

LIBERTY AND CHANGE

“But even unto this day, when Moses is read, the veil is upon their heart. Nevertheless when it shall turn to the Lord, the veil shall be taken away. Now the Lord is that Spirit: and where the Spirit of the Lord is, there is liberty. But we all, with open face beholding as in a glass the glory of the Lord, are changed into the same image from glory to glory, even as by the Spirit of the Lord.” (2 Cor 3:15-18)

Chapter 1

INTRODUCTION

With the skill of a spiritual surgeon, Paul is cutting away the malignancy of erroneous thought that had assaulted the Corinthian church. The eruption of all manner of transgression among them had confirmed their thinking was not in synch with the mind of the Lord. Later in this letter to them, he will remind them that “the weapons of our warfare are not carnal, but mighty through God to the pulling down of strong holds; casting down imaginations, and every high thing that exalteth itself against the knowledge of God, and bringing into captivity every thought to the obedience of Christ” (2 Cor 10:4-5). Presently Paul himself is throwing down bastions of erroneous thought. However, the point must come when the Corinthians themselves must engage in this battle in a consistent and productive manner.

A NOTE CONCERNING APOSTOLIC DOCTRINE

Having been myself once subverted in the manner in which I thought concerning “the Apostles’ doctrine,” I am particularly sensitive in this area. It does bear upon what is being delineated in this text. The subversion of the Corinthians was owing to their failure to see the distinctiveness and effectiveness of the New Covenant. That is why Paul is expounding the covenant, comparing it with the Old Covenant that had a lesser glory, even though given by God and ratified with blood (Ex 24:8; Heb 9:18-20). At some time, they had been turned away from the Gospel to a different kind of emphasis, and it had been disastrous (2 Cor 11:4).

There is a tightly woven association between Christ Jesus, the Gospel, and the New Covenant. They are like the “threefold cord” of Solomon’s reference, which is “not quickly broken” (Eccl 4:12). Christ Jesus Himself is the subject of the Gospel, and the ultimate one with whom the covenant was made. Of that ancient promise to Abraham – the Gospel in embryo – it is said, “Now to Abraham and his seed were the promises made. He saith not, And to seeds, as of many; but as of one, and to thy seed, which is Christ” (Gal 3:16). As soon as this threefold association becomes blurred, false doctrine and erroneous emphases at once enter. When Christ is not preached, there is no longer any good news. When Jesus is not central, there is no longer any realization of a “New Covenant,” for that covenant depends wholly upon Jesus Christ, who is its exclusive

Mediator.

CHRIST, THE GOSPEL, AND THE COVENANT

We are apprised that the early church “continued steadfastly in the Apostles’ doctrine” (Acts 2:42). What was that doctrine? Simplistically, it might be said to be what they taught, for “doctrine” means “teaching,” or “that which is taught.” (THAYER)

I want to establish that the “Apostles’ doctrine” consistently maintained the associations of Christ, the Gospel, and the New Covenant. This was, in fact, their “doctrine” – the hub upon which all teaching, exhortation, admonition, rebuke, correction, and instruction were suspended. Their “doctrine,” in this view, was not the corrective instruction they gave. Rather, it was the enduring part of what they said, that blended with God’s eternal purpose and the ages to come.

Instruction, correction, rebuke, admonition, and exhortation are technically the implications of the doctrine, and not the doctrine itself. They all have to do with man’s response to the message – a response that is imperative, yet is not the message itself.

Chapter 2

THE WORD “DOCTRINE”

There is a specific sense in which this word is used that refers to a core , or body, of teaching. Some examples of this use are as follows:

1. THE DOCTRINE FROM GOD. “If any man will do his will, he shall know of the doctrine, whether it be of God, or whether I speak of myself” (John 7:17).
2. THE DOCTRINE OF THE LORD. “Then the deputy, when he saw what was done, believed, being astonished at the doctrine of the Lord” (Acts 13:12).
3. A DOCTRINE THAT HAS A “FORM.” “But God be thanked, that ye were the servants of sin, but ye have obeyed from the heart that form of doctrine which was delivered you” (Rom 6:17).
4. THE DOCTRINE BY WHICH THINGS ARE MEASURED. “Now I beseech you, brethren, mark them which cause divisions and offences contrary to the doctrine which ye have learned; and avoid them” (Rom 16:17).
5. THE FOCUS OF ATTENTION. “Take heed unto thyself, and unto the doctrine; continue in them: for in doing this thou shalt both save thyself, and them that hear thee” (1 Tim 4:16).
6. A DOCTRINE ACCORDING TO GODLINESS. “If any man teach otherwise, and consent not to wholesome words, even the words of our Lord Jesus Christ, and to the doctrine which is according to godliness” (1 Tim 6:3).
7. A DOCTRINE TO BE ADORNED. “Not purloining [pilfering], but showing all good fidelity; that they may adorn the doctrine of God our Savior in all things” (Titus 2:10).
8. A DOCTRINE WITH PRINCIPLES. “Therefore leaving the principles of the doctrine of Christ, let us go on unto perfection; not laying again the foundation of repentance from dead works, and of faith toward God” (Heb 6:1).
9. A DOCTRINE THAT IS SUMMARIZED IN CHRIST. “Whosoever transgresseth,

and abideth not in the doctrine of Christ, hath not God. He that abideth in the doctrine of Christ, he hath both the Father and the Son” (2 John 1:9).

10. THERE IS A DOCTRINE BY WHICH WORDS THAT ARE PREACHED ARE MEASURED. “But speak thou the things which become sound doctrine” (Titus 2:1).

It should be apparent that there is a body of teaching that stands above behavioral correction. This is a “doctrine” that centers in Christ Jesus, declares the Gospel, expounds the New Covenant, and announces God’s “eternal purpose.” That “doctrine” is the spiritual lexicon upon which all sound reasoning is based.

THE MANNER OF FIRST CORINTHIANS

One of the chief differences between First and Second Corinthians is the thrust of the message. First Corinthians dealt extensively with misconduct and ignorance.

1. Divisions (1 Cor 1).
2. The manner in which he spoke, and why (1 Cor 2).
3. Carnality (1 Cor 3).
4. The spirit in which he came to the Corinthians (1 Cor 4)
5. Immorality (1 Cor 5).
6. Proper judgment in handling grievances (1 Cor 6).
7. Issues relating to marriage (1 Cor 7).
8. Eating meat offered to idols (1 Cor 8).
9. Justifying his apostleship (1 Cor 9).
10. Not attempting to sit at the table of demons and the table of the Lord (1 Cor 10).
11. Proper spiritual protocol, and conduct at the Lord’s table (1 Cor 11).
12. Proper assembly conduct and the reason for it (1 Cor 12-14).
13. Confirming the reality of the resurrection of the dead (1 Cor 15).
14. Fulfilling the commitment to gather a collection for the poor saints in Jerusalem (1 Cor 16).

All of the words delivered on these matters were true, and were to be followed faithfully. But they were not the heart of the “Apostles’ doctrine.” They were necessitated because the people were actually living at a distance from the Lord, and were thus incapable of digesting spiritual meat (1 Cor 3:1-2). This was not a mere supposition by Paul. Their conduct confirmed where they were living – and it was not in the “heavenly places” where they had been seated by Christ (Eph 2:6).

Chapter 3

THE THRUST OF SECOND CORINTHIANS

Having corrected many of their manners, the Corinthians were now ready for some substantive teaching – more to the heart of the matter. Notice the lofty subjects that expounded in this Epistle, as compared to First Corinthians.

- Divine comfort (2 Cor 1:3-7).
- The uniqueness of the New Covenant (2 Cor 3:1-18).
- How God initially changed us (2 Cor 4:6).
- The logic of suffering (2 Cor 4:7-18).
- The reality and objective of the resurrection body (2 Cor 5:1-10).
- What God accomplished in the death of Christ, and its effects upon the tender heart (2 Cor 5:14-21).
- The day of salvation (2 Cor 6:1-2).
- How true ministers are approved by God (2 Cor 6:3-10).
- The reason why the Corinthians had not made appropriate advancement (2 Cor 6:11-13).
- The logic behind avoiding an unequal yoke with unbelievers (2 Cor 6:14-18).
- Why the Macedonians excelled in their contributions to the poor saints in Jerusalem (2 Cor 8:5).
- The reasoning behind being faithful in contributing to the saints (2 Cor 9:1-15).
- The nature of our spiritual weaponry is declared (2 Cor 10:1-6).
- Satan's approach to deceiving the saints (2 Cor 11:13-15).
- Paul shares his visions and revelations, and the result of being given to see such things (2 Cor 12:1-10).

Notice the substantive manner in which Paul writes in this letter. He is more at the heart of the matter, having to deal less with flawed human conduct and misconceptions. The things of which he speaks are more universal and less provincial. Surely no one is willing to confirm that divisions, carnality, fornication, suing one another at the law, and questioning Paul's apostleship are issues with which every church must deal. Without exception, such things arise from outside the New Covenant, and independently of Christ Jesus. There is no moral chasm in the Gospel itself, or within the New Covenant, that allows for the entrance of vain imagination, moral debauchery, or causes divisions among the brethren. Such things have nothing whatever to do with Christ Jesus, the Gospel, or the New Covenant. None of them are integral to the abundant life Jesus came to give. They are all expressions of the flesh and evidence of Satanic intrusion.

Apostolic doctrine emphasizes what has been brought to us through Christ, not what excludes us from those benefits. That is, the thrust of the Apostolic message deals with the Person and accomplishments of Jesus, their association with the purpose of God, and their availability to those who believe. When the professed church becomes "carnal," it has moved outside of the perimeter in which these things can be understood. The design of rebuke and corrective teaching is to bring wayward souls within the sphere where the benefits of redemption can be realized.

It is with these things in mind that we now come to Paul's explanation of Israel's unbelief. The relevance of this subject is that this explains the failure to discern the truth on the part of all who have been identified with the Lord. Failure will not be traced to

mere ignorance, although such a condition does exist within the professed church. However, it is always a shame when it does, for the New Covenant includes the people knowing the Lord – that is, this is what is ministered to those who are in Christ Jesus. If this has not occurred, it can only be because the people are deceived, or in some way have quenched and grieved the Spirit of God.

