

2015 New Year's Message

THE GOSPEL: GOD'S GLORY IN THE FACE OF CHRIST

2 Corinthians 4:1-18

Key Verse: 4:6

“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.”

Happy New Year! Today’s passage begins with a phrase **“we do not lose heart”** and ends with it. In the KJV, it reads, **“we faint not.”** Does any of you feel faint? Many of us served students with the gospel, sacrificing much. We are tempted to lose heart when we do not see tangible fruit or when hardships arise. Apostle Paul tells us a clear reason why we should not lose heart. It is because we have the gospel light - the glory of God. He testifies how he lived a victorious and fruitful life by fixing his eyes on God’s glory. Let’s think about God’s glory displayed in the face of Christ.

I. The glory of God is the gospel (1-6)

Read verse 1; **“Therefore, since through God’s mercy we have this ministry, we do not lose heart.”** Here **“this ministry”** refers to the New Covenant, that is, the gospel. The Old Covenant in the law brought condemnation and death. The gospel brought righteousness and life by the Spirit. By God’s mercy, we have become ministers of this glorious gospel. How should we carry out this ministry? Verse 2 reads, **“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.”** In Corinth, there were false teachers who used deception, distorting the word of God. Gospel workers are tempted to water down their messages to please people. But true ministers set forth the truth plainly. With moral purity, they minister to people’s souls and thus commend themselves to everyone’s conscience before God.

Verses 3- 4 read, **“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 that displays the glory of Christ, who is the image of God.”** When the gospel is preached, it fails in unbelievers because Satan blinds their

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minds. What does Satan blind them from seeing? It is the light of the gospel that displays the glory of Christ. This is a remarkable description of the gospel. Christ is the image - the very nature and essence - of God. Seeing the light of the gospel of Christ's glory liberates people from Satan's power. So Satan tempts unbelievers to see only the visible glory of the world, like wealth, fame and power. To the worldly mindset, the gospel is foolishness and weakness. But it is the power of God and wisdom of God. (1Co 1:24) We do not lose heart because our ministry liberates people from the power of darkness and turns them to God.

Read verse 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.”** Let's think about three points in this verse.

First, God recreates people through the gospel. When God created the universe, the earth was dark and chaotic. God said, **“Let there be light.”**(Ge 1:3) Light revealed the beauty of God's creation and sustained life. (Jn 1:4) After the Fall, people neither glorified God as God nor gave thanks to Him. Their thinking became futile and their foolish hearts were darkened. (Ro 1:21) But God so loved the world that He sent His only Son to be the Light of the world. (Jn 8:12) God recreates people through the gospel of His Son. Before Christ came into my life, I was in darkness, not knowing the meaning and purpose in life. I was sick and groaned in my sins. I was a slave of fear. By God's tender mercy, the Holy Spirit shined the gospel light in me so that I could see Christ who was crucified for me. Then my heavy burden of sin rolled away and heavenly joy flooded my soul. Christ healed me so that I could leap like a calf released from the stall. (Mal 4:2) I became a new creation. (2Co 5:17) All of you would testify to the same.

Second, the gospel light enables us to see God's glory. No one has ever seen God, but God displayed His glory in the face of Christ. The Holy Spirit shines the gospel light in our hearts so that we may see God's glory. What is God's glory in the face of Christ? Apostle John testified, **“The Word became flesh and made his dwelling among us. We have seen his glory, the glory of the one and only Son, who came from the Father, full of grace and truth.”** (Jn 1:14) In Jesus, John saw God who is full of grace and truth. What do you see in the gospel books about God's glory in the face of Christ?

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Think about His love and truth for Nicodemus and the Samaritan woman. Think about His hope for Levi and other disciples, especially Peter. Think about His compassion and mercy toward a leper, the blind, and the demon-possessed. Think about His righteousness and wisdom in dealing with the Jewish religious leaders. Think about His reverence, submission and obedience to the Father. Most of all, think about His love displayed on the cross. The Almighty God became a lamb led to slaughter to give us life. How radiant is the beauty of His divine love! How majestic is His power of healing the sick, raising the dead, and calming the storm! How mighty is His power of the resurrection! These infinite beauties of Christ's character and majesties of His power are the glory of God.

