

1. Today is Epiphany, January 6, the day on which we commemorate the coming of the wise men to see Jesus, Mt. 2:1-12. It has also been called the Christmas of the Gentiles. Epiphany means "appearing." Our text is appropriate for this word and this day.
2. Twice in this chapter, vss. 1 and 16, Paul says "Therefore, we do not grow weary." Why not? Because God has had mercy on them and therefore they have deep convictions about their life and work. One commentator wrote: "God's mercy makes men active and sincere." He is referring to vs. 1. Another commentator wrote: "We were only poor creatures until God's mercy reached us. We have been converted. Our sufficiency is of God." The verb "to grow weary" occurs in a parable at Lk. 18:8. Jesus spoke this parable concerning the constant necessity of prayer so as not to grow weary. Why did the widow obtain her objective? Because she did not grow weary. Why did she not grow weary? Because she had deep convictions. How can Paul say that they do not grow weary? Because they have deep convictions, caused by the mercy of the Lord. They are hard pressed but not crushed. Perplexed but not despairing. Persecuted but not forsaken. Knocked down but not destroyed. Always delivered to death but having the life of Jesus in them. The outward man is constantly dying but the inward man is renewed daily. The present affliction is light compared with the eternal weight of future glory. They keep their eyes on the unseen, not what can be seen. "Therefore, we do not grow weary."
3. In vs. 2 Paul speaks about the crooked methods of non-Christian teachers who are actually ashamed of what they teach. Paul does not preach the Gospel with trickery but lets the Truth, the ONLY Truth, speak for itself. By this showing forth of the Truth Paul commended himself to every man's conscience before God. Truth is not ashamed. Truth does not grow weary. It is energetic and saves mankind.
4. In chapter 3 Paul spoke about the veil of unbelief which hid the Gospel from the eyes and hearts of unbelieving Jews. But in vs. 16 he says: "Nevertheless when one turns to the Lord, the veil is taken away." He returns to this figurative expression in our text in vs. 3. The Gospel is still veiled but only to those who are on the way to destruction. Vs. 4 gives us the reason and cause.
5. In vs. 5 we are told that Satan is the cause of this blinding. He is called "the god of this age." He only apes God. He is not really God. He usurped authority over sinful man. Jn. 12:31 calls him "the prince of this world." Eph. 2:2 calls him the "prince of the power of the air." He blinds the minds of the unbelievers so that they do not see the light of the gospel of the glory of Christ. Cf. Lk. 8:12 where we are told that Satan snatches the Word from the hearers. In the Gospel, Christ, Who is God, makes the invisible God visible to the believer. Satan does not want that to happen. No mere man has ever seen God by his own powers. But Jesus Christ, true God, has revealed the glorious God to us in His Gospel. See Jn. 1:18. What an Epiphany!!
6. Vss. 5-6 are a unit in our text. Paul says they preach because they are the hearers' servants because of Jesus. They only preach. They do not rule. And they only preach Christ Jesus, the Lord, the Savior. What lies behind this? Just as God made light to shine at the beginning (Gen. 1:3), so, when sin entered the world, He made the light of the knowledge of God to shine in the Gospel (Gen. 3:15). This was brought to perfect fulfillment in Jesus Christ, true God and true man. Now it is by faith. Then it will be by experience. See I Cor. 13:12; I Jn. 3:2. After dark, rainy days, a day of clear sunshine cheers us and invigorates us. In this dark world of sin and woe the light of the Gospel cheers us. Therefore, we do not grow weary. The world mourns and stumbles about, saying: "What is truth?" Though Christians often grow weary they always return to the cheering light of the Gospel of Jesus Christ.

Sermon Outline on II Cor. 4:3-6, Epiphany

Theme: THE ONLY CURE FOR NATURAL MAN'S BLINDNESS

Introduction: Natural man is born dead spiritually. He is blind as to the truth about himself and that of God. The veil of unbelief hangs over him. He cannot remove this veil himself. And Satan is constantly at work blinding man even more. But God, Who caused light to shine at Gen. 1:3, has given mankind an instrument to remove this veil and blindness. It is the only cure for natural man's blindness.

I-Natural Man's Blindness

A-Natural man is like the Old Covenant people who rejected the Gospel. Vss. 14-15 of chapter 3 describe this condition. Their minds were hardened. A veil hung over their hearts. Paul describes this condition in I Cor. 1. The wisdom of the Gospel is foolishness to natural man. It is a stumbling block to the Jews and foolishness to the Greeks. Vs. 3 of our text says that the Gospel is veiled to those who are perishing. If people have no use for the good news, it is a good sign that they are on the way to perdition.

B-Natural man's blindness is increased by Satan, vs. 4. Not only is natural man's heart dark but Satan also furthers this blindness. He actually makes himself the god of this age. Unbelievers consider Satan their god. He blinds their hearts so that the light of the Gospel does not shine in their hearts. They live in a spiritual world that lies in darkness and ignorance. Lk. 8:12 tells us that when the Word is preached, Satan snatches it away. Satan has great power. Lk. 10:19. His power caused our first parents to fall into darkness.

C-False teachers increase this darkness, vs. 2. False teachers are actually ashamed of what they teach. Therefore they practice deception. They try to make money out of their teaching. At Paul's time there were itinerant teachers who went about teaching people things which were not really true. And they even took money for their false teaching. Paul says that he has renounced the hidden things of shame. He does not practice craftiness and deceit. He is honest with people.

II-The Only Cure for this Situation

A-Paul gives this cure various names. In vs. 2 he calls it the showing forth of the Truth. The truth is that God was in Christ reconciling the world unto Himself. The truth is that God rescued man from this awful spiritual blindness and activity of Satan. In vs. 4 Paul calls it the light of the gospel of the glory of Christ. It is light as opposed to darkness. It is glory as opposed to shame. It is Christ as opposed to Satan. In vs. 6 Paul calls it the light of the knowledge of the glory of God. It is knowledge, not ignorance. It is glory, not despair. It is glory which promises everlasting life. To put it very simply, it is the forgiveness of sins.

B-This cure comes only by preaching. The false teachers preached only about themselves. Paul says that he preaches only Christ. He preaches Christ and Him crucified. The church has only one reason for its existence, the preaching of the Gospel of Jesus Christ. That Gospel tells us that God has done everything for our salvation. The Gospel says: "Come for all things are now ready."

C-This cure is like the creation of light in Gen. 1:3. In the beginning God said: "Let there be light" and there was light. Likewise He has shined in our hearts to give the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ.

Conclusion: After several dark and rainy days we welcome the bright shining of the sun. It cheers us. Likewise, in this world of darkness and sin, The Gospel of Jesus Christ cheers us and takes away the veil of unbelief and ignorance. SLAVA BOGU EDINU!!