God was longsuffering with Israel, giving them a Law that identified their deficiencies, and a sacrificial system that could assist them to maintain some sensitivity to their condition. However, even though similar conditions may be found within the church, they are no longer tolerable. The sin of the world has been removed, the devil has been destroyed, and principalities and powers have been spoiled, or plundered (Heb 9:26; 2:14; Col 2:15). A reconciliation has been made (2 Cor 5:18-19), the heavens have been opened to us (Heb 10:20), and the Holy Spirit of promise has been given to us (1 Thess 4:8). Blindness and ignorance within the church are now out of order.

Chapter 4

WHEN MOSES IS READ

“But even unto this day, when Moses is read . . .” Other versions read, “But to this day, at the reading of Moses’ law” (BBE), “Yes, even today when they read Moses’ writings.” (2 Cor 3:15, NLT)

Here is Israel, a nation cultured to walk with God. They were chosen exclusively by Him, and held in the highest regard among the nations of men – “a special people unto Himself” (Deut 7:6). They experienced an unparalleled deliverance from Egypt that, according to appearance, has no equal among men – “the children of Israel went out with a high hand in the sight of all the Egyptians” (Num 33:3). As an entire nation, they crossed through the middle of the Red Sea on dry ground (Ex 14:16). The miraculous sustenance that they received in the form of “manna” extended over a period of forty years – all of which were spent in a desolate wilderness, where was “no water” (Deut 8:15-16). All of the prophets came from their number (Hos 6:5). All of the apostles came from them. The rights of relationship to God belonged to them–i.e. “to whom pertaineth the adoption” (Rom 9:4a). Divine glory was shown only them–i.e. “to whom pertaineth . . . the glory” (Rom 9:4b). All covenants belonged to them: agreements in which they were linked together with the Lord–i.e. “to whom pertaineth . . . the covenants” (Rom 9:4c). Only to them was the Law given as a covenant, being revealed only to them–i.e. “to whom pertaineth . . . the giving of the Law” (Rom 9:4d). The privilege of regularly serving God was given exclusively to them–i.e. “to whom pertaineth . . . the service of God” (Rom 9:4e). All the Divine promises pertained to them–i.e. “to whom pertaineth . . . the promises” (Rom 9:4f). For 1,500 years, they were the only nation on the face of the earth that had a covenant with the God of heaven. Concerning them being given the Law, Moses said, “And what nation is there so great, that hath statutes and judgments so righteous as all this law, which I set before you this day?” (Deut 4:8).

If it is possible to obtain true spiritual advantage by external means, surely such advantage will be realized by Israel! If education or tutelage is the full and complete answer to ignorance, then Israel will excel in understanding! If exposure to Divine workings is enough to sensitize the soul and provoke a love for God, such evidences will

be found in Israel. To this very day, in the realm of nature, the world has not seen miracles like those experienced by Israel. They range from millions being delivered simultaneously, to millions being fed miraculously for forty years. Their victories in military combat are unmatched in all of history. Once, without them raising a sword, an opposing army of 185,000 were slain by a holy angel in a single night (2 Kgs 19:35). Another time gigantic hailstones fell from heaven, overthrowing their foes (Josh 10:11). In one of their battles, Joshua commanded the sun to stand still to give them a longer day to fight – and it did (Josh 10:12). And, it was this nation “of whom as concerning the flesh Christ came, who is over all, God blessed for ever” (Rom 9:5). No nation has ever been blessed as Israel was!

We will now behold the reaction of these people to Bible reading. What will be their response when the Word of God is read? And what is the reason for it?

Chapter 5

MOSES IS READ

“But even unto this day, when Moses is read . . .” (2 Cor 3:15)

Moses was not a mere historian. Nor, indeed, was he a philosopher. What Moses wrote was what the Lord had spoken to him. Thus we read, “And the LORD said unto Moses, Write this for a memorial in a book, and rehearse it in the ears of Joshua” (Ex 17:14). And again, “And the LORD said unto Moses, Write thou these words: for after the tenor of these words I have made a covenant with thee and with Israel” (Ex 34:27).

What is more, when Moses had finished writing the words given to him by God, he sanctified the book, and the people who heard it. As it is written, “For when Moses had spoken every precept to all the people according to the law, he took the blood of calves and of goats, with water, and scarlet wool, and hyssop, and sprinkled both the book, and all the people” (Heb 9:19).

The reading “of Moses” particularly refers to the first five books of the Scripture: Genesis, Exodus, Leviticus, Numbers, and Deuteronomy. We know this by what is said about Moses’ writings. Jesus said, “For Moses said, Honor thy father and thy mother; and, Whoso curseth father or mother, let him die the death” (Mark 7:10). That is found in Exodus 21:17, Leviticus 20:9, and Deuteronomy 27:16. Again Jesus said to a leper He had cleansed, “And Jesus saith unto him, See thou tell no man; but go thy way, show thyself to the priest, and offer the gift that Moses commanded, for a testimony unto them” (Mat 8:4). That instruction is found in Leviticus 14:2-32. When being questioned by His enemies concerning how the Law addressed divorce, Jesus responded, “He saith unto them, Moses because of the hardness of your hearts suffered you to put away your wives: but from the beginning it was not so” (Mat 19:8). The text to which he referred is found in Deuteronomy 24:1-4. Jesus also referred to “the book of Moses,” in which God spoke to him out of a burning bush (Mk 12:26). That record is found in Exodus 3:2-6. Jesus also said of Moses, “For had ye believed Moses, ye would have believed me: for he wrote of me” (John 5:46).

Peter said, “For Moses truly said unto the fathers, A prophet shall the Lord your God raise up unto you of your brethren, like unto me; him shall ye hear in all things whatsoever he shall say unto you” (Acts 3:22). That is found in Deuteronomy 18:18. Paul referred to the

Gospel as things “which the prophets and Moses did say should come” (Acts 26:22).

Although the book of Genesis does not say Moses wrote it, it has been generally understood through the ages that this was the case. The fact that the first section of our Bibles is referred to as “Moses and the prophets” supports that view very well (Luke 16:29,31; 24:27; Acts 26:22; 28:23).

It might be well to cite some of the references to the coming Savior and the New Covenant that are found in the writings of Moses.

- “And I will put enmity between thee and the woman, and between thy seed and her Seed; It shall bruise thy head, and thou shalt bruise His heel” (Gen 3:15).
- “And in thy Seed shall all the nations of the earth be blessed; because thou hast obeyed My voice” (Gen 22:18).
- “The scepter shall not depart from Judah, nor a lawgiver from between his feet, until Shiloh come; and unto Him shall the gathering of the people be” (Gen 49:10).
- “The LORD thy God will raise up unto thee a Prophet from the midst of thee, of thy brethren, like unto me; unto Him ye shall hearken” (Deut 18:15).
- “I will raise them up a Prophet from among their brethren, like unto thee, and will put My words in His mouth; and He shall speak unto them all that I shall command Him. And it shall come to pass, that whosoever will not hearken unto M words which He shall speak in My name, I will require it of him” (Deut 18:18-19).
- “And the LORD thy God will circumcise thine heart, and the heart of thy seed, to love the LORD thy God with all thine heart, and with all thy soul, that thou mayest live” (Deut 30:6).
- There were also the types and shadows seen in laws and ordinances regarding the tabernacle service, the high priesthood, and the sacrificial system (Col 2:16-17; Heb 8:5; 9:24; 10:1).

Now, how will Israel respond to the reading of words that came from God Himself – words that related to the coming Savior? How will they react to a book that has been dedicated with “the blood of calves and goats?” This is Moses, with whom God spake “face to face as a man speaketh unto his friend” (Ex 33:11). This is Moses who “was very meek above all men which were upon the face of the earth” (Num 12:3). This is Moses with whom God spoke “mouth to mouth, apparently, and not in dark speeches” (Num 12:8). Moses! This is the man who “endured as seeing Him who is invisible” (Heb 11:26). It is the man who was “faithful in all God’s house” (Heb 3:2, NIV).

If glory, understanding, or faith can be passed from one man to another, Israel will surely profit from the reading of Moses. If it is possible to inherit a blessing from a holy man who had trafficked with God, Israel surely will! If glory can be passed from one person to another, surely the experience can be realized by the people who beheld the splendor of Moses’ face – a splendor that was too bright for mortals to gaze upon!

Chapter 6

THE VEIL UPON THE HEART

“But even unto this day, when Moses is read, the veil is upon their heart”

Other versions read, “a veil lies on their heart” (NKJV), “a veil lies over their heart” (NASB), “a veil covers their heart” (NIV), “a veil lies over their minds” (NRSV) “a veil is upon their heart” (DARBY), “a veil is laid over their hearts” (GENEVA), “their hearts are covered with a veil” (NJB), “their hearts are covered with that veil, and they do not understand” (NLT), “their hearts are blind and they think that obeying the Ten Commandments is the way to be saved” (LIVING), “a covering lies upon their hearts” (IE), and “a veil hangs over their hearts” (William’s).

Paul will now describe an experience where the mind and heart are exposed to the truth, yet are not able to perceive it. The point being made is that Israel cannot perceive the Savior in their own Scriptures, even though He has already come and fulfilled a significant percentage of them.

This is the same thing that was being experienced by many of the Corinthians. For example, they were so obtuse concerning the message and benefit of the Lord’s Table that God had judged them: “For all who eat and drink without discerning the body, eat and drink judgment against themselves. For this reason many of you are weak and ill, and some have died” (1 Cor 11:29-30). A veil was also over their hearts! That is why these words were so important to them. They are also very appropriate for our time, though they are rarely heard.

THE VEIL

This refers to the veil of obscurity, not the veil that was over Moses’ face. The idea is that something was hidden to the people when Moses was read. The references to the coming Messiah and the New Covenant are the particular points of reference. There was something between them and the truth, so that it could not be seen. Nor, indeed, could they steadfastly behold those things, or linger long upon them, pondering them in their hearts.

UPON THEIR HEART

Now Paul moves the veil from Moses’ face and declares it is over the hearts of the people. Why does he use such language. It is because, as he has already affirmed, the Gospel itself is not veiled. God has plainly declared what has occurred for men, and what can be experienced because of it. Paul said he did not speak with a kind of veil, hiding the truth from the people. Now, if people do not understand, it is not because the Gospel is beyond all understanding, for it is not. If men are saved by believing the record God has given of His Son (1 John 5:10-11), that record cannot be shrouded with a veil, as was Moses’ face. The Gospel is not too bright – it is not beyond the perimeter of accessibility!

