

“We Do Not Lose Heart”
(2nd Corinthians 3:12-13; 4:1-6)

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Introduction: The Christian is very bold:

- (1) Having *conviction* about what life is all about!
- (2) That is because of the true source of life, we know vitality even when we are tired, pressed, or going through difficulties!

Why? Hope

- (1) Certain hope, objective hope! Not a wish, but something real.
- (2) Based on the risen and glorified Savior, the Lord Jesus!

How is this hope FORMED? Christ's doxa (glory; splendor)

- (1) The doxa of His crucifixion
- (2) The doxa of His resurrection
- (3) The doxa of His second coming (we get a glimpse today, Transfiguration Sunday)!

One of a Kind: Why? Answer: Not like Moses

- (1) Moses' was a fading covenant. The law which condemned was being replaced with a new covenant that would forgive sins!

Romans 10:4: "For Christ is the end of the law for righteousness to everyone who believes."

- (2) Ours is a lasting covenant!

- In Christ, there is no limitation.
- In Christ, nothing can cancel it or make it fade! It is too glorious! ***This is what makes us bold!***

Part 1: So we do not lose heart:

- (1) In the face of the positive reasons: having this ministry!
 - (a) Our own salvation.
 - (b) Our mission to serve others for their salvation.
- (2) In the face of the negative reasons: even when many people reject the gospel.

Part 2: So we live a new life:

- (1) Renounce disgraceful ways!

Gregory of Nyssa: "Lives filled with light" = it is necessary for our lives also to be illuminated by the rays of the true light. (Ancient Christian Commentary, Volume 7, pg. 227-228)

Clement of Alexandria: "We must try, then, to resemble Him in spirit as far as we are able." (Ibid., pg. 229)

We esp. strive to avoid intentional or deliberate sin!

- (2) Refuse cunning (trying to be spiritual or religious through man's efforts, not God's) or adulteration of the Word (changing the Word in order to please people).
- (3) Stick to the open statement/publishing of the Truth!

"It is the plain unadulterated gospel of the grace of God revealed supremely in the death and resurrection of Christ that alone strikes home to his conscience." (Buls, B, Festival Epistles, pg. 68, Buls quoting Tasker)

Part 3: And we understand the battle:

- (1) Veiling is going on in those who are perishing...only applies in this text to those who hear the gospel.
- (2) So this is also a warning to us since we hear the gospel.
- (3) But what is really veiled?
 - (a) Not really the gospel itself (though it seems this way and that's why Paul says what he says at 4:3).
 - (b) But nothing can actually veil the glory of the gospel itself.
 - (c) Nothing could veil the glory of Jesus at the Transfiguration!
 - (d) So what is really being veiled are hearts and minds *towards* the gospel.
- (4) Who does the veiling?
 - (a) The "god of this world" actually the "god of this age" or "god of this *aion/this time*".
 - (b) This is a reference to the devil, not a reference to God.
 - (c) He is called "god" lower case because he is powerful and can deceive us, but he is not God!
 - (d) Similar references to the devil in other Scriptures: John 12:31: "the prince of this world;" Ephesians 2:2: "the prince of the power of the air."
 - (e) The Lutheran theologian Calov called the devil "the ape of God"...he apes God, tries to imitate God's authority, but he is a fraud, a fake, a deceiver.

- (f) His realm or stage of operations = Aion = "all that floating mass of thoughts, opinions, maxims, speculations, hopes, impulses, aims, aspirations at any time current in the world." (Buls, C, Festival Epistles, pg. 62, Buls quotes Rienecker who quotes Trench)
- (g) So the devil relies on change and instability to deceive you. The gospel, however, is *unchanging!*

Lenski, pg. 960: "the god of this eon blinded the thoughts of the unbelieving so that the illumination of the gospel of the glory of Christ, who is the image of God, did not get to dawn..."

(5) Elements of his strategy:

- (a) He wants you to deny his existence. This is the most direct and effective, because if you deny his existence, then why would you ever be worried about him trying to deceive you?! In our sin we act like he's not real. But the Christian knows better: when we are confronted with temptation, or fear, or discouragement, then we are confronted by the devil. He tries to take you away from your faith -- that conviction and vitality that we mentioned previously -- in Christ.
- (b) He also wants you to deny the foundation of absolute truth: the world hates the notion and wants us to capitulate to relativism; that truth has many versions. If there is no single truth, then who are we to say this is true and that is false; or this is right and that is wrong?! In our sin we make exceptions to God's Word and this is a slap in the face to the Lord. We say we believe in Him, that we follow Him, but then choose to ignore or violate His Word when it is no longer convenient to us. When this happens, we lose our conscience and we give in to sin. This can destroy faith.

Lenski, pg. 961: So though the truth is presented "all...thinking and reasoning are as if it does not see it at all. The thoughts are blinded."

Warning: remember that all of this "perishing" refers to some who are receiving the gospel! One of the most vivid pictures of this is the parable of the sower (Luke 8:12):

"The ones along the path are those who have heard; then the devil comes and takes away the word from their hearts, so that they many not believe and be saved."

- (c) This is isn't God's fault; or the gospel's fault, but the fault of the person whose heart and mind is veiled or covered towards the gospel!

Part 4 & Conclusion: The Source of Glory/Keeping Us Faithful!

- (1) Vs 5: the proclamation of Jesus Christ/the gospel!

Lenski, pg. 964: "In him [Jesus Christ] now shines forth forever all God's love for us, and in him we are to behold all that this love has wrought for our salvation."

(2) Vs 6: Light = Knowledge of the Glory of God = Jesus Christ.

Think of how God shattered the darkness at creation. The universe has been bathed with light ever since!

In the same way, your darkness has been shattered! God has "come to shine" in your heart; His light coming through the knowledge of His Son Jesus Christ our Lord!

Lenski, pg. 970: "Mere nature shines with light; the center of our personal being, shines with the knowledge of the glory of God, with his living, gracious presence in Christ."

(3) So we get back to the gospel, the source of God's light in your life to keep you bold without losing heart! And this is your source Christian:

(a) The doxa of the Lord's crucifixion!

(b) The doxa of the Lord's resurrection!

(c) The doxa of the Lord's second coming! (remember The Transfiguration)

This is why we have hope; this is why we do not grow weary. Ambrosiaster says that is why we do not lose heart: the mercy of God which cleanses us and makes us righteous; adopts us as the children of God and endows us with a glory like the glory of Christ! And Chrysostom says that this is all attributed to the loving kindness of God so that we do not sink under trial, but we rejoice and speak boldly! (Ancient Christian Commentary, vol 7, pg. 227)