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## 2 Corinthians 4

(2019)

Bible House of Grace contains an easy to read New and Old Testament commentary full of spiritual treasures and pearls, complete with an insightful resource guide illuminating God's love and grace.



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Although I believe my aim is pure and God's will perfect this document is still the product of a human man, as to such I neither claim perfect knowledge or perfect understanding.

## 2 Corinthians 4.

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### Topics.

- The god of this world.
- The Gospel is veiled.
- The glory of Christ, who is the image of God.
- Let light shine out of darkness.
- We have this treasure in jars of clay.
- Always carrying in the body, the death of Jesus.
- Death is at work in us but life in you.
- Our inner nature is being renewed day by day.
- We look not to the things that are seen, but to things that are unseen.

**The previous chapter:** in the previous chapter Paul talked of a mirror so highly polished that it shines a light on the Gospel which reflects Christ back to the minds of those who seek him and of two universal laws permanently imbedded into our human DNA., that affect us all. Firstly, a law so potent it has the power to condemn and kill us all, and secondly a law that states, "The object we behold in our mind influences us to become like it." He showed us how to overcome the first law and how to use the second to enhance our lives mentally, emotionally and spiritually.

**NOTE:** for information concerning people, places and the meaning of words see Map Locations and People of the Bible, and Bible Dictionary on Website Menu.

- In certain chapters this letter is written as though Paul is having a conversation with the Corinthians (i.e., he asks them a question and then answers it etc.).
- Though Paul's letter is directed to the Corinthian church the content applies to any church or believer in the same situations.

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### 2 CORINTHIANS 4:1-5:

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#### Paul and those with Him Refuse to Tamper with God's Word.

- **2 Corinthians 4:1-5:** Therefore, having this ministry by the mercy of God, we do not lose heart. <sup>2</sup>But we have renounced disgraceful, underhanded ways. We refuse to practice cunning or to tamper with God's word, but by the open statement of the truth we would commend ourselves to everyone's conscience in the sight of God. <sup>3</sup>And even if our gospel is veiled, it is veiled only to those who are perishing (Lost in KJV). <sup>4</sup>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. <sup>5</sup>For what we proclaim is not ourselves, but Jesus Christ as Lord, with ourselves as your servants for Jesus' sake.

The words, "We do not lose heart" (v1) implies that there are very real reasons existing that have the potential to discourage Paul and those ministering with him, but this disappointment does not stem from the glorious Gospel of Christ, but because Paul teaches the Good News of the Gospel with a clear conscience before God and before those he proclaims it to while there are others who are twisting and tampering with it in deceitful and dishonest ways.

**The god of this world:** the words, "The god of this world" (v4) refer to the entity we all know as Satan, to understand what Paul is saying it helps to firstly have a brief understanding of the word Satan and what it means. Satan in the Hebrew and Greek language does not have a capital \*S\* and simply means an adversary, one who withstands, opposes or resists it is a word that has come to symbolize everything that is the total opposite to what is good, decent and right. In many verses of the Bible the word Satan is often personified as the arch enemy of God. The New Testament says the works of Satan are evil thoughts, murders, adulteries, fornication's, thefts, a false witness, blasphemies, covetousness, wickedness, deceit and lasciviousness. Pride, foolishness, idolatry, witchcraft, hatred, variance, emulation's, wrath, strife, sedition's and heresies, envying, drunkenness, revelling, and such like. The Bible tells us all of these dwell in the human heart and that they are all the works of Satan, which shows us that Satan's dwelling place must be in the human heart therefore the word Satan is a personification of the evil in the heart that influences a person's own lust, ego and pride etc., in rebellion against God or to act as an adversary to Christ and those who follow him. But the word Satan is not limited in its meaning to only religious matters, Satan in its widest and fullest sense is a personification of everything that is opposed to what is good, religious or secular, thus, the universal title, "The Arch Enemy of Good." This influence can be manifested through an individual, a group, a government or leaders of nations that act as an adversary and enemy to everything that is good, decent and right.

