

## **"The Light of the Knowledge of Christ"**

**(2<sup>nd</sup> Corinthians 4:1-6)**

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### **Introduction: So What Does "Light" Refer To?**

- A. In Scripture, is light presented in a literal, figurative, or transferred sense (e.g. as something from Christ to His disciples, or as describing our conversion from darkness to light)? Answer: yes, all of the above!**
- B. "[Light] has the meanings of 'daylight,' 'sunlight,' 'brightness,' 'shining,' and 'lamp.' Light is both a medium and object of sight. It enables us to grasp and master the world; to see it is life. Light brings freedom, deliverance, and hope. It is thus an object of praise. It denotes what is publicly known. It accompanies divine manifestations. The light of knowledge brings illumination." ([Little] Kittel, *Theological Dictionary of the New Testament*, 1293)**
- C. But just as the word "wisdom" in the Old Testament has several meanings, but including the fact that it is a reference to the Lord Himself (Proverbs 8), "light" with its several meanings is also a reference to the Lord Jesus Christ.**
- D. For example:**

***"Again Jesus spoke to them, saying, 'I am the light of the world. Whoever follows me will not walk in darkness, but will have the light of life.'" – St. John's Gospel, chapter 8, verse 12.***

- E. Why is this such Good News? Well, perhaps because one of the most terrifying descriptions of hell – that is separation from God who is light – is "gloomy darkness (2 Peter 2:4)." Think of children who are afraid of the dark; think of how we feel when depressed or discouraged as if we were in a state of darkness. Darkness means a loss of hope, living in despair and a sense of not knowing which way to go.**
- F. But this state of sin is the reason why the Lord came. He came to invade our darkness and fill us with LIGHT, life, freedom, hope, and salvation. Our epistle on this Transfiguration Sunday informs us of how this happens and why our receiving Christ as our light is absolutely crucial for you and me.**

### **Part I: St. Paul's Foundational Concept Before Speaking of the Light of Christ is "This Ministry (2<sup>nd</sup> Corinthians 4:1)":**

- A. Scripture will not permit us to be ambiguous or ethereal. There is nothing praiseworthy of mysticism for the sake of mysticism. There is no good and true religion without clarity. So we cannot speak of good light/Christ's light in some weird sort of psychedelic way as in something produced in a state of ecstasy (or simply the effects of harmful and destructive drugs). Remember that even the devil presents himself as an angel of light (2<sup>nd</sup> Cor. 11), so "light" in and of itself isn't necessarily good and holy.**

- B. So the biblical *context* for light in the good sense, in the beneficial sense is absolutely critical to get.
- C. Again, in the beginning of our epistle at 2<sup>nd</sup> Corinthians 4:1 St. Paul speaks of “this ministry.” Now without getting into all of the nuances, let us cut to the chase and identify that which makes the sacred and holy service of the ministry powerful and effectual: The Word of Christ!
- D. Speaking of depression, discouragement, and living with that dark cloud over your head, St. Paul specifically says that the reason the servants of God “do not lose heart” is the ministry, that is, God’s service through the Word of Christ.
- E. Dear Christians, I am not putting down the value of good psychological care and counselors – they are indeed a gift from God – but so often we neglect the most powerful, enlightening, uplifting, available, and affordable counseling: it is right here, it is the Word of Christ. But you know how it goes for us poor sinners, we don’t want to act too religious, we don’t want to be accused of being pietists, and on top of all that we are just lazy and we much prefer everything and anything else taking up our time over and above the Word of Christ. I mean after-all we’ve already been confirmed for crying out loud, we’ve already read the whole Bible cover to cover (right?), we’ve already heard how many sermons in our lifetime? Why should I, a good Lutheran as I am, ever diminish my reputation as someone who acts as though I need the Word less?
- F. And when this is our amazing position, when we say television gets this huge percentage of our leisure time and God’s Word gets how much? When we do this, we are missing out on what St. Paul is frankly celebrating...he is spared from losing heart, because of the Word of Christ that fills his heart and mind. And if you have a hard simply because you don’t know where to begin, read the Psalms, read the hymn book, the praise book of the Old Testament. Make those little prayers your prayers...they are AMAZING!
- G. This is the foundation for knowing Christ’s light.

