



The Scrolls

Helping **CENTRAL BIBLE CHURCH** Families Belong, Become and Go Beyond V24 N49 December 4, 2022

LIGHT HAS COME

“Light of Glory”

2 Corinthians 4:1-6

THIS WEEK'S CORE COMPETENCY

Personal God

I believe God is involved in and cares about my daily life.

“I lift up my eyes to the mountains – where does my help come from? My help comes from the LORD, the Maker of heaven and earth.”

Psalm 121:1-2



How should the ministry of the New Covenant be conducted?

In 2 Corinthians 4:1-6, Paul defends himself and the gospel he preaches against the accusations of his Corinthian opponents (see chaps. 10-13). Of course, the apostle’s message centers on the person and work of Jesus Christ. In verse 5 he says, “For what we preach is not ourselves, but Jesus Christ as Lord, and ourselves as your servants for Jesus’ sake.” Preaching Jesus Christ “as Lord” amounts to preaching that Jesus Christ is the Lord God. Two other statements in the surrounding verses reinforce Paul’s affirmation of Jesus’ deity. In verse 4, he refers to Jesus, “who is the image of God,” reminding us of a later statement he made about Jesus to the Colossians: “The Son is the image of the invisible God, the firstborn over all creation. For in him all things were created, things in heaven and on earth, visible and invisible, whether thrones or powers or ruler or authorities; all things have been created through him and for him. He is before all things, and in him all things hold together. And he is the head of the body, the church; he is the beginning and the firstborn from among the dead, so that in everything he might have the supremacy. For God was pleased to have all his fullness dwell in him, and through him to reconcile to himself all things, whether things on earth or things in heaven, by making peace through his blood, she on the cross” (1:15-20). And then there’s Paul’s closing reference to “God’s glory displayed in the face of Christ” (v. 6).

The deity of Jesus is unequivocally affirmed in throughout New Testament. In fact, it is the very heart of biblical Christianity. One writer puts it this way, “One of the most controversial topics of Christian theology is the deity of Christ. It is at the same time one of the most crucial. It lies at the

heart of our faith. For our faith rests on Jesus’ actually being God in human flesh, and not simply an extraordinary human, albeit the most unusual person who ever lived” (Millard J. Erickson, *Christian Theology*, 2:683).

The book of Hebrews is most emphatic regarding Jesus’ divinity. In the opening chapter, he is shown to be superior to angels. Among other things, he is said to be “the radiance of God’s glory and the exact representation of his being” (v. 3), one about whom God says, “Let all God’s angels worship him” (v. 6) and to whom God himself says, “Your throne, O God, will last for ever and ever.” He is the one who “laid the foundations of the earth” (v. 10) whose “years will never end” (v. 12).

Hebrews 1 unmistakably ascribes deity to the Son. That being the case, belief in one God must be understood in such a way as to accommodate the affirmation of Jesus’ deity – that Jesus is God as well as the Father. The doctrine of the Trinity, which reached its final formulation in the fourth century in Augustine’s *De Trinitate*, does just that. He wrote, “We believe that the Father, Son and Holy Spirit are one God, maker and ruler of every creature, and that ‘Father’ is not ‘Son,’ nor ‘Holy Spirit’ ‘Father’ or ‘Son’; but a Trinity of mutually related persons, and a unity of equal essence.” A contemporary theologian defines the Trinity this way, “In the one living and true God there are three coeternal and coequal Persons, the same in substance but distinct in existence” (Charles C. Ryrie, *Basic Theology*, 632).

Our God is a Personal God. Nowhere is this more evident than in the Christian doctrine of Jesus Christ.

1

EXAMINE GOD'S WORD

Read 2 Corinthians 4:1-6

1 *Therefore, since through God's mercy we have this ministry, we do not lose heart.* 2 *Rather, we have renounced secret and shameful ways; we do not use deception, nor do we distort the word of God. On the contrary, by setting forth the truth plainly we 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 *The god of this age has blinded the minds of unbelievers, so that they cannot see the light of the gospel that displays the glory of Christ, who is the image of God.* 5 *For what we preach is not 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," made his light shine in our hearts to give us the light of the knowledge of God's glory displayed in the face of Christ.*