Third, the ultimate purpose of the gospel is glorifying God. St. Augustine confessed, "You have made us for Yourself, O Lord, and our heart is restless until it rests in You." People who live without God are like orphans. Our heavenly Father was in great pain seeing His beloved children perish in the darkness. He took the most difficult action to liberate us from sin and death and bring us to Himself. He sent His Son as a human to show His glory, die on the cross and rise again. Then the Father and the Son sent the Holy Spirit to be with us so that we may enjoy God's presence forever. Apostle Peter summarized this gospel: **"For Christ also suffered once for sins, the righteous for the unrighteous, to bring you to God."** (1Pe 3:18a) The gospel brought us all the blessings with it - forgiveness, justification, peace, healing, gifts, freedom, glorification and eternal life. And the best part of the gospel is this: God has removed all obstacles between us and Himself and brought us back to Himself. God Himself is the best and utmost gift of the gospel.

The Westminster Catechism (teaching of Biblical truth) Question 1 asks, "What is the chief and highest end of man?" The answer states, "Man's chief and highest end is to glorify God, and to enjoy him fully forever." This explains what the ultimate purpose of the gospel is. It is to restore us to have God as the center of our lives for our utmost happiness. When God is glorified in us, we have utmost joy and satisfaction. When we are most satisfied with God, we are glorifying God. God is worthy of our worship. He is worthy to receive our love, devotion and praise more than anything else. What can give us joy and satisfaction more than the beauties of God's glory? When do we lose heart? When do we lose joy and thankfulness? When do we lose desire to do God's work? It is

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when we do not have God on the throne of our hearts. It is when we become self-centered and self-seeking. It is when we do not glorify God.

How can we glorify God? We should accept the Lordship of Christ. Verse 5 reads, **“For what we preach is not ourselves, but Jesus Christ as Lord, and ourselves as your servants for Jesus’ sake.”** “Lord Jesus” or “Jesus the Crucified is Lord” was the confession of the apostles and early Christians (Ro 10:9, 1Co 12:3, Php 2:11). Colossians 1:16b says, **“all things have been created through Him (Christ) and for Him.”** We are not accidently here in this world. Christ is our Creator; we are made for Him. The Risen Jesus said, **“I am the Alpha and the Omega, the First and the Last, the Beginning and the End.”** (Rev 22:13) Jesus is the Sovereign Creator and Consummator of history. All creation and history is moving toward glorifying Him. The early Christians acknowledged Christ as the Sovereign Ruler and Owner of their lives. They confessed Jesus’ Lordship against the pagan religions and emperor worship, not fearing death. These days many Christians prefer Jesus to be their Savior, Healer and Friend rather than their Lord. Yes, Jesus is our Lord as much as He is our Savior, Healer and Friend. Are we ready to offer anything, even our lives, if the Lord needs it? In order to glorify God and enjoy Him fully, we should go back to the early Christians’ confession “Jesus is Lord.”

Before His crucifixion, Lord Jesus prayed to the Father; **“I have brought you glory on earth by finishing the work you gave me to do.”** (Jn 17:4) Jesus glorified the Father by carrying out the mission the Father gave Him to do. Jesus preached the gospel, raised disciples, and gave His life on the cross. The Lord Jesus gave us the New Commandment: **“A new command I give you: Love one another. As I have loved you, so you must love one another.”** (Jn 13:34) He also gave us the Great Commission: **“All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me. Therefore go and make disciples of all nations.”**(Mt 28:18-19) When we bear the fruit of Christ’s love and carry out His commission, God is glorified. Praise God who shined the gospel light in our hearts so that we may live for His glory and enjoy Him forever.

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II. Christ's glory is manifested in our weakness and sufferings (7-12)

Read verse 7; **“But we have this treasure in jars of clay to show that this all-surpassing power is from God and not from us.”** Our body is weak like clay pots. God chose humble, weak people to convey His glorious gospel to the world. God did this so that His all-surpassing power may be manifested through our weakness. So we shouldn't lose heart because of our weaknesses. We can do God's work not by our ability, but by God's power.

