

## Let's Get Real!

Truth Equals Reality

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In my senior year in high school my English teacher introduced the class to the Greek philosophers, particularly Plato. To us this was pretty dry stuff, but enough of it stuck with me that at least one of Plato's analogies can be used in this sermon, and I am glad it did. The analogy that I am thinking of is the one that most people are introduced to Plato through, and that is Plato's *Cave*.

Some of you may remember this from high school, or college, or philosophy, or literature class, and it is used basically to show the "remarkable" leap in thought that the Greeks, particularly Socrates, Plato, and Aristotle made in human thought. Of course you know that God was way ahead of them, because this principle, as we will see later, was known at least as far back as Moses' day to the Israelites. So do not ever let anyone tell you that Greek philosophy is far advanced over the theology of the Bible. So whatever the case, the basics of *Plato's Cave* analogy is consistent I think with what the Bible reveals; so it is safe. This is *Plato's Cave* analogy. I will quote this from a source that I have.

Imagine the condition of men living in a sort of cavernous chamber underground with an entrance open to the light, and a long passage down all along the cave. Here they have been from childhood, chained by the leg, and also by the neck so that they cannot move and can see only what is in front of them because the chain will not let them turn their heads. At some distance higher up is the light of a fire burning behind them. Between the prisoners and the fire is a track with a parapet built along it. Now behind the parapet imagine persons carrying along various objects which project above the parapet. Prisoners so confined would have seen nothing of themselves or of one another, except the shadows thrown by the fire light on the wall of the cave facing them, and they would have seen little or nothing of the objects carried past. In every way then, such prisoners would recognize as reality nothing but the shadows of those objects.

That is kind of a strange scenario, if you think about it. It is something that would probably never happen, but it makes a good point. If you had been confined to a dim room all of your life, from your earliest memories, and all you had ever seen were shadows on a wall, you would think that the shadows were real. You would have no idea, no knowledge at all of the *real* object that was actually casting that shadow. If ever were you taken from that room and shown the reality, you might have a hard time accepting the reality for what it was. That is, you would have a hard time seeing that real thing as greater than the shadow that you had known all your life. And then if you went back into that dim room and tried to tell your fellow inmates about the reality that you had witnessed when outside in the light, would they believe you? All they knew is shadow. Would they even understand reality? Probably not. They would be unable to comprehend reality because they have never been enlightened to it. It was something beyond their ken, beyond their realm of knowledge.

Well, such is Christianity. The truth of God and the way that it describes, is reality. The world from which we are called is the cave where the people are deceived into believing that the shadows are the reality instead of what is truly real. In many ways, even though we have been enlightened to the reality, we are still in the cave. We still have not completely accepted the reality of what God has

enlightened us to, and it is this concept—*reality versus shadow*—that we are going to look into today, particularly the reality part. We already know enough about the shadow. We need to understand the reality.

Remember I said a few minutes ago that the understanding of *shadow versus reality* was known in Israel a long long time before Plato. As a matter of fact, it was a thousand years before Plato even was able to say "*goo goo, gah gah*," that the Israelites knew about this. It was about 1400 BC and he lived in about 400 BC. In fact this understanding was not mere philosophy to the Israelites. It was fact. It was in itself reality to them, that the life they lived on earth was a shadow in comparison to what God lived.

So we are going to run through a string of verses with not very much comment, to show how common this knowledge was in the Old Testament, and in the New, and how frequently it pops up in Scripture. I think you will be surprised. Let us start in Exodus 25, where the first occurrence of it is, and this is the area of Scripture where God is telling Moses how to construct the tabernacle and all the things that are in it.

**Exodus 25:40** "And see to it that you make them according to the pattern which was shown you on the mountain."

Moses climbs up Mount Sinai and God gives him a vision, or whatever, of the *true* tabernacle in heaven, and He walks him around the true tabernacle and lets him see all the little things, all the details of what the tabernacle on earth should be. So He gives him a pattern.

**Exodus 26:30** "And you shall raise up the tabernacle according to its pattern which you were shown on the mountain."

He repeats it twice here within one chapter. God is very adamant here about this. He says, "Don't deviate at all from the blueprint that I am giving you. We want this exact, or as exact as we possibly can."

Now let us go to Numbers 8, and verse 4. This section is entitled *The Arrangement of the Lamps*. I mean, it gets down to exactly where the lamps are placed.

**Numbers 8:4** Now this workmanship of the lampstand was of hammered gold; from its shaft to its flowers it was hammered work. According to the pattern which the LORD had shown Moses, so he made the lampstand.

Here we have a third time that God emphasizes that everything is supposed to go according to the plan, according to the pattern. It has got to be perfect. Even the minor details were supposed to be exact.

Let us skip up to I Chronicles. Now we are going to the area of the making of the Temple. We were at the tabernacle in the time of Moses; now we are going to the Temple in the time of David. And these are David's instructions to Solomon before he died, how to construct the Temple. David is speaking to Solomon.

