

# The Inshining of the Gospel

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***"In whom the god of this world hath blinded the minds of them which believe not, lest the light of the glorious gospel of Christ, who is the image of God, should shine unto them." (2 Corinthians 4:4)***

The sentence begins in the third verse, "*But if our gospel be hid, it is hid to them that are lost: in whom the god of this world hath blinded the minds...*"

The gospel of the kingdom that is diverse from all other kingdoms the apostle had set forth in the preceding chapter under the symbol of a ministration of life, of righteousness and of glory. This is the gospel which Paul and his fellow labourers had received from God, and in the preaching of which they had "renounced the hidden things of dishonesty, not walking in craftiness, nor handling the word of God deceitfully; but by manifestation of the truth commending ourselves to every man's conscience in the sight of God."

"*This gospel of the kingdom,*" Christ said, "*shall be preached in all the world for a witness unto all nations.*" (Matt. 24:14) The day is to come when the knowledge of the Lord shall cover the earth as the waters cover the sea. We have here a great widespread gospel and its extension has not yet fully come. It has come to some. It came with power to the Thessalonians, as Paul says to them, "*Our gospel came not unto you in word only, but also in power, and in the Holy Ghost, and in much assurance.*" (1 Thess. 1:5) If some of us can say before a heart-searching God, that the gospel came to us on an occasion never to be forgotten, came to us in power, and that it has come to us from time to time in power, we are highly favoured. There are some people to whom it does not so come, from whom it is hid. There is an allusion to this in what has preceded in the third chapter, where the apostle speaks of a veil of ignorance being on the heart, and "the god of this world" blinding their minds. One of the false gods of Israel to which they turned was called Remphan; and Remphan we are told by the learned means blindness. It is the false god of this world who comes to the ungodly, the dead in trespasses and sins, and stirs up and brings out the enmity of their hearts against the gospel which is hid from them, but which they think they know and are capable of knowing; "in whom the god of this world hath blinded the minds of them which believe not."

Of all things that are dreadful in the case of the lost it is this power of unbelief that exceeds the rest. It is the greatest immorality in the world and the greatest sin; but it does not appear such to those who are under its dominion. External sins they can see, but this one awful sin, this discrediting of God, this casting of His word behind their back, this despising of His Christ, this turning away from all heavenly counsel contained in the scripture, this unbelief that is subtle, reasonable, deadly and powerful, holds all its subjects in a security, fills them with a happiness

and guides them with its own hand of enmity against God and self-righteousness, so that they know not that they are under its power. Unbelief is in every child of God but it does not prevail in them; it is broken as to its dominion. In them it takes other forms, such as rebellion when things are against their inclinations and apparent interests, in fretting, wishing things were other than they are; but its dominion is broken in them.

What a mercy it is to have faith in your heart; faith that will live and labour under load, that though damped will never die. Faith that goes out in desires, that is real to the heart, to the spirit and that says, "Give me Christ or else I die." True faith embraces Christ, heartily approves of Him, loves Him, wants Him, craves after Him, and is never content without Him. As many of us as have such a faith owe to Him who has given it to us an everlasting debt of gratitude and praise.

To be lost as in the third verse, is to be eternally under the curse of God. What a condition! What a state! O! Sinner, God make you think of it and feel it. To be lost is to be without God, without the Father, without the Son and without the Holy Ghost. It is to be without an interest in Christ, without the Spirit of life and grace. It is to be without conviction of sin, without prayer, without the fear of God, without changes. To be lost is to be dead, condemned, under the ministration of condemnation and of death. It is to be under the law, the law that says "*Cursed is everyone that continueth not in all things which are written in the book of the law to do them.*" (Gal. 3:10) To be lost is to be a bankrupt, to owe God what you can never pay Him. "Them that are lost." O! What a word. "Depart from Me, ye cursed," is the word of Christ to the lost in the day of judgment. "*Depart from Me ye cursed, into everlasting fire, prepared for the devil and his angels.*" (Matt. 25:41)

