God gave the growth."**

THE GOSPEL IS ABOUT JESUS, NOT US

Paul doesn't want any of the glory that only belongs to Jesus. His only responsibility is to serve the people by presenting Jesus as Lord.

- The gospel is the story of Jesus' love for us expressed through His life of perfect obedience, His substitutionary death on the cross, and His victorious resurrection.

THERE'S POWER IN THE GOSPEL

When Paul presents Jesus as Lord, God does an amazing thing. In the same way God commanded light to shine in the darkness at creation, **God shines light into blinded hearts so people can see Jesus and be saved.**

- **Salvation is a miracle of God's grace.**

DEATH FOR LIFE (2 CORINTHIANS 4:7–15)

GRACE MAGNIFIED IN WEAKNESS

As weak "clay jars," the treasure of Jesus in us is a gift to be received and shared, not a reward to be earned, because it can't be.

- This doesn't mean we do nothing. We cry out to God in prayer asking Him to use us as instruments in His hands, proclaiming Jesus as Lord and Savior.

WE NEED GOD'S HELP

The plight of the Christian who lives for Jesus is **affliction, perplexity, persecution**, and being **struck down**. But the final word belongs to Jesus because He won't allow us to ultimately be **crushed**. He won't allow us to **despair**. He won't **abandon** us. And we can't be **destroyed** because in Christ we are His!

LOOKS CAN BE DECEIVING

Jesus' death seemed to indicate that He had lost and everyone else had won. When Christians die for their faith, the devil and the world seem to win. When Paul suffers for his faith, he seems to be the loser.

- Another contradiction in the Bible is that **death is the only path to true life**.
- Paul was a human punching bag for the cause of Jesus as he proclaimed the gospel. But Christ shone brightly through Paul's sufferings. **What looked like weakness actually magnified the glory of Jesus.**
- **It's ok to admit weakness and struggles as we point people to mighty Jesus!**

FAITH FUELS EVANGELISM

The crucified and resurrected Jesus was so real to Paul that he couldn't stay quiet about Him, no matter the opposition.

- **One cannot be in the presence of Jesus and remain quiet about Him.** We don't have to be **obnoxious**, but we have to be **intentional**.

A SURE HOPE

The resurrection of Jesus was the proof Paul needed to turn from his old way of life to living submitted to Jesus. If Jesus was raised, then those who are in Christ will be raised as well. This hope will not disappoint (Romans 5:5).

- Everyone hopes in something or someone for their lives. **Will it survive suffering?**

TROPHIES TO THE GLORY OF GOD

As Paul preaches the gospel, more and more people repent and believe and are saved. The more who are saved, the more thanksgiving to God increases. And the more thanksgiving to God increases, the more glory He receives.

- **Every Believer is a trophy who magnifies the truth that Jesus saves sinners.**

AFFLICTION FOR GLORY (2 CORINTHIANS 4:16–18)

PAUL CAN'T STOP, WON'T STOP

Paul ends this chapter the way he started it, with a commitment to share the gospel no matter the cost. Physically, Paul continued to pay a cost, but the reward was great, both daily and eternally.

- **Christ followers find their best lives in daily becoming more like Jesus.**

AN ETERNAL PERSPECTIVE

Paul found the strength to endure his afflictions by comparing the temporary with the eternal. His wasn't a passive endurance. Paul's daily focus on Jesus as his reward gave him the resolve to stand firm in his afflictions.

- **We aren't permanent residents in this world so why do we live like we are?**

LIGHT AFFLICTION?

What Paul calls light affliction should humble us. In ch. 11, he speaks of five times receiving the forty lashes minus one. Three times he was beaten with rods. He'd been stoned and left for dead. He'd been shipwrecked, cold, imprisoned, hungry, thirsty, and without clothing.

- **Most Christians don't really suffer.**

WHERE YOUR TREASURE IS...

For Paul, the suffering was temporary, but Jesus was forever. The writer of Hebrews (maybe Paul?) said we are to "run with **endurance** the race that lies before us, **keeping our eyes on Jesus**, the pioneer and perfecter of our faith" (Hebrews 12:1–2).

- **Strength to endure is found in our focus.**

OUR POWER

- There is power that God unleashes when we humbly and unashamedly proclaim the true gospel (Romans 1:16).
- We have to know our role: we proclaim, Jesus saves.
- The brighter the Son, the more glorious He becomes to the people with whom we share.

OUR MESSAGE

- As "clay jars," none of us are good enough to earn salvation. It is received.
- None of us are so strong that we do not need help. We have to humble ourselves.
- Our stories of authentic need point to Him.
- **Do our ways of living truly satisfy the longings of our hearts? Is there a better way?**

OUR REWARD

- Daily walking with Jesus in His Word, in prayer, in worship, and in community makes us more like Him.
- Focusing on what lasts forever, Jesus, gives us strength to face what comes today.
- **Our misguided desires find their satisfaction in Jesus, now and forever.**

THE BEATIFIC VISION

- Theologians speak of the "Beatific Vision," which is when we see God.
- Paul tells us in v. 6 that we see God's glory in the face of Jesus Christ.
- **When we taste and see that Jesus is good, nothing else but Jesus will satisfy us, thus, leading us to pursue Him alone.**