**I Chronicles 28:10** "Consider now, for the LORD has chosen you to build a house for the sanctuary; be strong, and do it."

**I Chronicles 28:12-13** And the plans for all that he had by the Spirit, of the courts of the house of the LORD, of all the chambers all around, of the treasuries of the house of God, and of the treasuries for the dedicated things; also for the division of the priests and the Levites, for all the work of the service of the house of the LORD, and for all the articles of service in the house of the LORD.

It was just the construction of the building that he was talking about, but even there was a pattern for how the Levites were supposed to function in all the courses and everything. God told David down to the very detail, to the millimeter.

**I Chronicles 28:19** "All this," said David, "the LORD made me understand in writing, by His hand upon me, all the works of these plans."

Interesting. I did not know this until I researched this sermon that David had to go through the same thing that Moses did, that by some sort of divine inspiration, whether it was a vision or a dream, or whatever it happened to be—direct inspiration—David had to draw out the plan so finely that Solomon would be able to do all these things perfectly, according to the plan that God had given David. It is a wonderful thing, because remember when Solomon did this, everything was ready for him to put together when David died. David just could not construct the thing. It still took seven years, was it not, to build the Temple. I am not exactly sure about that 7 years figure but everything, down to the most minute detail was written down.

Let us go to Acts 7. It just pops up in the New Testament as well. In Acts 7 you probably already understand is Stephen's address to the Sanhedrin.

**Acts 7:44** "Our fathers had the tabernacle of witness in the wilderness, as He appointed, instructing Moses to make it according to the pattern that he had seen."

So Stephen reminds the Sanhedrin that Moses had gone up on the mount and received a pattern of the tabernacle.

**Acts 7:47** "But Solomon built Him a house."

Not just a tent that could be taken from place to place, but Solomon built Him a permanent house— a temple.

**Acts 7:48-50** "However, the Most High does not dwell in temples made with hands, as the prophet says: 'Heaven is My throne, and earth is My footstool. What house will you build for Me?' Says the LORD, 'or what is the place of My rest? Has My hand not made all these things?' "

So Stephen is actually reminding them of their history to show them that the tabernacle and the Temple were just copies of the reality. They were mere shadows on the wall of the cave, compared to what was real in heaven. The pattern was not what was shown in heaven. That was the real thing. The pattern is what they built on earth, as a copy, a mere representation of the true. This knowledge infuriated those Sadducees and Pharisees in the Sanhedrin, and they ended up killing Stephen for it, because he told them, he just suggested it, that their rituals had been superseded by the life and death of Jesus Christ. In a way Stephen was re-teaching them this principle of the shadow verses the reality. He was saying the reality is what is up in heaven, and all this is just a mere copy of the true.

Let us now go to Hebrews 8. We will see how this same idea is carried through from Exodus to Hebrews.

**Hebrews 8:1-2** Now this is the main point of the things we are saying: We have such a High Priest, who is seated at the right hand of the throne of the Majesty in the heavens, a Minister of the sanctuary and of the true tabernacle which the Lord erected, and not man.

Do you see what he is saying? The *true* tabernacle is the one that God built; not the one that Moses built, not the Temple that Solomon built, or the one that Ezra and Nehemiah built—it is the one that God built.

**Hebrews 8:4-5** For if He [Jesus] were on earth, He would not be a priest [That is true, because He is a Jew, not a Levite.], since there are priests who offer the gifts according to the law; who serve the copy and shadow of the heavenly things, as Moses was divinely instructed when he was about to make the tabernacle. For He [God] said, "See that you make all things according to the pattern shown you on the mountain."

So we are back where we started in Exodus 25:40. That is what Paul just quoted. We started with that, we ended with that. *Moffat* renders the words *the copy*, and *the shadow* in verse 5 as *a mere shadowy outline*. This maybe was the most beautiful building on earth. I am speaking of the Temple in this case, the one that Solomon built; but it is just a mere shadowy outline in comparison to the heavenly one—the true tabernacle in heaven. So this is what a pattern or a shadow is. It is just a pale representation of what the actual object is—the copy, a shadow, a plan. It is not the real thing.

Now you may have a question. Why was God so particular about all the details of the tabernacle and the Temple if they were just shadows, if they were just kind of temporary things to fill the time until Jesus came? Why all the emphasis in getting everything, even the placement of the lamps, down to the millimeter, we might say, down to the inch? The answer is really quite simple. God wanted the copy to be so like the masterpiece that the reality is, so that all the symbolic and spiritual meanings contained in the type, the shadow, the symbol, could be understood as readily as possible by us. We are kind of thick. We need it to be as exact as possible to get all the meat out of it that we can. The better the pattern, the easier it is to imagine the reality.