What an awful state some of us may be in. May the Lord give us divine life. You who are dead in sins have not the slightest possible shadow of a reason to think it will be other with you than it is said here of the lost who knew not the gospel. They are lost to all intents and purposes, and of them it may be said they are, though living, as good as in hell. But if one is brought into a concern about this; if God makes known Himself and His anger against sin and sinners, and how necessary it is for Him to punish sin; if He gives repentance and works faith; if He manifests a new and living way to such a person, there is hope. There is hope in his end, that it will be well with him. What a fearful thing to be under the power and the dominion of "the god of this world." The devil was permitted to usurp authority over man in Eden and that procured man's expulsion from Eden, and ever since he has been in men's hearts and minds influencing, driving, tempting, deceiving, alluring and ruining. What an awful power "the god of this world" has over men! Blessed be God, there is one above him. The kingdom of God comes to the people of God. The kingdom that is diverse from all other kingdoms; whose laws are different and better than other laws. The Apostle says that the great end of the enemy is that the light of the glorious gospel of Christ should not shine to the lost; that is his great end. Every fragment a lost person uses against Christ, every whisper which brings pride, pride of reason and of knowledge; and every thought a person may have of his own capability of repenting when he will, and of pleasing God by his thoughts, all these things are from "the god of this world" working upon a dead heart, and a proud spirit. "The god of this world" works upon the Arminian principle and his great end is, that he, this vile and envious spirit, this spirit imbued with and moved always by implacable hatred of God, is to plunge us into the same ruin and perdition and punishment with

himself. May the Lord give grace to those of you who at present do not possess it, for be assured of this, if you die in sin, you will go among those of whom it is here said, "If our gospel be hid, it is hid to them that are lost."

I want to speak of the gospel. It is called "the glorious gospel of Christ, who is the image of God." It is a glorious gospel. It is glory itself. God is glory, and everything that He does has this quality of gloriousness. What is the gospel? What kind of gospel would suit and save some of us? What sort of gospel do we need and desire? I believe I can answer the feeling, the mental language that you now have--you need "the gospel of God." What is this? It is the gospel of the eternal Deity of Jesus Christ.

This is the first thing to be mentioned. The Lord Jesus Christ is God. "*I am the Lord; and beside Me there is no saviour.*" (Isa. 43:11) He is, as Paul says to the Colossians. "*The image of the invisible God;*" and as he says to the Hebrews, "the express image of His person." The law is, "a shadow of good things to come, and not the very image of the things." There is never an exact proportion and figure in a shadow. The express image of God means the essence of God, the Being of God. Whatever is proper to God, the Lord Jesus Christ is; and He is this image in our own nature because no man can see God and live, that is God absolutely considered. But the express image of God in our nature is visible, and is seen; and the Lord Jesus teaches this in those important words in John's Gospel, answering Philip, "*He that hath seen Me hath seen the Father;*" (John 14:9) that is: He that hath seen Me as being God, has seen the Father whose only begotten Son I am.

In the epistle to the Ephesians Paul says what the gospel is, "*He that descended is the same also that ascended.*" (Eph. 4:10) The human nature of Christ is in heaven but it did not descend from heaven. He was born of the virgin, but His divine nature and person descended from heaven and took up as His residence, in that nature that should ever be in union with Him, our nature. If you see God in Christ, you see the greatest mystery you ever can see in this world or in the world to come. "*God was in Christ, reconciling the world unto Himself.*" (2 Cor. 5:19) In Christ God was in a union never to be dissolved. The gospel of Christ is the gospel of the incarnation of the Son of God. There is no gospel where there is no incarnation. The gospel being good news, could only be good news as declaring the coming into our nature of the eternal Son of God. He who is God can save, but He can save sinners only as He is man. Each of these natures is necessary to salvation, and it is believed by every child of God that both are necessary to salvation. How could a creature forgive sin? How could God suffer for sin, taken absolutely? The answer to both questions is impossible; but with these two united in one Person, there can be the putting away of sin and the forgiveness of sin. This gospel does shine sometimes into the hearts of sinners! What a wonder it is of divine wisdom and love and grace that there should be a God-man mediator! God able to save; man capable of a voluntary death to save. God Almighty and man united to Him. These two together in one person, make a glorious gospel. Glorious above all our conception of what is glorious until it is revealed to us. Glorious in the eyes of God the Father is Jesus Christ. Glorious in the estimation of the Lord is the work of Jesus Christ. Glorious in the declaration of pardon is Jesus Christ in His precious atonement. Glorious is the gospel in its power to relieve a sinner of his sins; and glorious is the righteousness of Christ whereby a sinner is absolutely justified.

