

47-04-01.wpd --Earthly Agents of Heaven's King
Gospel, image of God, light, glory, incarnation
2 Cor 4:4-7

Christians are to shine Heaven's Light on Earth's darkness.

INTRODUCTION: (text as Scripture reading)

--This is the 3rd sermon in a series about how Christ's *Incarnation*, His *Cross*, His *Resurrection & Ascension*, and *Pentecost* brought a *new* (or more *correctly*) a *restored* relationship between Heaven and Earth: 1st

Our Deposit in the Bank of Heaven (*By faith in Jesus Christ we have the authority of Heaven on Earth.*) 2nd **The Heavenly Dove on Earth** (*The Holy Spirit makes Christ's Incarnation an ongoing reality.*) **Title.**

--re-read text: **2 Cor 4:4-7**

--That last verse is a very important point. When Jesus walked on this Earth, His one physical body housed the Light of the world. Now that He is in Heaven, the many bodies of Christians these "*jars of clay*" or "earthen vessels" house that same Light, for this purpose: **HOM.idea.**

--But looking at the whole passage... we see that **Satan has a goal**, **God has a goal**, and **the Christian has a goal**....

I. Satan's Goal Is to Turn off the Lights (*Why?*)

A. Because he hates the nature of the true God-- 1 John 1:5, This is the message we have heard from him and declare to you: God is light; in him there is no darkness at all. Satan does not want God's light to shine.

1. Satan was first named *Lucifer* [*Light-Bearer*], which means he once had a divine stewardship involving God's light, but he must have *hated* his job, because he traded it for *darkness*.
2. Satan's rebellion darkened Heaven's history, and he spread that rebellion on Earth through our first parents, Adam and Eve.

B. What was God's original intention for creation?-- Gen 1:1-4, In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth. Now the earth was formless and empty, darkness was over the surface of the deep, and the Spirit of God was hovering over the waters. And God said, "Let there be light," and there was light. God saw that the light was good, and he separated the light from the darkness. (God wanted to share His nature as "light" with creation.)

C. Satan wanted to blind us to God's light and God's view of reality:

1. Humanity's original fellowship with God was totally **enlightened** by God Himself. (They saw and understood everything, even

their own *nakedness*, in the light of God's view of reality.)

2. Satan's deceitful promise was to open the eyes of Adam and Eve, but his *real plan* was to blind them to God's light. (The primary proof that Satan had succeeded was that they immediately tried covering their nakedness from each other's sight and hiding their guilty souls from God's light. God's recognition of the devil's success is seen in His first question to Adam and Eve about their fig-leaf coverings: "Who told you that you were naked?")

TRANS: Why did God create humans naked? He meant them to be totally naked before Him and totally open to one another (just as the 3 Members of the Triune Godhead dwell together in the *total openness of light* and the *total nakedness of truth*. But, **v.4a**, *The god of this age has blinded the minds of unbelievers, so that they cannot see the light...* Eden was a paradise because it had Heaven's light on Earth in the very Person of God. With that light rejected, it's not "*heaven ... but hell on earth.*" Yet God is good. He did not abandon His creation to the devil's schemes. Our hope is in what Satan wants to keep us from seeing, **v.4b**, *...the light of the gospel of the glory of Christ, who is the image of God. That hope was incarnation, God's Incarnation in Christ. And it is still our hope....*

II. God's Goal Is to Turn the Lights Back on (*How?*)

A. Through Christians! **Christians are to shine Heaven's Light on Earth's darkness.** (Yet the power "**to shine**" is not in us, but in Christ-- **v.5**, *For we do not preach ourselves, but Jesus Christ as Lord, and ourselves as your servants for Jesus' sake.* We are to be **Earthly Agents of Heaven's King**.)

B. We become these *earthly agents for Heaven's King* through light:

1. Paul's explanation of this refers back to the way things were to be in the beginning-- **v.6a**, *For God, who said, "Let light shine out of darkness,"* (in other words, God never changed His mind nor His plan for creation to be filled with His light.)
2. **Verse 6b** explains salvation in terms of light: [He] *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.* (The Incarnation gave God a human *face* that we can relate to. When His face *shines in our hearts*, we are freed from Satan's blinding darkness, and the "knowledge of the glory of God" and **His view of reality**, are both restored to us.)

TRANS: There's a phrase that is used jokingly to poke fun at the conversion experience: "*I've seen the light!*" But that phrase perfectly describes our rediscovery of God's point of view, how God *sees* things, and *how we were created to see* them. This doesn't mean that we, as Christians, are back in paradise. But paradise has begun again in our hearts, and God wants Christ's heavenly light to shine out from our hearts upon the worldly darkness still present on Earth.

III. Our Goal Is to Be Faithful Witnesses to God's Light

- A. No, we have not returned to paradise, but the precious light of paradise has returned to us, and (v.7), *we have this treasure in jars of clay to show that this all-surpassing power is from God and not from us*.
- B. Our bodies are weak, often *get weary*, and eventually *waste away*, but the power residing in us is "all-surpassing" (it is beyond all other powers) and it "*is from God and not from us*" (it's **not dependent on our own knowledge**, our *position in society*, our *political party*, or our *physical strength*.... the weakest saint can have the most powerful influence merely by letting that light shine in thought, in word, in prayer, in deed.....)

CONCLUSION:

--**Christians are to shine Heaven's Light on Earth's darkness**. And this is why we must be in constant dependence on the Holy Spirit, the Heavenly Dove, to mediate the presence of the Incarnate Christ in our lives, making us incarnations of that Presence. Jesus said "*I am the light of the world*," and because He was going to make His home in our hearts, He said, "*You are the light of the world*," **earthly agents of Heaven's King**. Let's be those lights, heavenly lights ... wherever we are, for however long our sojourn on Earth lasts.

2 Cor 4:4-7 (NIV) 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. {5} For we do not preach 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 the glory of God in the face of Christ. {7} But we have this treasure in jars of clay to show that this all-surpassing power is from God and not from us.