

Living for the Light looks different.

2 Corinthians 4:1-6

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Commercials in the pandemic - all the same. Like they have found the “chords” that enchant us.

As we watch we wonder? ‘Will anything stand out?’ Because it seems that something different would make the difference!

In 2 Corinthians, Paul the apostle has been giving a Masterclass on Christianity and Christian ministry that starkly stands out as unique and different from the prevailing sentiment and style of the day.

Some say that Paul isn’t clever enough - but he doesn’t care because he knows there is a power in the simple message of the gospel - It has so radically changed his life that he is buoyed by it through the calm and rough seas of life.

While he is writing in the context of his ministry in Corinth - it is a whole life reality for every believer. We live and love different than the prevailing way of the world.

Because we are on a mission - **Matthew 28:18–20** “And Jesus came and said to them, “All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me. [19] Go therefore and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, [20] teaching them to observe all that I have commanded you. And behold, I am with you always, to the end of the age.” (ESV)

As you go... as you live. Be discipling, live different so others see, and teach them what Jesus taught you.

For our purposes today and to reclaim or reorient ourselves as peculiar people, we will look at Life (which is our ministry) and the Light that drives us.

1) Life

We do funny things with our lives. We silo life into categories. Things don't mingle together. But in Christianity, the posture and priorities extend to all of life (supposed to). A life founded, flourishing in the gospel.

[Gospel - the good news of Jesus and his kingdom - that we have, by inherited nature, disregarded our Creator - but in love he came and lived a perfect God-regarding life, and died an innocent death so he could grant forgiveness to the guilty, handling the sin of all who believe.

What's more, we gain new life through his resurrection - a new life that looks different. Christianity, faith, not merely an accessory to an already busy life but foundational to and the functional core of our being.]

That's how Paul was living and that's what his ministry was inviting others into.

Galatians 2:20 "I have been crucified with Christ. It is no longer I who live, but Christ who lives in me. And the life I now live in the flesh I live by faith in the Son of God, who loved me and gave himself for me." (ESV)

The methods of this life then stand apart... we live and share Jesus with integrity. Renouncing disgraceful, underhanded ways - it extends to all of life. How we work, play, politicize - all interact and colors how the gospel is revealed (or not) by our lives and what we say.

We work these things out in community...

I never want to do or say things that prevent me from proclaiming Jesus. "Our job is to make Jesus known, and then to keep out of the way, to make sure we don't get in the light."

The challenge is that we get so wrapped up with pet issues, hobbies of the heart, that we are just not inclined to share Jesus.

This is an invitation to it.

We don't have to be innovative to share.

You don't have to be able to win an argument. You don't have to pull a bait and switch.

The message speaks for itself. We just repeat it!

Romans 1:16 “For I am not ashamed of the gospel, for it is the power of God for salvation to everyone who believes...” (ESV)

“Presented in a straightforward way, and in reliance upon the Spirit, the Word of God will achieve the results for which God sends it forth.”

So we can drop the veneer and share the simple gospel as a person in need to people in need.

1 Peter 3:15 “...in your hearts honor Christ the Lord as holy, always being prepared to make a defense to anyone who asks you for a reason for the hope that is in you; yet do it with gentleness and respect,” (ESV)

We can trust that is enough. An “open statement of the truth” (v. 2).

“Everybody has a conscience to which this message will make its appeal, like a message from an almost-forgotten relative, awakening memories and hopes.”

Paul won't leave us naive or unaware, however, the god of this world/age (satan) wants to keep people blinded, to be kept from hearing and understanding the gospel. So we pray, trusting the Spirit to open eyes and hearts as we live sharing Jesus.

In a world that tricks, deceives, dilutes truth, the Christian is different. We stand out. We don't succumb to the patterns of the world, we endeavor to lift Jesus high in all of life - not to earn salvation, or credibility/status - but because we want others to be saved, and because we have had an encounter with the light.

