

Christ Reformation Church

Tillamook, Oregon

You Must be Born Again!

Jesus said to her, “I am the resurrection and the life. Whoever believes in me, though he die, yet shall he live, and everyone who lives and believes in me shall never die. Do you believe this?”

(John 11:25-26)

www.sermonaudio.com/crc

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***How Great is the Darkness –
Spiritual Blindness***

September 7, 2025

Sermon Text: 2 Cor 4:1-6

Scripture Reading: Acts 9:1-22

Isaiah 42:1-7 Behold my servant, whom I uphold, my chosen, in whom my soul delights; I have put my Spirit upon him; he will bring forth justice to the nations. (2) He will not cry aloud or lift up his voice, or make it heard in the street; (3) a bruised reed he will not break, and a faintly burning

wick he will not quench; he will faithfully bring forth justice. (4) He will not grow faint or be discouraged till he has established justice in the earth; and the coastlands wait for his law. (5) Thus says God, the LORD, who created the heavens and stretched them out, who spread out the earth and what comes from it, who gives breath to the people on it and spirit to those who walk in it: (6) “I am the LORD; I have called you in righteousness; I will take you by the hand and keep you; I will give you as a covenant for the people, a light for the nations, (7) to open the eyes that are blind, to bring out the prisoners

from the dungeon, from the prison those who sit in darkness.

Two very major themes in the Bible are *light* and *darkness*. Genesis opens with them:

Genesis 1:1-5 In the beginning, God created the heavens and the earth. (2) The earth was without form and void, and darkness was over the face of the deep. And the Spirit of God was hovering over the face of the waters. (3) And God said, “Let there be light,” and there was light. (4) And God saw that the light was good. And God separated the light from the darkness. (5) God called the light Day, and the darkness he called Night. And there was evening and there was morning, the first day.

Even now, every 24 hours, mankind is reminded – night and day, light and darkness.

Where God is absent – that is, wherever God, who is light, does not reveal Himself, there is darkness. God is light. Christ came into this world and John tells us

that He was and is the light and life of men. Over and over you have it – darkness and light:

1 John 1:5-7 This is the message we have heard from him and proclaim to you, that God is light, and in him is no darkness at all. (6) If we say we have fellowship with him while we walk in darkness, we lie and do not practice the truth. (7) But if we walk in the light, as he is in the light, we have fellowship with one another, and the blood of Jesus his Son cleanses us from all sin.

Salvation in Christ is repeatedly expressed in these very terms:

Colossians 1:13-14 He has delivered us from the domain of darkness and transferred us to the kingdom of his beloved Son, (14) in whom we have redemption, the forgiveness of sins.

When the risen Lord appeared to Saul on that Damascus Road, darkness and light, blindness and

sight, are the major theme, as we read earlier.

Jesus healed the blind in the days of His earthly ministry.

see: (5) the blind receive their sight and the lame walk, lepers are cleansed and the deaf hear, and the dead are raised up, and the poor have good news preached to them.

Matthew 9:27-31 And as Jesus passed on from there, two blind men followed him, crying aloud, "Have mercy on us, Son of David." (28) When he entered the house, the blind men came to him, and Jesus said to them, "Do you believe that I am able to do this?" They said to him, "Yes, Lord." (29) Then he touched their eyes, saying, "According to your faith be it done to you." (30) And their eyes were opened. And Jesus sternly warned them, "See that no one knows about it." (31) But they went away and spread his fame through all that district.

Matthew 20:30-34 And behold, there were two blind men sitting by the roadside, and when they heard that Jesus was passing by, they cried out, "Lord, have mercy on us, Son of David!" (31) The crowd rebuked them, telling them to be silent, but they cried out all the more, "Lord, have mercy on us, Son of David!" (32) And stopping, Jesus called them and said, "What do you want me to do for you?" (33) They said to him, "Lord, let our eyes be opened." (34) And Jesus in pity touched their eyes, and immediately they recovered their sight and followed him.

