

THE GLORY OF THE GOSPEL

The gospel of Christ is GLORIOUS, but what makes it so? Paul in 2 Corinthians 4 spells it out. He speaks of “the gospel of the glory of Christ” and “the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ.” It’s all about JESUS and WHO He is! That’s what makes the gospel GLORIOUS! It’s not only what He did (ALL IMPORTANT) but WHO He is. It’s WHO Jesus is that makes WHAT He did all important!

2 Corinthians 4:3–6 (NKJV)

3 But even if our gospel is veiled, it is veiled to those who are perishing,
4 whose minds the god of this age has blinded, who do not believe, lest the light of the gospel of the glory of Christ, who is the image of God, should shine on them.
5 For we do not preach ourselves, but Christ Jesus the Lord, and ourselves your bondservants for Jesus’ sake.
6 For it is the God who commanded light to shine out of darkness, who has shone in our hearts to give the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ.

Paul here is clearly dealing with essential gospel truth and His emphasis here is on the PERSON of Christ. His emphasis is on the LORDSHIP of Christ! And the issue is one of BELIEF.

Those blinded to the truth don’t BELIEVE it. Paul, in verses 4b through 6, enlarges on what the light of the gospel is. It is this truth that is hidden from those perishing and that to which Satan is blinding them.

Paul describes it as “***the light of the gospel of the glory of Christ***”.

And what is this gospel – this good news? Well, it is the glory of Christ. And what is the glory of Christ? Well, it is the reality that He is the image of God. This means that Jesus is the EXACT representation of God. He is God of very God and thus reveals God to us (cf. Jn. 8:24; 10:30; 14:9; Col. 1:15; Heb. 1:3; 1 Jn. 5:20).

What we have in verse 5 is a shorthand statement of Paul’s gospel message. He introduced it in verse 4 as “***the gospel of the glory of Christ***”. Now, in verse 5, he states a summation of this gospel. His message, succinctly stated, was “***Christ Jesus the Lord***”. This was the core essence of his GOSPEL message!

Again, “Christ” is a Messianic title meaning “Anointed One”. Jesus is His given name at the time of His birth (Mt. 1:21). That’s why it is often called

His “human name”. Jesus was a common name being the Greek version of Joshua in the Old Testament. It literally means “YHWH saves”. So, Jesus means GOD-SAVIOR!

That is WHO Jesus is – He is the God-Savior! Lord means MASTER. When used of the resurrected Lord it always refers to His exalted position as the sovereign God-Man. The idea of Lord is God-Master (cf. Phil. 2:10-11).

Here is the essence of the gospel that one must BELIEVE. We must believe that Jesus is the promised/prophesied One in the OT. We must believe in Him as the God-Savior Who came to die for our sins. And we must believe in Him as Lord – Sovereign God-Master.

“The heart of their ministry was the proclamation of Christ Jesus as Lord. This acknowledgement is basic to the gospel (Rom. 10:9; 1 Cor. 12:3), and thus lies at the heart of Paul’s message. One should beware of drawing categorical distinctions between accepting Christ as Savior and accepting Him as Lord. Both are clearly involved in any true commitment to Christ.” – **Homer Kent Jr.**

And let me add one more critical component to this. The belief in Christ as Savior and Lord must be from the HEART (cf. Rom. 10:9-10). It must be PERSONAL.

The oldest creed in Christianity is “**Jesus is Lord**”. This was known as the confession of salvation. Paul is clear in Ephesians 4:5 in saying that for all believers there is the unity of “One Lord, one faith”.

As you compare what Paul says about the gospel in 1st and 2nd Corinthians, he consistently stresses either the PERSON or the WORK of Christ. And of course, they go together and are inseparable.

For example, in 1 Corinthians 1:17-18, Paul says Christ sent him to preach the gospel and says this is “the message of the cross”. In 1 Corinthians 1:23, Paul says, “we preach Christ crucified”. In 1 Corinthians 15:1-4 Paul says that the gospel is that Christ died for our sins, was buried, and rose again the third day according to the Scriptures. Here in 2 Corinthians 4:3-6 Paul emphasizes that the gospel is the LORDSHIP – the GODHOOD of Jesus Christ.

The bottom line is that the gospel message involves both the PERSON and the WORK of Christ. One cannot be divorced from the other.

That's why the Bible says, "Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and you will be saved" (Acts 16:31). It doesn't say just believe on Him as Lord, or just believe on Him as Savior. Rather, it joins them by saying believe in Him as "Lord Jesus" – meaning Lord-God and Savior!