The real cause of a lack of understanding is not the book, but the heart. It is not because of the translation of Scripture, but because of the lack of translation of the people (Col 1:13). It is not that the words are too difficult, but that the hearts are covered over with a spiritual veil that prohibits the comprehension of the truth.

Supposedly simplified translations cannot change the heart. It requires something more than reading! Those who make a practice of championing watered down and diluted versions of Scripture should spend their time better targeting the conviction of the sinners with Word of the Lord. It is much more plain than some have suggested!

The Jews, while engaged in sacred duties, had an obscuring veil hung over their hearts!

They therefore read right past precious shadows of coming realities, and the announcement of good things to come. When Jesus arrived on the scene, religion had become so stilted that some thought it better to engage the Savior concerning technicalities of the Law rather than to seize the kingdom with violence, as some were wont to do (ex, Matt 22:24; John 8:5).

To confirm that it was possible to recognize Jesus as the fulfillment of Moses and the Prophets, after seeing and hearing Jesus Philip told Nathaniel, “We have found Him, of whom Moses in the law, and the prophets, did write, Jesus of Nazareth, the son of Joseph” (John 1:45). Philip did not have a veil over his heart! Once Nathaniel saw Jesus for himself, he said, “Rabbi, Thou art the Son of God; thou art the King of Israel” (John 1:49). Even the woman at the well, herself a Samaritan and not a Jew, said of Jesus, “Come, see a man, which told me all things that ever I did: is not this the Christ?” (John 4:29). Because she had “turned to the Lord,” she did not have a veil over her heart, and thus saw clearly who He was!

Chapter 7

TURNING TO THE LORD

“Nevertheless when it shall turn to the Lord . . .” Other versions read, “Nevertheless when one turns to the Lord” (NKJV), “but whenever a man turns to the Lord” (NASB), “But whenever anyone turns to the Lord” (NIV), “But when it is turned to the Lord” (BBE).

“NEVERTHELESS”

The word “nevertheless” is a grammatical disjunction meaning “but, moreover.” That is, here is a circumstances that overrides a former one – something that undoes a former situation.

“Nevertheless” can be for good or for evil. When, for example, ten men from Israel spied out the land given them by God, they conceded it was precisely what the Lord had said. They said to Joshua, “We came unto the land whither thou sentest us, and surely it floweth with milk and honey; and this is the fruit of it” (Num 13:27). However, because of unbelief – or because of the veil over their heart – they added, “Nevertheless the people be strong that dwell in the land, and the cities are walled, and very great: and moreover we saw the children of Anak there. The Amalekites dwell in the land of the south: and the Hittites, and the Jebusites, and the Amorites, dwell in the mountains: and the Canaanites dwell by the sea, and by the coast of Jordan” (Num 13:28-29).

Paul referred to two influential false teachers of his time: Hymanaeus and Philetus. Their word was like a cancerous growth among the people. Teaching that the resurrection had already passed, they actually “overthrew the faith.” Although the situation was most serious, and may even have been judged to be an impossible one, Paul added, “Nevertheless the foundation of God standeth sure, having this seal, The Lord knoweth them that are his. And, Let every one that nameth the name of Christ depart from iniquity” (2 Tim 2:19). The foundation of God could not be displaced by these evil men, nor could their teaching subvert those in fellowship with Him – those He “knew.”

“Nevertheless” stands between the possible and the impossible. In this case, it is like a passage from the evil to the good, from blindness to illumination, and from ignorance to

understanding.

Although the hearts of the people had a veil suspended over them, causing them to be blind to Christ and the New Covenant He is mediating, there is something that can REMOVE that veil. It is, as you might expect, directly related to the Lord Jesus Christ. It is not a procedure, a discipline, or some fleshly achievement.

“WHEN”

The Kingdom of God is one of order – precise and purposeful order. It is not “ordered” after the manner of this world, which is often without meaningful objective. This is an order, or arrangement, in which the purpose of God is realized and the revealed need of mankind is met.

The word “when” is a word denoting transition – the point at which the person moves from one condition to another, or when an appointed purpose comes to pass. Thus we read, “WHEN” we were “yet without strength, in due time, Christ died for the ungodly” (Rom 5:6). Again, the coming of the Savior into the world is associated with “when.” “But WHEN the fulness of the time was come, God sent forth His Son, made of a woman, made under the law” (Gal 4:4).

Paul also refers to his own enlightenment in these words: “But WHEN it pleased God, who separated me from my mother's womb, and called me by His grace, to reveal His Son in me, that I might preach Him among the heathen; immediately I conferred not with flesh and blood” (Gal 1:15-16).

Our text will speak of a time of advance from an unacceptable stage to an acceptable one. If that point can be identified, the time when the state of blindness ended and a time of insight began to be enjoyed will be pin-pointed.

Chapter 8

“IT”

“Nevertheless when it shall turn to the Lord . . .” (2 Cor 3:16)

Other versions read, “But when they shall be converted to the Lord” (DOUAY), “Nevertheless when their heart shall be turned to the Lord,” (GENEVA), “But whenever the heart of the nation shall have returned to the Lord” (Weymouth), and “But whenever a person turns [in repentance] to the Lord” (AMPLIFIED).

What is the “it” of reference? The various translations approach this text from different perspectives.

1. Israel themselves: “they” (DOUAY/YLT), “the nation” (Weymouth).
2. Any person: “when one” (NKJV), “a man” (NASB), “anyone” (NIV), “a person” (NAB), “someone” (IE), and “anybody” (Williams).
3. The heart: “it” (ASV/BBE/DARBY), “their heart” (GENEVA/Montgomery), “the heart” (Weymouth).

While there is a sense in which all of these are true (Israel itself, any or all persons, and the heart), it seems to me that the emphasis is being placed upon the heart – whether of Israel or any other person. The heart is what is veiled (verse 15). God spoke of Israel turning to him with their HEART: “if thou turn unto the LORD thy

God with all thine HEART, and with all thy soul” (Deut 30:10). There is also turning their heart away from Him: “But if thine HEART turn away, so that thou wilt not hear” (Deut 30:17). I will take the “it” to refer to the heart – specifically of Israel, and generally of any person or group of persons.

“TURN TO THE LORD”

This refers to the turning of the heart to the Lord – a turning that is no mere formality. This is a turning attended by sincerity, and an earnest quest to be received by Him. The eyes of the heart are thus fixed upon the Lord Himself. There is such a concentration upon the Lord that the heart refuses to be distracted to lesser things. This is the kind of turning to which the Psalmist referred when he said, “Blessed are they that keep His testimonies, and that seek Him with the whole heart” (Psa 119:2). It is result of the heart being “prepared” to seek the Lord (2 Chron 12:14), and it is always honored by the Lord.

Hosea spoke of this kind of turning. “Take with you words, and turn to the LORD: say unto him, Take away all iniquity, and receive us graciously: so will we render the calves of our lips” (Hosea 14:2). The angel of the Lord told Zachariah that during the ministry of his coming son, John the Baptist, “many of the children of Israel shall turn to the Lord” (Luke 1:16).

This is not a “return” to the Lord, as spoken by the Lord through the prophets (Isa 44:22; Jer 4:1; Mal 3:7). That was a return under the Old Covenant, and could not yield the results realized following Christ’s enthronement.

During one phase of Peter’s ministry it is said that “all that dwelt at Lydda and Saron saw him, and TURNED to the Lord” (Acts 9:35). Certain men from Cyprus and Cyrene preached Jesus to the Grecians. It is written that “the hand of the Lord was with them: and a great number believed, and TURNED unto the Lord” (Acts 11:21). When it was reported that many Gentiles had been converted, James spoke of them as those “which from among the Gentiles are TURNED to God” (Acts 15:19). The Thessalonians are described as those who “TURNED to God from idols to serve the living and true God” (1 Thess 1:9).

There is such a thing as turning to the Lord – focusing upon Him, and engaging in a fervent quest to know Him and receive His great salvation. In certain religious circles such language is not common. However, we all do well to incorporate this manner of speaking into our spiritual vocabulary. The heart can be turned to the Lord, a turning in which He becomes the concentration of life and exclusive focus of attention.

Chapter 9

WHEN DOES THIS TURNING OCCUR?

“Nevertheless when it shall turn to the Lord, the veil shall be taken away.” (2 Cor 3:16)

This is a technical point, yet is worthy of note. Paul has said that when Moses was read, the heart of the Jews had a veil upon it so that they could not see the Lord. What is involved in such a people turning to the Lord? Ultimately, for the Jews, it comes when an association is made with Moses’ writings and the promised Messiah (John 5:39; Rev 19:10). The Scriptures, including Moses’ writings, were bearing witness to a single Person – the Lord’s Christ. That is why Jesus said to His critics, “Search the scriptures;

for in them ye think ye have eternal life: and they are they which testify of Me. And ye will not come to Me, that ye might have life” (John 5:39). That was because they had a veil over their heart.

THE TWO ON THE ROAD TO EMMAUS

Allow me to site another example. When Cleopas and his associate were on the road to Emmaus, they “talked together of all” the things that had recently happened – things relating to the death of Christ. They saw no purpose or sense to it all, and it caused them to be “sad.” When the risen Savior Himself joined them, he inquired about their communications, and they told Him of the subject of their discussion. Their “eyes were holden,” however, that they “should not know Him” of whom they were speaking. A veil was over their heart! After hearing the lengthy explanation of Cleopas, Jesus spoke with piercing plainness: “Then He said unto them, O fools, and slow of heart to believe all that the prophets have spoken: Ought not Christ to have suffered these things, and to enter into His glory?” (Luke 24:26). It was then that Jesus started with “Moses and all the prophets,” expounding “unto them in all the Scriptures the things concerning Himself.” What a blessed occasion that was – still the two had no idea who was talking to them. A veil remained over their heart.

As they approached the village where they were residing, Jesus “acted as though He would go further” (Lk 24:38). It was then that the two despondent disciples “constrained Him, saying, Abide with us: for it is toward evening, and the day is far spent” (Lk 24:29). They were turning to the Lord! Because Jesus does not quench a smoking flax or break a bruised reed (Matt 12:20), “He went in to tarry with them.” There, as He “sat at meat with them,” “He took bread, and blessed it, and brake, and gave to them” (Lk 24:30). Suddenly, everything was changed. It is written, “And their eyes were opened, and they knew Him; and He vanished out of their sight” (Lk 24:31). The veil had been lifted from their hearts! It was taken away so that they could perceive what was formerly hidden from them.