Matthew 11:2-5 Now when John heard in prison about the deeds of the Christ, he sent word by his disciples (3) and said to him, "Are you the one who is to come, or shall we look for another?" (4) And Jesus answered them, "Go and tell John what you hear and

Now, His healing of the blind was far more than just kindness. It was of course his kindness and mercy, but when Jesus gave sight to the blind, He was showing us something far greater. The blindness was a picture of man's

condition in sin. The healing, the turning on of the light, was a depiction of what happens to the sinner when Christ saves him. Darkness to light. Blindness to sight.

In his second letter to the Corinthians, the Apostle Paul explains this – taking us behind the scenes:

2 Corinthians 4:1-6 Therefore, having this ministry by the mercy of God, we do not lose heart. (2) But we have renounced disgraceful, underhanded ways. We refuse to practice cunning or to tamper with God's word, but by the open statement of the truth we would commend ourselves to everyone's conscience in the sight of God. (3) And even if our gospel is veiled, it is veiled to those who are perishing. (4) In their case the god of this world has blinded the minds of the unbelievers, to keep them from seeing the light of the gospel of the glory of Christ, who is the image of God. (5) For what we proclaim is not ourselves, but Jesus Christ as Lord, with

ourselves as your servants for Jesus' sake. (6) For God, who said, "Let light shine out of darkness," has shone in our hearts to give the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ.

Let the Light Shine

This is a profound passage of God's Word. Paul tells us:

1. The Gospel must not be tampered with, nor must preachers use "disgraceful, underhanded ways" in order to "sell" salvation or exalt themselves.
2. This blindness is a blindness *of the mind*.
3. Satan is the one who casts a veil over the unbeliever's mind so that he cannot see.
4. It is God alone who must turn on the light, and He does so through the power of the gospel preached.

We Do Not Lose Heart

Why did Paul mention “losing heart”? To lose heart means to become discouraged, to start to think that our efforts are of no use.

When preachers and churches and professing Christians conclude that their efforts are not bearing fruit, they are tempted (and often yield to that temptation) to use methods which Paul describes as disgraceful, underhanded, cunning, or tampering with God’s Word, in order to get “results.”

Do we see this happening in the churches today? Absolutely. Consider the words Paul uses to describe what is happening increasingly in the churches today:

- Hidden things
- Shameful things
- Craftiness
- Adulterating or tampering with God’s Word

The pulpit ministry in other words becomes a façade, a show, behind

which are shameful, dishonest motives. Methods used not for the glory of Christ, but for the bank accounts of man.

Losing heart and discouragement can be a temptation to us as we faithfully serve Christ, proclaim His Word, and yet not see crowds of people turning to Christ. We must guard against this. Listen to Simon Kistemaker on this:

“The verb lose heart refers not to physical fatigue but to spiritual weariness. Despite the hardship and suffering Paul has had to face as an apostle of Jesus Christ, he is not disheartened. The ministry to which the Lord has called him is a spiritual challenge. Paul knows that God grants him courage and boldness to overcome the verbal and physical attacks that he has to endure.” [New Testament Commentary, 2 Corinthians, Kistemaker]

Paul persevered, and we must also. We must never yield to the gimmicks which we see all around us today in the churches. Here are

some more comments by Kistemaker on the words Paul uses to describe evil tactics being adopted in churches for “success”

“The second part of Paul’s first clause can be translated, ‘all shameful secrecy,’ ‘secret and shameful ways,’ ‘the hidden things of shame’. Trickery is an attribute of the devil, not of the true apostle. Paul refers to it with the word “cunning” by Satan in Eden.” [ibid]

Like Paul, we must *renounce* and reject such devices which, in the end, deceive people into thinking they are saved. Paul had emphasized the very same subject in his first epistle to this church:

1 Corinthians 2:1-5 And I, when I came to you, brothers, did not come proclaiming to you the testimony of God with lofty speech or wisdom. (2) For I decided to know nothing among you except Jesus Christ and him crucified. (3) And I was with you in weakness and in fear and much

trembling, (4) and my speech and my message were not in plausible words of wisdom, but in demonstration of the Spirit and of power, (5) so that your faith might not rest in the wisdom of men but in the power of God.

