

## **2 Corinthians 4:3-6**

**3** And even if our gospel is veiled, it is veiled to those who are perishing. **4** In their case the god of this world has blinded the minds of the unbelievers, to keep them from seeing the light of the gospel of the glory of Christ, who is the image of God. **5** For we do not proclaim ourselves; we proclaim Jesus Christ as Lord and ourselves as your slaves for Jesus' sake. **6** For it is the God who said, "Let light shine out of darkness," who has shone in our hearts to give the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ.

You can't miss the things you never had.

I love WWII history. My grandfather fought in WWII, and it was just always a part of our family narrative. We spent many weekends up at the air force museum. The coffee table at grandfathers house was always full of WWII books, and I can remember him showing me things, like where the ship he was on was anchored in Pearl harbor just weeks before the attack. He missed Pearl Harbor only to be caught in the Philippines and the fall of Bataan because what was and continues to be, classic Watkins luck.

I especially enjoy the series Band of Brothers, about the soldiers who fought in the D-Day invasion and beyond. It is shockingly accurate in its depiction of events based on numerous books and statements from the actual men involved. In the fourth part there's a lovely scene where one of the soldiers gives a little boy a bar of chocolate. The boy takes it, tastes it, scarfs it down. The father smiles, enjoying the boy's reaction. He remarks to the soldier that the boy has never had chocolate. The war has been going on as long as, or close to as long as, that boy has been alive. There's been no chocolate. The boy couldn't have even missed it, because he's never had it. But that soldier was able to bring a little light into the darkness, to share just a little love in that circumstance.

Those who have not heard the good news of Jesus Christ can be like that child. It's hard to miss what you never had. But then someone comes along and shines some light into the darkness, pulls the veil back a little bit, and show you something wonderful. Sometimes, even those who are followers of Christ need a little light too.

There's this curious thing that happens when you become a pastor that people think its absolutely scandalous if you have not converted everyone around you to Christianity, and preferably to your exact flavor. I wish that it was as simple as

that, but it's really not. Paul tells us that the god of this world blinds the minds of people to the truth of the gospel, preventing them from freedom in Christ.

I think some people imagine Satan creeping around covering people's eyes like some kind of cartoon, red, horned, fork tailed, and pitchfork in one hand. I suppose that is one explanation, and I am not one ever to underestimate the role of Satan the spiritual tug of war that occurs all around us. But I think Satan might have a little more finesse than that. When I imagine Satan blinding the minds of believers, I think of the people who experience unspeakable evil, and cannot reconcile a loving God who would allow such things. I think of people who spend so much time surviving that there is little time to consider deeper matter such as who are we and where are we going. I think of people who have been wounded by the church, and decide to throw the baby out with the bath water. I think of people whose unanswered prayers and sensibilities have led them to turn only to the tangible for answers. I think of people who dwell in deep darkness, and have never seen a glimpse of light, and can't even miss what they don't have.

I'm willing to bet you know someone who is blinded right now, or someone who is in a deep darkness. We can do so much and than just pray for those people. We can be the light of the gospel shining in the darkness, we can show them what they never missed. And it doesn't have to be hard or awkward, it doesn't have to be dramatic. Just love, act in a loving way, act in a way that reflects the principles of the Gospel. Give away chocolate.

There's an old story from Ernest Hemingway about a man and his son who were estranged for whatever reason and living in Madrid. The father wanted to be reconciled to his son and knew he wouldn't find the young man but just wandering the streets, so he took out an add in the newspaper which "Paco, meet me at the Hotel Montana at noon on Tuesday. All is forgiven! Love, Papa." Well, the father arrived at the hotel at teh appointed time to find 800 Pacos waiting for their fathers. We have all experienced darkness, and we could all use some light.

Maybe it's a friend or family member who you know who are going through rough times. Maybe it's the waitress who serves you lunch today, or your neighbor, or the kid that rides his bike through your garden. Whoever you meet today, what might happen if you approached the encounter by asking yourself how you could be the light in that situation? How could you spread the Gospel, and build just a little more of God's kingdom.

Maybe you will do that by sharing the gospel with someone, maybe even your own testimony. Maybe you will do that by inviting them to come to church with you, to visit a place with many loving and open arms waiting. Maybe the way that you will be the light will be by sitting silently. Our Jewish friends have a beautiful way of handling grief called sitting Shiva. For seven days following the burial of a loved one, the family mourns. If you are in a position where you might visit a family sitting shiva, there are strict rules to follow. You enter quietly, sit near the mourner, and space not one word until they address you first. You are to wait until you understand what the mourner needs from you, and then provide it. Perhaps they need to talk about their loved ones, the visitor brings light by listening. Perhaps they need to hear sacred promises, the visitor brings light by reciting prayers. Perhaps they need to be distracted with something trivial, the visitor brings light by talking about sports or trashy tv.

There are many ways to be God's light in this world, and every encounter we have with anyone is an opportunity to be the light. And when you are open to being the light of God in the world, incredible things begin to happen. You will find new friends and family where you least expect them. When you are trying to share the light of the world, it changes those around you and you also change yourself. The more you try to be the light in the darkness, the brighter you will shine. Kindness and love grow like muscles when they're used regularly. But more importantly than any of that, God may be using you to reach another beloved child of God in the darkness. You might be that beacon that points them towards God. Every encounter with everyone you meet is an opportunity to push back some of the darkness of this world, and lift the veil just a little. May we always strive to be the light.

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