**The evil one the prince of the power of the air and the god of this world:** John tells us that the whole world lives under the influence and power of the evil one and Paul says unbelievers follow the prince of the power of the air because the god of this world has blinded their minds. The titles "the evil one," "the prince of the power of the air" and "the god of this world" all refer to the same power and influence that affects the human mind, mentally, emotionally and spiritually. They are simply different titles for the same entity which personifies the evil that rises up out of the human heart and influences the world, this entity in most verses is called Satan or the devil (1 John 5:19) (2 Cor. 4:4) (Eph. 2:2). For further information see the title:

- Demons in, Satan and his Family (ON WEBSITE MENU).

**The god of this world has blinded the minds of the unbelievers:** with this understanding it is clear to see that the phrase "The god of this world has blinded the minds of the unbelievers" (v4) in this context is an expression that embraces within its meaning human pride, ego, greed, selfishness, lust, etc., it is that spirit in us that puts self-first, that entity that says, "Me first." The god of this world is self, pride, ego, greed, sexual lust and lust for power and profit (i.e., money) and such like, for simplicity these are all summed up in the words, "The god of this world," since they are what drive the world's governments, trade and economy and influence human nature i.e., self, ego and pride do not want to bow down to God or be accountable to Him, thus it is our own ego and pride that blinds us to the light of the Gospel of the glory of Christ.

**The Gospel is veiled:** Paul's statement, "If the gospel is veiled, it is veiled only to those who are perishing" (Lost in KJV) (v3). This is because the death and resurrection of the Lord Jesus Christ and the glorious message of God's forgiveness and eternal plan of salvation contained in the Gospel message cannot be perceived until a person humbles themselves before God and accept the Lord Jesus Christ, until they do this they remain separated from God and on a path that will end in eternal death.

**The glory of Christ, who is the image of God:** the words, "The glory of Christ, who is the image of God" (v4) do not mean that Jesus is God, but rather that he is the mirror image of God. It presents the idea of a person standing in front of a mirror and the mirror reflecting back the perfect image of that person. The image is not the person, but is a perfect reflection of them it is in this manner that the Lord Jesus Christ the

glorified and perfect Son of God reflects the image of his heavenly Fathers. God and Jesus are not only one in their plans and purposes, but also one in perfect love and perfect unity.

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## 2 CORINTHIANS 4:6-11

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### Let Light Shine out of Darkness.

- **2 Corinthians 4:6-11:** For God, who said, "Let light shine out of darkness," has shone in our hearts to give the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ. <sup>7</sup>But we have this treasure in jars of clay, to show that the surpassing power belongs to God and not to us. <sup>8</sup>We are afflicted in every way, but not crushed; perplexed but not driven to despair <sup>9</sup>persecuted, but not forsaken struck down, but not destroyed <sup>10</sup>always carrying (Bearing in KJV) in the body the death of Jesus, so that the life of Jesus may also be manifested in our bodies. <sup>11</sup>For we who live are always being given over to death for Jesus' sake, so that the life of Jesus also may be manifested in our mortal flesh.

The words, For God, who said, "Let light shine out of darkness" (v6) are stunningly awesome since they allude to the beginning of creation when God said, "Let there be light," and there was light (Gen 1:1-5). Paul is likening God's breath-taking power that brought natural light into a world of darkness to another light that God shines in the heart of those in Christ which gives them majestic knowledge and insight of God through their faith in Jesus. It is the Almighty God of creation who through a person's faith in Christ illuminates the knowledge of Himself to their mind. Added to this the glory of God is seen by whoever looks with eyes of faith upon the Lord Jesus Christ because he was the perfect image of God on earth in power and in character, i.e., divine forgiveness, grace, mercy and love etc.

