



**Title:** Glory on Display

**Text:** 2 Corinthians 4:1–6

**Connection to Unit Theme:** Jesus reflects God perfectly. To see Jesus is to see God; to know Jesus is to know God. He is the radiance of the glory of God (Heb. 1:3). But many do not see and exult in the glory of God reflected in Jesus Christ.

### **Introduction Idea**

On January 9th, 2007, Joshua Bell sold out Boston's Symphony Hall. Seats were nearly \$100 each. Bell plays a violin worth more than \$3 million and is one of the best musicians in the world. Three days later he entered a metro station in Washington, D.C. wearing casual clothing and a ball cap. He opened his case and played his violin for 45 minutes. Only six people stopped, 20 gave money (a total of \$32), but no one recognized him.

Today, when it comes to the glory of God in the person of Jesus Christ, many are blind. They do not see his beauty and majesty, and therefore do not ascribe to him the honor and worth he deserves. As Christians, we want to do all we can to spread Christ's glory in the world. In 2 Corinthians 4:1–6 the Apostle Paul addressed how difficult this can be. We may become discouraged and desire to quit (v.1), but we have good reasons to press on.

What can we do to display the glory of Christ in the world? This text teaches us three things.

### **Sermon Division I – Refuse to distort the Word of God (vv. 1–2)**

In verse 2 Paul refers to the methods of other teachers and philosophers of his day who used any means necessary to gather a following (cf. 1 Cor. 1:20–25). This of course meant altering their message and merely tickling the ears of their hearers. Paul and his companions renounced these deceitful and shameful ways. They did not edit God's Word. They announced it. "By an open display of the truth" (v.2), the message remained the same for everyone who heard it.

Every Christian is tempted, at times, to adjust the gospel and make it more palatable to the culture. We may feel that we are making progress, but if they are not hearing the Gospel, we are only further condemning them.

In June 2013, The Atlantic featured an article titled "Listening to Young Atheists," which recounted the testimony of many young people who grew up in church, but are now atheists. Of the many factors that led to their exit, one staggered many readers. The churches they attended did not take the Bible seriously. The author said, "These students heard plenty of messages encouraging 'social justice,' community involvement, and 'being good,' but they seldom saw the relationship between that message, Jesus Christ, and the Bible" (The Atlantic, June 6, 2013).

Fascinating! This is the result when we distort the message: we drain the gospel of its power. While we must take great care to communicate the message clearly, we do not have the option of altering it.



**Application:** In what ways are you tempted to alter or soften the gospel? We must understand that if we are going to spread the glory of Christ in the world, we cannot distort God's Word.

### **Sermon Division II – Recognize the work of the devil (vv. 3–4)**

The reasons some don't embrace the gospel are numerous. Pride, love of pleasure, fear, and moralism could be listed as factors for unbelief. But in verse 4 Paul focuses on the work of the "god of this age" who "has blinded the minds of the unbelievers so they cannot see the light of the gospel of the glory of Christ" (v.4). The devil fights for his own glory, and he will do anything to prevent people from seeing the glory of Christ.

We must keep this in mind. When someone fails to respond to the gospel despite our best efforts to convince them, we tend to question our methods, our character, and perhaps even the message itself. But blindness to the gospel should not surprise us! We are at war with powers and authorities that we cannot see (Eph. 6:12). We have the greatest message in the world and unfortunately, the greatest enemy. J.R.R. Tolkien reminds us: "It does not do to leave a live dragon out of your calculations, if you live near him" (Tolkien, *The Hobbit*, 217). We live near a live dragon (Rev. 12:9) who hates the gospel. Let us not forget this.

**Application:** Have you forgotten the work of Satan? How does this impact your life?

### **Sermon Division III – Rest in the power of God (vv. 5–6)**

In verses 5–6 Paul reminds the Corinthians, and us, that only God can save. Just as in the beginning God made light shine out of darkness (Gen. 1:1–3), He can open blind eyes to the light of the glory of Christ in the gospel (v.6). Our task is simple: announce that Jesus is Lord (v.5). The rest is up to God. We cannot open blind eyes. We cannot create new creatures in Christ. We cannot give life to spiritually dead people. But God can and we must rest in His power.

Charles Wesley wrote, "Long my imprisoned spirit lay, Fast bound in sin and nature's night; Thine eye diffused a quickening ray - I woke, the dungeon flamed with light; My chains fell off, my heart was free, I rose, went forth, and followed Thee" (Wesley, "And Can It Be That I Should Gain"). We did not save ourselves and we cannot save anyone else. We simply announce the message and leave the results to God.

**Application:** Are you trying to save someone in your own power and skill? I encourage you to rest in the power of God. Be fervent in prayer, be faithful to witness, but trust God as the only savior.



### **Conclusion Idea**

The Warren Theatre in Wichita, Kansas currently hosts the world's largest IMAX screen. It measures 60 feet high and 84 feet wide. But the screen does not exist for itself. Imagine how strange it would be if people merely paid to see a blank screen! No. It exists to display movies. Christians do not exist for themselves. We exist to put the glory of Christ on display in the world. Let us press on and not lose heart.