

# How Firm Is Your Foundation: Is the Gospel Irrelevant

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We want to welcome those joining us from LakeRidge Praise this morning. Would you stand as we honor the reading of God's holy word, and would you read with me?

## 2 Corinthians 4:3-6 (NIV)

*And even if our gospel is veiled, it is veiled to those who are perishing. 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. For we do not preach ourselves, but Jesus Christ as Lord, and ourselves as your servants for Jesus' sake. 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 the glory of God in the face of Christ.*

This is the word of God for the people of God, thanks be to God. Amen.

"Could you move please? You're standing in my light."

"Oh no. The power went off. Honey, where is the flashlight?"

"Turn on the lights; it's so dark in here."

Light, we love the light. After a scary night as a kid camping out in the backyard, you love to see daylight. We use phrases like, "Light at the end of the tunnel." "The light of your life." "The difference between light and dark." Light for us humans via sunlight produces vitamin D for health and helps to avoid the northern state affliction of sunlight deficiency in winter. Light for us is simply life giving.

I read a variety of publications and papers, watch the news, and I am fascinated by how often we as Christians are painted as these somewhat irrelevant believers. We can be portrayed as people who are not world changers, somehow out of touch and out of step with the real world.

Well. Sorry, world you are wrong. Christian organizations in the United States are the largest single providers of relief and assistance in the world. We are a light to the world.

I checked on Charity Navigator and with the American Institute of Philanthropy and found the organizations with the best ratings are: Catholic Charities, UMCOR-United

Methodist Committee on Relief, the Salvation Army, the Episcopal Relief Fund, Compassion International, and World Vision.

Don't tell me the Gospel of Jesus Christ is irrelevant today in this age. No sir. The Gospel of Jesus Christ brings light to the world. Today's reading addresses that for some people in the world, the gospel is veiled. Veiled means hidden, obscured, or unclear and hidden.

Ladies, how many of you wore a veil when you were married? Occasionally I still see a bride with a veil at their wedding. . The groom stands next to his veiled bride throughout the ceremony. After the exchanging of vows, he's told that he can kiss his bride. Now, for the first time, her veil is lifted, and their kiss symbolizes the physical ratification of the covenant just created.

Today in most weddings, the bridal veil is history, out of style, old school. What happens then is that many younger people can miss the symbolic meaning of the veil in matrimony and probably don't know its role in the Scriptures either.

In Genesis 24, Rebekah has just climbed down off of her camel as Isaac's fiancé. Before she ever meets him, she slips on a veil to cover her face. She's telling Isaac that she's a virgin. As a follower of the God of Abraham, she has remained pure and is now giving her purity to him.

In Exodus 34, Moses has met with God and now his face beams with Shekinah glory. (God breathed light that radiates from Moses 'encounter with God.) Aaron and the Israelites are terrified to approach Moses, so when Moses is in their presence, he covers his face with a veil to hide its radiance.

In Scripture, and in the symbolism of the wedding ceremony, a veil separates those on either side of it. One side is that which is pure, glorious and divinely appointed. On the other side is that which has not yet beheld it.

**The veil is removed.** The gospel of Jesus is, in essence, an unveiling. A barrier between God and humanity is removed. Light shines into the darkness. Divine access is granted to those whose obstinate, arrogant, and petty humanness and rebellious attitude forbade it in their past.

In Matthew 27, at the moment of Jesus' death, the foot-thick curtain veiling the Most Holy Place is torn apart, from the top of the curtain down. The message to us today is that **ALL** people may know through the life, death and resurrection of Jesus Christ may enter into God's presence. The scriptures continue and say that tombs break open and dead saints spill out among the living. The line between life and death has been blurred. A new spiritual reality has just been unveiled.

In the Mark 9 text, where Jesus goes up the mountain with three of his disciples and is transfigured, we read of the unveiling of Christ's glory to the amazed and awestruck disciples. Peter, James and John believed Jesus was the Messiah, but now they saw his

divinity, his glory in a new way. Their eyes were opened to a new reality.

**A veiled response.** We understand that Jesus represents God's creating another dimension to human existence, so why don't more people see and respond to it? Why do people not get it? Why do we sense that "the Light" can feel like a low light 25watt bulb in a long dark hallway to our culture? Why is the Christian faith viewed as only one of the many choices from the cafeteria line of beliefs?

I think, no, I know what it is. Look at verse 4 in 2 Corinthians chap 4 again. Hear these words, "the god of this world". The god of this world. Little "g" for this god. Not God with a capital G. This "little g" god is like a false god, a created god, not the creator of life. No this little "g" god — is a fashionista. The devil not only wears Prada, he thinks it best if our eyes look out from behind the god of this world's veils: **"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."** (2 Corinthians 4:4). We read this throughout Scripture. The enemy sows weeds among the wheat (Matthew 13). He's at work in the disobedient (Ephesians 2:2). The evil one's response to Jesus' unveiling is a re-veiling. Leave it to Satan to cloud our minds, our insight, to disrupt our discernment, to crush our boldness, and to lead us down a road of apathetic and lukewarm Christianity if we allow him.