Salvation is of the Lord. Our task is to faithfully proclaim Christ just as He has revealed Himself to us in His Word. AND in the same WAY – not by dreaming up various tricks to “sell” the gospel like some huckster. I think we must cite the “invitation” system of Billy Graham as a prime example.

The gospel is the power of God to salvation (Romans 1). It is God’s power alone by which sinners are given eyes to see Christ. We must never yield to temptation to employ our own devices. Listen to Matthew Henry:

“*We faint not (2Co_4:1) under the difficulty of our work, nor do we desist from our labour.*” And this their steadfastness was owing to the *mercy of God*. From the same mercy and grace from which they

received the apostleship (Rom 1:5), they received strength to persevere in the work of that office.

Note, As it is great mercy and grace to be called to be saints, and especially to be *counted faithful, and be put into the ministry* (1Ti 1:12), so it is owing to the mercy and grace of God if we continue faithful and persevere in our work with diligence. The best men in the world would faint in their work, and under their burdens, if they did not receive mercy from God. *By the grace of God I am what I am*, said this great apostle in his former epistle to these Corinthians, 1Co 15:10. And that mercy which has helped us out, and helped us on, hitherto, we may rely upon to help us even to the end.

And in respect to the trickery and deceitfulness which Paul rejected:

“Their sincerity in their work is avouched (2Co 4:2) in several expressions: *We have renounced the hidden things of dishonesty.*

The things of dishonesty are hidden things, that will not bear the light; and those who practice them are, or should be, ashamed of them, especially when they are known.

Such things the apostle did not allow of, but did renounce and avoid with indignation: *Not walking in craftiness*, or in disguise, acting with art and cunning, but in great simplicity, and with open freedom. They had no evil and wicked designs covered with fair and specious (false) pretenses of something that was good.

Nor did the apostles in their preaching *handle the word of God deceitfully*; but, as he said before, they used *great plainness of speech*, and did not make their ministry serve a turn, or yield to evil purposes. They had not cheated the people with falsehood instead of truth. Some think the apostle alludes to the deceit which treacherous gamesters use, or that of hucksters in the market, who mix bad wares with good. The apostles acted not like such persons, but they *manifested the*

truth to every man's conscience, declaring nothing but what in their own conscience they believed to be true, and what might serve for the conviction of their consciences who heard them, who were to judge for themselves, and to give an account for themselves. And all this they did as in the sight of God, desirous thus to commend themselves to God, and to the consciences of men, by their undisguised sincerity.

Note, A steadfast adherence to the truths of the gospel will commend ministers and people; and sincerity or uprightness will preserve a man's reputation, and the good opinion of wise and good men concerning him. [Matthew Henry]

Now, what if we do faithfully persevere in serving Christ and preaching His Word, rejecting all of this man-made method? What if we do so, *and we see no fruit or very little fruit?* What does this mean? Paul tells us, and his words here bring us right back to our subject of darkness and light, blindness and sight:

2 Corinthians 4:3-4 And even if our gospel is veiled, it is veiled to those who are perishing. (4) In their case the god of this world has blinded the minds of the unbelievers, to keep them from seeing the light of the gospel of the glory of Christ, who is the image of God.

Every human being is born into this world, blind. Some are blind physically, but ALL enter this fallen world in *blindness of the mind*. When man fell, Satan cast this dark veil over the sinner's thinking so that he has NO capacity to see the glory of Christ and be saved. In that darkness, man is perishing and on his way to hell.

Think carefully about that 4th verse:

(4) In their case the god of this world has blinded the minds of the unbelievers, to keep them from seeing the light of the gospel of the glory of Christ, who is the image of God.

This is the bondage which the unsaved man is in. When you speak to such a person and try to direct them to Christ, you are talking to a blind (and deaf) person. So great is this darkness that the Jews who were the enemies of Christ (and still are) could “see” Him raise Lazarus from the dead and yet still they detested Him.

