

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. ...* 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.*

Text: 2 Corinthians 4:3-4, 6 A 1/28/18 Isaiah 61:1-3 Luke 4:14-21 Ps. Resp. Ps.: 119:1ff.
Hymns: 16, 358, 777, 53

GOD GIVES US FAITH AND SALVATION

Dear fellow believers in Christ,

One part of the Bible's account of the Wise Men that always makes me sad is the reaction of the Jews in Jerusalem when the Wise Men ask, "*Where is He who has been born King of the Jews?*" (Mt. 2:2a). The Jews knew Micah's prophecy that Christ would be born in Bethlehem (Mic. 5:2). Yet the Bible doesn't mention any of the Jews going to Bethlehem to see if their promised Messiah had come. That is so very sad.

Paul begins our text, "*But even if our Gospel is veiled, it is veiled to those who are perishing.*" The "*Gospel*" is the Bible's message of our salvation in Jesus. Paul says that the "*Gospel is veiled ... to those who are perishing.*" When the Bible talks about who Jesus Christ is and what He said and did and how we're saved, it's "*veiled*" to the unbelievers. They don't 'get it.'

The Bible says that the Son of God also became the man, Jesus Christ. He did this so that as God and Man He could live a perfect life in our place to earn heaven for us. As God and man Jesus could also be punished for our sins on the cross in our place, so we don't have to be punished in hell, but can go to heaven. The Bible says that for everyone by nature the Gospel is "*foolishness..., and [they] cannot understand [it]*" (1 Cor. 2:14, NASB). The Gospel doesn't make sense to unbelievers. Unbelievers don't see their need for the Gospel. Unbelievers reject the Gospel.

Paul refers to the unbelievers as "*those who are perishing.*" It would be sad enough if, when the unbelievers died, they stayed dead and didn't get to go to heaven. But death isn't the end for anyone. Jesus says, "*The hour is coming in which all who are in the graves will hear [My] voice and come forth – those who have done good*" (by faith) "*to the resurrection of life, and those who have done evil*" (through unbelief) "*to the resurrection of condemnation*" (Jn. 5:28-29). Jesus says, "*I am the way, the truth, and the life. No one comes to the Father except through Me*" (Jn. 14:6). Jesus wants everyone to believe in Him and go to heaven. Those who don't believe in Jesus can't go to heaven, but are going to hell.

Paul says that the *“Gospel is veiled ... to those who are perishing, whose minds the god of this age has blinded.”* Some people think they don’t need Jesus. Others think they’re too intelligent to believe in God. The Bible says that the devil *“is ... at work in those who are disobedient”* (the devil is at work in the unbelievers) (Eph. 2:2). Whatever the reason for their unbelief, they don’t realize that the devil is actively working in them to keep them *“[blind]”* to the truth. Those who don’t believe in Jesus don’t realize that they’re following the devil, whom Paul calls *“the god of this age.”*

One commentator says, “If blind men do not see the sun, it is not because the sun is not there or because it is not shining. It is because they are blind. If those who are perishing in their unbelief do not believe the Gospel, it is not because the Gospel is untrue or that it lacks power. It is because the god of this age has blinded their minds.” (Sermon Studies on the Epistles, series C, NPH, © 1991, p. 105).

Paul says the devil blinds unbelievers to *“the light of the Gospel of the glory of Christ, who is the image of God.”* We see traits of the parents in their children. Looking at Jesus in the Bible, we see the traits of His Father. John says about Jesus’ birth, *“And the Word became 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”* (Jn. 1:14). Once the disciple Philip said to Jesus, *“Lord, show us the Father....”* (“Let us see God.”) *“Jesus said to him, ‘Have I been with you so long, and yet you have not known Me...? He who has seen Me has seen the Father’”* (Jn. 14:8-9). By faith in Jesus Christ we ‘see’ and know God. God is not a faraway god who doesn’t know us and doesn’t care about us. God is not a fickle god who does whatever he wants to do, giving no thought to how it affects us. God is not a mean, cruel god whom we have to be afraid of. God is not a weak god who can’t really do anything to help us. God is not a god only for material things, and only for this life. When we look at Jesus and what He did for us we see, as the Bible says, that *“God is love”* (1 Jn. 4:8, 16). God is loving, God is merciful, God is forgiving, God truly cares about us, God fervently desires to help us and bless our lives, and God fervently desires that we believe in Him and be saved and go to heaven.

In the first chapter of the Bible we’re told, *“In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth. The earth was without form, and void, and darkness was on the face of the deep.”* (Darkness was over the surface of the water.) *“... Then God said, ‘Let there be light’; and there was light. And God saw the light, that it was good; and God divided the light from the darkness”* (Gen. 1:1-4). Paul says in our text, *“For it is the God who commanded light to shine out of darkness, who has shown in our hearts to give the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ.”* We have light because God created light and caused it to shine, dispelling the darkness. God brought us out of Satan’s darkness and healed us of our spiritual blindness, giving us the eyes of faith. God has given us the Gospel – the glorious message of God’s love for us in sending us His Son who died on the cross to save us. And God has given us

our faith so that we believe in Jesus and are saved. *“For it is by grace you have been saved, through faith – and that not from yourselves, it is the gift of God – not by works, so that no one can boast”* – Ephesians 2:8-9.

Amazing Grace – how sweet the sound – that saved a wretch like me!
I once was lost but now am found, was blind but now I see.

When the Jews in Jerusalem heard from the Wise Men that the promised Messiah was born, why didn't they go to Bethlehem to see Him? It was because Satan had blinded them with unbelief. Why did the Wise Men travel so far, and not give up, until they found Jesus? And why did the Wise Men worship the child, Jesus? It was because God had opened their eyes, giving them faith. By the faith God had given them they believed the Gospel's message of salvation in God's Son, they believed in God's Son, Jesus, and they were saved!

“Dear Lord, thank You for opening our blind eyes and giving us faith to believe Your Gospel and to believe in Jesus, and be saved!” Amen.