**We have this treasure in jars of clay:** the statement, "We have this treasure in jars of clay (v7) means that the, "the majestic light of the knowledge of the glory of God" that comes through faith in Lord Jesus Christ and shines in the human heart is hidden by the mortal flesh of the human body.

**To show that the surpassing power belongs to God and not to us:** the words, "To show that the surpassing power belongs to God and not to us" (v7) is in the context of Paul and those ministering with him being afflicted, persecuted, brutally beaten, confused and deserted, but never driven to despair mentally or emotionally thus the words, "The surpassing power belongs to God and not to us" means that their suffering is evidence that there is a power within themselves that far surpasses their own nature (i.e., self, ego and pride) otherwise why would they continue to proclaim the gospel when it brings pain, suffering and persecution to their own bodies.

**Always carrying (bearing in KJV) in the body the death of Jesus:** (v10) means, Paul and those ministering with him are always conscious of the suffering and brutal death of the Lord Jesus Christ. When ministering they keep in mind that Jesus suffered mockery, persecution and laid down his life for the lost. Paul is saying that they always keep the suffering of Christ in their mind so that they are themselves are in the same manner as Christ was always prepared to suffer for those that are perishing. In this way the life of Jesus is manifested in their ministry, lifestyle and bodies because they also are prepared to suffer and endure loss for those that are separated from God and doomed to eternal destruction.

**The principal being taught:** is that those who stand as ministers of the Lord Jesus Christ proclaiming the Good News of the Gospel should always be ready to accept suffering or even death for the salvation of the lost and by so doing the life Jesus lived will be outwardly manifested in their mortal bodies made of clay.

### Death is at Work in us but life in You.

- **2 Corinthians 4:12-18:** So death is at work in us but life in You. <sup>13</sup>Since we have the same spirit of faith according to what has been written, "I believed, and so I spoke," we also believe, and so we also speak, <sup>14</sup>knowing that he who raised the Lord Jesus will raise us also with Jesus and bring us with you into his presence. <sup>15</sup>For it is all for your sake, so that as grace extends to more and more people it may increase thanksgiving, to the glory of God. <sup>16</sup>So we do not lose heart. Though our outer nature is wasting away, our inner nature is being renewed day by day. <sup>17</sup>For this slight momentary affliction is preparing for us an eternal weight of glory beyond all comparison, <sup>18</sup>as we look not to the things that are seen but to the things that are unseen. For the things that are seen are transient, but the things that are unseen are eternal.

**Death is at work in us:** the phrase, "Death is at Work in us" (v12) cannot be talking about everlasting life because Paul and those with him all have eternal life in Christ rather it is about Paul and those ministering with him being in continual sorrow, persecution, danger, affliction and even at times facing death itself through preaching the Gospel. It is about speaking the Gospel without worrying about the consequences to self, ego and pride and to letting go of the things of this world including our own mortal life because we know something far better is to come. It means that Paul and those ministering with him were prepared to suffer and die for Christ and for those who were perishing. Their ministry to God was more important to them than a comfortable lifestyle, being rich and wealthy or being thought of as someone famous or important. In these verses Paul is contrasting his attitude and those ministering with him to the attitude of the Corinthians leaders who were tampering and distorting the Gospel (v2) (no-doubt for their own gain) and more concerned about their own comfort than they are of the poor and less fortunate thus the phrase, "Death is at work in us" is about living for the wellbeing of others, since to do this requires dying to the things self, ego and pride want

**But life in you:** "(v12) these words, carry the idea that the sufferings and self-denials of Paul and those with him were for the good of others, and would result in their benefit and salvation. The Corinthian brothers and sisters were comparatively safe and free from persecution and the dangers of death and reaped the advantages of Paul (and those with him) exposure to trials and suffering. Paul is saying that the Gospel he preaches in the face of danger and death is the Corinthians gain, their joy and the means of nourishing spiritual life in their hearts and thereby keeping them to eternal life and everlasting glory while at the same time encouraging Paul and those ministering with him to continue in their service to Christ with boldness and cheerfulness.