Let us return to *Plato's Cave* to understand this. God wanted the shadow to be so much like the reality, that we could identify the reality from having seen the shadow. We do this sometimes just in our daily lives. You see a shadow of a tree on the ground. Without looking at the tree, fairly frequently we could identify that tree as an oak or a maple, or a pine or a spruce, just by the shadow on the ground. We come to understand that a pine tree leaves a particular shadow. So does a spruce tree, which is different looking from a pine tree, as well as a maple, an oak, and different trees which have different shapes.

I was thinking about the Bradford pears that we have around here. Have you ever looked at a Bradford pear, and notice how much its tree has a canopy, and looks like a pear? It has a big rounded bottom, and then it goes up to a kind of stubby point on the top. It looks just like a pear. You see a pear tree in its shadow, this particular type of pear, and you know it is a Bradford pear, which is identifiable. The shadow looks an awful lot like the reality, but it is not the reality. It is still the shadow. You try to climb a shadow, it does not work.

Let us go to Hebrews chapter 9 and verse 24. Paul reiterates this.

**Hebrews 9:24** For Christ has not entered the holy places made with hands, which are copies of the true, but into heaven itself [meaning Christ has gone into heaven, and He has not entered into the copies of the things, He has entered into the *true things*, the true, the reality that was in heaven] now to appear in the presence of God for us.

I think at this point it is a good idea that we do a little bit of a word study on this word *true* that we see in this verse. We will be talking about this word basically for the rest of the sermon, because this is where I have been heading: *True*, what is *truth*, what is *real*. The word in Greek is *alethinos*. Maybe some of you have known somebody named Aletha. Well, her name means "true," or "truth," and it does have similarities with the word *Allison*, which also means "truth." This word *alethinos* and its variants, it almost invariably is translated into a form of the word true, truth, truly—something like that. *Speak the truth*. But you know how it is that when someone uses a word over and over and over again, you kind of lose the meaning of it. It just seems to lose all of its real meaning. In this way, some of the modern translations I think do a good job of differentiating the shades of meaning that these words (*alethinos* and some of its variance) have or can be put to.

So *alethinos* has basically three other related words: *aletheia*, *alethes*, and *alethio*. They all mean *truth*, or to *speak the truth*. But they can also mean "certain," "reliable," "honest," "authentic," "revealed," "real," "genuine," "sincere," "correct." It can even mean "righteous." These words do not all mean the same thing. They may mean nearly the same thing, like "righteous" and "correct," but there is a bit of a shade there that needs to be brought out at times. So *aletheia*, which is the noun form, is almost always translated *truth*. In normal Greek usage, let us say in a secular sense, it means "non-concealment." I think non-concealment is a non-word. It just means something that is not concealed, not hidden.

Now I would like to quote from *The Theological Dictionary of the New Testament*, on page 38, and what they say about *aletheia*. They say: "It denotes what is seen, indicated, expressed, or disclosed, that is, it is a thing as it really is. *Aletheia* is the real state of affairs. For example, *aletheia* is the truth in law; or *aletheia* are real events in history, things as they actually are. In philosophy, it is *true being*."

Links developed with logos, the word, as we learned (John 1:1), or spokesman, as Mr. Armstrong translated it, and the Logos has the function of revealing *aletheia*, and also connection with *pistis*, which is the word for *faith*, since one has to rely on truth. You have to have faith in the truth. So in practice, they say *aletheia* yields the sense of correct doctrine that indicates the truth.

It goes on to say that, "In philosophy *aletheia* comes to mean *genuine reality*," as I have been using it this afternoon. In antithesis to what appears real, or even how the truth . . . Maybe this is stretching it a little bit too far, *aletheia* means genuine reality in antithesis to even how the reality appears. Do you understand my drift here, that the real thing has its own reality, that even us looking at it and trying to understand it, is incomprehensible to us? It is so real, it is beyond our understanding, so we see it in one way, and it is still even more real than we can understand it. What truly is can then be equated with what is divine or eternal. So the *real* thing—what is truly real—is what is godly, what is forever.

Let us look at a few verses that contain *aletheia* and how biblical writers used it. First let us go to Mark 12. I do not want this to be a real deep philosophy thing. It can get that way if you do really get deep into this word. That is not what I am interested in. I am interested in trying to get everybody to understand what is real. This one has two uses of *aletheia*.

**Mark 12:14** When they had come [the Pharisees], they said to Him, "Teacher, we know that You are true [sincere] and care about no one [You do not try to court anyone's favor. You are not a respecter of persons.]; for You do not regard the person of men, but teach the way of God in truth."

What does "in truth" mean? Well this is probably better translated "correctly." "For You do not regard the person of men, but teach the way of God *correctly*."

Then they ask Him their leading question. So here in one verse you have two different uses of the word *aletheia*; one meaning *sincere*. "We know you're a sincere man, and we know that You teach God's way correctly." You see, *truth* just does not cut it. It is a perfect translation word for word, but those two synonyms actually broaden our understanding about what they actually said. They were buttering Him up. That is what they were doing. They were trying to get Him soft so that they could land their punch. It did not work, because He was real.