The gospel is the gospel of incarnation, "*And the Word was made flesh, and dwelt among us, (and we beheld His glory, the glory as of the only begotten of the Father), full of grace and truth.*" (John 1:14) There was a time when the denial of this was scarcely heard, when even where there was no spiritual life, there was a general profession of belief in the incarnation of the Son of God. Today it is different; it is much more common amongst religious people of the world to deny this than to confess it. Therefore I would rather often bring it before you, that if it please the Holy Spirit to reveal it, you may find in your souls a cleaving to the truth of Incarnate Deity. The glorious gospel, the good news, the glorious tidings from heaven; that the Son of God descended into the lower parts of the earth and took on Him our nature. There was a glorious union between these two natures which are infinitely separated and distant one from the other; yet brought together by the mysterious wisdom and love and power of God, so that poor wretched man should be brought to God from the depths of his sinfulness, corruption and guilt. No incarnation means no cross. Christ as an example; what a figment it is! Yet the devil has blinded innumerable people by preaching the cross of Christ as an example of nobility in suffering. Christ an example only; it is a delusion. He has left "us an example, that ye should follow His steps." But first, this is true, "*Who His own self bare our sins in His own body on the tree, that we, being dead to sins, should live unto righteousness.*" (1 Pet. 2:24)

Well, God help us to cleave close to the gospel of the incarnation of the eternal Son of God; the Son of God descended and taking up the nature that was born of the virgin Mary into union with Himself. This good doctrine received into our hearts will nourish and strengthen and comfort us. It will open a new and living way before our astonished eyes. It will tell us that there is room in Christ for the vilest of sinners; that there is a High Priest over the house of God for the guiltiest; that there is One who is full of compassion and able to be touched with the feeling of our infirmities; it will tell us that God forgives sins and justifies the ungodly that believeth in Jesus. O! What a gospel is this gospel respecting the Person of the Lord Jesus.

This glorious gospel, is the gospel of the imputation of sin to a suitable sinless person, the Saviour. In this epistle it is said, God "*hath made Him to be sin for us, who knew not sin.*" (2 Cor. 5:21) There was a complete transference, a mutual transference; the transferring of guilt to the Saviour, and the transferring of His righteousness to the sinner; "that we might be made the righteousness of God in Him." Take this out of the gospel and what is there left that is worth notice? Take this out of the gospel and how could a wretch who feels his wretchedness in sin have any hope in the mercy of God? Such is a terrible gospel; no gospel at all if imputation is taken away. Eliminate this doctrine of the imputation of sin to Christ, and the imputation of righteousness to the sinner, and we are all as good as in hell; there is nothing for us but perdition. When a sinner, brought by the Spirit of God into solemn and deep despair of himself and of his own righteousness, looks on the Lord Jesus, and adoringly and wonderingly believes in the imputation that removes from himself all sin and brings to him nothing but righteousness, he is complete in Christ. That is the gospel word. "*And ye are complete in Him.*" (Col. 2:10) Completely justified and completely saved. Glorious gospel! If this but shines into our hearts what a happy people we shall be!

