

Having exposed the major source of teaching which confused and detoured people from the true gospel, Paul has **turned our eyes upon Jesus**, ch. 3:18. Now Paul returns to the issue of those competing with him for the hearts of the Corinthians. What are hidden things of dishonesty mentioned in verse one? Sinful fantasies? Hypocritical actions? Duplicity about one's true beliefs? Believing one thing about a scripture issue and speaking another? Why would someone do that? To "win a point?" To win an argument? To win a following? To please a constituency? To avoid being confronted with the truth? To avoid arguments over scripture? To maintain public standing in an assembly while privately instilling teaching that undermines the truth in the minds of the unsuspecting? Whatever their motives, such persons are denounced in verse 2. They, by their actions (and inactions), hide the gospel from the lost. They act as Satan's agents, though usually not knowingly that.

In contrast, Paul's gospel has not been hidden by the devices of an insincere and deceitful man. He has been sincere and faithful to it. If it is hid at all it is hid to the lost because of their innate blindness to it. On top of that, Satan dupes men. He has great intelligence and wisdom, has many, many tools in his kit, and has had years of experience selecting and using just the right one for the job. But even he cannot ban the light of the gospel of the glory of Christ. So he seeks ways to dim it and diffuse it making it less offensive to men's consciences. Too often we cooperate. He uses selfish, ambitious religious men to compete with those bringing the gospel. Paul has exposed them and now goes on to show what a true minister brings.

Paul contrasts his ministry of truth with that which they were presenting. Now Paul had brought something new and radically different than Judaism (the Old Testament), or any religion the pagans had to offer or any philosophy the scholars had developed. But he was belittled by some in Corinth because he was not eloquent, ch. 10:10. But he reminds them that what he brought was not something he dreamed up, or gotten from other men but it was from God. Like Jesus, Paul presented it in a straightforward, no frills manner that did nothing to attract listeners in the flesh.

Paul has received his ministry from God. The Lord Himself announced this along with the sufferings he would experience, when He stopped him in his tracks on the road to Damascus. Acts 9; 22; & 26. Paul takes pains to remind those he writes to of this direct revelation from the Lord in many of his epistles. He speaks of receiving this ministry (service) as a **mercy** from God. We learn elsewhere, spiritual gifts are **grace** from God.

Romans 12:6 Having then gifts differing according to

the grace that is given to us,

Ephesians 4:7 *But unto every one of us is given grace according to the measure of the gift of Christ.*

But our ministry, our service, what is given us by the Spirit to do or say, is **mercy** of God. That God stoops to love a poor, lost, blind sinner is **mercy** beyond anyone's dream. But He has given believers the **truth** to give to others which **itself** commends **us** to every man's conscience. The preacher is commended by the truth he brings (supported by a moral life), nothing else. The third epistle of John emphasizes this. It is the truth that commends the servant of Christ not some authority of man or even of the assembly. Therefore, since the message commends the speaker, we do not have to "package" the gospel to make it attractive to the lost. This would be "gilding the lily" so to speak. Satan is said here to have blinded the minds of the lost. He uses many features of the world to do this. He has it all at his disposal for he is its god. Yet we see believers trying to use worldly techniques to draw listeners and followers. We feel we have to liven things up, attract listeners with some social activity or entertainment then give the gospel. Jesus didn't do that. Paul didn't either. No brass bands. No gimmicks! These but interfere with the light. But God doesn't call us to compete with Satan for listeners or followers. Avoid using the world's methods to seek to bring sinners to repentance. How often we seem to feel some inadequacy in the simplicity of the gospel or in the simple presentation of it. We are not to try to manipulate the scriptures to convince men. They are blind. They are lost. No, the Lord said the house of the strong man cannot be spoiled (looted) without binding the strongman, Matthew 12:28-29. He is bound now by the death and resurrection of the Lord Jesus Christ. We do not have to bind him as some think. We simply and clearly present the word of God as led by the Holy Spirit of God and let Him handle the rest. The blind see. The marvelous light shines into the darkness of a lost person's heart and they see.

