***Big Questions: Looking to God’s Word for Answers  
“…always being ready to make a defense…” I Peter 3:15***

**What Is The Gospel? II Corinthians 4:3-4**

**Overview of Prior Questions**

**I. God is and He created all things for His glory**

**II. God reveals His glory by demonstrating His Attributes through His Creation**

**III. Humanity rejects the God who is and replaces Him with a God in our own image**

**IV. The pinnacle of God’s creation is humans made in His image, invested with infinite instrumental and intrinsic value**

**V. Our behavior matters because sin destroys the purpose for our existence. We cannot see, experience, and delight in the glory of God when we sin because we are placing our own desires about the intended design of the God who made us.**

**Exposition\* of II Corinthians 4:3-4**

**I. What is the Gospel?**

* **The Gospel means “good news”**
* **God has “good news” for all people**

**II. What is the highest, best “good news” of the Gospel?**

* **Is it…**
  + Is it the forgiveness of sins?
  + Is it justification by faith?
  + Is it the removal of the wrath of God?
  + Is it liberation from the bondage of sin?
  + Is it escape or rescue from heal?
  + Is it entrance into heaven?
  + Is it eternal life?
  + Is it release from pain or conflict?
* **All of these things are a means to the highest good of the good news of the Gospel**
* **The highest good of the good news of the Gospel is seeing the glory of God in His Son, Jesus Christ**

**Conclusion: The Gospel is the “good news” that God has provided a way to restore His original intent in creating humans, that we could see, experience, enjoy, and reflect the glory of God through His Son, Jesus Christ.**

**Next week, “What does it mean to be lost?” II Corinthians 4:5-6**

**\* Based on a sermon by John Piper, “Opening Their Eyes, Doing What Only God Can Do”**

**2 Corinthians 4**

**1**Therefore, since we have this ministry, as we received mercy, we do not lose heart, **2**but we have renounced the things hidden because of shame, not walking in craftiness or adulterating the word of God, but by the manifestation of truth commending ourselves to every man'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 whose case the god of this world has blinded the minds of the unbelieving so that they might not 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 Christ Jesus as Lord, and ourselves as your bond-servants for Jesus' sake. **6**For God, who said, "Light shall shine out of darkness," is the One who has shone in our hearts to give the Light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Christ.

**7**But we have this treasure in earthen vessels, so that the surpassing greatness of the power will be of God and not from ourselves; **8**we are afflicted in every way, but not crushed; perplexed, but not despairing; **9**persecuted, but not forsaken; struck down, but not destroyed; **10**always carrying about in the body the dying of Jesus, so that the life of Jesus also may be manifested in our body. **11**For we who live are constantly being delivered over to death for Jesus' sake, so that the life of Jesus also may be manifested in our mortal flesh. **12**So death works in us, but life in you. **13**But having the same spirit of faith, according to what is written, "I BELIEVED, THEREFORE I SPOKE," we also believe, therefore we also speak, **14**knowing that He who raised the Lord Jesus will raise us also with Jesus and will present us with you. **15**For all things are for your sakes, so that the grace which is spreading to more and more people may cause the giving of thanks to abound to the glory of God. **16**Therefore we do not lose heart, but though our outer man is decaying, yet our inner man is being renewed day by day.

**17**For momentary, light affliction is producing for us an eternal weight of glory far beyond all comparison, **18**while we look not at the things which are seen, but at the things which are not seen; for the things which are seen are temporal, but the things which are not seen are eternal.

**I. Scripture Reading**

* Stand to read
* **Read II Corinthians 4:1-18 (Slides)**

**Overview of Prior Questions**

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**IV. The pinnacle of God’s creation is humans made in His image, invested with infinite instrumental and intrinsic value**

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**Exposition II Corinthians 4:1-4**