Read in another translation

1 *God in his mercy has given us this work to do, and so we do not become discouraged.* 2 *We put aside all secret and shameful deeds; we do not act with deceit, nor do we falsify the word of God. In the full light of truth we live in God's sight and try to commend ourselves to everyone's good conscience.* 3 *For if the gospel we preach is hidden, it is hidden only from those who are being lost.* 4 *They do not believe, because their minds have been kept in the dark by the evil god of this world. He keeps them from seeing the light shining on them, the light that comes from the Good News about the glory of Christ, who is the exact likeness of God.* 5 *For it is not ourselves that we preach; we preach Jesus Christ as Lord, and ourselves as your servants for Jesus' sake.* 6 *The God who said, "Out of darkness the light shall shine!" is the same God who made his light shine in our hearts, to bring us the knowledge of God's glory shining in the face of Christ. (GNT)*

After reading the text, practice your Observation skills by noting the following:

- Box "therefore" indicating *result* in v. 1.
- Box "since" indicating *reason* in v. 1.
- Bracket "we do not lose heart" in v. 1.
- Box "rather" in v. 2, "on the contrary" in v. 2, and "but" in v. 5 indicating *contrast*.
- Bracket "secret and shameful ways" in v. 2.
- Circle "deception" in v. 2.
- Circle "distort" in v. 2.
- Draw a line from the word "truth" in v. 2 to the words "our gospel" in v. 3.
- Circle "veiled" in v. 3.
- Bracket "the god of this age" in v. 4.
- Box "so that" indicating *purpose/result* in v. 4.
- Put parentheses around each of the three prepositional phrases "of the gospel," "of Christ," and "of God" in v. 4.
- Circle "image" in v. 4.
- Circle "Lord" in v. 5.
- Circle "light" (3x) in v. 6.

What one word would you use to describe the TONE of this passage? (i.e., stern, joyful, cautious, etc.)

What word or idea stands out to you in this passage?

What one thing do you not understand in this passage?

Try to summarize the THEME of this passage in one word. If you were going to describe these verses, you might say, "This text is about _____."



DIG DEEPER

Answer the questions to help you apply the passage and prepare for discussion

1. What is it about “this ministry” (see “since”) that keeps Paul from losing heart?
2. Does how we *see* our ministry as Christians have a similar effect on us? Explain.
3. What does Paul’s defense of himself (vv. 2-3) say about his accusers?
4. Explain the *contrast* introduced by “On the contrary” in verse 2.
5. Put what “commend ourselves to everyone’s conscience” (v. 2) means in your own words.
6. What does Satan do to blind the minds of unbelievers and how does he do it?
7. Identify the *purpose* behind or the *result* of this blinding.
8. Christ isn’t the physical image of God, is he? So in what sense is he the “image” of God?
9. Explain the *contrast* in verse 5 and its contemporary relevance.
10. “Light” is used *figuratively* in verse 6. To what does the figure of speech refer?
11. **Discussion:** Talk about what verse 6 indicates about Jesus Christ.

Commentary On The Text

On 2 Corinthians 4:1-15, one commentator writes: “The New Covenant ministry is glorious because of the certain triumph of Christ (2:14) and the transforming work of the Spirit (3:18), but it is not without its hardships. Physically, the demands of Paul’s ministry sometimes seemed too much for him to bear (cf. 1:8; 11:23-27). No less excruciating were the spiritual demands (cf. 7:5; 11:28-29) brought on by those he served (e.g., 2:4) and those he opposed (e.g., 2:5). He reflected on these experiences in this passage and pointed to what sustained him, namely, the power of God (4:7)” (David K. Lowery, “2 Corinthians,” in *The Bible Knowledge Commentary: New Testament*, 562).

The opening verses of this passage, verses 1-6, constitute a single paragraph, and like all good paragraphs it has a topic sentence. That topic sentence, like all good topic sentences, expresses the main thought of the paragraph. The first sentence in a paragraph isn’t always the topic sentence, but often it is as here. “Therefore, since through God’s mercy we have this ministry, we do not lose heart.” Put differently, “God in his mercy has given us this work to do, and so we do not become discouraged” (GNT).

If anyone ever had a good reason for losing heart, becoming discouraged, giving up, Paul did. But instead of quitting, he patiently pressed on. How he viewed his work made all the difference in the world. Warren Wiersbe is right when he says, “The way you look at your ministry helps to determine how you will fulfill it. If you look on serving Christ as a burden instead of a privilege, you will be a drudge and do only what is required of you. Some people even look on service as a punishment from God. When Paul considered the fact that he was a minister of Jesus Christ, he was overwhelmed by the grace and mercy of God. His positive attitude toward the ministry had some practical consequences in his life” (*The Bible Exposition Commentary*, 2:641-42).