As they pondered what had taken place, they were able to interpret their experience with spiritual accuracy. Referring to the time when they did not know it was the Lord Jesus speaking with them, they said, “And they said one to another, Did not our heart burn within us, while He talked with us by the way, and while He opened to us the scriptures?” (Luke 24:32). On the road, their hearts burned, yet remained veiled. That is when Jesus joined them. But when they “turned to the Lord,” asking Him to abide with them, He did not allow that veil to stay upon their hearts. It was taken away!

Chapter 10

WHEN MEN TURN TO THE LORD

“Nevertheless when it shall turn to the Lord, the veil shall be taken away.” (2 Cor 3:6)

Men turn to the Lord when there is an association made with Scripture and the One to whom it bears witness – the Lord Jesus Christ. It occurs when men see, as the hymn writer put it, “beyond the sacred page.”

THE ACADEMIC APPROACH

Right here it is important to note the debilitating effects of a merely academic religion. When the text of Scripture is approached like any other piece of reading – with a

dictionary and lexicon in hand, and aided by references on cultural considerations – it has a dampening effect upon the soul. Surely every devout student of Scripture has noted the impact of this approach. It tends to elevate human wisdom, and take the power out of the text. In such approaches, men are turning to their peers, and not to God. It is not that student helps are wrong or sinful, and no one ought to entertain that notion. Rather, it is that these things are nothing more than helps – they are not keys that unlock the meaning of God’s Word.

I have observed that those who elevate the original language, human history, logic, and cultural customs, generally have little understanding of the thrust and ministry of Scripture. They tend to get caught up in things of small consequence, and are not noted for “spiritual understanding.” Their words tend more to trivia than substance. All of these “helps” can be of measured benefit when they are sanctified by faith. When the significance, intent, and thrust of Scripture is seen, such things can be used with profit. However, they will not be an end of themselves, but will always give place to the Lord Himself.

SEE THE BIBLE CORRECTLY

Seeing the Bible correctly is not having a precise understanding of every text, although that is certainly something to be coveted. I am speaking of perceiving the purpose for Scripture, the One of whom it testifies, and the absolute necessity of Him. As long as the Bible is seen as a rule book, the veil will not be lifted, and people will remain in ignorance. If people insist on using the Word of God to buttress their sectarian dogmas, they will remain spiritually blind, because a veil is over their heart. God will not allow a person to know His Word who fails to see His Son in it. It makes no difference how learned the individual may be, or how diligent they are in their study habits. Those are not the things that cause the veil to be removed!

THE EXPERIENCE OF DAVID

But when the Lord Himself is seen in the Scriptures – a Lord that is in quest of the person, and who has something of eternal value to give the one seeking Him – the heart is awakened, and the direction of life is altered. If it is a person like David, after he has read and ingested the Scriptures, he will plead, “Show me Thy ways, O Lord; teach me Thy paths” (Psa 25:4). Although David never had the experience on earth of those who are in Christ Jesus, God did give Him to see more than His peers. It was because David was turned to Him, seeking to know Him and understand what He had said. Such a turning sets the tone of spiritual life, enabling spiritual understanding. It is the vestibule of a profitable life.

Chapter 11

THE VEIL SHALL BE TAKEN AWAY

“ . . . the veil shall be taken away.” ((2 Cor 3:16).

Other versions read, “the veil is taken away” (NKJV), “the veil is removed” (NRSV), “the veil will be taken away” (BBE), “then the veil is taken away” (LIVING), “the covering is removed” (IE), “the veil will be withdrawn” (Weymouth), “the veil is stripped away” (Montgomery), and “the veil is stripped off and taken away” (AMPLIFIED).

Here is a most precious promise – an “exceeding great and precious promise” (2 Pet 1:4).

When the heart is turned to the Lord, the obscuring veil “shall be taken away.” There is no chance that this will not happen! A person cannot turn to the “Sun of righteousness” and remain in ignorance. When the heart is turned toward Him who is “the Light of the world,” darkness can no longer prevail. The “veil” that keeps men from looking intently and steadfastly upon the Lord cannot remain over the heart when it is “turned to the Lord.”

The “veil” does not simply fall off of the heart. It is not melted, so to speak, by the glory of the Lord. That is, it is not eliminated by some spiritually automated process. It is “taken away,” deliberately “removed,” or “withdrawn,” by the Lord Himself. Settle it in your mind, when a person turns to the Lord, this will surely take place – the obscuring veil will be removed! If the veil remains, the person has not turned to the Lord. I hardly see how this can be denied.

If the veil can remain upon the heart after the individual has turned to the Lord, then this promise is not true, and the Spirit of truth has lied. Such a thought is blasphemous, and is to be thrown down with our spiritual weaponry (2 Cor 10:3-4).

The seriousness of this matter is seen in the ignorance that prevails in the American church. Scarcely a place can be found where there is a significant measure of “the knowledge of His will in all wisdom and spiritual understanding” – even though salvation provides for us to be “filled” with them! The “things of the Spirit of God” (Rom 8:5; 1 Cor 2:14) are not well known – in fact, there is altogether too little familiarity with them. It can be said of the modern church as it was of Israel, “I have written to him the great things of my law, but they were counted as a strange thing” (Hosea 8:12).

If it is true that when the heart is turned to the Lord “the veil shall be taken away,” then the current condition of the modern church is totally unacceptable. An institutionalized church may be accommodating to such a condition, but God will not! It is a reproach to Christ when those who wear His name are fundamentally ignorant of His objectives and ways.

A veiled heart is one that cannot comprehend the things of God. It is one that cannot gaze steadfastly at the glory of the Lord – the glory by which we are transformed (2 Cor 3:18; 4:17-18). It is a heart that has not been turned to the Lord, regardless of its profession. However, that very veil is removed when one turns to the Lord, and there are no exceptions to this rule!

Chapter 12

THE EXPERIENCE OF THE ETHIOPIAN EUNUCH

“And Philip said, If thou believest with all thine heart, thou mayest. And he answered and said, I believe that Jesus Christ is the Son of God.” (Acts 8:37)

Concerning turning to the Lord, if it is someone like the Ethiopian eunuch, perceiving in Scripture something that ought to be understood, yet is not, the person will say to a man of God, “How can I [understand], except some man should guide me? And he desired Philip that he would come up and sit with him” (Acts 8:31). He was turning to the Lord! Before the day had passed, the veil was lifted from his heart! It all was initiated while he was reading the Scripture pertaining to Jesus.

THE EXPERIENCE OF SAUL OF TARSUS

Who can forget the experience of Saul of Tarsus! When he was in the process of “breathing out threatenings and slaughter against the disciples of the Lord,” he encountered the very one to whom he had been blinded. He was seeking to find men or women who were Christians in Damascus, and “bring them bound to Jerusalem.” Although he was an avid student of Scripture, a veil was upon his heart. As he journeyed, “suddenly there shined round about him a light from heaven.” Falling to the ground, and smitten with blindness, he heard a penetrating voice cry out, “Saul, Saul, why persecutest thou Me?” Knowing this was no ordinary voice, Saul replied, “Who art thou, LORD?” The answer came back with crystal-clear clarity, “I am Jesus whom thou persecutest: it is hard for thee to kick against the pricks.” Immediately, trembling and astonished, Saul responded, “Lord, what wilt Thou have me to do?” (Acts 9:1-6). He was turning to the Lord, and in faithfulness, the Lord took away the veil from his heart. Within a few days, Saul was using the very Scriptures with which he was so familiar, preaching Christ “in the synagogues, that He is the Son of God” (Acts 9:20). It is said of this former Pharisee, “But Saul increased the more in strength, and confounded the Jews which dwelt at Damascus, proving that this is very Christ” (Acts 9:22). The veil had been taken away from his heart!

MY OWN EXPERIENCE

I can vividly remember my own experience – when I began to see the Lord and His Christ in every page of Scripture. Suddenly the Bible was transformed from a reference book to food for the soul! I was no longer satisfied with the dull and lifeless analyses of men. Their canned explanations of Scripture seemed so dry. Now I was enthralled with the Scriptures themselves. There were precious morsels on every page. I saw correlations of Scripture I could never see before. Jesus was clearly seen in many types and shadows that were formerly seen only as imposed and cumbersome ordinances. The veil was being taken away.

Chapter 13

PETER’S STATEMENT

Peter also spoke of the removal of the veil from the heart. He used a different approach, yet was essentially speaking of the same thing. “We have also a more sure word of prophecy; whereunto ye do well that ye take heed, as unto a light that shineth in a dark place, UNTIL THE DAY DAWN, and the day star arise in your hearts: Knowing this first, that no prophecy of the scripture is of any private interpretation. For the prophecy came not in old time by the will of man: but holy men of God spake as they were moved by the Holy Spirit” (NKJV) – (2 Pet 1:19-21).

The AMPLIFIED BIBLE reads, “And we have the prophetic word [made] firmer still. You will do well to pay close attention to it as to a lamp shining in a dismal (squalid and dark) place, until the day breaks through [the gloom] and the Morning Star rises (comes into being) in your hearts. [Yet] first [you must] understand this, that no prophecy of Scripture is [a matter] of any personal or private or special interpretation (loosening, solving). For no prophecy ever originated because some man willed it [to do so—it never came by human impulse], but men spoke from God who were borne along (moved and impelled) by the Holy Spirit.”

Several things are clearly affirmed in this text.

1. The “word which by the gospel is preached unto you” (Verse 25), is a “more sure word” than that spoken by the prophets. That is, their word was something that was coming. The word of the Gospel is word of something that has already come – it is the prophetic word fulfilled.
2. This is a Word that must become our focus.
3. It is a light shining in the dark regions of this present evil world.
4. As we fix our attention on this word, the day will dawn, and the Day Star will rise in our hearts. That is, we will come to understand the truth.
5. Scripture is not the prophets’ interpretation of what they saw and heard.
6. No prophecy was a Divine response to what men wanted.
7. Scripture is the result of the Holy Spirit’s direction.