This is the gospel of the death of the Surety. A gospel without a vicarious death is no gospel. What would become of you who are convinced of sin, if the death of Christ were taken out of the gospel? This most blessed thing the Lord Himself utters, in the gospel according to John,

*"Therefore doth My Father love Me, because I lay down My life...No man taketh it from Me,.... I have power to lay it down, and I have power to take it again. This commandment have I received of My Father." (John 10:17,18) The death of Christ is that new way opened for us. "Having therefore, brethren, boldness to enter into the holiest by the blood of Jesus, by a new and living way, which He hath consecrated for us, through the veil, that is to say, His flesh; and having an High Priest over the house of God; let us draw near." (Heb. 10:19-22) This is very wonderful as contrasted with the bondage and blindness of all upon whose hearts the vail falls.*

There is no liberty under the law. There can be none; nor access to God. When the Lord was about to give the Decalogue from Mount Sinai by Moses to Israel, He told Moses to fence the mount about and to warn the people from coming near; there was no liberty. And God who spoke to them and who thundered and lightened from His own eternal Majesty so as to bring terror on the hearts of the people even at a distance from Him, that same God has removed the bar. Now, says the Apostle in the epistle to the Hebrews, "Ye are not come unto the mount that might be touched,....nor unto blackness and darkness," to that wondrous and awful mount, flashing with lightning and uttering thunders, frightening the people so they could not go near. "But" says Paul, "*Ye are come unto mount Sion.*" You are come to God; you are come to Jesus Christ; you are come to the blood of the covenant, that speaketh better things than that of Abel. You are come this way, this new way. (Heb. 12:18-24)

When you are distressed by sin and grieved that you are sinners; when you feel your hardness of heart; when you mourn that you are in such and such an evil condition; and the Holy Ghost opens this way to you, there is an instant feeling that you must go and that you can go, and when you get there what a relief there is! The relief is set forth in the case of Asaph who was so troubled and perplexed and wounded and guilty in his trying to find out what God had hidden and the reasons for His different dealings with the righteous and the wicked. He said, "When I thought to know this, it was too painful for me; until I went into the sanctuary of God; then understood I their end." When we get near in this new and living way, what liberty there is! Why should God keep distant from Himself a sinner for whom the Saviour shed His blood? There is no reason in God. The bar of unbelief is with us but there is no bar with God. He says, "Come." He says, "Open thy mouth wide." He says, "Call upon Me in the day of trouble." He says, "If we confess our sins, He is faithful and just to forgive us our sins, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness." And the reason is that the Lord Jesus laid down His life. It is a beautiful thing to see by faith this Man without corruption and capable of a voluntary death. Consider that where there is no corruption, there can be legally, rightly, no death. Christ had no corruption; He had no natural sin, but He took on Him a nature that though pure, was capable of a voluntary yielding up of itself to God as a sacrifice, and this removed sin. This took away the legal disability and the inability of a poor guilty creature from approaching God. It made the way open so they who were under the law and not to come near to the Mount nor touch it, and had no immediate contact with God, find in the gospel both contact, and a sweet experience sooner or later. The Lord used the terms near and distant because they are suitable to us, and He says, "A people near unto Him." This "near" have all the saints.

The Apostle says, "*Let us come boldly unto the throne of grace.*" (Heb. 4:16) Seeing we have a High Priest, and seeing that the new way is through the rent vail of the Saviour's flesh, let us draw near. Let a troubled sinner come. Let a devil-plagued creature come. Let those whose

groans and sighs are rising to heaven, let them come. Let one perplexed in his providential case, come. Let one who has a thousand fears that he will never be accepted, let him come. Let all come who are in this condition of felt necessity. Glorious gospel! The death of Christ is the life of the church. The death of Christ is a new way not contemplated by the law, though eternally purposed, declared, evidenced, opened and made manifest in the gospel and revealed, explained and applied by the eternal Spirit. I wish for myself, and I wish for you that we all had a warmer heart to this glorious gospel and that our hearts were more open to it, and that there were not in us that dreadful indisposition to the throne of God's heavenly grace.

