

“Removing the Veil . . . Reflecting His Glory”—2 Corinthians 3:16-18

The text for this sermon, the theme of which is “Removing the Veil . . . Reflecting His Glory, is 2 Corinthians 3:16-18 → *When one turns to the Lord, the veil is removed. Now the Lord is the Spirit, and where the Spirit of the Lord is, there is freedom. And we all, with unveiled face, beholding the glory of the Lord, are being transformed into the same image from glory to glory. For this comes from the Lord Who is the Spirit.*

This is the text.

Dear Brothers and Sisters in Christ Jesus,

There are many ways people “veil” that which doesn’t look good to them. Bodily blemishes can be covered up with make-up. Property “eye sores” can be covered over with remodeling materials or unique “interior decorating,” such as a throw over that old couch which reflects years of “wear and tear.” People will strive to “veil” their embarrassment by deflecting attention elsewhere in an effort to “save face.” Even though veils have been used for noble purposes, as in traditional wedding ceremonies, their intended use is to hide something.

In our text Paul uses the picture of a *veil* to described the struggles which many have in their relationship with the LORD. He refers to this *veil* as hindering the experience of God’s glory in all its fullness, which God

wants all people to experience. This “veil” is the sin of unbelief which the devil, *the god of this world* uses to blind *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. (cf. 2 Corinthians 4:4) In the context Paul refers to the Jews who heard God’s Word read every Sabbath Day at worship and yet missed seeing the light of the gospel of the glory of Christ in the Person & Work of Jesus. (cf. 2 Corinthians 3:14-15)

Experiencing God’s *glory* usually involved God revealing Himself, His Word, and His Will to people in some miraculous manner accompanied with a light so bright that it was unbearable. We have such an example in the Transfiguration when Jesus *was transfigured before* some of His disciples, *and His face shone like the sun, and His clothes became as white as light*. (cf. Matthew 17:2) Matthew 17:6 records His disciples falling *on their faces . . . terrified*. Experiencing God’s glorious presence humbles the sinner, bringing him to his knees! (cf. Genesis 17:3; Isaiah 6:5; Ezekiel 1:28; Luke 5:8; Acts 9:3-4; Revelation 1:17)

When Yahweh met with Moses to reveal His Word and Will, the face of Moses so radiated the glory of God that *he put a veil over* it when he spoke Yahweh’s Word to the people. (cf. Exodus 34:33-35) The radiance of God’s glory from Moses’ face reminded the people that his authority did not come from himself but that he was merely a “transmitter” of God’s divine Will and Word. It was a witness to the LORD’s authority working

through Moses. This was very important since much of the time the Israelites looked at Moses as kind of an “authority unto himself,” especially during their “pouts” whenever things weren’t going their way.

In our text, Paul’s point is how this glory *under the old covenant* was “fading out” until it was fulfilled in Jesus, and is now reflected anew in those who believe in Him. John 1:14 say about Jesus: *We have seen His glory, glory as of the only Son from the Father, full of grace and truth.* Jesus came not only to reflect the eternal glory of God the Father but also to fulfill God’s promises recorded in the Old Testament and read every Sabbath in synagogue worship. He came to remove the veil of sin and unbelief and open up the way for us to freely come into God’s presence under a new covenant, through His sacrificial death on the cross where He dealt with our sin. This was even symbolized when *the curtain of the temple*, baring one from the presence of Yahweh, *was torn in two, from top to bottom* when He died on the cross. (cf. Matthew 27:51)

The way to have a forgiven relationship with Yahweh as your loving Father has been open up to you! How does it feel to be experiencing the presence of the glory of God amongst His people gathered to hear His holy Word? Joyful? Fearful? Awful as well as awe-filled? Does it intensify your “sin consciousness” being in the presence of your holy God? Are you confident in His love displayed in Jesus for you? How about all of the above? Here you stand in His presence only as you fall to your

knees in confession of your sins and trust in His eternal forgiveness **in the Lord Jesus Christ**. Thus, Paul's statement in verse 16 of our text: *When one turns to the Lord, the veil is removed. When the veil of sin and unbelief is removed by faith in the Person & Work of Jesus you have the privilege of reflecting His glory in your daily life.*

