

2 Corinthians 4:3-6 ³ And even if our gospel is veiled, it is veiled to those who are perishing. ⁴ The god of this age has blinded the minds of unbelievers, so that they cannot see the light of the gospel of the glory of Christ, who is the image of God. ⁵ For we do not preach ourselves, but Jesus Christ as Lord, and ourselves as your servants for Jesus' sake. ⁶ For God, who said, "Let light shine out of darkness," {6 Gen. 1:3} made his light shine in our hearts to give us the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Christ.

“The Glory of God in the Face of Jesus Christ”

I'd like to play for you an old Hank Williams, Sr. song; *I Saw the Light*.

I wandered so aimless, life filled with sin. I wouldn't ask my dear Saviour in.
Then Jesus came, like a stranger in the night. Praise the Lord, I saw the Light.

Chorus:

I saw the Light, I saw the Light. No more darkness, no more night.
Now I'm so happy, no sorrow in sight. Praise the Lord, I saw the Light.

Just like a blind man, I wandered alone. Worries and fears I claimed for my own.
Then, like the blind man, He gave back my sight. Praise the Lord, I saw the Light.

Chorus:

I was a fool to wander and a-stray. Straight is the gate, and narrow, the way.
Now I have traded the wrong for the right. Praise the Lord, I saw the Light.

Chorus:

This song reflects the religious experience, I think, of a lot of Christians. We've wandered around lost like blind people groping about amidst worries and fears. We've shut God out of our minds and lives. We've heard those TV preachers talk about getting ourselves saved by asking Jesus into our hearts to be our Lord and Saviour. Sometimes we laughed them off; most times ignored them. Yet, at other times we honestly did ask Jesus in and nothing happened. But then, one day, in a moment, out of the blue, we see the Light. Jesus by means of the Holy Spirit invisibly yet perceptively made himself known to us and suddenly we knew, we felt the steadfast love of the Father and knew God is faithful. Indeed, suddenly we had faith, not just beliefs.

This knowability of God goes back a long way. All the way back to the first day of creation when the Triune God of grace made himself able to be known by those in he creates by saying “Let there be Light.” In New Testament terms, the knowability of God and his steadfast love and faithfulness became visible in, through, and as Jesus Christ by the revealing work of the Holy Spirit. Jesus is the light that God spoke into being on the first day of Creation. The effect on us of seeing the Light is true faith in God that surpasses mere beliefs. The Christian faith is more than just a particular set of beliefs about God. It is a faith-based relationship with God.

More on this topic of light; when you see the word glory in the Bible it refers to this light, God's knowability through Jesus Christ by the presence of the Holy Spirit. We are prone to think of glory as renown or honour; like when we give glory to someone we honour them, talk them up to show our respect for

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them. But, when we talk about God’s glory, the glory of the LORD, or the glory of Christ we are talking about a glory that is a glory all to itself surpassing any earthly honour that creation could extend to its Creator. The glory of God is the invisible but perceivable presence of God himself, the light of God’s presence.

So back to Hank seeing the Light, I just went around Robin Hood’s barn to say that when he sings, “Then Jesus came like a stranger in the night. Praise the Lord, I saw the light.” he encountered the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ. When Paul says the “the face of Jesus Christ” we shouldn’t think of his literal, physical face. It is more appropriate to think of it as being “the presence of Jesus Christ.” Hank sings about his experience of seeing the invisible but perceivable presence of God in the presence of Jesus Christ. Another way of saying this is he experienced the Holy Spirit who brought the personal presence of Jesus Christ into his life.

Now looking at 2 Corinthians, Paul answers an important: Why doesn’t everybody just see the Light? His answer is that the gospel is veiled to those who are perishing; perishing in Hank’s terms would be wandering blindly claiming worries and fears as our own. It is veiled to those who don’t have this gift of faith that I’ve been talking about. We need to be careful here to keep from saying it is entirely the fault of the perishing that they don’t have faith for as I said faith arises as the consequence of when Jesus comes like a stranger in the night with the Light of the glory of God.

Now, this veiled gospel in its briefest form is that Jesus is Lord. He was the Son of God born human, lived life as we do, faced struggles as we do, was crucified as a truly righteous man yet bearing our sin unto death. Then the Father in the power of the Holy Spirit raised him from the dead. Jesus ascended into heaven to the right hand of the Father from where he reigns through the outpouring of the Holy Spirit until he comes again to make all things new. At which point all people will be raised from the dead and held accountable for their lives. At that point some will refuse him ultimately as Lord. Everyone else lives on in creation the way God intended it.

There are those who hear that and just say, “I don’t see it.” They can’t accept that this is true historical fact. It is, as Paul says, veiled to them and the reason Paul gives is that the God of this age or of this world order has blinded the minds of those without faith to keep them from seeing the Light of the gospel of the glory of Christ, who is the image, the real appearance of God. Jesus shows us what God is really like because he is God the Son become human. The god of this world order is trying to keep them from seeing. How?

There are many ways. Like as happened to Job, he hurts us so that in our pain we might either deny that there is a God or worse, knowing God we curse him for letting such terrible pain into our lives. Another way of blinding us is that he puts idols before us, things that play on our passions, our sensuality, our lust. Idols always come in some form of money, sex, or power. We find something that feels good or that we think meets our deepest needs and we serve it as we should God; things like work, our children, relationships, politics, patriotism, substance abuse, and on and on. These are things that just take over our lives until we are driven by an addiction that makes us make some really bad life

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decisions. Hank says he “wandered so aimless, life filled with sin.” Burying himself in addiction to alcohol and painkillers is what he was talking about. Unfortunately, he couldn’t give up his gods and they killed him. Idolatry is very powerful and often times we will serve God only to the extent that God is good for our idols. We are made for a relationship with God through faith, but we can use idols to supplant that relationship because they are more immediate and we deceive ourselves thinking they are controllable.

Another way the god of this age blinds minds particularly for us today is with the arrogance of the Enlightenment coupled with the myth of progress. The Enlightenment is otherwise known as the Age of Reason. One powerfully blinding god of our age is our own ability to think. We humans arrogantly have said that if we can’t come by it through reason then it is not true. If we cannot see it with our eyes or measure it and then make deductions about it, then it is not real. This arrogance opened the door for the first time in human history to atheism, for us to say there is no God simply because I can’t see or measure him. The Age of Reason has only made us able to rationalize our addictions and our life pains and in the end I become my own god. Talk about wandering aimlessly.

Well, seeing the light far surpasses groping blindly in the darkness. Hank’s last words in that song is “Praise the Lord! I saw the light.” There is no joy greater than the spontaneous outburst of gratitude and praise that wells up and explodes forth from the heart because you’ve been touched by the steadfast love and faithfulness of God. God is knowable. The Light can really be seen. If we can’t see it, if we are blinded by the gospel we just need to accept that we’ve been blinded. We need to take our hurts that make us think God is not real and prayerfully lay them at his feet. We need to set aside our idols and let prayer take the place of addiction. We need to set aside the arrogance of reason and humbly look to Jesus. God has made himself knowable. God has made it so that we can be in a relationship with him through Jesus Christ and the Holy Spirit. All we have to do is just get on with that relationship and when the time is right for us each, we’ll see the Light. Time and again we will see the light. Amen.