As Apostle Paul carried out the Lord's commission, he faced many hardships and sufferings. He testified in verses 8-9, saying, **“We are hard pressed on every side, but not crushed; perplexed, but not in despair; persecuted, but not abandoned; struck down, but not destroyed.”** Paul was imprisoned, flogged, and was exposed to death again and again. He was in danger of bandits, persecutors and natural disasters. Most of all, he was under constant pressure because of the concerns for all churches (2Co 11:23-29). In the eyes of the world, Paul looked foolish, pitiful and weak. But God's power was manifested through his life. When he felt no way out, God delivered him and opened a way. Once, after being stoned, he was dragged outside of the city. As his disciples were preparing his funeral, he got up (Ac 14:19-20). He was given new courage and kept alive like a roly-poly toy (오뚜기).

Paul summarized the secret he had experienced in verses 10-11. Read verses 10-11: **“We always carry around in our body the death of Jesus, so that the life of Jesus may also be revealed in our body. For we who are alive are always being given over to death for Jesus' sake, so that his life may also be revealed in our mortal body.”** Paul always carried around in his body **“the death of Jesus.”** Here **“death of Jesus”** means Jesus' self-denial and suffering to fulfill God's will for world salvation. Paul saw that through Jesus' self-denial and sufferings, Christ's life and His glory were displayed. So Paul wanted to know Christ and His glory by participating in Christ's sufferings. He said in Philippians 3:10-11; **“I want to know Christ—yes, to know the power of his resurrection and participation in his sufferings, becoming like him in his death, and so, somehow, attaining to the resurrection from the dead.”**

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As Paul took part in Jesus' suffering, the Lord revealed His life, that is, His power of the resurrection. The repeated deliverances of the Apostle Paul and the restorations of his courage were manifestations of Jesus' life and His glory. The Lord promised, **"And I am with you always to the very end of the age."** (Mt 28:20) I thank the Lord who has been with UBF missionaries and leaders around the world and revealed His life to them. Many of them went through wars, banishment, sickness, financial difficulties and so on. The Lord delivered them from all hardships and enabled them to advance the gospel. M. David Kang in Honduras was shot by robbers on his head. But the Lord protected him so that the bullets might stop in his skull, not causing any major injury. Many of you can testify to the Lord's life manifested in your life and ministry. We can boldly follow the Lord Jesus because of His promise and His all surpassing power.

People of the world spend their lives decorating the outward look of their jars of clay. Think about how vain is the glory of a clay jar. But we Christians use our lives for gaining the supreme and eternal treasure—that is, Jesus Christ. The Lord had said about Paul, **"I will show him how much he must suffer for my name."** (Ac 9:16) Paul's suffering was designed by Christ to keep him close to Himself and to show him His glory. The goal of Christian life is not personal ease and benefits. It is growing in love with Christ and knowing His glory by imitating Him.

I'd like to share the story of Jim Caviezel, who acted as Jesus in the movie, "The Passion of the Christ" (2004). The movie broke box-office records around the world, becoming one of the highest grossing films of all time. Recently, I learned why Jim's performance moved many. When he was offered the role of Jesus by Director Mel Gibson, he realized that the initials of his name were the same as that of Jesus Christ (J.C.) and that he was 33, the same age of Jesus when he was crucified. He received the offer as divine calling and prayed that people might see Jesus through himself in the movie. During the filming, he experienced several kinds of suffering. For instance, his shoulder was dislocated while carrying the cross. He protested, "Lord, we're trying to make a movie here, and I'm just an actor. Why don't you protect me?" But his suffering continued: While filming the flogging scene, one of the whips missed the steel board on his back and cut a 13-inch gash into his back. While filming the crucifixion scene, he

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contracted pneumonia and suffered hypothermia that almost threatened his life. He went through the filming and endured all the pain, thinking, "If I die to make this movie, many will be saved." When he took part in Jesus' suffering, people indeed could see Jesus through him. He testified during an interview that he was transformed through the experience. The Lord answered his heart's prayer by drawing him into close communion with Himself. In this way, Christ blessed him to bear His image.