How? While it could be with a "radiant" face (cf. Stephen—Acts 6:15), you reflect the glory of the Lord with a "radiant" life. It is not some kind of spiritual pride which strives to get people to see that you are basking in the Holy Spirit. That kind of glory is vain-glory which causes people to see you instead of Jesus. Rather, it is a boldness and confidence in your relationship with the LORD which trusts the Holy Spirit to work through you **as a humble servant** who has been crucified and raised with Christ (cf. Galatians 2:20; Romans 6; 1 Corinthians 2:2), freed from the guilt of sin and freed up to serve Jesus your Lord. This is the work of the Holy Spirit as verse 17 of our text says: *Now the Lord is the Spirit, and where the Spirit of the Lord is, there is freedom.* As you reflect God's glory in Christ others can also experience freedom from the burden of sin through confession and absolution as they trust in Jesus.

Thus, we do not want to replace one veil for another. We want our *light to shine before others, so that they may see our good works **and give glory to our Father Who is in heaven.*** (cf. Matthew 5:16) There are

many who refuse to believe in Jesus, who refuse to admit their sin in God's presence by confession and refuse to receive forgiveness of sins in Christ's glorious grace. Sadly, there are many who claim to believe in Jesus and yet refuse to submit to His Word with a convoluted perspective of His Word which picks and chooses what is and what is not sin. Unfortunately *the god of this world* has blinded many *minds . . . to keep them from seeing the light of the gospel of the glory of Christ* by defining their relationship with Him by lip-service, human benevolence, charitable giving, and a host of other human endeavors. Your relationship with Yahweh as your loving Father can only be define by the working of God, Father, Son and Holy Spirit, as revealed in His written Word. People need to see His glorious grace shine through you **in order to see Jesus.**

Paul says in verse 18 of our text that *we all, with unveiled face, are beholding the glory of the Lord*. How? As we encounter His glory through His Word and Sacrament; as we hold to the teaching of Jesus, not simply having learned something about Him at some point in our lives, but reading His written Word daily with the prayer for the Holy Spirit to move obedience to it in every area of our lives. This is how we *are being transformed into the same image of Jesus from glory to glory*. We have been taken from the glory of the old covenant under the curse of the Law because of our sin to the glory the new covenant under the work of

Jesus, Who took the curse of that sin upon Himself so we can be freed from it. (cf. Galatians 3:13) This is God's work in us as Paul says: *This comes from the Lord Who is the Spirit.* (Verse 18) God's Spirit is constantly at work in our lives giving us the desire and power to reflect God's glory in ever-increasing ways!

Yes, you still deal with the temptation to use a "veil" in a "selective" manner spiritually. For instance, joining in the sinful behavior of the people around you at a given moment in order to "fit in" with the crowd. There is a reason why it's called "peer **pressure**." At one moment you may function on the basis of Christ's principles but at another moment be tempted to cover up those principles for your own sinful, selfish desires. It's kind of like uncovering your faith in the sight of others only at "religious times" and then covering it up at those times when you're afraid to stand up for Jesus' teaching. The devil is still trying to stifle your reflecting of God's glory in the face of Christ.

But, God has brought you into a more stable and permanent relationship with Himself through the Person and Work of Jesus. It is a permanent glory bound up in your baptism, in confession and absolution, as well as faith and obedience in the work of Jesus and the Holy Spirit. As people who have experienced God's glory in Jesus with His forgiveness and grace, you will have a natural desire in that relationship to let people see Whom you serve. You will desire to be faithful to your

Lord Jesus Christ in your actions and words as you fulfill the daily vocations of life. The veil has been removed by Jesus and you have the privilege of reflecting the glory of God by the power of the Holy Spirit. Amen.

*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.***

(2 Corinthians 4:6)

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