Further the gospel is the gospel of the burial and of the resurrection of the Lord Jesus Christ. Never leave out the burial of Christ when you think of the gospel. Why not? Because the Holy Ghost has put it into the gospel. Paul says to the Corinthians "*I delivered unto you first of all that which I also received, how that Christ died for our sins according to the scriptures; and that He was buried, and that He rose again the third day according to the scriptures.*" (1 Cor. 15:3,4) Why is the burial of Christ insisted on? Because we being sinners, must die and be buried; and if the Lord Jesus Christ had not gone through that indignity how could we have escaped? But He was buried and He rose again. Every child of God is embalmed in the tomb and buried in a sanctified grave, if I may speak so, for He was buried for all His people, and He rose again the third day according to scripture. He saw no corruption, and we shall be raised in the power of that blessed, spotless, incorruptible resurrection body of Jesus Christ. He will "*change our vile body that it may be fashioned like unto His glorious body, according to the working whereby He is able even to subdue all things unto Himself.*" (Phil. 3:21) The glorious gospel! When this gospel shines into my heart it does me good. When it shines into your heart it does you good. It brings you nigh. It lifts your spirit. It carries your hope to heaven; it fixes there as an anchor cast into a good anchorage. And there you live, and hang, and wait, and ride over the stormy waters of this life, and there you believe at times that all will be well with you when the end comes and you enter into that haven of rest whence you will never depart. The gospel is commodious in this life to winter in; and it is commodious to winter in for ever and ever. O! Happy soul that is brought to this blessed, glorious gospel of Christ.

Next, the gospel is the glorious gospel of the High Priestly intercession of our great High Priest in heaven. Does this suit? Does it not suit? How could you approach the God of all majesty and glory, without an intercessor? "*He ever liveth to make intercession for us.*" (Heb. 7:25) Poor sinner this gospel will, when it reaches your heart, raise you up. It is like lifting a beggar out of the dust and taking him off the dunghill and setting him with the princes of God's people and causing him to inherit the throne of glory. The glorious gospel of Christ! Of this gospel Paul has this word, "*I am not ashamed of the gospel of Christ.*" (Rom. 1:16) He gives two reasons for this attitude of his mind to the gospel. First, that, "it is the power of God unto salvation to every one that believeth;" and second, that, "therein is the righteousness of God revealed." What a revelation! How do you expect and hope to stand in eternity? Say you: My expectation is in and from the righteousness of Christ. The gospel reveals it. "Therein is the righteousness of God revealed from faith to faith: as it is written, The just shall live by faith."

No sinner who is brought to hang on this revealed righteousness revealed in him shall ever fail or come into condemnation. O! Sinner, if this gospel shines into your heart, no devil, no sin, no rage of your own, shall consign you to eternal perdition. The glorious gospel! Do you think it is so? I

do. It is the gospel that the Apostle was not ashamed of, and I hope I am not ashamed of it. I am ashamed of my poor way of preaching it but I am not ashamed of it. I trust I shall not be left to be ashamed of it if ever I have to answer before ungodly men for it, and that you will not be.

The gospel is the gospel of the covenant, and the covenant runs thus: finding fault with the first covenant, God said, I will make a new covenant. And the new covenant is this. "I will be to them a God, and they shall be to Me a people." Meeting their objections of ignorance God says, "They shall not teach every man his neighbour, and every man his brother, saying, Know the Lord, for all shall know Me, from the least to the greatest." And how is that to be? God says, "*I will put My law in their inward parts, and write it in their hearts.*" (Heb. 8:10-11) I will see to it that they come to know Me. I will see to it that they shall not make a mistake here. They shall not rely on fancies, nor be pleased with their own imaginations. I will put My laws into their heart; they shall find it there. Why, you find the word there sometimes, don't you? You find a promise in your heart sometimes; an exhortation; an invitation; sometimes something drops upon your spirit that amazes you. It comes from God and is a fulfilment of that word, "I will put My law in their inward parts." And lest you should forget, He says, "I will...write it in their hearts." The writing of the finger of God is indelible. It is written on no tablet that can be washed, but the fleshy table of the heart. The writing on the stones given to Moses was by the very finger of God, and He uses the same word. "I will...write it in their hearts." My finger shall make the indelible impression, the clear character of divine love and grace and forgiveness and mercy. Then He crowns all by saying, "For I will forgive their iniquity and remember their sins no more." What a gospel! A covenant gospel. A covenant "*ordered in all things and sure.*" (2 Sam. 23:5) A covenant that takes in every human contingency, everything that a child of God may speak of as contingency. Difficulties, temptations, mountains, valleys, ignorance, a veil on the heart, every evil, and every consideration that a legal mind can enter into; all these are taken up, and swept out of the way, and says, "I will be their God, and they shall be My people." That covers it.