Apostle Paul said in verse 12, **"So then, death is at work in us, but life is at work in you."** When Paul shared the gospel with people by imitating Jesus, the Lord manifested His life in them also. Here we learn that the work of giving life requires sacrifice. We also learn what true love is. Love is taking the suffering that leads others to Christ. May we have the inmost desire to know Christ by participating in His suffering, and thus lead others to Christ.

III. Our eternal glory far outweighs momentary troubles (13-18)

In verses 13-15, Paul testifies about how he served Christ in a difficult time. Verses 13-14 read: **"It is written: 'I believed; therefore I have spoken.' Since we have that same spirit of faith, we also believe and therefore speak, because we know that the one who raised the Lord Jesus from the dead will also raise us with Jesus and present us with you to himself."** Paul quotes Psalm 116:10. The psalmist could boldly proclaim his faith in the midst of sufferings because he had a living hope in God. Likewise, the apostles and the early Christians boldly testified to the Lord's Name with the same spirit of resurrection faith. Their joyful message was the victory of Christ over death. Since Christ conquered death and He will also raise us in His glory, we have nothing to fear. The world is growing darker. However, when we speak about the gospel boldly, God shines His light into people's hearts. (15)

Read verse 16; **"Therefore we do not lose heart. Though outwardly we are wasting away, yet inwardly we are being renewed day by day."** There is no greater joy for us than being renewed in Christ's character. This happens as we follow Jesus' footsteps as the Apostle Paul did. The Apostle also said in 3:18, **"And we all, who ...contemplate the Lord's glory, are being transformed into his image with ever-increasing glory..."** As we see the glory of Christ, we realize our sins in light of the

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beauties of Christ. This realization leads us to repentance. As we know Christ's glory more and more, we are being transformed into His image with ever-increasing glory.

This gives us a direction about how to study the Bible. We should prayerfully study the Bible to know Christ. And we should contemplate the Lord's glory that is revealed by the word of God. Contemplation needs devotion of heart and time. We've learned that reflecting on God's word in writing is an excellent way for achieving this. Without devotion for inner transformation by the word of God, no one can grow to be a disciple of Christ. We need to be renewed in our vision and passion every year. Our God always has a vision with passion. May God give each of us a new vision with new passion for His glory in the New Year. I have a vision. It is to see that we reach out all of the major cities and campuses of the world in this generation. I'd like to call all of you to pray for this vision with me.

Furthermore we do not lose heart, **“for our light and momentary troubles are achieving for us an eternal glory that far outweighs them all.”** (17) Paul contrasts literally **“an exceeding unto exceeding weight of eternal glory”** with **“light and momentary troubles.”** Our troubles fade away into nothingness when compared with our eternal glory. (Ro 8:18) **“So we fix our eyes not on what is seen, but on what is unseen, since what is seen is temporary, but what is unseen is eternal.”** (18) The things of this world are all temporal and destined to pass away. The kingdom of God the Bible promises is the only real world that will last. Compared with our eternal future, our present life is like the twinkling of an eye. Whatever we give to God, He will transform them into our eternal glory. Lord Jesus said, **“Look, I am coming soon! My reward is with me, and I will give to each person according to what they have done.”** (Rev. 22:12) In God's kingdom, we will shine like the stars in the sky in the infinite glory of God. (Dan 12:3) There we will join the grand chorus with all the saints and every creature in heaven and on earth; **“To him who sits on the throne and to the Lamb be praise and honor and glory and power, for ever and ever!”** (Rev 5:13) The Kingdom of God will be eternal Paradise because we will see eternal God and glorify and enjoy Him forever.

We learned that Christ shed His precious blood to restore us to live for God's glory and enjoy Him. God's glory in the face of Christ is the source of our joy,

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satisfaction and transformation. The Apostle Paul glorified God by sharing the gospel with all peoples by following Christ's footsteps. God has entrusted the souls in world's college campuses to us. They are in the most important years in life to prepare their future. They will be leaders. They are the future of our societies, nations and the world. They are the future of the church of God. May the Holy Spirit help us to have God's heart and Christ's love for the young people of our nation and the world. May we joyfully participate in Christ's sufferings to carry out His Great Commission. Finally let's not lose heart, but be strong and courageous by the all-surpassing power from God.