

2 Corinthians 3:7-4:6

Chapter 3

Verses 7-11:

--Having introduced the contrast between the letter that kills and the Spirit that gives life, Paul is going to illustrate this truth through an incident in the life of Moses.

--(7-8) Paul calls the ten commandments and the written law ***the ministry of death*** because the law was meant to kill all hope in personal goodness and righteousness and merit. It drove anyone seeing clearly to find salvation in another.

****Galatians 3:24: Therefore the law was our tutor to bring us to Christ, that we might be justified by faith.****

--Still, the law was a part of God's plan and therefore it had a measure of glory—though passing—to itself. This Paul points out by illustration through the literal face of Moses that was glowing when he came down from the mountain. (See Ex. 34:29-35)

--Paul's point is to recognize that if the ministry of death through the law had a glory that was passing—how much more will be the glory of the ministry of the Spirit which is everlasting? One ministry is greater than the other.

--(9-11) By design, ***the ministry of condemnation*** was simply meant to lead one to ***the ministry of righteousness***. (This does not mean that Christians are now "lawless" but that we have a new law of the Spirit and the righteous requirements of the law are fulfilled in the Spirit and not the strength of our own flesh—Rom. 8:2-4.)

--In fact, the ministry that makes us righteous in Christ Jesus is so much greater that the two are not ever worth comparing!

--The ministry of the New Covenant has taken the place of the Old Covenant and will remain. One is passing. One is lasting.

Verses 12-13:

--Paul was bold because of the power of the gospel and His trust in the sufficiency of the ministry of the Spirit. *One characteristic of false teaching is that it is often very confusing, mysterious, elitist, and questioning.*

--It is a bold thing to contrast yourself with Moses. Paul uses the image of the veil as an illustration here. Moses likely had no idea of what Paul was teaching when he did this. Moses most likely covered his face so it wasn't a distraction from what was said! *I doubt he feared the fading light or was ashamed of it as some think.*

--Moses' motives may not be clear but Paul's point is. The glory in one case was veiled and fading and the glory in the other case is unveiled and lasting.

--Moses' very ministry was full of types, shadows, and parabolic ceremonies that covered various truths like a veil. Yet, as important as they were, they were temporary.

Verses 14-16:

--Paul points out that the Jews were still veiled when they read Moses. They were blind to the glory that was partially covered there. He is literally claiming that the most religious Jews did not understand the true glory of the law—and he would know! They were blind to the true spiritual nature of circumcision, sacrifices, Passover, etc.

--How could that veil be removed? ***The veil is taken away in Christ!***

--All Jews—to be saved—must put their faith in the Messiah, the Lord Jesus Christ. This was the consistent message of the apostles to the religious leaders and all who would listen.

****Acts 5:30-32: The God of our fathers raised up Jesus whom you murdered by hanging on a tree. Him God has exalted to His right hand to be Prince and Savior, to give repentance to Israel and forgiveness of sins. And we are His witnesses to these things, and so also is the Holy Spirit whom God has given to those who obey Him.****

--What was Paul's hope? ***Nevertheless when one turns to the Lord, the veil is taken away.*** How can this possibly happen other than through the power of the Holy Spirit?

Verse 17:

--This verse is confusing and there a number of arguments because of the language. I think the key is simply seeing that Paul is saying that Jesus and the Holy Spirit are one. As Jesus would say: ***I and My Father are one (John 10:30).***

****Romans 8:9-10: But you are not in the flesh but in the Spirit, if indeed the Spirit of God dwells in you. Now if anyone does not have the Spirit of Christ, he is not His. And if Christ is in you, the body is dead because of sin, but the Spirit is life because of righteousness.****

****Galatians 4:6: And because you are sons, God has sent forth the Spirit of His Son into your hearts, crying out, 'Abba, Father!'****

--What kind of ***liberty*** is there in the Lord and His Spirit? Clearly, liberty from the penalty of sin, the power of sin, and the presence of sin. Liberty from self-consciousness through God-consciousness. Liberty to be free to be who and what God made us to be.

