

I Was Blind But Now I See

2 Corinthians 4:1-6

February 15, 2026

Introduction

This is the third and final sermon in a series of 3 which I began on August 11th, 2024. We began to look at this entire passage at 2 Cor. 3:1 and have so far gone through the text up to and including chapter 3, verse 18. We've seen Paul defending his lack of need to produce credentials in order to be allowed to visit and preach and teach the Corinthians. He claims rightly that the people themselves are proof of his apostleship and his ministry on behalf of Christ. They are his *"letter of recommendation, written on our hearts, to be known and read by all"* (3:2). Paul brings in the role of the Holy Spirit in this regard in 3:3 – *"And you show that you are a letter from Christ delivered by us, written not with ink but with the Spirit of the living God, not on tablets of stone but on tablets of human hearts."* God is given all the glory by Paul as the word "Glory" is the predominant word in vv. 7-11. He also brings in a contrast between the Old Covenant and the New Covenant by referring back to the veil on Moses' face in Exodus 34 – using it as an analogy so that the veil representing the OC, which covers Moses' glowing face except when he is teaching his people God's Word is blocking understanding of the passages. The NC, replacing the OC, will have much more glory which will never fade and the veil covering the access to the Word, is taken away by Christ. The NC in replacing the OC, will have much more glory and that glory will never fade because it will be permanent.

In our last sermon from I Cor. 3:12-18, (August 25th, 2024), we saw that Paul, still referring to that Mosaic veil, shows it to symbolize God's Word being blocked so that the Word could not be understood and this veil is now positioned over people's hearts. In 3:16 he tells us that this veil is removed only through Christ. With that now unveiled heart and face, people behold the glory of the Lord and are being transformed into the image of Christ and will attain to glory of their own (vv. 17-18).

I. The Ministry Given by God's Mercy vv. 1-2

This section we'll look at today begins with the connector word, *"Therefore,"* connecting what precedes it with what follows it as a summary and explanation of chapter 3:1-18. Let's read vv. 1-6 of chapter 4. This chapter is tightly connected with chapter 3. It is really talking about the consequences / results of what Paul addresses here as doctrine.

V. 1 - Notice first of all that Paul says that he has this ministry *"by the mercy of God."* He did not invent it or choose it as his vocation. God gave him his ministry and as such, Paul intends to operate this ministry without underhanded or deceitful means. It must be conducted honourably, glorifying God. And as a result, *"we do not lose heart."* Those who lead churches

(pastors), can lose heart and become discouraged when the people they love don't heed their warnings or appreciate their revealing of God's Word. Note Hebrews 13:17: *"Obey your leaders and submit to them, for they are keeping watch over your souls, as those who will give an account. Let them do this with joy and not with groaning, for that would be no advantage to you."*

– not heeding this verse can mean you remove joy from your leaders and perhaps this is Paul's fear that God comforts him about, so he won't lose heart. In II Corinthians 11:23-27, Paul recounts the physical hardships and danger of his ministry, and then, in v. 28, he states a surprising cause of anxiety – *"And apart from other things, there is the daily pressure on me of my anxiety for all the churches."*

v. 2 – There are people out there, even today, who handle God's Word with cunning and deliberate tampering with God's Word. We see them on TV, and in tabloids or in their many "books" masquerading as "good theology." They promise their followers all sorts of blessings that God never promised and they get very rich off of those who blindly send them money in hopes of getting it back multiplied by God! There were certainly people like this in Paul's day, on a lower scale of course, with no TV, radio or Internet to make them famous. They may be the very ones trying to convince the Corinthians to ask Paul for credentials. But Paul never ministered for their money – I Cor. 9:17-18 says; *"For if I do this of my own will, I have a reward, but if not of my own will, I am still entrusted with a stewardship. What then is my reward? That in my preaching, I may present the gospel free of charge, so as not to make use of my right in the Gospel."*

Paul (and his companions) preached the *"open statement of the truth."* His message was a simple one – yet he was not a simple man. Read the Epistle to the Romans for example and see his masterful presentation of the gospel and his prophecies of Israel's future. His writing is nothing short of brilliant. Notice what this same body of believers said about Paul in 2 Cor. 10:8-10. They said that his actual presence among them was not very impressive. He didn't care if they thought he was impressive or not, his aim was for them to see Christ and to glorify Him! In I Cor. 1:23 he says, *"But we preach Christ crucified, a stumbling block to Jews and folly to Gentiles."* Paul is not a boastful man, he is a sincere one, serving His God, whom he loves!