NOTE: If raising a dead man right in front of the sinner’s eyes was still not adequate to get them to “see” and turn to Christ in faith, then how does anyone today actually think that they are capable of devising some scheme to “sell” Christ to the lost?

Luke 16:27-31 And he said, ‘Then I beg you, father, to send him to my father's house— (28) for I have five brothers—so that he may warn them, lest they also come into this place of torment.’ (29) But Abraham said, ‘They have Moses and the Prophets; let them hear them.’ (30) And he said, ‘No, father Abraham, but if someone goes to them from the dead, they will repent.’ (31) He said to him,

‘If they do not hear Moses and the Prophets, neither will they be convinced if someone should rise from the dead.’”

The sinner is on, as that song put it – *the highway to hell*. Broadway. But he parties as he goes toward the precipice. The crowd traveling down Broadway to destruction is a crowd *of blind people. And they are led by blind people*. The huge, mega so-called “churches” are the blind leading the blind into the pit.

Satan does not have power right now to deceive the nations – he is bound by Christ in that respect ever since the Cross. One day he will be loosed one final time to deceptively gather the whole world into the kingdom of antichrist. But Satan does have power right now to deceive and blind individuals.

Matthew 13:19 When anyone hears the word of the kingdom and does not understand it, the evil one comes and snatches away what has been sown in his heart. This is what was sown along the path.

And of course this explains why Paul told the Ephesians:

Ephesians 6:10-12 Finally, be strong in the Lord and in the strength of his might. (11) Put on the whole armor of God, that you may be able to stand against the schemes of the devil. (12) For we do not wrestle against flesh and blood, but against the rulers, against the authorities, against the cosmic powers over this present darkness, against the spiritual forces of evil in the heavenly places.

And again to the Corinthians:

2 Corinthians 10:2-6 I beg of you that when I am present I may not have to show boldness with such confidence as I count on showing against some who suspect us of walking according to the flesh. (3) For though we walk in the flesh, we are not waging war according to the flesh. (4) For the weapons of our warfare are not of the flesh but have divine power to destroy strongholds. (5) We destroy arguments and every lofty

opinion raised against the knowledge of God, and take every thought captive to obey Christ, (6) being ready to punish every disobedience, when your obedience is complete.

See it? Paul is very, very consistent – *we do not wage war according to the flesh*. We don't tamper with God's Word to make it "appetizing" to the sinner. We don't utilize underhanded, cunning methods for carnal motives such as increasing the crowd or the money. No, we recognize that the sinner is blind. And the only remedy is the gospel through which the Spirit of God works to give sight to the blind.

And then carefully consider this:

2 Corinthians 4:5-6 For what we proclaim is not ourselves, but Jesus Christ as Lord, with ourselves as your servants for Jesus' sake. (6) For God, who said, "Let light shine out of darkness," has shone in our hearts to give the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ.

We proclaim Jesus Christ as Lord, not ourselves. Many false preachers and teachers have crept into the churches to “proclaim themselves.” To exalt themselves. They are not preaching Christ, they are not His servants. Why? *Because they themselves are still blind. They are in the darkness. Unregenerate blind guides leading the blind into the pit.*

“For God, who said, ‘Let light shine out of darkness’”. There it is. God said “let there be light” and Saul the Pharisee became Paul the Apostle. And so it is every time a person is saved. The darkness, that veil which Satan put over the mind, is lifted away and then the mind sees the glory of God in the face of Jesus.

What Paul means by that last phrase is this – The sin-blinded mind can read the Bible, hear sermons preached, even be present when Jesus heals a man born blind, and still not see the glory of God shining through Jesus Christ.

And look at the very next verse:

2 Corinthians 4:7 But we have this treasure in jars of clay, to show that the surpassing power belongs to God and not to us.