He refers then to the first day of the six days creation given in Genesis 1. There we read, "And God said 'let there be light' (or 'Light, be!') and there was light." Just as in a lost sinner's heart, where formless ruin and darkness reigned, light flooded the scene. The glory of God exposing all, enlightening all, judging all. And warming and energizing all in preparation for the next step in His creative work. Just like a lost sinner, the darkness didn't seek the light. It doesn't like light.

John 3:18 *He that believeth on him is not condemned: but he that believeth not is condemned already, because he hath not believed in the name of the only*

begotten Son of God. 19 And this is the condemnation, that light is come into the world, and men loved darkness rather than light, because their deeds were evil. 20 For every one that doeth evil hateth the light, neither cometh to the light, lest his deeds should be reproved. 21 But he that doeth truth cometh to the light, that his deeds may be made manifest, that they are wrought in God.

The irresistible light was sent upon the darkness and it could not be repelled, or contained.

John 1:4 In him was life; and the life was the light of men. 5 And the light shineth in darkness; and the darkness comprehended [apprehends, seizes overcomes,] it not.

It is all God's initiative and work in Genesis 1 and 2. It is, similarly, all God's initiative and work in salvation of the lost. What mercy! What grace! What light! What salvation! He chooses to use us, mere men and women, boys and girls as the light bearers, the light bringers, lights in this poor, dark world. We are led to renounce the hidden things of dishonesty in our own being and forthrightly bring the light to the lost. The light of the good news , the gospel **of the glory of Christ.** (NKJ, JND, NAS, NIV, etc.) He is the very **image of God.** Seeing Him changes men from lost to found, blind to seeing, from rebels to disciples, from self centered and self sufficient to meek, from Satan's to Christ's, as He did Paul on the way to Damascus. Gazing on Him changes believers step by step from glory to glory to become more and more like Him while here. Seeing Him in Person when we arrive in heaven we are finally changed completely and forever to be fully like Him, 1John3.

Last week we contrasted Adam with Christ who is, as a real human being, the faithful and true image of God. Here are some additional scriptures and hymns.

John 1:18 No man hath seen God at any time; the only begotten Son, which is in the bosom of the Father, he hath declared him

John 14:9 Jesus saith unto him, Have I been so long time with you, and yet hast thou not known me, Philip? he that hath seen me hath seen the Father; and how sayest thou then, Shew us the Father?e that hath seen me hath seen the Father.

Colossians 1:15 Who is the image of the invisible God, the firstborn of every creature:

Hebrews 1:3 Who being the brightness of his glory, and the express image of his person, and upholding all things by the word of his power, when he had by himself purged our sins, sat down on the right hand of the Majesty on high;

In Thee most perfectly expressed,
The Father self doth shine;

Fulness of Godhead, too: the Blest,
Eternally divine.

Image of th' infinite Unseen,
Whose being none can know;
Brightness of light no eye hath seen,
God's love revealed below.

Worthy, O Lamb of God, art Thou
That every knee to Thee should bow.

"Thou Art The Everlasting Word"
150. Hymns for the Little Flock

O soul inspiring story
God's majesty and grace
In lustrous strokes of glory
Deep carved in Jesus face!
Hearts rapt in contemplation
Of God head's image bright,
Break forth in adoration,
In wonder and delight!

There Manhood, all perfection,
And Godhead-fullness shine;
God's love and Man's affection,
The human, the divine;
A life, a death, transcendent,
Revealing God as love:
Here, lowly Man, dependent-
God over all, above!

Unsullied blaze of glory!
O ever-radiant Face!
Thy rich, unfathomed story
Transfigures us in grace!

Made like Thee, soon, completely
With love-lit eyes we'll scan
God's face unvailed sweetly
In Thine, Thou Son of man!

23. O soul inspiring story
Author: Frank Allaben
Hymns of Grace and Truth

Turn your eyes upon Jesus,
Look full in His wonderful face,
And the things of earth
Will grow strangely dim,
In the light of His glory and grace.

Helen H. Lemmel

By Ron Canner May 19, 2004