II. The god of This World? vv. 3-4

These two verses are extremely important in Paul's flow of thought. Here, in v. 3, Paul ties this verse to previous verses – 3:13-16 – where he talked about the veil covering Moses' face, and the veil covering the hearts of those who read the OT and don't comprehend or heed it, because only in Christ is the veil removed!

Now, Paul says that the gospel he preaches is hidden or veiled, but only to *"those who are perishing."* We wonder, why and how could such incredible good news be hidden from anyone? Some obviously hear the Word and respond in

faith and repentance and are saved. But some hear that same message, ignore or despise it and perish.

Paul will explain to us how the gospel is hindered and hidden from those who are perishing in v. 4, but I want to look with you at a passage in Isaiah – Isaiah 6:8-10. We will work our way into v. 4 in our text from there. Most Christians are familiar with Isaiah’s vision of the Lord, high and lifted up in chapter 6:1-6, and are amazed at Isaiah’s reaction to it. Isaiah is so taken with the majesty of the Lord on His throne that when the voice of the Lord sounds in v. 8, asking “*who will go for us*” with a message of salvation, Isaiah immediately responds with “*Here am I send me!*” And God says, “*Go, and say to this people...*” read vv. 9-10.

Amazing! He is being sent to the people, God knows and tells Isaiah but they are going to reject the message. They won’t hear it, they won’t see, and they, as a result, won’t be healed! Some skeptics will say, OK, that’s an OT passage but does it apply in the NT? The problem is, this passage is quoted in the NT in Matt. 13:10-15; John 12:40 and Acts 28:24-28. So this blinding and deafening of those exposed to God’s Word results in some who hear and see and respond positively, but for most, the judgment is that they do not respond positively, and in fact, reject it outright. Note what I Cor. 2:14 says – “*The natural person does not accept the things of God, for they are folly to him, and he is not able to understand them because they are spiritually discerned.*” And Eph. 4:18 tells us: “*They are darkened in their understanding, alienated from the life of God because of the ignorance in them, due to their hardness of heart.*” Yet, some do believe. How does that happen? See how Matt. 13:10-11 and verses 16-17 describe it.

It is those in whom the Holy Spirit is working who respond to the message of the gospel – having their hearts changed from stone to flesh as we’ve read earlier in our first sermon on II Cor. 3:17-18. And according to Eph. 2:8-9, faith is a gift – the Holy Spirit gives us faith and when presented with the gospel, we believe! This entire passage of II Cor. 3:1-4:6 is showing us how the Spirit works in us to bring us to Christ and all that rises to a crescendo in 4:5-6 which we will see shortly.

But now, in v. 4, Paul tells us why those who are perishing can’t penetrate this veil over their hearts. In this incredible verse, Paul says that “*the god of this world has blinded the minds of unbelievers to keep them from seeing...*”. Yet, we have just seen that the God, the capital G God, Yahweh has intended this to happen. So, the question is, who is this “*god of this world?*”

Commentators are convinced as a majority that this “*god of this world*” is Satan, although some early Gnostics felt it was Jahweh that Paul referred to here, using as at least part of their argument the passage from Isaiah 6 that I just outlined for us. But, the general, overwhelming consensus is that this refers to Satan. But then, why call him “*the god of this world?*” First of all, he is not even “a” god, instead, he’s a powerful angel who fell; 2nd, he is not God’s

equal in any way. But there is ample evidence that our God has him completely under His control, as evidenced in Job 1 & 2. Here in these chapters, God uses or employs Satan to test His servant Job. I believe we can see him blinding those who are perishing this same way as in Job, performing what God told Isaiah to do in spreading His message. Arguably, this control is also demonstrated in I Kings 22:19-23 where God's message 'suggested through an evil spirit who may be Satan', through the prophet Micaiah to King Ahab that will ultimately result in Ahab's death.

The Bible says a fair amount about Satan being in control over the physical world right now, in the past and until Christ returns to eliminate him. He is exercising the power and authority that the true God has granted him – in Luke 4:6 and in Matt. 4:8-9, this is what we find; *“Again the devil took Him to a very high mountain and showed Him all the kingdoms of the world and their glory. And he said to him, “All these I will give you, if you will fall down and worship me.”* Satan claims he has control over all the nations and offers them to Christ if He will fall down and worship Satan. Do you notice that Christ does not challenge what Satan says about the kingdoms being his to offer? Instead, He tells Satan to leave Him, and he does.