--There can be abuses of this liberty (***1 Cor. 8:9; Gal. 5:13; 1 Peter 2:16***).

Verse 18:

--Here we have an incredible verse. This verse is condensed Christianity.

--First, it speaks about an experience that is there for all those that have been set free by the work of the Spirit. ***But we all.*** . . . is in contrast again with what only Moses knew. This truth is for all Christians. ****No pope, priest, or pastor with "special" access! & Moses with Eldad + Medad****

--Second, we all get to be a part of this beholding of the glory of the Lord with ***unveiled face***. Our blindness has been removed and will remain removed. There is no veil between us and Him.

--Third, there is an argument about whether the emphasis here is on the *reflecting* or the *beholding* that is happening in this mirror. Do we reflect like mirrors or behold as in a mirror?

--The Greek word for ***beholding as in a mirror*** is a single word (*katoptrizo*) and is used only here in the NT. The reality is that the word carries the double idea of both beholding and reflecting. Both are true!

--What are we to see reflected in this mirror? ***The glory of the Lord!***

****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.****

****John 14:9: Jesus said to him, "Have I been with you so long, and yet you have not known Me, Philip? He who has seen Me has seen the Father. . . ****

****Hebrews 1:3: Who being the brightness of His glory and the express image of His person. . . ****

--A mirror can only reflect what it "sees" or "receives." Sadly, we just are not occupied much with Jesus Christ! If we are beholding the glory of Jesus Christ, what happens? Transformation!

--This is Paul's version of condensed Christianity. Saved from the law, we freely behold the glory of the Lord, and as we see Him and come to know Him, the Holy Spirit works His life in our life.

--How does it all happen, specifically? I don't know! I only know that if we submit ourselves to the process it will work—it does work.

--Now, I know that there are always excuses, but this is the Word of God. Did God create the world so that humans can grow corn by method but Christ-likeness has to come by chance? Is growing a crop more certain than the fulfillment of God's greatest purpose in creation?

****Romans 8:29: For whom He foreknew, He also predestined to be conformed to the image of His Son, that He might be the firstborn among many brethren.****

--Look, there is no shortcut to Christlike character or life. There is only Holy Spirit driven transformation and God has no other method because He doesn't require another method.

**Drummond (The Greatest Thing In The World): "Since we are what we are by the impacts of those who surround us, those who surround themselves with the highest will be those who change into the highest.*

*"To live with Socrates—with unveiled face—must have made one wise; with Aristides, just. Francis of Assisi must have made one gentle; Savonarola, strong. But to have lived with Christ? To have lived with Christ must have made one like Christ; that is to say, a Christian."**

--That was how it happened to the disciples. That is how it must happen with us.

Chapter 4

Verse 1:

--By the mercy of God, Paul had received the ministry of the New Covenant in the power of the Spirit. So, he who had been so faithful and zealous for the law and ministry of condemnation and death was not going to lose hope and give up on the more glorious ministry of righteousness!

--I find it interesting that Paul uses the word *mercy* and not *grace* as was typical of him. He realized that there was a special need of mercy for those that are in ministry as we see mercy added to all his typical greeting in the pastoral epistles: **1 Tim. 1:2; 2 Tim. 1:2; Titus 1:4.**

Verse 2:

--Again, Paul contrasts his ministry with that of false teachers—likely those in the church—in three main ways.

1) ***The hidden things of shame:*** Paul's ministry didn't have things hidden that would be shameful if revealed. *So sad that this is often the case!*

2) ***Not walking in craftiness:*** Paul didn't use underhanded tactics or trickery with people. He wasn't into slow manipulation of thoughts and ways.

--The Greek word for *craftiness* is used of the Pharisees (pay taxes to Caesar) and Satan!

Luke 20:23: *But He perceived their craftiness, and said to them, "Why do you test me?"*

2 Corinthians 11:3: *But I fear, lest somehow, as the serpent deceived Eve by his craftiness, so your minds may be corrupted from the simplicity that is in Christ.*

--Paul wrote clearly, lived in the open, and spoke the truth sincerely.