Paul mentions three. First, it kept him from being a quitter (v. 1). “We do not lose heart,” he said. One commentator explains: “Quite possibly he is obliquely answering criticism that, since his ministry is characterized by such difficulty and reversal, his legitimacy as a minister is, to say the least, problematic. Paul will argue that, on the contrary, his endurance in the sufferings of ministry (hinted at here but made explicit elsewhere in the letter) mark the apostle out as a genuine servant of Christ, whose own sufferings are now reproduced in the ministry of the one who represents him (5:20; 12:10; see on 6:3-10)” (Paul Bar-

nett, *The Second Epistle to the Corinthians*, NICNT, 212).

Second, it kept him from being a deceiver (vv. 2-4). Some would stop at nothing to advance their ministry, but not Paul. He didn’t spin the truth or edit his message to suit his hearers. Contrary to those false teachers who opposed him in Corinth, Paul simply told the truth and left the results up to God. In a nutshell, he had integrity. After defending his own ministry and perhaps criticizing peddlers of the gospel at the same time, Paul goes on to speak positively about his own ministry, saying that he sets forth the truth plainly. Of course, many people, especially Jews, did not accept his gospel. But unlike his opponents, Paul would not change his message to make it more palatable or winsome. According to one commentator: “The gospel was rejected by people who were unable and unwilling to accept it (cf. 1 Cor. 1:18; 2:14). They disbelieved and were abetted in their unbelief by Satan, **the god of this Age** (cf. Eph. 2:2), who though defeated by Christ (Heb. 2:14), continues his hold over the present world (1 Peter 5:8; 1 John 5:19)” (Lowery, 563). Satan blinds the mind’s eye of unbelievers, “so that they cannot see the light of the gospel that displays the glory of Christ who is the image of God” (v. 4).

And third, it kept him from being a self-promoter (vv. 5-6). Paul’s ministry wasn’t all about Paul. It wasn’t all about the minister. It was all about Jesus Christ and all about others. His statement, “What we preach is not ourselves but Jesus Christ as Lord,” could be either apologetic or polemic—more likely *both*. “It would be apologetic if Paul is responding to criticism that in his preaching he puts himself forward, i.e., that he is more concerned to establish his authority as an apostle than to proclaim the gospel. It would be polemic if Paul is implying that, unlike others who put themselves forward in their preaching, he preaches the lordship of Christ” (Colin G. Kruse, *2 Corinthians*, TNTC, 104).

Through God’s mercy we who have been saved all have work to do—work entailed in being Christians. We’re not apostles like Paul; most of us aren’t employees of a church or Christian ministry. But we’re all “God’s workmanship created in Christ Jesus to do good works, which God prepared in advance for us to do” (Eph 2:10), and we all run the risk of losing heart. But if we see our work like Paul saw his, we can patiently press on and not give up.

Word Studies/Notes

v. 1 **therefore** “‘Therefore’ ties what follows with what has just been said” (Paul Barnett, *The Second Epistle to the Corinthians*, NICNT, 211). In effect picks up where he left off in 3:6, “He [God] has made us competent as ministers of a new covenant Therefore, since through God’s mercy we have this ministry, we do not lose heart.” “He had no reason to lose heart (cf. Gal 6:9), for God in his mercy had granted him a privilege exceeding that of Moses (cf. 1 Tim 1:12-16). He had been called not to communicate the law but to dispense grace. A minister of the gospel has a higher calling than even the mediator of the law. Paul regarded this divine commission to serve under the new covenant as more than compensating for all the trials he endured for being true to his calling (vv. 7-12, 17; cf. Rom 8:18), including the malicious charges of his Corinthian opponents (note v. 2)” (Murray J. Harris, “2 Corinthians” in *The Expositor’s Bible Commentary*, 10:340.)

v. 2 **secret and** Lit., “hidden things of shame,” a reference to the kind of things a person might do when no one is looking or under the cover of darkness. See “shameful hidden deeds” (NET); “disgraceful” ways (RSV).

v. 2 **deception** Lit., “walking in craftiness.” “Paul’s word means literally ‘readiness to do anything’, usually any bad thing; as we say, ‘to stop at nothing’” (C. K. Barrett, *A Commentary on the Second Epistle to the Corinthians*, HNTC, 128). The person who uses this is ready to do anything, to use any trick in the book, to win an audience.