**I Believed, and so I spoke:** (v13) these words, allude to the words of David who in praising the LORD basically said:

- I believed, therefore have I spoken though I was greatly afflicted and all mankind are liars, nevertheless I will pay my vows to the LORD amongst the people knowing that the death of God's saints is precious in the sight of the LORD (Psalm 116:10-14).

Paul is pretty much saying the same as David i.e., because Paul and those ministering with him believe in the Lord Jesus Christ they will continue to proclaim the Gospel regardless of the perils and dangers they may face, since they are fully assured that even if they are killed serving Christ God who raised the Lord Jesus will not only raise them to be with Christ, but will at the same time raise the Corinthians with them into the Lord's presence (v14). The expression:

- Our outer nature is wasting away (v16).

In this context refers to the body which loses its vigour and elasticity and becomes weak and feeble as we grow older until it eventually decays, perishes dies and is laid in a grave since it is not designed to bear up

forever the trials of life, and the wear and tear of constant action. It should be noted that the phrase, 'Outer nature' should not be mistaken with the term, 'The outward Man' since the phrase; 'The outward Man' mostly refers to our fallen corrupt human nature, i.e., self, ego, pride, lust and greed etc., and not the flesh and bones body itself. The statement:

- Our inner nature is being renewed day by day" (v16).

In this context refers to the inward spiritual life of those in Christ, which is strengthened invigorated and filled as they meditate on the joys and triumphs of the Gospel, the breath-taking and awesome knowledge that they are accepted by Almighty God the creator and source of all life and the humbling understanding that not only are all their sins forgiven (because of their faith in Christ), but God counts them as righteous and sets His love and favour on them. Added to this is the majestic image created in the mind by their faith that underlies all other thoughts, passions, plans and desires etc., (whether life is charmed or troubled) which is the excitement generated by the expectation of the fulfilment of God's glorious promise of eternal life spent in everlasting glory with the Lord Jesus Christ the King of kings and Lord of lords to all who put their faith and their trust in His Son.

When these things are valued, believed and permeate the mind the inner nature of every brother and sister in Christ is being renewed day by day. This does not mean they will be consciously aware of it each day as they live out their life in this world with all its frustrations, sorrow and troubles, but as time passes and they endure there is no-doubt they will see that they have a hidden strength, contentment, joy and hope in their inner man (also called the heart) that they would not trade for all the wealth and kingdoms of this world.

**A second manner in which the inner nature is renewed day by day:**

the inner nature is also renewed comforted, energised, refreshed, strengthened and sustained when we do-good to others and promote the salvation of mankind even when the body is weary, grows old and move closer to death. This is a principle and sentiment that is not only grounded on Paul's own personal experience, but the experience of thousands who in their efforts to do-good to others have experienced the same vitality of life well up within themselves. When a brother or sister in Christ spends their life in helping and benefiting others and proclaiming the Good News of the Gospel the powers (excitement, strength and joy) of their mind will not only expand, but they will have a clearer view of the Gospel and their faith in God will increase which will as they grow older and move nearer to the grave and to eternal life and everlasting glory result in their inner life being raised far above the things of this world and their own ego and pride.

There is no-question that the grace that comes with the Good News of the Gospel is an effectual and powerful force against despair, depression and anxiety in times of crisis and trouble. The knowledge that Christ was raised from the dead and that his resurrection is God's assurance and guarantee that those who die with faith in His Son will also be raised from the grave not only gives overwhelming comfort and enormous encouragement during a time of suffering and sorrow, but also sets the suffering person far above the fear of death, because the guaranteed hope of eternal life and everlasting peace, joy and happiness is an enormous mental and emotional comfort and support to a troubled mind.

