

# The Servant of the Lord is Called 6) To Shine in Darkness

2 Corinthians 4:3-6 • 2021-02-14 • Series for Epiphany



Have you ever had someone express road rage at you? It doesn't take much for another driver to get angry if they feel like you are getting in the way. They will treat you as if you are driving on their road. I had this happen to me a few weeks back. It actually happened while I was in the front car waiting at a stoplight on the corner of Main and 87. I was in the right lane and there was a line of a few cars behind me. Alongside of my lane was a long semi-trailer waiting for a left turn. Suddenly a vehicle behind me started honking their horn. They had evidently noticed that the light had turned green. They had also noticed that after 2.5 seconds I had not yet moved forward to allow the line to progress. If I had not been paying attention, I might have just heard the honking, saw the green light, and hit the gas to get flying. But I had in fact been paying attention. The driver behind me was blind to what lay ahead of him. He couldn't see because the large trailer had been blocking his view of the intersection. That driver only saw the green light and thought I deserved a scolding for not immediately moving. But I could see a good reason to wait even though the light was now green. A mother had been making her way across the intersection with her child and hadn't made it all the way across in time. After enduring a few more angry honks from behind me I saw that the pedestrians had finally made their way safely to the other side. I proceeded forward. I'm sure the driver behind me felt incredibly foolish for his lack of patience. If I had responded to that aggressive honking instead of remaining an attentive driver, the consequences could have been horrible.

There is a similar thing happening every day in the spiritual realm. Christians can see and are aware of what many around them are not able to see or understand. Because of this the world will respond in ways that are puzzling. But today we see the apostle Paul explain just why that is the case. Those who do not see are like that blind driver aggressively honking their horn. They are blind to the reality of the situation. How does a Christian respond to a world so full of people who are spiritually blinded? Today we turn to 2 Corinthians 4 and finish our series looking at "The Servant of the Lord is Called." And there we see how the servant of the Lord shines in the darkness.

Paul and Timothy wrote to the believers in ancient Corinth explaining some of the challenges they have working as servants of the Lord. And one of the challenges they bring up in this chapter is that so many of the people they are trying to reach with the gospel remained blind. He paints a picture of their situation. Paul says it is like they are wearing a veil so that they cannot clearly see what is being preached. Some people might complain today about the difficulty breathing with a mask over your face. Imagine trying to clearly see something with a veil over your eyes. For many when they hear the Word of God a "veil remains over their hearts" so that people cannot accept or believe it.

You may have experienced what it is like to work with someone who has a spiritual blinder on. Someone might be desperately longing for peace. You can declare to them the peace that comes from forgiveness through faith in Christ. But it seems to go right past them as they look for peace in other places like their own achievements or possessions. You can tell someone who is dying that the Son of God came to die for them and take away their sins so they might live forever. But a veil covers their hearts as they only think about their own deeds instead of the deeds of God for them. Maybe someone hears the gospel for years and years but doesn't ever take it to heart. You see them complain about church and they only come for tradition sake or to feel good about themselves. They don't come to repent and listen to the gospel. A veil remains over their hearts so that the gospel remains hidden to them.

That blindness is more dangerous than driving a car without a clear view. The gospel is the only source of light and hope in this dark world. A person without the gospel remains lost in this life as a slave to sin and the devil. They remain lost as they are blinded to what is good and godly. They remain lost to the only thing that can open their eyes to see Jesus as the Savior they need from sin. They remain lost in sin and doomed to death and hell. That's why Paul says, "But even if our gospel is veiled, it is veiled among those who are perishing." The road they are on leads to a life of sin and a death followed by everlasting shame.

Is that the way you view unbelievers in this world? It is the reality of their condition. Either someone has faith in Jesus as the Son of God their Savior and trusts in him, or they are blind and remain an unbeliever. There is no in-between state of existence. You are either a believer who sees with faith and trusts in Christ and knows where you are headed, or you are an unbeliever driving blind and does not see the danger ahead or the need for the light.

Paul gives us a frightening picture of what things are like spiritually for all those who do not believe the gospel. "In the case of those people, the god of this age has blinded the minds of the unbelievers, to keep them from clearly seeing the light of the gospel..." Do you know someone who does not believe in Christ? It doesn't matter how good they appear to be or how evil they appear to be. If they do not believe in Christ, they are actually unable to see the gospel's light because the devil wants to keep them blinded. The god of this age wants everyone to remain in blindness and sin. He wants everyone to perish as enemies of God and doomed to hell. So, he will do whatever it takes to keep a veil over people's hearts when the gospel is shared.

And they are not blinded because God has in any way abandoned them. God has sent his light to this world. He saw us stumbling around in the darkness unable to help ourselves. (Isaiah 59) He perceived the whole world under captivity of sin and the devil's deceit. So, he sent his only Son to be a light.