Acts 12, another use of this. This is where Peter was awakened by the angel and set free.

**Acts 12:9** So he [Peter] went out and followed him [the angel], and did not know that what was done by the angel was was real [*alethinos*], but thought he was seeing a vision.

Now here the *New King James* gets it right. They translated it "real" rather than "true." The Authorized Version, the *King James*, translates it as "true." It is a little better even to translate it "*actual*." Peter did not know that the things that were done by the angel were actually happening, but they were real, they were fact. Let us go to Romans 1:18. This is a pretty common verse.

**Romans 1:18** For the wrath of God is revealed from heaven against all ungodliness and unrighteousness of men, who suppress the truth [*aletheia*] in unrighteousness.

Now what is the meaning of *aletheia* here? Well, the best one I have found for it is the word "revelation of God." "They suppress the revelation of God in unrighteousness." That is basically what he goes on to say. They have all these proofs of God revealing Himself as God, as Creator, as whatever—Law Giver, Life Giver, Sustainer—and they have rejected all these revelations of God in order to worship the created things. He also uses it that way in verse 25.

Now let us go into a little bit more, I hate to say *esoteric*. I do not want to use the word *philosophic* either, but a little bit *deeper* into this idea of what *aletheia*, what *reality* is. We go to the advanced gospel, in John 1, because John was combating the Gnostics, and they were intellectuals and they had all these ideas about the *logos*, and what was real, and what was light. They felt that they were on the highest levels of knowledge, and so John hit them where they were. He did not back off. That is why the gospel of John in many respects is so much different from the other ones, because he was actually combating a specific problem.

**John 1:1-8** In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. He was in the beginning with God. All things were made through Him, and without Him nothing was made that was made. In Him was life, and the life was the light of men. And the light shines in the darkness, and the darkness did not comprehend it. There was a man sent from God, whose name was John [John the Baptist]. This man came for a witness, to bear witness of the Light, that all through him might believe. He was not that Light, but was sent to bear witness of that Light.

**John 1:14** And the Word became flesh and dwelt among us, and we beheld His glory, the glory as of the only begotten of the Father, full of grace and truth [*aletheia* or *alethinos*].

What he says here in verses 4 through 8, is that this *Logos*, Jesus, who had pre-existed as the *Word*, the Spokesman for God, who was God, and had been with God, is the true Light. That is, He is the real, genuine, authentic Light that reveals God's way.

Now John is using the idea of light as a Revealer of the way to explain the role of the Word, the Logos. Remember earlier I said that *alethinos*, or *aletheia* and Logos were combined. They had certain elements that touched each other, and this is one of them. Logos, or the Word, is the Revealer of the way of God. Just like a flashlight or a torch can light our path in the dark so we do not trip or stumble over the things that may be in our path, so does Jesus' life show us the way to live in a sin-darkened world. That is what he means by the Light. He is the Revealer of the way. The world was dark. We were stumbling around in sin until Jesus came and opened our eyes and turned on the light so we could see where we were walking, and the way we should walk—not just where we were right here, but also where the goal was.

So He was the One that lit up from where we are, all the way to where we are going. He says John was not that Light. He just came to show us where the Light was, like Malachi 3 said he would.

Now we get to verse 14, that He is full of truth. That is, He, as a person, and His entire life are jam-packed with the revelation of God. Remember we used the term *alethinos* to mean "the revelation of God." Well that is kind of what it means here. He is full of all that revelation of God—everything that is good and right and proper and godly, was in Him. He was **real**. There has never been a more real person who has ever existed. Everything that was godly was in Him. He was full of *alethinos*. And all these things, as the Light, He came to show us how to do. He came to show us how to be real, like He is real.

Let us go to John 14. These things pop up all through this gospel, and if you understand what these things mean in the context of what John is trying to get across, in the context of combating Gnosticism, and ideas about life and truth and all these other things, then what John says becomes very plain.

**John 14:6** Jesus said to him [Thomas], "I am the way, the truth [*alethinos*], and the life. No one comes to the Father except through Me."

Jesus not only is full of the truth, He **is** truth. Maybe that is saying the same thing. He embodies what is real. Garner Ted Armstrong had that book, *The Real Jesus*. It was a better title than he maybe had thought. *He was the real Jesus*. The Christ is the real thing. He is the perfect example of life lived according to the truth of God. What He said God wants of man, He backed up by His life in everything He did—from the first little cry, to His cry on the cross, as He died. He did everything right.

And what we can take from that is that living as He did, is the *only* way. As He says here, "I am the way." Living as He did is the only way that leads to life—eternal, abundant, godly life that only He can give us, because He *is* the life. He is not only the way, He is what we do on the way, as well as

what we will get when we end up there in the Kingdom of God. He is everything to us. If there is such thing as a *super reality*, that is what Jesus Christ is. Nothing is more real than He. So we cannot go wrong doing what He did, following Him.