THE REASONING

Peter affirms that “first,” before we proceed to enter the road of understanding, there is something that must be settled in our hearts. No prophecy, in any sense, had its origin with man. Prophecy, or Scripture, is not the product of human interpretation – that is, the prophets did not receive a vision or a mere outline of truth, then figure it out for himself – not “of any private interpretation.” Further, no prophecy came because men wanted it to come – “not by the will of man.” Particularly regarding His salvation, God spoke through “holy men” – and only “holy men” – who were, in their speaking and writing, “carried along by the Holy Spirit” (NIV).

It is written that Israel could not steadfastly gaze upon the glory that attended the giving of the Old Covenant (2 Cor 3:13). Their eyes were not adapted to such splendor. However, the case with believers is much different. They **MUST** gaze at the glory associated with the New Covenant in order to be advantaged by it. The promise is that, if they “turn to the Lord,” instead of away from Him as Israel did, the obscuring veil that is upon their heart will be taken away. That is a Divine commitment, and there is not the slightest chance that it will fail of fulfillment! As Peter said, the day will dawn, and the Day Star will rise in your heart – what God desires us to see will be seen. To put it another way, we will grasp the message being sent to us from heaven. It will dawn upon us what the Lord is saying doing through Christ Jesus. In the process, we ourselves will be changed by the glory of what we see. As it is written, “But we all, with open face beholding as in a glass the glory of the Lord, are changed into the same image from glory to glory, even as by the Spirit of the Lord (2 Cor 3:18).

Chapter 14

THE LORD IS THAT SPIRIT, #1

“Now the Lord is that Spirit . . .” Other versions read, “Now the Lord is the Spirit” (NASB), “Now the Lord is the Spirit who gives them life” (LIVING), “the Spirit is ‘the Lord’” (IE), “Now by ‘the Lord’ is meant the Spirit” (Weymouth), “Now the Lord means the Spirit” (Williams), and “the Lord means the Spirit” (Montgomery).

“NOW”

This is a word denoting the time in which the New Covenant is operative – “this present time” (Rom 8:18). From the standpoint of appropriation, it speaks of the time of access and availability. From the standpoint of response, this is the time to take heed to what is being said. From the standpoint of alertness, this is the time to be awake, alert, vigilant, and keenly aware of what is going on!

Ponder some of the texts in which this word is used – “NOW” – and behold how it lends itself to a state of alertness, readiness, and participation in the good will of God.

1. “But NOW the righteousness of God without the law is manifested, being witnessed by the law and the prophets” (Rom 3:21).
2. “Much more then, being NOW justified by His blood, we shall be saved from wrath through Him” (Rom 5:9).
3. “And not only so, but we also joy in God through our Lord Jesus Christ, by whom we have NOW received the atonement” (Rom 5:11).
4. “I speak after the manner of men because of the infirmity of your flesh: for as ye have yielded your members servants to uncleanness and to iniquity unto iniquity; even so NOW yield your members servants to righteousness unto holiness” (Rom 6:19).
5. “But NOW being made free from sin, and become servants to God, ye have your fruit unto holiness, and the end everlasting life” (Rom 6:22).
6. “But NOW we are delivered from the law, that being dead wherein we were held; that we should serve in newness of spirit, and not in the oldness of the letter” (Rom 7:6).
7. “There is therefore NOW no condemnation to them which are in Christ Jesus, who walk not after the flesh, but after the Spirit” (Rom 8:1).

There are at least two philosophies of life – two ways in which life can be approached.

1. One is to live for self and the moment, dominated by a sense of this world and what it has to offer. In such a case, the Lord is sought only in a crisis, and in order to augment, as it were, life in the flesh – life in this world.
2. The other approach is to perceive what the Lord is now offering, and what I can be in Him. In this approach, the world is secondary, and the will of God is primary. In this case, the person himself is subordinate, and the Lord becomes all-important.

As often used in Scripture, the word “now” is spoken within the latter framework. He is not only consciously brought into the moment, but deliberately. He is seen as One who, in fact, rules the moment, and is the one for whom life is to be lived.

Chapter 15

THE LORD IS THAT SPIRIT, #2

“Now the Lord is that Spirit” (2 Cor 3:17).

The expression may sound peculiar: “Now, the Lord is that Spirit.” Paul is referring to the way in which He has used the word “Spirit” in His exposition of the glory of the New Covenant.

1. “Forasmuch as ye are manifestly declared to be the epistle of Christ ministered by us, THE SPIRIT of the living God; not in tables of stone, but in fleshly tables of the

heart” (2 Cor 3:3).

2. “Who also hath made us able ministers of the new testament; not of the letter, but of THE SPIRIT : for the letter killeth, but the spirit giveth life” (2 Cor 3:6).

3. “How shall not the ministration of THE SPIRIT be rather glorious?” (2 Cor 3:8).

The Old Covenant was, in a manner of speaking, impersonal. That is, although it was given by the Lord, He was not directly involved with the people, for it was NOT an economy of faith (Gal 3:12). Even His reflected glory, seen in the skin of Moses’ face, faded from both view and memory. When God spoke, He did so through Moses. When He led the people, He did so through Moses. When He gave the people water from a rock, He did so through Moses. Moses spoke to Him for the people, and to the people for Him. The Israelites did not have direct access to God. Even the High Priest came before the Lord only once a year – and that in a strict ceremony, laded with types, shadows, and symbols. It was not personal, with an interchange between God and man. This is what distinguished Moses from the rest of the people – including Aaron the high priest. Of him God said, “With him will I speak mouth to mouth, even apparently, and not in dark speeches; and the similitude of the LORD shall he behold” (Num 12:8). That was His way with Moses, but it was not so with the rest of the people. They were “only” given rules regarding “meats and drinks, and divers washings, and carnal ordinances, imposed on them until the time of reformation” (Heb 9:10).

But this is not the manner of the New Covenant. In this covenant there is a writing that is accomplished with “the Spirit of the living God” (3:3). This is not an academic covenant with mere rules and regulations, but one in which “the Spirit giveth life” (3:6). It is not a covenant inscribed on tables of stones, and embalmed, as it were, in print. It is “the ministration of the Spirit” (3:8).

NOT A HUMAN VIRTUE OR STRENGTH

This is not a “spirit” like “the spirit and power of Elijah” (Luke 1:17) – a mere attitude, or frame of mind. It is not a certain quality of mind, like “the spirit of power, and of love, and of a sound mind” (2 Tim 1:7). The “Spirit” of our text does not refer to the inward man, speaking of accomplishments wrought by elevated human qualities – like “the spirit of man” that “knoweth the things of a man” (1 Cor 2:11). It does not refer to an inward virtue that has been cultured by the grace of God, like “the spirit of meekness” (1 Cor 4:21), “the spirit of faith” (2 Cor 4:13), or “the spirit of wisdom” (Eph 1:17). It surely does not refer to “the spirit of your mind,” where saints are “renewed” (Eph 4:23).

Chapter 16

THE LORD IS THAT SPIRIT, #3

“Now the Lord is that Spirit.” (2 Cor 3:17)

THE LORD HIMSELF IS INVOLVED

In the New Covenant, the Lord Himself is involved – involved to a far greater extent than He was under the Old Covenant. HE is the One who puts His Law “in their inward parts.” HE is the One who writes His Law “in their hearts.” HE is the focus of the people, being “their God.” They are the focus of HIS attention, being HIS “people.” HE is the One that is known, as compared to only knowing what is required of the people – and He is known

by them all, “from the least of them unto the greatest of them.” In the New Covenant HE forgives “their iniquity,” and they do not come away with a defiled conscience, as they did under the Law (Heb 10:1-3). HE remembers their sin “no more,” no longer continually holding forth His hands to a “disobedient and gainsaying people” (Rom 10:21), as He did under the Old Covenant (Jer 31:33-34). “The Lord is THAT Spirit!”

Concerning the working out of our salvation, the following explanation is given for its effectiveness. “For it is God which worketh in you both to will and to do of his good pleasure” (Phil 2:13). “The Lord is THAT Spirit!”

When speaking of the adequacy possessed by those who are working together with God, it is written, “Not that we are sufficient of ourselves to think any thing as of ourselves; but our sufficiency is of God; who also hath made us able ministers of the new testament” (2 Cor 3:5-6). “The Lord is THAT Spirit!”

When the matter of our maturity, or perfection, is addressed, we are given to see Divine involvement. “Now the God of peace, that brought again from the dead our Lord Jesus, that great shepherd of the sheep, through the blood of the everlasting covenant, make you perfect in every good work to do His will, working in you that which is wellpleasing in His sight, through Jesus Christ; to whom be glory for ever and ever. Amen” (Heb 13:20-21). “The Lord is THAT Spirit!”

The requirement of enduring suffering, being perfect, firm, and strong is opened up to us by the Spirit. “But the God of all grace, who hath called us unto His eternal glory by Christ Jesus, after that ye have suffered a while, make you perfect, stablish, strengthen, settle you” (1 Pet 5:10). “The Lord is THAT Spirit!”

When the activities of those in the Kingdom of God are the subject, they are called “workers together with Him” (2 Cor 6:2), and “fellowlaborers together with God” (1 C or 3:9). “The Lord is THAT Spirit!”

In the New Covenant there is immediate fellowship “with the Father and with His Son Jesus Christ” (1 John 1:3). God has “called us into the fellowship of His Son Jesus Christ our Lord” (1 Cor 1:9). Those within the New Covenant are “made partakers of Christ” (Heb 3:14), and “partakers of the Divine nature” (2 Pet 1:4). Now, the person accepted by God is described as he that “dwelleth in God and God in him” (1 John 4:16). In Christ Jesus there is a very real circumstance described as “God dwelleth in us, and His love is perfected in us” (1 John 4:12). It is said of the faithful person that he “dwelleth in Him and He in him” (1 John 3:24).

Such marvelous realities never took place under the Old Covenant. The heart of the people was not changed under that covenant. Moral and spiritual change cannot be accomplished by means of that kind of agreement.

When our text affirms, “THE LORD IS THAT SPIRIT,” it is declaring the manner of the New Covenant. It is a covenant in which God can work within the people, perfecting, strengthening, and settling them. He is not a God out of sight and out of mind, but it imminent in the affairs of His people. He is active with and in the people who are reconciled to Him.