v. 2 **distort** Lit., “falsifying.” The verb means “to use deceit, to use bait, to ensnare, to corrupt with error, to falsify, to corrupt” (Fritz Rienecker, *A Linguistic Key to the Greek New Testament*, 462). Paul is likely responding to unnamed critics in Corinth who accused him of falsifying the gospel probably by not requiring Gentile converts to keep the law – the same ones who carried letters of recommendation with them (see 3:6; cf. Acts 15:1, 5).

v. 2 **truth** “Any man who has a conscience should be able to recognize Paul’s good faith” seeing that he “commends himself not by spinning a tale about his own importance but simply by telling the truth” (Barrett, 129).

v. 3 **veiled** Paul returns to a figure he used in 3:14-16 to refer to “not understanding.” Jewish people didn’t understand his gospel; it didn’t make sense to them. They didn’t “see what he was saying.”

v. 4 **blinded** They didn’t see what he was saying because Satan had “blinded” their minds – something all unbelievers have in common according to this verse. “At this point Paul turns to the objection that the gospel, for which he claims so unique a power, has patently been ineffective in the case of many, no doubt the majority, of those to whom he proclaimed it; large numbers have entirely failed to perceive its superlative glory of which he has spoken with such enthusiasm. This Paul concedes. The fault, however, is not in the gospel, but in those who have failed to discern its glory. The unveiled gospel, openly proclaimed, has been veiled to them because it is veiled in them: the veil is over their hearts and minds (3:14ff), not over the gospel” (Paul Hughes, *Paul’s Second Epistle to the Corinthians*, NICNT, 125).

v. 4 **light** One figure leads to another. “Blinded” minds don’t perceive the “light” of the gospel; unbelievers don’t have “the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Christ” (v. 6).

v. 4 **image** Jesus is the Second Person of the Godhead, whom John calls “the Word” (Jn 1:1-5), incarnate. In the man, Jesus, the invisible God becomes visible (see Jn 1:18; 14:9; Col 1:15; Heb 1:3).

4

APPLY THE TEXT

CENTRAL MESSAGE OF THE TEXT

Rather than give up, keep telling others the truth about Jesus and serve them for his sake, knowing that God alone can make them see the light.

CENTRAL MESSAGE FOR YOUR LIFE

(Rewrite the Central Message above to personally apply to your own life)



3 LIVING QUESTIONS

The “Living Questions” are simple questions we may ask of any text in order to apply the Bible to our life. Answer the questions below as personally as you can.

1. What does this passage teach me about God?

2. What does this passage teach me about myself?

3. What does this passage lead me to do?



FAMILY TALK

Sometimes I read the Bible and have no idea what the author is saying. I think I've read this week's passage at least 48 times and am just beginning to grasp the meaning. How can we explain what the Bible says to our kids when we don't really get it ourselves? At this point I understand why it's easier to just go to a T-ball game and shelve the Bible. Parents, we have a right and a responsibility to be the spiritual mentors to our kids, so let's do the hard work. When I don't understand a passage I do several things that usually help. First, I pray. As believers, we have the Holy Spirit who is faithful to reveal God's truth to us. I remember a time when I just couldn't decipher God's word and I prayed for several days for the answer to a Bible study question. Boom! Right in the shower, the answer came to me. It was incredible. Second, I look at other Bible translations. It helps me to look at The Message or The Amplified Bible to catch the meaning. Third, I talk about the text with my community of believers. My husband is always my "go to" guy who sheds a light on the text and offers a different thought or perspective so I can see clearly and understand what the author is saying. Last, we have this little thing called *The Scrolls*. What a huge blessing to our church to have a free resource filled with valuable commentary and thought provoking questions. Parents, let's do the hard work of Bible study. Our kids are worth it!

What Does The Bible Say?

Read Luke 2:1-7 and 2 Corinthians 4:1-6

1. Why did Joseph and Mary travel to Bethlehem?
2. What happened while they were in Bethlehem?
3. Where is God's glory displayed (2 Cor 4:6)?

What Do You Think?

How does light shine in our hearts (2 Cor 4:1-6)?

What Do You Do?

Mary and Joseph traveled to Bethlehem and slept in a manger. With your parents' permission, make a traveling fort and sleep in it in various places around the house this week.