Do you think that the world might say that Christianity is irrelevant because there is:

1. **too much information**? I don't know. But when the gospel is everywhere, is it nowhere? You don't see it, because it's always there — a church on every corner, television preachers, radio preachers, Christian bookstores, best-selling authors, Christian speakers.

2. Or, I wonder if the gospel might be loitering below the surface, hidden in the **ruts and routine of our daily lives** which make it hard for faith to stay alive.

3. Or, the gospel might be thought to be irrelevant because it's **simply not cool** to be a believer. We're afraid of the misunderstanding and ostracism we might face if we really embraced the claims of the gospel. I spoke with a man several months ago, and he asked me what I did for a living. I told him I am a minister of the Gospel. He snorted, guffawed and laughed. He gave me his

4. **Intellectual objections** about how Christianity was nothing more than a method of mind control for weak minded, non thinking, and low intellect individuals. People of God, the god of this world, of his world, have successfully veiled that man's eyes to the gift of Jesus Christ who is the light.

**Unveiled at last.** If you are a skeptic, God may not be believed. John Wesley was a good guy, a church going man, but not until his "heart was strangely warmed" in a meeting one evening, did God become real to him. The tension that we feel regarding the gospel is the tension of "already-not yet." As Christians we should learn this theological mantra. When

a person knows God through Jesus, the light of the gospel is obvious to us. We say, "Wow, has this been there all along; it's already been seen."

Just like Timothy Busfield, the actor who played Kevin Costner's brother in law in the movie, "*Field of Dreams*." For weeks the baseball players from the past have been playing on the Iowa ball field. Only those spectators who believe and understand can see the players. Not until a watching child chokes on a hot dog and a player from the past crosses the foul line and becomes his later life doctor self and revives the child, does the brother-in-law say, "Who are these people? Where did they come from? Ray, don't; sell this field Ray. Don't sell the field." Those of us with unveiled faces see the glory of God as plainly as our reflection in a mirror (2 Corinthians 3:18). Every one of you who believes in Christ in this congregation is a story of unveiling. Your story is the realization of the light of the world, Jesus Christ, making a difference.

So, what about those people whose eyes are still veiled? For them I wonder if the gospel is an issue of "not yet," hopefully, not "not ever." Scriptures in 2 Corinthians 3:16 says that "when one turns to the Lord, the veil is removed." But the "not yet" has a cosmic element as well. The addendum or subtitle to the book of Revelation could be "Unveiled at Last." When history ends, it will culminate and come to close with all eyes opened to the destiny of the Deceiver, the little "g" god of the word, the ruler of the power of the air (Eph. 2:2) "the ruler of this world," (John 12:31), who seeks to blind the world today.

So the gospel of Jesus Christ is an issue of "already-not yet." Already at work in some people, and not yet known to others. The Gospel message of Jesus Christ and the light of the world is already spreading within the kingdom, but not yet fully revealed in the entire world.

There is a show on TV called Undercover Boss. It's a great show because it takes a CEO of a successful company and places him or her in a very different environment from what they are used to. One example was the president of Waste Management Industries. This guy worked in a New York glass corner office skyscraper and ran a multi billion dollar company. He had a limo pick him up from work, wore nice starched shirts from the laundry and well tailored suits, and jetted to business meetings around the country.

He "thinks" he knows what is going on in his company. He "thinks" he sees the light. He "thinks" he knows the real work of his employees, but he does not. One task was to be a helper on a truck that vacuumed out port-a-potties in a Houston amusement park. Vacuum out the port-a-potty, wash and scrub, sanitize rapidly and effectively clean the entire structure. Clean it up, and add new toilet paper and hand sanitizer. The undercover boss, the CEO, was pitiful. The driver he was working for encouraged him, told him not to worry about the foul smell, and don't be embarrassed that he kept gagging. But with continued practice he'd get good at his job.

The boss goes back to New York after working 6 different jobs in different parts of the country for the company, and he has an epiphany. An unveiling. He suddenly sees that he can do a better job for those who work for him by being a better boss. He gets it. What he once saw as financial prudence, he now saw as stifling his employees and weighing them down with some burdensome rules.

This text out of 2 Corinthians should inspire those of us who see from the inside of the gospel to make it known to those outside of it. We are to be authentically invitational to everyone to come join us in the work of the Gospel of Christ. Paul was asking believers to rise and shine, not to sink into the darkness. That is what we are to be about, church. After the wedding veil or the spiritual veil is lifted, a new exciting and completely different life begins. We live different lives when we are unveiled — lives given to others and for others. All Christians should agree in a spiritual sense — that the veils that separate us from the true living Creator God, really should be out of style in our culture.

Today Jesus Christ invites each one of us to lift the veil of our lives. Perhaps you are hiding behind the veil of perceived success, financial security, power, or prestige.

If so, Jesus Christ is offering you the opportunity to cast off that veil and to meet him face to face, to encounter the risen and resurrected Christ. Perhaps for the first time.

How will you look at the world tomorrow? How will you look at others? Today Christ calls us to look him in his wondrous face. Christ asks each one of us here this question? Will you let your light shine for me? Will you let the light of Christ be unveiled in you so that others might see Christ in you? Will you speak for Christ today, this week? Will you let your light shine out of the darkness?

Let's pray...