**Our outer nature and our inner nature:** for the ardent Bible student it should be mentioned that the term, "The outward Nature" (v16) can refer to two different things depending on the context it is used in, firstly to the physical body and secondly to the carnal nature of all mankind (also called the flesh and the outward man) which refers to self, ego, pride, greed and lust etc., it is the context that determines which of these two the statement "The outward Nature" (also called the outward man) should be applied to. This same principal applies to the phrase, "The inner nature" (v16) as it also is not limited to the nature of Christ that dwells within

those who faithfully follow him, but can also refer to the natural inner nature of all mankind, i.e., self, ego, pride, greed and lust etc. It is the context that determines whether the writer is referring to the inner nature of Christ or the inward nature of all humanity.

**We look not to the things that are seen, but to things that are unseen:** Paul's statement, "We look not to the things that are seen, but to things that are Unseen" has in some circles of religion been grossly taken out of context and used as a spiritual cliché to call through affirmations, confession and visualisation into one's own life things they want but can't see. The teaching states that by faith we can call the things unseen into this seen world, meaning, if a Christian visualises and confesses something enough it will mystically come to them. Though there is a truth and there are mental benefits in the principle of affirmations and visualisation these religious teachers have taken the power affirmations and visualisation techniques have far beyond what they are able to bring to pass.

There is no-doubt that affirmations and visualisation practises will help keep our dreams alive and motivate us to make the sacrifices in life and do the work needed to achieve the goal, but without sacrifices and hard work affirmations and visualisations will produce nothing. But, Paul's words, "We look not to the things that are seen, but to things that are Unseen" have absolutely nothing to do with affirmations or visualisation, but rather faith in the resurrection thus, "Looking to the things unseen" refers to dead bodies that have decayed and are none existent, but will be raised not only to immortality but also to everlasting life and eternal glory, meaning to a heavenly world of perfect joy and perfect peace with the, 'Prince of Peace being the King. We know this is what Paul has in focus because prior to Paul saying:

- We look not to the things that are seen but to the things that are unseen (v18).

He made the statement:

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- For this slight momentary affliction is preparing for us an eternal weight of glory beyond all comparison (v17).

Obviously referring to eternal life added to this are the following powerful and comforting words:

- For the things that are seen are transient, (meaning fleeting, passing, temporary and short-lived) but the things that are unseen are eternal (v17).

**A personal note:** it stuns me that the entire focus of Jesus, the apostles and Paul was not how to have a better life here and now, but rather on eternal life. They knew everyone (Christian or secular) is going to suffer troubles in this mortal, temporary, passing and troubled world so they made their dominant message one of encouragement and comfort i.e., divine forgiveness of sins and the glory of eternal life. No-where do they appeal to self, pride and ego or what we all would like in this life, rather to overcome the troubles that come our way their advice is not to focus on this present temporary world, but on the glory and royal majesty of the return of the King of Peace and on the promised hope of the eternal and heavenly world of everlasting joy and peace to come.

It seems (to me at least) that the excess of worldly materialism in this world today has subtly managed to influence some religious teachers to such an extent that they have almost totally reversed the spiritual, heavenly and eternal Gospel message proclaimed by Christ and the apostles to a message that is focused on materialism and what self-desires in this world rather than on spirituality. Tragically the message that should be the absolute least materialistic message of all faiths has in much of modern Christianity become one of the most materialistic messages so much so that some congregations are told to claim what they want from God. From my personal observations (and I realise they are limited) it seems that the underlying current of much of modern

(modern being the key word) religious teaching is, "What can God do for me." Whereas the underlying thought in the messages of Christ and of the apostles is, "What can I do for God and for others?" The modern Gospel seems to be focused of what is best for self, how can self-enhance its own life, whereas underpinning the teachings of Christ and the apostles is the thought, "What can I do to enhance the life of others?"

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*As the founder of Bible House of Grace, I would like to thank the many Christian scholars, commentators and theologians who have gone before me, and the many today, who have freely made available their works to enhance the knowledge of the Bible to all people worldwide. It is only with the help of these faithful writers that much of Bible House of Grace exists as it does today.*

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Bible House of Grace