WHERE THE SPIRIT OF THE LORD IS, #1

“ . . . and where the Spirit of the Lord is . . . ” Other versions read, “and where He is” (LIVING), “wherever the Spirit of the Lord is” (IE), “where the Lord’s Spirit is,” ISV and “where the Spirit of the Lord abides” (Montgomery).

You should observe the strength of the statements that are being made in this chapter. There is absolutely no uncertainty or qualification in them. They provide an excellent example of the strength of the Word, which is described as being “quick, and powerful, and sharper than any two-edged sword, piercing even to the dividing asunder of soul and spirit, and of the joints and marrow, and is a discerner of the thoughts and intents of the heart” (Heb 4:12). Here are some of the strong statements to which I refer.

1. You ARE declared to be the “epistles of Christ” (verse 3a).
2. The writing has been accomplished “by the Spirit of the living God” (verse 3b).
3. The heart is the substance upon which the writing is done (verse 3c).
4. The letter kills (verse 6a).
5. The Spirit gives life (verse 6b).
6. The ministration of the Spirit is rather glorious (verse 8).
7. The ministration of righteousness exceeds in glory (verse 9).
8. The Old Covenant and its glory has been “done away” (verse 11).
9. The obscuring veil is done away in Christ (verse 14).
10. When the heart turns to the Lord, the veil shall be taken away (verse 16).

THE POWER OF AFFIRMATION

Only in Christ Jesus, or within the New Covenant can things unseen be declared with unmitigated certainty. There is no ambiguity or supposition in the New Covenant itself (Heb 8:10-12). There is no vagueness or idealistic reasoning in Christ Jesus. Life in the Son is characterized by firmness and certitude. The realities announced by the Gospel of Christ leave no room for doubt, or the possibility that they are not the absolute truth. Some examples of this certainty sureness and absoluteness are as follows.

1. God was in Christ, reconciling the world to Himself (2 Cor 5:19).
2. Jesus made peace through the blood of His cross (Col 1:20).
3. There is no condemnation to them who are in Christ Jesus (Rom 8:1).
4. Through His own death, Jesus destroyed the devil, who had the power of death (Heb 2:14).
5. Jesus put away sin by the sacrifice of Himself (Heb 9:26).

Those who are in Christ Jesus are told of their condition, and of the blessedness that attends it.

1. We are dead, and our lives are hid with Christ in God (Col 3:3).
2. He that is in us is greater than He that is in the world (1 John 4:4).

3. We are more than conquerors through Him that loved us (Rom 8:37).
4. All things are ours (1 Cor 3:21).
5. God has raised us up and made us sit together in heavenly places (Eph 2:6).

Chapter 18

BEING DRIVEN BY GOALS

“Now the Lord is that Spirit: and where the Spirit of the Lord is, there is liberty. “ (2 Cor 3:17)

Because of the spiritual retardation of our time, there is much talk about “goals” – idealistic objectives for life. Most of these are theoretical, with no basis in reality. They are more related to abstract dreams than to anything that is substantive. It all sounds good enough – but is that really the way it is?

If we confined ourselves to the business world, the domain of education, government, and the likes, there might be some small place for theoretic goals. However, when this kind of thinking and speaking is brought into the church, we have fallen upon hard times.

With some degree of shame, I must confess that most of the preaching and teaching I hear these days does not fall into the category of “AFFIRMATION” – asserting unchangeable realities, and announcing foundational truth. Much of the religious talk these days is something like this: “We ought to read our Bible’s more.” “We should be praying more.” “We should be holy.” “We are to be the salt and light of the world.” “Let’s try and make our marriages more stable.” “Let’s reach our neighborhoods for Jesus.” “If we fast more we will be better people” . . . etc. You can fill in some sayings of your own.

It is not that such words are wrong, and God forbid that anyone should get the idea that they are. The point is that such an approach does not take into account the nature of the New Covenant, the reality of the new birth, and the marvelous abundance that is ours in Christ Jesus. Of themselves, these statements are nothing more than fleshly observations. They are sorely lacking in both moral and spiritual power. That is why the religious charlatans develop all manner of plans and procedure that will, according to their own assessment, bring success in these objectives. When such admonitions are given, at the very best, they must always be preceded by affirmations of realities that already exist.

This verse provides a case-in-point. It does not tell us to seek the Holy Spirit. We are not exhorted to meet some mysterious qualification, or to rise to a higher standard. Such exhortations will follow, but they will be built upon statements that present what already exists in Christ Jesus. Instead of saying, “Here is a plan,” it is affirmed, “Where the Spirit of the Lord is, there is liberty.” The Amplified Bible reads, “there is liberty (emancipation from bondage, freedom).”

The Message Bible reads, “And when God is personally present, a living Spirit, that old, constricting legislation is recognized as obsolete. We're free of it!” In other words, whatever the Lord requires of those in Christ, they have been liberated to do. If Jesus told a lame man to pick up his bed and walk, he was free to do it (John 5:8). If you are “in Christ” (2 Cor 5:17) and if the Holy Spirit is dwelling in you (Rom 8:11), and if you have not quenched or grieved Him (1 Thess 5:19; Eph 4:30), you can do what He requires of you. Of that, you can be sure.

Chapter 19

WHERE THE SPIRIT OF THE LORD IS, #2

“Now the Lord is that Spirit: and where the Spirit of the Lord is, there is liberty.” (2 Cor 3:17)

We will now be presented with evidence of the presence of the “Spirit of the Lord.” This is not the statement of a goal to be reached – i.e. if we can ever achieve liberty, we will receive God’s Spirit. It is not something for which men are to strive. It is rather something that is certainly present where the Spirit is found. If the thing mentioned is not present, it is because the Spirit of the Lord is NOT there. If it is present, it is directly owing to the presence of “the Spirit of the Lord.” This is a sort of measuring rod for our use.

When Paul speaks in this manner, he is providing a means to assess our real condition. He is not speaking idealistically, as though you could walk with the Lord independently of the condition described. Further, this may not be the evidence that certain people prefer, but it is the truth, and is to be accepted.

THERE IS LIBERTY

“ . . . there is liberty.” Other versions read, “there is freedom” (NIV), “there the heart is free” (BBE), “he gives freedom” (NLT), “there is freedom [from trying to be saved by keeping the laws of God” (LIVING), “freedom is enjoyed” (Weymouth), and “there is liberty (emancipation from bondage, freedom) [Isa 61:1,2.] (AMPLIFIED).

THE CONCEPT OF LIBERTY

The concept of “liberty,” as God intends for it to be understood, was introduced under the Law. Every fiftieth year “the trumpet of jubilee” was to be sounded “throughout the land.” The trumpet was to be blown “on the day of atonement.” That year – all of it – was to be “hallowed,” or set apart to the Lord. A certain message was to be proclaimed throughout the land: “proclaim liberty throughout ALL the land unto ALL the inhabitants” (Lev 25:8-11).

THE INVOLVEMENTS OF LIBERTY

Those who were in bondage were set free. Every person was to return to “his own possession,” and every man “unto his family.”

SOWING AND REAPING SUSPENDED

Throughout that year, no sowing or reaping was to be done, and what sprang up of its own accord was not to be eaten: “A jubilee shall that fiftieth year be unto you: ye shall not sow, neither reap that which groweth of itself in it, nor gather the grapes in it of thy vine undressed” (Lev 25:11). The “year of Jubilee” was one in which they could not harvest the fields. Instead, they could bring home only what they were going to eat, not storing it in their barns: “eat only what is taken directly from the fields”(Lev 25:12, NIV).

A REFERENCE POINT FOR COMMERCE

Any property that was bought or sold was to be done without taking any advantage of each other. Those selling the land had to take into consideration the number of years until

the next Jubilee, and charge only for the years the person would reap the benefits of the property. Those buying the land were to approach the sale with the same thing in mind. They were not to “oppress one another” in these matters (Lev 25:14-17).

SOLD PROPERTY REVERTED BACK TO ITS OWNER

Whatever property was sold reverted to the original owner in the year of Jubilee (Lev 25:28).

CERTAIN UNREDEEMED HOUSES REMAINED WITH THE BUYER

If a house was sold that was within a walled city, the seller was given opportunity to redeem it within the first year. If he did not redeem the house, it would remain the possession of the buyer, and was not to be returned in the year of Jubilee (Lev 25:29-30).

CERTAIN HOUSES REVERTED BACK TO THE OWNER

Houses outside of a walled city were treated as a field. They could be redeemed, and they also reverted back to their owner in the year of Jubilee (Lev 25:31).

SPECIAL PRIVILEGES FOR THE LEVITES

The houses of the Levites could be redeemed at any time, and were returned in the year of Jubilee (Lev 25:32-33). However, the fields, or pastures, of the suburbs of the Levite cities could not be sold; they were their “perpetual possession” (Lev 25:34).

SLAVES WERE FREED

Slaves were freed in the year of Jubilee. All business transactions involved in the buying and selling of slaves were to be done the year of Jubilee in mind (Lev 25:35-55).

In a nutshell, the liberty depicted in the year of Jubilee involved returning to where something belonged – whether property or an individual.

Chapter 20

WHERE THE SPIRIT OF THE LORD IS, #3

“Now the Lord is that Spirit: and where the Spirit of the Lord is, there is liberty.” (2 Cor 3:17)

SPIRITUAL FREEDOM

The liberty that is found “where the Spirit of the Lord is” has two sides. First, it is release from bondage to sin, which was heightened by the Law. As it is written, “the strength of sin is the Law” (1 Cor 15:56). That is, the Law brought out the hostility and enmity against God that existed in fallen humanity. Second, it promotes the freedom that allows the individual to draw nigh unto God – something that the Law strictly forbade. Now, those in the New Covenant are told, “Let us draw near with a true heart in full assurance of faith, having our hearts sprinkled from an evil conscience, and our bodies washed with pure water” (Heb 10:22). In a stirring contrast of the New Covenant with the Old Covenant the Spirit affirms, “For the law made nothing perfect, but the bringing in of a better hope did; BY THE WHICH we draw nigh unto God” (Heb 7:19). Again it is written, “Draw nigh to God, and he will draw nigh to you. Cleanse your hands, ye sinners; and purify your hearts, ye double minded” (James 4:8).

The freedom realized in Christ Jesus involves release from servitude to sin, and free

access to God. All spiritual advance requires that these two factors be present.