CORE COMPETENCY: Personal God

I believe God cares about everything in my life.

MEMORY VERSE: Isaiah 9:6

"For to us a child is born, to us a son is given, and the government will be on his shoulders. And he will be called Wonderful Counselor, Mighty God, Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace."

KidPIX COUPON

Earn 1 KidPIX Token by completing the CENTRALKids Bible Study on this page and another token by memorizing and reciting the memory verse for this week.

Questions: kids@wearecentral.org

- I completed my Bible Study
- I memorized this week's verse
- I brought my Bible to church
- I brought a friend



CHILD'S NAME

GRADE

PARENT SIGNATURE

OUR CORE COMPETENCIES

CENTRAL BELIEFS

Authority of the Bible (2 Timothy 3:16-17)
I believe the Bible is the Word of God and has the right to command my belief and action.

Church (Ephesians 4:15-16)

I believe the church is God's primary way to accomplish His purposes on earth today.

Eternity (John 14:1-4)

I believe there is a heaven and a hell and that Jesus Christ is returning to judge the earth and to establish His eternal kingdom.

The Holy Spirit (Romans 8:9)

I believe the Holy Spirit convicts, calls, converts and changes me as a child of God.

Humanity (John 3:16)

I believe all people are loved by God and need Jesus Christ as their Savior.

Identity in Christ (John 1:12)

I believe I am significant because of my position as a child of God.

Jesus Christ (Hebrews 1:1-4)

I believe Jesus Christ is the Son of God who became man, died for sinners and rose from the dead.

Life Purpose (Acts 20:24)

I believe I am a steward of God's resources and have been redeemed to participate in His Kingdom purposes for His glory.

Personal God (Psalm 121:1-2)

I believe God is involved in and cares about my daily life.

Salvation by Grace (Ephesians 2:8-9)

I believe a person comes into a right relationship with God by His grace, through faith in Jesus Christ.



CENTRAL VIRTUES

Love (1 John 4:10-12)

I sacrificially and unconditionally love and forgive others.

Joy (John 15:11)

I have inner contentment and purpose in spite of my circumstances.

Peace (Philippians 4:6-7)

I am free from anxiety because things are right between God, myself and others.

Patience (Proverbs 14:29)

I take a long time to overheat and endure patiently under the unavoidable pressures of life.

Kindness/Goodness (1 Thessalonians 5:15)

I choose to do the right things in my relationships with others

Faithfulness (Proverbs 3:3-4)

I have established a good name with God and with others based on my long-term loyalty to those relationships.

Gentleness (Philippians 4:5)

I am thoughtful, considerate and calm in dealing with others.

Self-Control (Titus 2:11-13)

I have the power, through Christ, to control myself.

Grace (Colossians 3:13)

I demonstrate forgiveness, mercy and generosity to others, even when they have offended me.

Hope (1 Peter 1:3-5)

I have a growing anticipation of God's promises and my secure eternity with Him.

Humility (Philippians 2:3-4)

I choose to esteem others above myself.



CENTRAL PRACTICES

Bible Study (Hebrews 4:12)

I study the Bible to know God, the truth, and to find direction for my daily life.

Biblical Community (Acts 2:44-47)

I fellowship with other Christians to accomplish God's purposes in my life, others' lives, and in the world.

Compassion (Psalm 82:3-4)

I seek to serve the last, the least and the lost in my community.

Disciple-Making (2 Timothy 2:2)

I multiply godly beliefs, virtues and practices in others to encourage their spiritual growth in Christ.

Evangelism (Acts 1:8)

I share Jesus with others through personal proclamation and demonstration of the gospel.

Generosity (2 Corinthians 9:6-11)

I gladly give my resources to fulfill God's purposes.

Prayer (Psalm 66:16-20)

I pray to God to know Him, to lay my request before Him and to find direction for my daily life.

Single-Mindedness (Matthew 6:33)

I focus on God and His priorities for my life.

Spiritual Gifts (Romans 12:4-6)

I know and use my spiritual gifts to accomplish God's purposes.

Worship (Psalm 95:1-7)

I worship God for who He is and what He has done for me.

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Stephanie Thomas (B.B.A University of Texas at Arlington). Stephanie is married to James and they have four children: Elijah, Levi, Ella and Simon. Stephanie has attended Central Bible Church for more than 20 years, has been on staff since 2014, and now serves as Children's Minister.

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BIBLE CHURCH**

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