Now let us go to the first verse of Hebrews 1. This will kind of conclude what Jesus is, what our Messiah is as far as the reality goes. This is one of my favorite sections of scripture.

**Hebrews 1:1-4** God, who at various times and in different ways spoke in time past to the fathers by the prophets, has in these last days spoken to us by His Son, whom He has appointed heir of all things, through whom also He made the worlds, who being the brightness of His glory and the express image of His person, and upholding all things by the word of His power, when He had by Himself purged our sins, sat down at the right hand of the Majesty on high, having become so much better than the angels, as He has by inheritance obtained a more excellent name than they.

Now the phrase that I am looking at here, or keying in on is, "the express image of His person." What this means is He is the exact reproduction of the Father. It is like there was a stamp, and that stamp is God. I am talking about a stamp that you would stamp into some sort of metal, and when God pressed that stamp and He looked at what He had made, it looked exactly like God. Jesus is the perfect expression of God's nature in a man. That is what He is now, while He is not a man. Jesus is the real thing. Those of you from Atlanta, I'm sorry, Coke is not the real thing. Jesus is the real thing. He is the real McCoy. He is the genuine article. Everything else is counterfeit compared to Him. He is the One whom John says in I John 2:6 that we ought to walk like, because His genuineness, His reality is our goal.

Let us see this in II Corinthians 3. We will be spending a lot of time in II Corinthians 3 and 4. Here in II Corinthians 3 Paul was talking about the spirit of the law, and how the spirit is so much better than the physical, and he also says how much better the New Covenant is over the Old Covenant. Let us pick it up in verse 16. Remember he had talked about Moses when he came down from the mountain, that he had to have a veil put over his face because the people could not take it, that his face shined because he had been in the presence of God. Paul says here in verse 16:

**II Corinthians 3:16-17** Nevertheless when one turns to the Lord, the veil is taken away. Now the Lord is the Spirit; and where the Spirit of the Lord is, there is liberty.

We are free now, as he says here, to know and to pursue the truth. We do not have blinders on anymore. Those things have been taken away, ripped away by the Spirit of the Lord, so that we can understand what is real and what is eternal.

**II Corinthians 3:18** But we all, with unveiled face [with the blinders ripped off], beholding as in a mirror the glory of the Lord, are being transformed into the same image from glory to glory, just as by the Spirit of the Lord.

God is in the process of transforming us into the same image, the same perfect expression of God's nature, the same exact reproduction of the Father's character. See, Jesus is not only the real thing, He is our goal. We are being trained to grow up into the same image, which is Christ, and this could only possibly be done by the Spirit of the Lord working in us and with us. So this is the truth. This is the reality of our calling. God did not call us to get into His Kingdom by the skin of our teeth. God has not called us, as it says in I Peter, so that we will just scarcely be saved, if we can help it, that is. It is



probably going to be that way, that the righteous and the godly will just scarcely be saved. But He set the goal way, way up there, and He said to reach for it, and strive to attain it. He wants our full cooperation and effort, and really trying our hardest every day to put on the new man—that holy righteous character, the grace and the knowledge of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ.

So our growing to the measure of the stature of the fullness of Christ, as it says in Ephesians 4, *is* our reality. That is what is real for us. Everything else is less important. Everything else is a shadow compared to what we are supposed to be doing. Our reality is *growing up into the Head in all things*.

Paul continues on this theme in the next chapter, II Corinthians 4. In light of this understanding of reality, it is really an incredible chapter. Until I started looking through this, I had no idea that there was so much in II Corinthians 4. We will kind of bring all these thoughts together in this chapter.

**II Corinthians 4:1** Therefore [in a sense a concluding statement from what he had just said] since we have this ministry . . .

I want you to understand that he is speaking in this section from the standpoint of a minister, of himself, of what he was supposed to be doing as an apostle.

**II Corinthians 4:1** Therefore since we have this ministry . . .

I have got to stop again. What is this ministry? The ministry is aiding in the growth of the church member of the called sons of God, into the image of the Father, which is Jesus Christ. That is the ministry. That is the service the ministry is trying to do. That is its first job. Remember, "For the equipping of the saints" for the work of ministry. And on and on it goes till it gets to the measure of the stature of the fullness of Christ.

**II Corinthians 4:1** Therefore, since we have this ministry, as we have received mercy, we do not lose heart.

What he means by this is that because God has granted us mercy, this is possible, this ministry of growth up into the Head, which is Christ. And that is the only way it could ever be done. God gives us mercy, and aids us as we go on. Otherwise it would be an absolute impossibility. No man could be like Christ, without help.

**II Corinthians 4:2** But we have renounced the hidden things of shame, not walking in craftiness nor handling the word of God deceitfully, but by manifestation of the truth commending ourselves to every man's conscience in the sight of God.