As for Satan's power, here is what the Bible says about him;

In John 12:31 – he is called *“the ruler of this world”*

In Eph. 2:2 – *“the prince of the power of the air”* and *“the spirit that is now at work in the sons of disobedience.”*

In Eph. 6:12 – he is a part of the *“cosmic powers over this present darkness”*

In 2 Thess. 2:9 – he operates *“with all powers and false signs and wonders...and wicked deception.”*

In I Pet. 5:8 – he is *“our adversary, prowling around like a roaring lion,”*

In Matt. 13:19 – *“he snatches the Word when it is sown”*

In 2 Cor. 11:14 – he transforms himself *“into an angel of light”*

And in I John 5:19 – *“the whole world lies in the power of the evil one.”*

It is my position that the one Paul calls “the god of this world” in II Cor. 4:4 is Satan, but he is under God's full sovereignty. And what he does with his power regarding those who hear the gospel is that *“he blinds the minds of unbelievers to keep them from seeing the light of the gospel of the glory of Christ.”*

The light is therein the gospel, but these unbelievers are kept from seeing that light. In 3:18, Paul said that, *“with unveiled face we behold the glory of the Lord,”* and coming up in 4:6, he says God *“gives the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ.”*

So, what overcomes Satan's power over us is God, it's Christ. In Christ, the veil is removed (3:15). So, the thing that Satan hides from unbelievers in v. 4 here, is what God enables us to see in v. 6.

In 2 Timothy 2:24-26, Paul makes an interesting point to show how God removes the blindness caused by the devil, when he says, *“perhaps God may*

perhaps grant them repentance.” The remedy is always and only God and His grace; it’s “but God.” He grants faith and He grants repentance. This is supernatural work.

John Piper comments,

“The effect of this supernatural work is that the captive of Satan is freed from his stupor, his blindness. He comes to his senses and sees the truth and beauty of what was before boring and untrue. He comes to a knowledge of the truth.”¹

Verse 4 ends with the statement, about Christ, “*who is the image of God.*”

This should remind us of a few NT passages:

Hebrews 1:3 – “*He is the radiance of the glory of God and the exact imprint of His nature...*”

Colossians 1:15-17 – “*He is the image of the invisible God, the firstborn of all creation. For by him all things were created, in heaven and on earth, visible and invisible, whether thrones or dominions or rulers or authorities, all things were created through him and for him. And he is before all things and in him all things hold together.*”

And John 1:1-3 – “*In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. He was in the beginning with God. All things were made through Him, and without him was not anything made that was made.*” He is the image of God because He is God in the flesh, and He was sent to die on our behalf.

III. What We Proclaim vv. 5-6

Verse 5 – Paul and his apostolic companions, did not preach to bring glory to themselves, or to advance their own interests. Paul was sent, commissioned to make his great beloved Saviour known and worshipped, and it is clear from the book of Acts and Paul’s epistles that he did that to the best of his abilities, even at the risk of great injury, suffering or even death as a result of his efforts to serve Christ. He adds in v. 5, “*with ourselves as your servants for Jesus’ sake.*” They all knew the risk & cost of their ministry, yet they did it anyway, for the sake of the people God had sent them to minister the gospel to. Note Paul’s heartfelt comments to the elders of Ephesus in Acts 20:18-27.

The central message? Jesus is preached as Lord and Saviour, proving that He is God in the flesh, the predicted Messiah, our substitute Lamb to take away sin, to reveal His doctrines and His sinless life, the design of His death, and the critical nature of His resurrection and Ascension – as I Cor. 15:17 says, “*If Christ has not been raised, your faith is futile and you are still in your sins.*” Paul preached Jesus Christ as Lord! He is far above all human and angelic authority.