1. We are free to resist the devil (James 4:7).
2. We are free to put on the whole armor of God (Eph 6:11).
3. We are free to put to death our members that are upon the earth (Col 3:5).
4. We are free to abstain from fleshly lusts that war against the soul (1 Pet 2:11).
5. We are free to obtain grace to help in the time of need (Heb 4:16).
6. We are free to draw nigh unto God (James 4:8).
7. We are free to perfect holiness in the fear of God (2 Cor 7:1).

If these things are not found in those who are “in Christ Jesus,” it is certainly not because they are not free to do them. If they have been freed from the hold of the devil, it cannot be that they are still bound by him! If Satan has gained control over them again, it is because they have made a place for him! No one comes into Christ under the control of the devil – no one. Satan cannot overpower a person who has really been translated into the kingdom of God’s dear Son (Col 1:13). The only way he can dominate such a soul is to lure them away from Christ and into the flesh – this he does by delusion and temptation. Those who would have us believe that demons can control the child of God against his will have only betrayed their ignorance. Regeneration does not produce vassals for the devil! It rather liberates and frees the believer. If that freedom is destroyed, an “evil heart of unbelief” (Heb 3:12) has been welcomed by the individual. Such a person is not a victim at all. They are one who has willingly walked out of the domain of freedom into the flesh, from which they were once delivered. They have ceased to believe, refused to mortify their members that are upon the earth, and failed to resist the devil. All of this has occurred because they have chosen to live at a distance from the Lord.

Chapter 21

JESUS AND FREEDOM

“If the Son therefore shall make you free, ye shall be free indeed” (John 8:36).

During His ministry among men, Jesus spoke of the freedom realized through Him. It would be ministered through “the truth,” which is the articulation of spiritual reality. Once seen, or known, that truth brings liberty to the soul. “Then said Jesus to those Jews which believed on him, If ye continue in my word, then are ye my disciples indeed; and ye shall know the truth, and the truth shall make you free” (John 8:32). Confirming that this would not be accomplished independently of Him He added, “If the Son therefore shall make you free, ye shall be free indeed” (John 8:36). That is, men would be liberated from servitude to sin, and given free access to the God from whose glory they had fallen.

Christ has freed us in order that we might remain free, unencumbered with sin, and no longer blinded by the glory of God. Paul referred to this circumstance when he wrote to the Galatians, “It was for freedom that Christ set us free; therefore keep standing firm and do not be subject again to a yoke of slavery” (Gal 5:1, NASB).

A REAL LIBERTY

Our text affirms, “where the Spirit of the Lord is, there is liberty.” It does not say it is

possible for there to be liberty, or that there ought to be liberty “where the Spirit is.” In other words, the Spirit does not hold out a goal we are to seek to attain. Rather, this is a very real condition that is found wherever “the Spirit is.” It is a liberty that is revealed in spiritual growth and advance – growth that is the direct result of not being held in bondage by the Law, and being able to draw close to the Lord. If men are really not freed from the bludgeon of the Law, or if they really cannot draw near to God, it can only be because the Spirit of the Lord is not present – for “where the Spirit of the Lord is, there IS liberty.”

How, then, are men to know if, for them, the liberty really does exist? Our text will affirm that steadfastly gazing at the Lord and being “changed” confirms the liberty has been realized. If we can, in fact, engage in the action now described, we are free. If we cannot, we are still in bondage. The difference in those two states is the presence of the Spirit, who is the Lord!

THE IMPLICATIONS

The implications of this text accent the absolute necessity for a Savior and a New Covenant. By nature, or in an unregenerate state, we are slaves to sin. As it is written, “ye were the servants of sin . . . when ye were the servants of sin ye were free from righteousness” (Rom 6:17,20). Paul said that prior to our acceptance in the Beloved we were “dead in trespasses and sins.” The condition was so woeful that we were described as being “children of disobedience,” and “were by nature the children of wrath, even as others” (Eph 2:1-3).

Liberty involves being delivered from that woeful state, being kept from it, and being transformed from one stage of glory unto another, until, according to God’s predetermination, we are finally conformed to the image of God’s Son (Rom 8:29). A view of salvation that does not include these things is not from God, and consequently is not true.

True liberty requires the presence of the Spirit, without which the Divinely required work cannot possibly be done. If the Lord does not “build the house,” all of the builder’s labor is in vain – pointless and useless (Psa 127:1). The means of transformation will now be expounded, and it is surely glorious!

Chapter 22

BUT WE ALL

“But we all, with open face beholding . . .” (2 Cor 3:18). Other versions read, “we all with unveiled face” (NKJV), “all of us who have the veil removed” (NLT), and “But we Christians have no veil over our faces” (LIVING).

It is imperative that we see what follows as a common experience among “the elect” (Mk 13:22; Col 3:12). This is not something for the leaders of the church, or for some especially gifted members of Christ’s body. There is no such thing as a segment of the body of Christ that is exempt from what follows. Further, this is not an option that is available if any of the people are not interested.

It ought to be noted that we are living in a time when Christianity is being neutered so that it has no power. In order to make room for specialists in behavioral analyses and counseling, the Lord, who is “that Spirit,” has been relegated to the role of a non-active

Chancellor – a kind of a God emeritus. In the nominal church, He is, for all practical purposes, “Lord” by name only. A convenient theology has been adopted that allows for the Scribes and Pharisees of the land to maintain their positions, and do so with respect and dignity. For this reason, the church is really not noted for a fundamental and lasting “change” in its members.

All of this is nothing more than religious pretense. There is no sincerity or reality in it – not so much as a weightless mote. This will be seen from what is now stated – something that is occurring to “we all.” Wherever this is not occurring (and to one’s own master they stand or fall – Rom 14:4) there really is no participation in the New Covenant, all profession notwithstanding.

As soon as you read these words, it will at once become apparent to you that the experience is not at all common within the professed church. Of course, there were some who lacked this during the first century. Early in the history of the church, a couple misrepresented what they were giving to the Lord, and lost their lives because of it (Acts 5:1-13). Shortly after that, murmuring broke out among the disciples (Acts 6:1). Out of seven Asian churches Jesus assessed, five of them had serious flaws.

1. Ephesus had left their first love, and stood in danger of being removed (Rev 2:4).
2. Pergamos allowed some among them who taught the doctrine of Balaam, casting stumbling blocks before the people. They also had some among them who held to the doctrine of the Nicolaitanes, which doctrine Jesus hated (Rev 2:13-14).
3. Thyatira permitted a false prophetess to seduce the people into committing fornication, and eating things sacrificed to idols (Rev 2:2-23).
4. Sardis was a church that had a name that it was alive, but it was actually dead. Only a few people there had not defiled themselves (Rev 3:1-4).
5. Laodicea was lukewarm, and was so nauseating to the Lord that He was going to vomit them out of His mouth (Rev 3:15-16).

The difference between conditions when John wrote The Revelation and now is that the true condition of the churches was made known. This is also seen in Paul’s writings: 2 Cor 11:4; Gal 1:6; Col 2:8.

Chapter 23

The difference between condition of the churches when John wrote The Revelation and now, is that the true condition of the churches was made known through Christ’s revelation to John. This is also seen in Paul’s writings, in which the state of churches was made known (2 Cor 11:4; Gal 1:6; Col 2:8).

WHY DID THESE CONDITIONS EXIST?

Why did these uncomplimentary conditions exist? Was it because the New Covenant is also “weak through the flesh,” as was the Old Covenant (Rom 8:3)? Can it be that, like the Law, the New Covenant “makes nothing perfect” (Heb 7:19)? Is it true that under the New Covenant God still “finds fault” with the people as He did under the Law (Heb 8:8). Is God still holding forth His hands to a “disobedient and gainsaying people” (Rom 10:21)? Is the New Covenant also one of fading glory, that begins with a blaze, then gradually dissipates into a state of normalcy?

Considering the state of the average American church, one might think that all of these questions could be answered in the affirmative. It might be surmised that the preachers and teachers are right who say, “We are just like those Israelites.” Or, “You know how we all are – we want our own way, and really do not want to obey the Lord.” Maybe you have heard someone say that the only difference between Christians and the world is that we are not condemned – “we are just forgiven sinners.” Of course, all of this is a carnal attempt to justify the miserable condition of the average American church – whether it is mega-church or a mini-church.

However, consider the impact that immature and ignorant Christians have upon our text. If the New Covenant does not produce a better people, then how can it possibly be a “better covenant?” How can its promises be “better promises” if they do not yield better results? How can a covenant with a glory that excels and remains produce a people like Israel of old, with an impure conscience, a lack of discernment, and thoughts that are not the thoughts of God?

Our text has affirmed, “where the Spirit of the Lord is, there is liberty.” It has declared that the new covenant ministers both life and righteousness. In this covenant, the veil is removed from the heart, so that spiritual obtuseness no longer exists.

It only remains, therefore, for the people to take advantage of the liberty produced by the Spirit. This is something that “WE ALL” do. If what follows is really not being done, it is not because the New Covenant has not made provision for it. It is rather because the people have their attention fixed on the wrong thing!

I am going to wax bold and affirm that God makes no provision for anyone in Christ to fail to do what follows. There is not a syllable of Scripture that remotely suggests any person can remain in a state of Divine acceptance where this is not done. Thinking themselves to be merciful and kind, some religious men excuse the miserable condition of wayward professing Christians. But this is not the manner of Jesus, as confirmed in His letters to the churches in Asia. It is also corroborated by Paul’s letters to fledgling churches who had been juvenile too long, and were not bringing forth fruit as they should.

When we read the words “we all,” we are being subjected to something that is intended for everyone whose sins have been remitted, and who are in Christ Jesus! If they are old enough to believe and be baptized, they are old enough to this. It is time for the church to expect what follows from its members. Jesus does, and so should they!

This is the means by which we become like Jesus, or are conformed to His image – something that is the unwavering determination of God Himself. This is not one of the ways this happens, but is the exclusive and appointed means of being “changed.”

Chapter 24

WITH OPEN FACE

“But we all, with open face beholding as in a glass the glory of the Lord, are changed into the same image from glory to glory, even as by the Spirit of the Lord.” (2 Cor 3:18)

Other versions read, “with unveiled faces” (NKJV), “have had the veil removed” (NLT), “uncovered faces” (IE), and “with faces uncovered” (Williams).