Now these *hidden things of shame*—that is Paul's way of talking about the shadows. The hidden things of shame are the false ways of living that we must be striving to avoid. So he says we have renounced all those false ways. We have renounced the shadows. We do not walk in craftiness anymore, and we do not handle the Word of God deceitfully anymore. We take it straight. It is the truth. Then he says, "By manifestation of the truth . . ." What he is saying here is, "By making plain, making clear what God has revealed."

**II Corinthians 4:2-3** [By making clear what God has revealed, we] commending ourselves to every man's conscience in the sight of God. But even if our gospel is veiled, it is veiled to those who are perishing.

I am going to have to stop to just about every verse here because there is so much in this chapter. He gives us a hint of what is real, in this verse, as opposed to what is not real, what is a shadow. It is seen in the word *perishing*. What is not real, what is a shadow perishes.

**II Corinthians 4:4** Whose minds the god of this age has blinded, who do not believe, lest the light of the gospel of the glory of Christ [the Light, the Word, the One who reveals our way] who is the image of God . . .

Now here we will poke back at Hebrews 1, verse 3 where he talks about the image of God, as well as in II Corinthians 3.18.

**II Corinthians 4:4** Whose minds the god of this age has blinded, who do not believe, lest the light of the gospel of the glory of Christ, who is the image of God, should shine on them.

Satan does his very best to obscure, or counterfeit, or distract us from, or even destroy, if possible, the truth. The god of this age has blinded us, or them—those who do not believe, and he tries his hardest to blind us again. The blinders can come off, sure, when we receive the Spirit of God, but that is not to say that we cannot put the blinders back on, with Satan's help. So he says that Satan does not want us concentrating on reality, and as much as he can, he will distract us from it, to get our minds somewhere else so the light starts receding in our vision, and we start going off the path. You have got to watch that guy. He is that roaring lion that is going about seeking whom he may devour. He is doing his best to distract us from the light.

**II Corinthians 4:5** For we do not preach ourselves . . .

No. We do not want to preach what *we* think. We want to preach Jesus Christ the Lord. Remember, He is the reality. He is the embodiment of everything that is good and right and pleasing to God. What we do preach is ourselves as your servants for Jesus' sake, he says. That is the greatest thing that we can claim, that we are mere servants. We are just doing our best to bring the light, and make it clear.

So the true ministry of God preaches Jesus Christ in all His facets—His life, His death, all of His teaching, His example, His instruction, His prophecies, anything that Christ brought and revealed and manifested and opened up, made clear, made plain, gave the spirit, gave the spiritual aspects of, whatever—that is the realm of the true ministry of God, because He is the way, the truth, and the life. This is how you preach Jesus. Protestants have a weird idea of preaching Jesus. They think that they can pick and choose which part of Jesus they can preach. But it says here, "We preach Jesus Christ the Lord." The whole kit and caboodle.

**II Corinthians 4:6** For it is the God who commanded light to 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.

Here is an allusion to creation. In Genesis 1:3 God said, "Let there be light." The same God who commanded light to shine out of darkness in the physical world, the physical realm, when He began creation, commanded that light be given to us. And how is that light given to us? "Through the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ." Now see, he is referring back to Moses. Remember Moses had the veil over his face, but Jesus does not have the veil on His face. The whole

reality of God, the great glory, everything that God is, we can see in the light that shines from the face of Jesus Christ. That is what he is saying here. You look on Jesus, you will live—eternally. Everything that is godly and eternal and righteous and holy shines from Jesus' face, from His life, from His example, from His teaching.

**II Corinthians 4:7** But we have this treasure in earthen vessels [We have been given this light when we are still fleshly human beings. Why?], that the excellence of the power may be of God and not of us.

So that God can have the glory. If we were all spirit and had this treasure, we might be able to do it. But now we are in these earthen vessels. We are able to sin. We are able to go backwards. We are able to stray from the path. It is only by the grace of God that we do not. So God gets all the glory. As much as we may try to get real, to live truth, we could not ever accomplish one iota of it without the aid of God. Remember, Jesus said, "Of ourselves, we can do nothing." How true it is. We would all just be a quivering spot of jelly I guess, without the aid of God.

**II Corinthians 4:8-12** We are hard pressed on every side, yet not crushed; we are perplexed, but not in despair; persecuted, but not forsaken; struck down, but not destroyed—always carrying about in the body the dying of the Lord Jesus, that the life of Jesus also may be manifested in our body. For we who live are always delivered to death for Jesus' sake, that the life of Jesus also may be manifested in our mortal flesh. So then death is working in us, but life in you.

What Paul is saying here in this section, he is speaking from the standpoint of a minister again, but what he is saying is that we go through all the tests, the trials, the persecutions, the hardships so that we can learn to live like Christ did. This is a very simple principle. All these things that happen—being hard pressed, being perplexed, persecuted, struck down, whatever it happens to be, we go through them so that the life of Jesus Christ can be revealed in us through our response to them. Remember, Christ lives in us and we are supposed to be living our lives in the flesh as He did when He was alive in the flesh, and as He lives now.