His Son came as a light to the world. He revealed his coming for ages. The prophecies spoke of the light that was to come into the world. Then Jesus came, "In him was life, and that life was the light of mankind." (John 1) He is altogether different from our enemy, the devil. The devil is called "the god of this age." His illegitimate reign is limited and short. He is not a god and is not the true ruler. But Jesus is called "God's image." He is true God. Jesus wasn't made in God's image like Adam and Eve. He is God's image.

And as true God he didn't come to bring any darkness or cause any blindness. He came to bring glory and light. Everything he spoke was true. And the message he came to bring is one of forgiveness for sinners doomed to death and hell. He came to proclaim freedom for those bound to sin and death.

So, how can we ever win people to freedom from the devil's lies? How can we give them sight to see and believe in Jesus? You could argue that we must resort to every clever trick to outwit the devil. You could argue that people will really listen if we just create an impressive enough of a display of lights, screens, and sound. You might argue that the devil won't win if we find the most persuasive speakers. Maybe you could even say that the devil's blinders would be shattered if the church could just obtain a little more money in order to get people's attention.

But Paul says very clearly that he didn't ever need to resort to clever tricks when sharing the gospel. The gospel servant doesn't resort to such measures. They have something more powerful to open hearts and minds. The devil operates on the basis of ignorance and blindness. He loves to spread darkness and death. But as servants of Christ, we spread the "gospel of the glory of Christ." We don't spread darkness or deception. We spread light and truth.

The news we spread is about one who became a servant, though he is Lord of all. Once when Jesus' disciples were traveling with him, he took three of them up on a mountain. And there Jesus allowed their eyes to be opened to see something more than they usually saw. They saw the shining glory of Christ as his appearance was changed right before their eyes. His face shone like the sun and his clothes were like lightning. They were given a small visual glimpse of what God had chosen to keep hidden for a time. Jesus is the glorious and eternal Son of God. That was what the disciples had already come to believe by faith. Through the power of the gospel, they believed that Jesus was the Son of God, veiled in human flesh. Jesus then hid his glory again so that he appeared as a mere man, a servant.

The disciples saw his glory that day. But the true glory of God was seen with a heart of faith. They saw the glorious Son of God hide his true glory. He didn't operate like the devil. He didn't hide his glory in order to deceive. He made clear by his preaching and teaching that he was the Son of God. And he hid his glory in order to lower himself and be our Savior God. The disciples saw him go down from that mountain and face the devil's attacks. They witnessed the same Jesus hanging on a tree, his side pierced, and his lifeless body laid to rest in the tomb. They witnessed and believed the gospel truth that Jesus came to give his life for them. Then they saw him risen and alive again on the third day, just as he had foretold. The living Jesus shared the glorious gospel message: your sins are forgiven!

That message is the bright light which pierces the darkness. That gospel of Jesus is what shines past the devil's attempts to keep the people of this world in blindness. Servants of the Lord proclaim the God of eternity who became the Redeemer of sinners. Jesus paid the price with his own suffering and death and defeated the god of this age.

That's why our message and our preaching are not powerless to help those under the devil's control. If we relied on ourselves and our own wit, the world would be forever blind and lost. But "we do not preach ourselves, but Jesus Christ as Lord, and ourselves as your servants for Jesus' sake." That's what every Christian pastor, teacher, and evangelist is: a servant of those they preach and teach. We do not stand up high and on a pedestal over every sinner lost in darkness. We don't arrogantly proclaim, "Don't you get it? Why can't you understand and believe?" Instead, we patiently deal with the blind and lost. We become servants of sinners. We serve them with the light of the gospel.

Servants of the gospel shine the light wherever it is needed. When they see someone struggling under the devil's deception, they let the gospel shine in. When they see a person torn by the weight of sin and fearful of death, they shine with the gospel message of him who conquered sin and death.

Servants of the Lord will not give in to despair. They serve this world for Jesus sake. They don't go after those who they think might most deserve the gospel. They share the light with those who are altogether blind and lost. They endure more than aggressive hoking. They endure the devil's attacks and the rejection of those who remain blind. But they bring light and life to the blind and dead. And they do it for the sake of Jesus who loved us all.

You are called to be a servant of Jesus. And you serve as you use the same powerful gospel to free the captive and give sight to the blind. You let the glorious light of Jesus shine in a dark world. And that powerful gospel message creates life, frees the prisoner, and gives sight to the blind. It has the power to drive back the devil's schemes and create faith in the heart. "For the God who said, 'Light will shine out of darkness,' is the same one who made light shine in our hearts to give us the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the person of Jesus Christ."