2) Light

Jesus - “the light of the gospel of the glory of Christ” is the dynamite that blows darkness away.

Paul had his Damascus road experience...

And we who have faith in Christ are to have a similar experience as the Creator God enlivens and enlightens our hearts to know the beauty of God in Jesus.

The little veils of satan are no match for the universe-producing power of God.

Paul quotes Genesis and the creation account indicating the power to save is the same power that made all things.

The magnitude of it, to bring light into the darkness of the hearts of men to bring knowledge and glory... leaves us in awe of this God of mercy.

"At the beginning of the creation, when all was darkness and chaos, God said, "let there be light," and there was light. God now addresses his gospel word to sinful people whose lives are, metaphorically speaking, darkness and chaos. As we hear and submit to his word, God shines his light into our hearts, dispelling the darkness of ignorance, guilt and fear. It is a new creation, of which we are now part, achieved by the word of God." Barnett

And when that's our experience everything changes. We see things from a different perspective.

(Dark room vs. Light - you can see shapes, maybe, but light reveals all)

“The gospel is the ultimate source of light that puts all of life into proper perspective. Because we view life according to how we are seen in the sight of God, we are free to abandon underhanded ways in favor of a transparent, grace-dependent life. All other ways of seeing will lead to blindness, other light sources represent darkness (Luke 11:34-36).” GTB

Not only seeing things differently but responding to them differently. Notice how Paul says he is their slaves for the sake of Jesus... he is merely someone who introduces people to the king.

“The adoption of the position of a servant as the natural outworking of the lordship of Christ with his own example as the method and commission.” BT

The light shining on our hearts develops into service, living for others, those around us for Jesus' sake. For his glory.

We are given another opportunity to slay the self. **2 Corinthians 4:5** "For what we proclaim is not ourselves, but Jesus Christ as Lord..." (ESV)

This pandemic is giving us plenty of opportunities to put others first, to submit and serve, to share Jesus.

When you are with and in the light, it comes naturally.

"We can only preach to others the Christ we have met for ourselves."

I wonder if we have had the experience of the light of Christ. Maybe we identify as Christians but we don't really know Jesus.

I know in my life, my desire is for it to be noticeable that I have been with Jesus. That you could smell him on me.

Grandpa's pipe... smell lingers.

So we don't live the peculiar life of trust in Jesus with hopes of meeting him someday - that's weak moralism - we live the peculiar life because we have met with Jesus!

Our strategy then is not cunning, trickery, it is not diluting the word to soften the edges - it is meeting Jesus so that you can introduce him to others

That's the application - be with the light to bring light.

Seek Him - the Savior who knows you and calls you by name. That gives himself for and to you. That prays for you - whose heart is gentle and lowly toward you.

“In Jesus Christ, we are given a friend who will always enjoy rather than refuse our presence. This is a companion whose embrace of us does not strengthen or weaken depending on how clean or unclean, how attractive or revolting, how faithful or fickle, we presently are. The friendliness of his heart for us subjectively is as fixed and stable as is the declaration of his justification of us objectively.”

Dane Ortlund

Would you ask Him to meet you? Even turn up the light - that you would find your way - that we would live to share his light. His desire is for you. Run to him.

As we do, we live with unsinkable hope. Because we have the mercy of God, we don't lose heart. Hang-on, Jesus is holding you!

Living for the Light looks different.

Jesus is unleashing a new creation through the light of his gospel. When we have encountered him, we live as servants, for His sake. It is the best life.

Psalm 43:3–4

[3] Send out your light and your truth;
let them lead me;
let them bring me to your holy hill
and to your dwelling!
[4] Then I will go to the altar of God,
to God my exceeding joy,
and I will praise you with the lyre,
O God, my God. (ESV)

Numbers 6:24–26

[24] The LORD bless you and keep you;
[25] the LORD make his face to shine upon you and be gracious to you;
[26] the LORD lift up his countenance upon you and give you peace. (ESV)