The gospel is the gospel of the Holy Ghost.

"The Father sent the Son to die;  
The willing Son obeyed."

Then, speaking of the Holy Spirit, the hymn writer says,

"The witness Thou, to ratify,  
The purchase Christ has made."

Will that do? The gospel of the Trinity. The gospel that reveals the Father's love, the Son's redemption, the Holy Spirit's work in the church. The gospel that says to a helpless-sinner: I will comfort you, for I will send you the Holy Ghost. Your ignorance of truth shall be met because He shall teach you and guide you into all truth. Your prayerlessness shall be met because He shall be in you as a spirit of intercession, making intercession for you with groanings which cannot be uttered. Your infirmities shall be met because He shall come alongside you and help your infirmities. What more can be said? This wondrous gospel. It supplies me well today. It has suited me for many years, but never more than now. Never a greater sinner, never a more dependent creature. How well does the gospel fit into my case.

The glorious gospel of Christ is the gospel of the blessed God. What a mercy when the god of this world is turned out and the Lord says: Depart hence, this is My house, My dwelling, My child; and He turns out the strong man armed, and spoils him, and comes in his place and says: I will be and I am the God of this sinner and I will teach him and keep him and chasten him and train and bless him; "In blessing I will bless him." This is the gospel that comes down into the experience of the people of the living God and says to them: You are My people. Christ is your elder brother, He is the Captain of your salvation, He was made perfect through suffering, and in order that He might bring you to glory He has gone there first Himself to take possession of that place for you. If this gospel shines into our hearts, we shall see. If it operates within, in the measure of the life we have we shall feel and we shall, sooner or later, enter into the word at the end of this chapter, *"For our light affliction, which is but for a moment, worketh for us a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory; while we look not at the things which are seen, but at the things which are not seen: for the things which are seen are temporal; but the things which are not seen are eternal."* (2 Cor. 4:17,18) Do you look for eternal things? If we possessed all the world, one word would mar everything, "temporal" or time measured. You are not to possess what you have much longer. You are not to possess your health much longer; your strength will decay in time. Your possession will waste away. "Temporal" -- we look at these things that are temporal intently, affectionately, confidingly and cleavingly; they have got hold of us; they are in our nature.

There is something beyond this and faith looks at times at things which are not seen, except by faith. Christ; unseen by the lost. Christ; unseen by all except those who have faith. Men see Him and believe Him not because they see Him not. The princes of this world knew Him not, for had they known Him they would not have crucified Him. (1 Cor. 2:8) They saw Him and did not see Him. In them was fulfilled the dreadful word, *"Make the heart of this people fat, and make their ears heavy, and shut their eyes; lest they see with their eyes and hear with their ears, and understand with their heart, and convert and be healed."* (Isa. 6:10) If on the contrary the Lord says to a ministering servant of His, or sends the Holy Spirit without a minister; Go to that sinner, quicken him, open his eyes, touch his heart, take away the heart of stone and give him a heart of flesh, convince him of sin, lead him to Jesus' blood, the end will be heaven. Has the light of this glorious gospel shined in our hearts? May the Lord grant we may be able, if not at this moment yet in time to come, to say it has, and we have perceived it. Amen.