In other words, we bear our cross, as it were, so we can demonstrate that the life of Christ is being *lived in us right now*. So this can be applied to all of us, not just the ministry. We all go through trials. But remember that trials are there, whether they are just simple tests of our faith, or whether they are great persecutions, or martyrdom, so we can show that we are *real*, like Christ is real, true. That we are adhering as much as we can to what He is, and what God has revealed.

We are going to skip the next few verses. We will go down to verse 16. Because we have all these trials on us, and we know that it is through grace that we are able to bear up under them, therefore we do not lose heart he says.

**II Corinthians 4:16** Therefore we do not lose heart. Even though our outward man is perishing [this earthly vessel that we have], yet the inward man is being renewed day by day.

Here is where our strength and ability to live God's way comes from. It is from our daily contact with God through the Holy Spirit, both in prayer, which is talking to Him, as well as study, which is Him talking to us. Remember, this is the Word of God, the Logos in print. And remember what the Logos is supposed to do—reveal what is true. It reveals what is real. So not only do we have to let Him

know what our needs are, and praise Him, and thank Him, but we also need to hear His instruction so we can get more real than we already are. It is only by daily contact with God that we can truly get real.

**II Corinthians 4:17** For our light affliction . . .

This was the guy who in chapter 11 had all those terrible things happen to him. He was stoned, beaten, drowned, fastings often—you name it, Paul went through it. He calls them *light* affliction. People say he is a masochist for saying something like that; but it is not. He had the proper perspective, is what it was. He knew what was real. His life in the flesh is a shadow. It is a copy. It is a temporary thing. The reality is what is real, so he says:

**II Corinthians 4:17** For our light affliction, which is but for a moment, is working for us a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory.

That is why he could say these things were light. What we have ahead of us is so much greater than forty stripes, lacking one, or being knocked on the head with a stone, or being thrust through, or being decapitated, or strung up, or whatever means of cruel martyrdom that could come our way—it is nothing, because this is only the testing ground, and the *more real*, the eternal thing, is just around the corner. He spends a lot of time in the next chapter talking about, "Well, I'd rather not be here. I'd rather be where it's real. I'd rather not be away from my Lord, but He's given me this time to help you. And so what is my loss is your gain. God's left me here so I can teach you. What I have to do is go through all this stuff so that I can bring the glorious light of the gospel of Christ to you and make you more real, as well as myself."

If we are going to truly "get real," we have to take on this same perspective that Paul had. "Nothing shall separate us from the love of Christ," he said. Remember my sermon on "Persecution" a few months ago? Those apostles rejoiced because they recognized that God has allowed them to suffer persecution, and therefore they were growing in the truth. They were growing in what was real, and they loved it. It is almost like, "Give me more. I'm glad I can suffer for His sake," because they knew what was real.

So what is more real to you? Your current trial, or the Kingdom of God and eternal life? When it comes down to it, this sermon today is all about perspective and priority. How do we perceive our lives, and how do we order them, with what is *real* in mind? Do you have the Kingdom of God foremost in mind, or is it your personal goal? It is up to you to answer that question.

**II Corinthians 4:18** While we do not look at the things which are seen, but at the things which are not seen. For the things which are seen are temporary, but the things which are not seen are eternal.

This is our perspective. Paul let us know what it should be. We cannot let what our senses discern become more real than the realities of God. Why? Because all these physical things that we see and hear and touch and taste and smell are here today, gone tomorrow. They are temporary. They are passing away. As the old song says, "All they are is dust in the wind." It may sound corny, but it is true. Paul is trying to get us to consider how we place value on things.

What importance do we place on, let us say our house, as compared to our family? The house is physical. It is passing away. It will deteriorate and fall down. But a family is made up of

relationships, and those relationships are spiritual. They are *real*! The house may feel real, you may live in it, but it's the family inside of it that's real. Would you give up your house to have a close strong family? Would give up the time you spent tinkering and sprucing up the house, in order to spend that time with the family instead? Is having the nicest house and yard on the block all that important in the end? You have to think about these things.

What value do we place on our work, or on our career? It is a physical thing. Do we place more value on it than on our relationship with God? Just this past week we heard of a man who left the church so he could maintain a \$300,000-a-year salary, because he occasionally "needed" to work on the Sabbath. What has greater value? What lasts longer? \$300,000 a year, or an eternal life with the Father? How much would what we made throughout our career matter in the Kingdom? Because you made 300 thousand bucks a year, is that going to put you over some schmo that made 20? No. James just warns us, this guy may be over you in the kingdom. So that man made a stupid carnal choice, and he needs to repent of it. He needs to "get real."

What about food and rest and our physical health? Sure, Paul says, they have value, but they last only a little while. We should do our best to maintain our bodies as well as we can, as well as we know how; but what value do they have in comparison to the spiritual food, spiritual exercise, and spiritual rest? I am speaking of fasting, prayer, Bible study, meditation. Do we skimp on these for a few extra minutes of sleep, or to make sure we feed our gut, or to go down to the gym and spend a couple of hours there? Have we prioritized our daily schedule to reflect the far greater value of eternal things over physical things? There is a balance that we need to aim for.