I. Paul’s Ministry (Header Slide)

* Prior questions, next couple of weeks with these questions about the nature of Christian salvation
* What does the Bible mean when it talks about people being saved?
* II Corinthians 3 Paul is speaking about the nature of his ministry and that the most commendable aspect of his ministry is the changed lives in the churches
* Paul says, “I don’t need letters of recommendation for my ministry. You are my letters of recommendation, you who have seen the glory of God and are being transformed into His image.”
* **Read II Corinthians 4:1-2 (Slide 2)**
* Not adulterating – not trading in the true message for a false message
* Paul did not use craftiness or tricks, but simply spoke words of truth
* This continues Paul’s contrasting message with those who “peddle the word of God.”
* He says that his message is an aroma of life for those who are being saved and an stench of death for those who are perishing
* This all seems predicated on a claim by Paul that he is presenting the true message and that there are false messengers that have come into the church
* Some may question, if these words are true, if this message is so clear, why doesn’t everyone believe?
* This question must have been in Paul’s mind because he immediately turns from the truth of the Gospel he is preaching to the reason some don’t believe
* **Read II Corinthians 4:3 (Slide 3)**
* The Gospel is veiled, hidden, covered, clouded
* What has caused this blindness?
* **Read II Corinthians 4:4 (Slide 4)**
* The god of this world, Satan, has blinded
* What is it that they perishing, the lost, cannot see?
* They cannot see the light of the Gospel

II. What is the Gospel?

* What is the highest good news that makes the Gospel good news?
  + Is it justification by faith?
  + Is it the forgiveness of sins?
  + Is it the removal of the wrath of God?
  + Is it liberation from the bondage of sin?
  + Is it escape or rescue from heal?
  + Is it entrance into heaven?
  + Is it eternal life?
  + Is it release from pain or conflict?
* NO! Why? Because as great as all of these truths may be and as necessary as the Gospel is in order for these things to be true, none of them is the greatest or highest good in what God has done in the Gospel
* All of these truths grant us ability to experience the greatest, highest, best, final good
* All of these truths allow us to experience the Gospel
* What is the Gospel from this text?
* What is the greatest final good according to this text?
* Verse 6 says that the Gospel is the light of the glory of God as seen in Christ
* God in Christ is the Gospel
* Seeing Christ in all His glory is the ultimate, highest, greatest good in the universe.
* Back to the list of our original eight items. How do these get us to the Gospel?
* These items get obstacles out of the way of getting Jesus Christ in all His glory
* Remember the High Priestly prayer of Christ in John 17
* **Read John 17:24 (Slide 5)**
* Remember the discussion between Jesus and the disciples in John 14 “Do not let your hearts be troubled…”
* “I am the way and the truth and the life…”
* Then Jesus says this
* **Read John 14:7-8 (Slide 6)**
* **Read John 14:9 (Slide 7)**
* Now back to II Corinthians 4
* **Read II Corinthians 4:4 (Slide 8)**
* Seeing the glory of Christ is the highest and best good in the universe and these other beautifully, necessary blessings provide a means to experience the goal of the prayer of Christ
* What is the Gospel? The Gospel is that God allows us to see Him by seeing, savoring, treasuring, loving, worshiping His Son Jesus Christ in all His glory
* He who has the Son has the Father

**Conclusion: The Gospel is the “good news” that God has provided a way to restore His original intent in creating humans, that we could see, experience, enjoy, and reflect the glory of God through His Son, Jesus Christ. (Blank slide)**

What does it mean to be lost?

* Being lost means not seeing the glory of God in His Son
* There are all types of implications of this lost condition, but ultimately it is a blindness to God

What does it mean to get saved?

* Darkness overcome and eyes open to see the glory of God in His Son Jesus Christ
* This prompts repentance from sin because sin keeps us from that glorious vision
* This brings forgiveness because our sin keeps us from seeing God as He really is
* This prompts faith because only by the work of God can we see Him
* God brings faith into dead, blind, and lost lives in order that we can finally see what we have never previously seen, Jesus Christ as the treasure of our lives
* Video clip from Piper “Opening their eyes, doing what only God can do” on the Jewish man from the Netherlands

What is our role in conversion?

* We are simply instruments through which the Holy Spirit uses us to bring conversion
* We are clay in the hands of God and He sends us to do what He alone can do
* Read Acts 26:17
* Only God can open the eyes of the blind and bring individuals out of darkness
* God will not do it without us, even though He is the only one who can do this
* Our role in the conversion of lost individuals in the Gospel is simply to be His instruments
* “My burden is light, My yoke is easy.” “Now go save the world.”
* How can His burden be light and then give us a task of doing the impossible?
* Because He does this. He does this work. He calls us to be His instrument so that we will be used by Him and so that we will be present to watch Him do this miraculous work and thus bring even greater glory to His name