The power belongs to God, not to us. We are entrusted with a great treasure – the gospel. But we ourselves are just, well, dirt. Jars of clay. I wonder if Paul had Gideon in mind? –

Judges 7:1-22 Then Jerubbaal (that is, Gideon) and all the people who were with him rose early and encamped beside the spring of Harod. And the camp of Midian was north of them, by the hill of Moreh, in the valley. (2) The LORD said to Gideon, “The people with you are too many for me to give the Midianites into their hand, **lest Israel boast over me, saying, ‘My own hand has saved me.’**

(3) Now therefore proclaim in the ears of the people, saying, ‘Whoever is fearful and trembling, let him return home and hurry away from Mount Gilead.’” Then 22,000 of the people returned, and 10,000 remained. (4) And the

LORD said to Gideon, “The people are still too many. Take them down to the water, and I will test them for you there, and anyone of whom I say to you, ‘This one shall go with you,’ shall go with you, and anyone of whom I say to you, ‘This one shall not go with you,’ shall not go.”

(5) So he brought the people down to the water. And the LORD said to Gideon, “Every one who laps the water with his tongue, as a dog laps, you shall set by himself. Likewise, every one who kneels down to drink.” (6) And the number of those who lapped, putting their hands to their mouths, was 300 men, but all the rest of the people knelt down to drink water.

(7) And the LORD said to Gideon, “With the 300 men who lapped I will save you and give the Midianites into your hand, and let all the others go every man to his home.” (8) So the people took provisions in their hands, and their trumpets. And he sent all the rest of Israel every man to his tent, but retained the 300 men. And the

camp of Midian was below him in the valley.

(9) That same night the LORD said to him, “Arise, go down against the camp, **for I have given it into your hand.** (10) But if you are afraid to go down, go down to the camp with Purah your servant. (11) And you shall hear what they say, and afterward your hands shall be strengthened to go down against the camp.” Then he went down with Purah his servant to the outposts of the armed men who were in the camp.

(12) And the Midianites and the Amalekites and all the people of the East lay along the valley like locusts in abundance, and their camels were without number, as the sand that is on the seashore in abundance. (13) When Gideon came, behold, a man was telling a dream to his comrade. And he said, “Behold, I dreamed a dream, and behold, a cake of barley bread tumbled into the camp of Midian and came to the tent and struck it so that it fell and turned it upside down, so that the tent lay flat.” (14) And his comrade

answered, “This is no other than the sword of Gideon the son of Joash, a man of Israel; God has given into his hand Midian and all the camp.”

(15) As soon as Gideon heard the telling of the dream and its interpretation, he worshiped. And he returned to the camp of Israel and said, “Arise, for the LORD has given the host of Midian into your hand.”

(16) And he divided the 300 men into three companies and **put trumpets into the hands of all of them and empty jars, with torches inside the jars.** (17) And he said to them, “Look at me, and do likewise. When I come to the outskirts of the camp, do as I do. (18) When I blow the trumpet, I and all who are with me, then blow the trumpets also on every side of all the camp and shout, ‘For the LORD and for Gideon.’”

(19) So Gideon and the hundred men who were with him came to the outskirts of the camp at the beginning of the middle watch, when they had just set the watch.

And they blew the trumpets **and smashed the jars that were in their hands.** (20) Then the three companies blew the trumpets and broke the jars. **They held in their left hands the torches,** and in their right hands the trumpets to blow. And they cried out, “A sword for the LORD and for Gideon!” (21) Every man stood in his place around the camp, and all the army ran. They cried out and fled. (22) When they blew the 300 trumpets, the LORD set every man's sword against his comrade and against all the army. And the army fled as far as Beth-shittah toward Zererah, as far as the border of Abel-meholah, by Tabbath.

Treasure – light – in a clay jar. WE have this great treasure through which the power of the Lord breaks through Satan’s darkness so that His elect are able to see Christ. In ourselves we are nothing. But we have this light, this torch of the gospel through which the Lord works. So never despair when the mass of people continue to perish and are blind to the glory of Christ.

Press on. God works through few,
not many – lest we would boast.