**Part II: This Foundation We Need Because the Alternative is Evil and Destructive:**

- A. We have to understand that without the Word of Christ our light, the alternative is “disgraceful, underhanded ways...[that include] to practice cunning or to tamper with God’s word (2<sup>nd</sup> Corinthians 4:2).” Where the world says with the devil, “Did God really say?” and everything in God’s Word is doubted and questioned.
- B. In your bulletin today, you have an update on how our synodical president, Matthew Harrison, has been speaking before a U.S. Federal Government House Committee on the birth control mandate that came out of the U.S. Department of Health and Human services that forces health coverages to include the termination of pregnancy (let me just say it the murdering of babies in the womb).
- C. There is this gigantic flood of relativistic morality that would lead you and me to compromise our source of light so that we would willfully enter into darkness by committing the deeds of darkness. Why would we in a million years sign up to destroy our children and our very lives? It is insanity and yet this is the devil’s

strategy and it is our own sinful hearts that think that it would be ok to go along with it. We can't.

**Part III: To Break Away from the Darkness We Need to Understand the Threat:**

- A. 2<sup>nd</sup> Corinthians 4:3: Satan's goal is to put a veil over the Gospel, cover up Christ's Word in our lives, to cover up the light!
- B. 2<sup>nd</sup> Corinthians 4:4: Satan's goal is to blind the minds of unbelievers to keep them *"from seeing the light of the gospel of the glory of Christ, who is the image of God."*

**Part IV and Conclusion: Our Response is to let Christ Shine!**

- A. We proclaim not ourselves (2<sup>nd</sup> Cor. 4:5) nor any other human resource that attempts to counter darkness, but Christ!
- B. Christ was at the Creation. When God the Father spoke, His speaking was His Son; His speaking was the Word of God: Jesus Christ. Jesus brought the universe into being. Christ the light has literally given you LIFE!
- C. Christ was at the Redemption. The One who died on the cross of Calvary is the One who was Transfigured. The Transfigured Jesus was nailed to the cross. Think of that...what power do nails have when they try holding LIGHT? And yet Jesus chose to hang there in a real body and therefore He suffered what you and I deserved to suffer in our darkness. He bore our darkness, He entered into our misery and cried out to the Father when He in the full experience of our sinful darkness, knew the isolation and abandonment we deserve. And yet at the same time, the nails could not conquer light. They could not hold light...light was stronger, so that our Savior beat our death and this was verified when the Light came forth from the tomb!
- D. Christ is our Life and Sanctification:
  - 1. So let your light shine before men (for Jesus is in you and His light is given to you to do the good works which God has prepared in advance for you to do, Matthew 5:16 and Ephesians 2:10).
  - 2. But remember first things first, you would have no light in you sinner if Christ did not shine upon you...His light must enter you through your eyes that behold His Sacrament and His Word, and your ears which receive the Word proclaimed...this light must enter in you so that your whole body will be full of light (Matthew 6:22-23).
  - 3. That is, we remain steadfast in His Word, so that we receive LIGHT/Christ upon us and in us, so that our minds will not get sucked into sin's rebellion, but so that by grace through faith in Jesus Christ we are not conformed to this world, but transformed by the renewal of [our] mind (Romans 12:2) as Christ's Word and therefore Christ Himself fills our minds.
  - 4. As the Psalmist says:

*"Your word is a lamp to my feet and a light to my path." – Psalm 119:105*

5. In this you will be led by faith in Christ so as not to lose heart, but Christ Himself will shine in your heart to give the light of the knowledge that the Transfigured Christ is your Savior, the Glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ. He is YOUR LIGHT and in HIS LIGHT you shall remain as He continues to shine on YOU!