"In the gospel the Lordship of Christ is proclaimed and people are called to give their allegiance to Him, but the One to Whom they are thus called to submit is also the crucified One, the One Who died for them. These two basic elements of the gospel need to be held together, for if they are not the gospel itself is distorted." –**Colin Kruse**

2 Corinthians 4:6 is a vital gospel verse. When Paul says "it is God who commanded light to shine out of darkness," he is referring to the Creation account in Genesis 1:3. There was darkness over the face of the deep, and suddenly God commanded: "Let there be light", and there was light. This was God's first command. These are the first words of Creation. God spoke, and it happened! There was no evolving. It was immediate and instantaneous! There was light!

Paul uses the Creation account to illustrate what happens to the believer in conversion. The God Who commanded light to shine in Genesis 1:3 in conversion shines the light of the gospel into our hearts, enabling us to see the truth of the Lord Jesus Christ. Just as it was a supernatural miracle of physical creation in Genesis 1, so it is also a supernatural miracle of spiritual enlightenment in the hearts of believers. Reception of the light in believing results in being born of God (cf. Jn. 1:13; 3:3-8).

Note this is God's activity. It is God Who turns on the light. We can't do this. This happens at His sovereign initiative! This is God's supernatural activity. This is a spiritual miracle.

Verse 6 further explains the preaching of Christ Jesus the Lord in verse 5. The light that God shines in the believer's heart is "***the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ.***" God enlightens us to the truth of Jesus being Lord/God. Light enables one to see. The light here relates to KNOWLEDGE.

In order to be saved you must know something. In 1 Timothy 2:4 Paul says that God, "desires all men to be saved and to come to the knowledge of the truth". The light of this knowledge is shown here to be the glory of God as seen in the face of Jesus Christ. Note the parallel here between "the glory of Christ" in verse 4 and the "glory of God" in verse 6.

The glory of God is His brilliance, His splendor, His moral excellence. It's the beauty of His character. When Moses asked to see God's glory (cf. Ex. 33:18) God revealed His character (cf. Ex. 34:6-7). The glory of God is manifested in all of His attributes together. It is seen in the fruit of the Spirit (cf. Gal. 5:22-23). It is seen in the Love Chapter of 1 Corinthians 13 (cf. 1 Cor. 13:4-8). We see it reflected in the beatitudes of the Sermon on the Mount (cf. Mt. 5:3-9, cf. v. 48). The glory of God is the glory of Who He is.

We see the glory of God most clearly revealed in the PERSON of the Lord Jesus Christ.

We see the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ, which is to say, when we look at Jesus, we see God. We see the glory of God in Him. When God turns on the light in saving faith, we see the reality that Jesus is fully God and that He reveals the truth of God to us. We see God in Him and Him as God.

No one ever really believes or sees the truth of this in their heart apart from divine revelation. That's why Paul says in 1 Corinthians 12:3 "no one can say that Jesus is Lord except by the Holy Spirit." Oh, people can mouth the words and not mean it in their heart. That's why Jesus says in Matthew 7 that on judgment day many will say "Lord, Lord" to Him only to have Him say, "I never knew you; depart from Me you who practice lawlessness!" (cf. Mt. 7:21-23). You see, they gave verbal assent to Christ's Lordship, but it was never real in their heart. They never really believed it.

Note the emphasis on LIGHT in 2 Corinthians 4:4-6.

- v. 4 the light of the gospel of the glory of Christ
- v. 4 Who is the image of God should shine on them
- v. 6 God who commanded light to shine
- v. 6 has shone in our hearts
- v. 6 to give the light

Many think that in the back of Paul's mind here is his own experience when Jesus met him on the road to Damascus. The story of Paul's conversion is shared 3 times in Acts – each time highlighting the noonday "light from heaven that was brighter than the sun" (cf. Acts 9:3, 8, 9: 22:6, 9, 11; 26:13). In this experience, Paul came to know the glory of God in the countenance of Jesus Christ. He came to see the truth that Jesus is God of very God. He came to know what he describes in his testimony of Philippians 3:8 as "the excellence of the knowledge of Christ Jesus my Lord" (cf. Gal. 1:15-16; 2:20).

“Here conversion is understood as illumination, an illumination which reveals the true nature of Christ as the one in whose face the glory of God is seen.” – **Colin Kruse**.

In conversion, we see Christ as Lord and Savior, and in FAITH embrace it as TRUTH, and that forever changes us (cf. Jn. 8:12). The true gospel is a LORDSHIP gospel! It is GLORIOUS because of WHO Jesus is seen to be. Those who are illumined to see the truth of Jesus have seen the GLORY of God in the face of Jesus! This is the GLORIOUS GOSPEL consisting of WHO Jesus is as Lord and Savior! BELIEVE IT!

Acts 16:31 (NKJV)

31 So they said, “Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and you will be saved, you and your household.”

Romans 10:13 (NKJV)

13 For “whoever calls on the name of the LORD shall be saved.”