If we want to do anything, we want to make sure that we always give the benefit of the doubt to the far more eternal things, if there is ever a question which to choose. And as we come up on the Days of Unleavened Bread, it is good to review our lives in these areas just to make sure we are on course, just so that the light is shining on the way that we are going. If it is not the way we are going, we need to get back on the path and "get real."

So Paul says in II Corinthians 5:7, "We walk by faith, not by sight." See, he explains in Hebrews 11:1 that "Faith is the substance of things hoped for, the evidence of things not seen." What he means here is that we walk, or conduct our lives in confidence, or we can conduct our lives in confidence with the assurance that God's Word and the way that it reveals is the true, the genuine, the real thing. It *will lead* to eternal life. That is what faith is. It gives us the confidence to do what we know is true. We can do what God instructs without doubt. His way is the only way that will produce eternal life.

We can live it *assertively*. I am not talking about hiding in a corner. We do not have to. *That is real!* We can live it in front of everybody, and not be worried, or be ashamed, because we know that we have the faith for walking according to the way of God, and that is the real way. Do you remember what they say back in the Old Testament about what will be told the people in the Millennium? "This is the way. Walk in it." We can do that right now.

Go to Matthew 6. I am a little over time here, but I think this is necessary, because I want you to hear Jesus say the same thing. In the Sermon on the Mount, Christ Himself spells out our priorities.

**Matthew 6:25-26** "Therefore I say to you, do not worry about your life, what you will eat or what you will drink; nor about your body, what you will put on. Is not life more

than food and the body more than clothing? Look at the birds of the air, for they neither sow nor reap nor gather into barns; yet your heavenly Father feeds them. Are you not of more value than they?"

Do they know the real thing? You do. God opened the light of the glorious gospel in the faith of Jesus Christ to *you*. That shows you how valuable *you* are to Him, and He is surely going to clothe you and give you all the things that you need.

**Matthew 6:27-30** "Which of you by worrying can add one cubit to his stature? [It does not do us a bit of good.] So why do you worry about clothing? Consider the lilies of the field, how they grow; they neither toil nor spin; and yet I say to you that even Solomon in all his glory was not arrayed like one of these. Now if God so clothes the grass of the field, which today is, and tomorrow is thrown into the oven [it is one of those physical things— here today, gone tomorrow], will He not much more clothe you, O you of little faith?"

Remember the word *alethin*os, and *pistis*—faith, all combined on this trek to reality.

**Matthew 6:31-32** "Therefore do not worry, saying, 'What shall we eat?' or 'What shall we drink?' or 'What shall we wear?' For after all these things the Gentiles seek."

Those are those people out in the world that do not understand. They are worried about that. They are caught in the rat race. Do not get involved.

**Matthew 6:32-33** "For your heavenly Father knows that you need all these things. [He is aware of it. Just go on. Live.] But seek first the kingdom of God and His righteousness, and all these things shall be added to you."

It is so simple. Do what is real, and God will provide. Remember, those of *little* faith worry about the shadow. Those of *great* faith keep their nose in what is real. They keep their eyes on the goal. Now John 17:17. This is the final scripture. Most of you could probably quote this. This is Jesus' prayer in the garden—the *true* Lord's prayer.

**John 17:17** Sanctify them by Your truth [by Your *alethin*os]. Your word is truth [ *alethin*os].

How would I paraphrase this? He says to God, He prays for us, "Set them apart. Make them different by what You have revealed. Your word Father, is reality."

Yes, living God's way will separate us from the world. We will look strange, we will look weird, we will look fanatical. Some, in time to come, and they have before—some will desire to persecute and kill us, because of being different, because we have been set apart. But we have *God's* approval of this way, and He will make sure that our lives will produce eternal life forever. Not physical life. Jesus said do not worry about them that can kill the body. Be worried about the One who can kill the soul, and do something about it. **Get real!**

So we come back to Plato's cave. God has released you from your chain, and He has led you out of the cave into the light—that light of the glorious gospel of Jesus Christ. He has shown you what is truly real. He has explained to you that the shadows are just pale imitations, and the supposedly

desirous things of this world are mere counterfeits. He has counseled you to live for the *real* thing, because the shadows mean nothing.

But then—there is always a "but," is there not?—He says you have got to still live in the cave, and in time to come He will release us again from the cave and allow us to live in the light forever. But to have this happen, to be released and to live in the light forever, we must live in that cave as much as we can, in the fullness of the light that has been revealed to us already. While doing so we have to remember and grow in our understanding of what is real.

It is not an easy life God has called us to. We will fail many times; and thank God, He has made allowances for that. He knows our frame, He knows we fail, but can succeed in the end, with His help, and it takes living a godly life. So let us get real!