Verse 6a – This is descriptive of God’s creative power, and identifies Him as the true God. Paul, here in v. 6, appears to be quoting an OT verse, but this is

¹ John Piper, *A Peculiar Glory*, Crossway, 2016, pg.146

not really a quote of any particular verse. But it is an allusion to a Genesis passage. The closest to it is Gen. 1:3, “And God said, *“Let there be light, and there was light.”* The implication is that there was darkness before that and in fact, Gen. 1:4b says, *“And God separated the light from the darkness.”* So Paul has provided the thought processes of the Genesis passage here in v. 6. Isaiah 45:7 also tells us (Isaiah speaking for God), *“I form light and create darkness, I make well-being and create calamity, I am the LORD who does all these things.”*

Simon Kistemaker aptly says the following;

“Paul asserts that God spoke the words, “Let light shine out of darkness,” but, in Scripture no exact reference is available except a free rendering of God’s creation command, “Let there be light” (Gen. 1:3). God dispels darkness at both creation and re-creation; He eliminates the darkness in the physical realm by means of the created sun and the darkness in the spiritual sphere through His uncreated Son. This interpretation was first advanced by the fourth-century church father, Chrysostom, who saw in this passage a parallel between the creation of the world and the recreation of God’s people. God says that He formed light and created darkness (Isa. 45:7), which is evident in both nature and regeneration.”²

Interestingly, see Acts 26:16-18 – Here, Paul recounts what had occurred to him in Acts 9 on the road to Damascus. Paul certainly understood how God uses both light and darkness and he equates Satan’s power to darkness, and God’s power to light; and further, this light provides forgiveness of sin, which means that the sins unforgiven are forged in darkness.

Admittedly, were it not for time constraints, we could look at a number of other pertinent passages to strengthen the case, but the point is that “while Satan blinds the human mind (4:4), God illumines the heart, which is the wellspring of life (acc. To Proverbs 4:23). Satan **prevents** illumination, but God **provides** it.”³

So, the veil and the blindness are the tools of “*the god of this world,*” while God sovereignly wields His invincible light.

Verse 6b continues, God, described in the first part of this verse, now “*has shone in our hearts to give the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ.*”

In v. 15, the veil was over the hearts of unbeliever, and only in Christ was it taken away; v. 16 telling us “when one turns to the Lord, the veil is removed. Now, in v. 6b, the purpose of the light that God shines in our hearts is provided.

This darkness is spiritual darkness. Eph. 1:16-18a says; *“I do not cease to give thanks for you, remembering you in my prayers, that the God of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of glory, may give you the Spirit of wisdom and in the*

² Simon Kistemaker, Baker NT Commentary, II Corinthians, Baker Books, 1997, pg. 143

³ IBID, pg. 144

*knowledge of Him, **having the eyes of your hearts enlightened**, that you may know what is the hope to which He has called you...*"

and notice the phrase, *"having the eyes of your hearts enlightened..."* **Not** the eyes of your heads, but your hearts. "So this 'seeing' is not natural seeing but it's of divine origin and supernatural. This seeing of the eyes of the heart is what Satan was preventing in 2 Cor. 4:4 and God granted in 4:6."⁴

It is the creation of a new spiritual sense – a new ability to know and be enthralled by divine beauty not visible to the human eye.⁵

John Piper explains the rest of this verse very well;

"What is now clear is that this 'beholding the glory of the Lord' is not a mere neutral sight, as if we looked accidentally or casually on some great person. In fact, that is precisely the way unbelievers look on Christ and his gospel before the miracle of II Corinthians 4:6. But after that miracle, the light of the glory of Christ shines through the gospel as through a window. Once the gospel was an uninteresting painting on the wall. Then suddenly we see, for the first time with wonder, that it is not a painting after all, but a window onto the Himalayas of the glories of Christ. Through the window of the gospel shines "the light of the gospel of the glory of Christ, who is the image of God" (2 Cor. 4:4)."⁶

And Hugh Martin points out the inward and outward aspects of it;

"The acquisition of a saving knowledge of God demands a twofold revelation; a revelation outside the soul – external to it; and revelation inside the soul itself. There must be outwardly presented to us – "The glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ.: There must be inwardly accomplished in us a work of giving light within. It is from the concurrence of these two revelations that a true knowledge of the Lord – a spiritual perception of His presence and glory – springs."⁷

Let those of us who are saved give God all the glory! If you happen to be here today without Christ as your Lord and Saviour, I urge you to consider Him as your only hope of escaping God's wrath for your sin, and allow Him to make your chains fall to the ground and give you the gift of His grace, which is eternal life.

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⁴ John Piper, *Reading the Bible Supernaturally*; Crossway, 2017, pg. 143-144

⁵ IBID, p. 144

⁶ IBID, Piper, pp 144-145

⁷ Hugh Martin, *The Abiding Presence*, Zondervan / Clarion 1984, p. 147