3) ***Nor handling the Word of God deceitfully:*** We see in Scripture that Satan can quote God's Word with the intent to make it mean something very different than God intended. It is using the Bible to obscure truth, or keep back truth. *Still happens today!*

--Instead, through the clear manifestation of God's Word, Paul impressed truth upon the consciences of men in the sight of God.

Verses 3-4:

--Here, I think Paul wants to also admit that there is a veil over Gentile hearts as well.

--Paul is also clear that those that are veiled and blinded are also those that are *perishing*. Sincerity of belief is not enough. The Gospel of Jesus Christ is the eternal dividing line in all matters of faith.

--To address this central issue of eternal life and death was Paul's personal call from Jesus.

Acts 26:17-18: *I will deliver you from the Jewish people, as well as from the Gentiles, to whom I now send you, to open their eyes, in order to turn them from darkness to light, and from the power of Satan to God, that they may receive forgiveness of sins and an inheritance among those who are sanctified by faith in Me.*

--Why are people perishing? Because of unbelief (***who do not believe***) that is always looking for justifications for self-blinding. And who is there to help them in this task? Satan!

--Sadly, under all faithful ministry, as it was with Paul, some will perish. The Greek word for *perishing* is various translated: *perish, destroy, lost, etc.*

--This is the ultimate reality of man outside of Jesus Christ: all hope gone, all purpose destroyed, all relationships lost—lost to God and to man.

--Why are they lost? Because they refuse ***the light of the gospel of the glory of Christ, who is the image of God***, to shine on them freely.

Verse 5:

--Knowing that we are in combat with a spiritual and supernatural enemy, Paul also knew his only hope was in divine assistance and resources.

--From John the Baptist pointing out the Lamb of God, to the apostles, to Paul, to every disciple down the line until today—the message we preach is Christ Jesus. The message of Jesus Christ is the only message that saves—not politics, not funny stories, not spiritual experiences, not good feelings, etc.

--Paul says we preach Christ as the message and ourselves as servant messengers.

Verse 6:

--Why preach this way? First, because Paul was a personal recipient of the power and life of divine illumination in Jesus Christ. **Some don't preach Christ because they are not born-again!**

--Second, because only God can make this happen. The reality of new birth is an even greater miracle than when God spoke light into the darkness of creation. This is spiritual illumination to see God the Father through God the Son by the power of God the Holy Spirit.

--Third, we receive this light and knowledge of the glory of God ***in the face of Jesus Christ!***

--This ideal is cross-cultural. The King of the Jews was written over Jesus Christ on the cross in Hebrew, Greek, and Latin. The Jews ideal was light. The Greeks ideal was knowledge. The Roman ideal was glory. All found in ***the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ!***

--Human faces do not differ widely in terms of basic construction materials but they are all individually unique because the person behind the face is. The face is the most telling and communicative part of us.

Buechner (The Faces of Jesus): "To say he had a face is to say that like the rest of us he had many faces as the writers of the Old Testament knew who used the Hebrew word almost exclusively in its plural form. To their way of thinking, the face of man is not a front for him to live his life behind but a frontier, the outermost, ever-changing edge of his life itself in all its richness and multiplicity, and hence they spoke not of the face of a man or of God but of his faces. The faces of Jesus then—all the ways he had of being and being seen. The writers of the New Testament give no description of any of them because it was his life alive inside them that was the news they hawked rather than the color of his eyes. When you think the world is on fire, you don't take time out to do a thumbnail sketch. Nobody tells us what he looked like, yet of course the New Testament itself is what he looked like, and we read his face there in the faces of all the ones he touched or failed to touch. . . You glimpse the mark of his face in the faces of everyone who ever looked toward him or away from him, which means finally of course that you glimpse the mark of him also in your own face."

****Luke 9:51: Now it came to pass, when the time had come for Him to be received up, that He steadfastly set His face to go to Jerusalem.****

--Where some would spit in His face, others would rip the beard from His face, others would beat His face, and some would see in that face—beaten beyond human recognition—***the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ.***

--What of you and I? Do we flee from the face that is our salvation? Are we blind or do we see?