WITH

This is the mode of the Kingdom – “with.” It describes the means by which the required moral and spiritual change will be accomplished. For example, we properly serve the Lord “with” our spirit (Rom 1:9) and “with” our mind (Rom 7:25). The effective confession of Christ is “with” the mouth (Rom 10:9), and believing is “with the heart” (Rom 10:10). How is it, then, that we will experience the change that is described in this text – “ARE CHANGED”?

OPEN FACE

An “open face” is one that is not veiled. It describes a person whose heart is not dominated by spiritual ignorance. It parallels Moses’ manner when he was before the Lord. Although he veiled his face when speaking with the people, “when Moses went in before the LORD to speak with him, he took the veil OFF, until he came out” (Ex 34:34). In so doing he was fully exposed to the Lord. Had he failed to do this, the skin of his face would not have shone, and he would have possessed no evidence that he had been in the Lord’s presence.

You will remember that it has already been affirmed that turning to the Lord causes the veil to be “taken away” (2 Cor 3:16). The purpose of this removal is not merely to “shine before men,” so to speak. It is rather that we might be the more fully exposed to the glory of the Lord.

The experience that follows does not speak of a change from carnal to spiritual. Carnal is the condition of the veil, and thus is not the condition being considered here. An “open face” speaks of the “new man” (Col 3:10), the “inward man” (2 Cor 4:16), and “whosoever is born of God” (1 John 5:18). That new nature is intended to grow, advance, and be in a continual state of upward change, advancing toward being conformed to the image of God’s Son.

This word suggests the liability of the returning veil – a condition in which one actually reverts to the state of spiritual ignorance from which he was once delivered. This is really what had occurred in Corinth, and thus a certain retardation took place among them – a condition that was more closely aligned with the unregenerate state than that of regeneration.

Here, the “face” stands for the heart, and thus an “open face” is a heart that is no longer uncircumcised – no longer covered over with the flesh so that it cannot see. It depicts a heart that has been “purified by faith” (Acts 15:9) – a heart that has been “sprinkled clean from an evil conscience” (Heb 10:22, NASB).

It is not possible to engage in heavenly commerce with natural aptitude. That is, “the mind of the flesh” cannot take hold of the things of God, for it is “enmity against God” (Rom 8:7). Such a mind is like a veiled face that cannot see. It is a heart that is covered over with an obscuring veil, and thus cannot make sense out of the things of God. If you are going to receive from God, you must look with an “open,” or unveiled, face. This is something that is done by “we all” – “all” who are in Christ Jesus. There must be full, unhindered, and continual exposure to Divine glory!

VARIOUS VEILS

Among professed believers there have always been spiritual veils that inhibited spiritual vision – things that inhibited proper understanding, and removed the preference for the Lord and His will.

EVE. When Eve ceased to consider the word of the Lord, and chose to dialog with the devil, a veil dropped over her heart. What God had clearly stated was suddenly blurred. The tree that was plainly identified as the gate to death was thought to be a means to obtaining wisdom (Gen 3:6).

ISRAEL. When Israel stopped considering the God of heaven, and started pondering the wilderness through which they had to pass, a veil dropped over their heart. They began to murmur against God, even though He had promised to care for them (Num 21:5).

DEMAS. When Demas began looking at this world, a veil dropped over his heart. He no longer saw the work of the Lord as something to be preferred, and thus abandoned it (2 Tim 4:10).

THE CORINTHIAN CHURCH. As soon as the Corinthians accepted “another Jesus,” “another gospel,” and “another spirit,” a veil dropped over their heart, and they began a descent into unacceptable manners and behavior (2 Cor 11:4).

THE GALATIAN CHURCHES. As soon as they embraced “another Gospel,” a veil dropped over their heart, and they removed themselves from Him who had called them into the grace of Christ” (Gal 1:6).

SUMMARY

As soon as a person’s attention is diverted from the Lord of glory, a veil immediately begins to cover the heart. The things of God cannot be clearly seen while one’s attention is devoted to lesser things. In order for God to be seen through Christ Jesus, our attention must be focused on Him. In spiritual life, diversion and distraction are the means through which demise and falling occur. If heeded, they cause the heart to be veiled once again – veiled again AFTER the veil had once been removed!

Those who maintain that once a person is saved they can never be lost must substantiate that the heart can never again be veiled once it is unveiled. There is such overwhelming evidence of the nonsense of this supposition that no person of sound mind will attempt to defend it. Backsliding, retrogression, ignorance, coldness, lukewarmness, and disinterest are so common in the professed Christian community that it is mind-boggling. The presence of such things confirms that a veil is over their heart. Further, the condition was brought on by forsaking the Gospel in order to embrace a lie.

The Spirit will now establish that the change required for glorification cannot possibly be achieved within the sphere of disinterest and distraction. There is no need to speculate about this. God will not transform people by knocking them down! He may get their attention that way, as seen in Saul of Tarsus. However, conformity to the image of God’s Son will not come by force. It will be accomplished by looking, beholding, and considering – by spiritual focus. Where the conformity of reference is not taking place, there is no beholding of the glory of the Lord. And, where there is no beholding of the glory of the Lord, a veil is over the heart. Further, when a veil is over the heart, regardless of any profession, to the contrary, the person is not turned toward the Lord, and has

embraced an erroneous gospel.

Chapter 26

BEHOLDING THE GLORY OF THE LORD

“ . . . beholding as in a glass the glory of the Lord . . . ” Other versions read, “beholding as in a mirror the glory of the Lord” (NKJV), “reflect the Lord’s glory” (NIV), “seeing the glory of the Lord as though reflected in a mirror” (NRSV), “giving back as in a glass the glory of the Lord” (BBE), “reflect the Lord’s glory” (NIB), “we can be mirrors that brightly reflect the glory of the Lord” (NLT), “we can be mirrors that brightly reflect the glory of the Lord,” LIVING “we reflect the same glory,” IE “reflecting like bright mirrors the glory of the Lord” (Weymouth), “we continue to reflect like mirrors the splendor of the Lord,” (Williams), and “continued to behold” (AMPLIFIED).

Not only must we employ the proper part of our persons – an “open face,” or one that is not veiled – we must prepare ourselves for EXTENDED exposure to the glory of God. The objective the Lord established for His people will not be accomplished by fleeting glances and brief exposure. Those who imagine such a thing is remotely possible have only been deceived.

BEHOLDING AS IN A GLASS

The phrase “beholding as in a glass” is the translation of a single Greek word – katoptrizo,menoi (ka-top-trid-zo-men-oi). Lexically the word means, “to show in a mirror, to make to reflect, to mirror . . . to behold for oneself in a mirror” (THAYER). Other lexical meanings include, “contemplate as in a mirror” (FRIBERG).

The expression “as in a glass” speaks of the reflection of a mirror – not peering through a window pane. We must not, however, be diverted from the point of this text. Two things are emphasized: the focus of believers, and what has captured their attention. The word “beholding” describes the focus of believers. From the standpoint of human activity, this is the appointed means of extended transformation.

“Beholding” speaks of a steadfast focus. This is not a glance, not a momentary consideration or a fleeting thought. This is unwaveringly looking, not allowing anything to interrupt our gaze. This is contrasted with Israel looking on the face of Moses. They could not look long upon his face because of its brightness: “the children of Israel could not steadfastly behold the face of Moses” (verse 7).

The New Covenant does not make provision for this type of consideration. There is absolutely no grace that can be appropriated by fleeting glances and momentary considerations. If our considerations are brief, we cannot possibly receive much from the Lord.

The mirror, or reflecting agency, into which we peer is the Gospel of Christ itself – “the record God has given of His Son” (1 John 5:10-11). The “glory of God in the face of Christ Jesus” is reflected most precisely in the Gospel itself. That is why it is “the power of God unto salvation” (Rom 1:16). That is why the Gospel was preached “with the Holy Spirit sent down from heaven” (1 Pet 1:12).

Chapter 27

A FATAL FLAW

One of the fatal flaws of the theology to which I was once subjected, is that the Gospel is preached only to sinners, not to saints. There is a whole body of reasoning that is presented to buttress this view. It is, however, unworthy of mention.

The Corinthians were told that the Gospel was the means by which they were brought into Christ. They were also told it was the means by which they stood, and would be saved, if they kept it in memory. “Moreover, brethren, I declare unto you the gospel which I preached unto you, which also ye have received, and wherein ye stand; by which also ye are saved, if ye keep in memory what I preached unto you, unless ye have believed in vain” (1 Cor 15:1-2).

This being true, what can be said of a preacher or a church, or a movement, that neglects the Gospel, or does not continually place it before the people, declaring and expounding it? I will tell you. Such men, churches, and movements have removed the means by which men “stand.” They have also placed to the side the single message that is “the power of God unto salvation” – not just initial salvation, but the salvation we are presently working out (Phil 2:12), and that will be consummated at the redemption of the body (Rom 8:23; Eph 1:14). The Gospel is essential to that process. It should not be surprising, therefore, if those within an environment where the Gospel is not being affirmed and expounded fall. Such people have also removed the means of salvation being brought to its culmination. The messages written to the churches were, in fact, an exposition of facts and implications of the Gospel of Jesus Christ.

Our text is showing us that the removal of the Gospel robs the people of the proper focus of consideration. Substitute focuses are offered: the church, the needy, the family, the nation . . . etc. Such considerations are not of themselves wrong, and let no one imagine that they are. However, when they become the focus, or the center of our attention, the means of transformation has been removed! There is no sense in which that removal can be considered right or expeditious.

SUMMATION

We are speaking of “beholding” the reflected glory of Christ resident in the Gospel. The Gospel is the “glass,” that reflects the glory of the Lord. That is, “therein (in the Gospel) is the righteousness of God revealed from faith to faith: as it is written, The just shall live by faith” (Rom 1:17).

The word “mirror,” as used by some translations, can leave us with the wrong impression (NKJV, NASB, NRSV, ASV, GENEVA, NAU, NJB, NLT, WEBSTER, YLT). This could lead someone to believe it is our own image that is being beheld, as in the ordinary use of a mirror. Leaving this impression, some translations read, “with unveiled faces like mirrors reflecting the Lord’s glory” (NJB), “so that we can be mirrors that brightly reflect the glory of the Lord” (NLT), “we can be mirrors that brightly reflect the glory of the Lord” (LIVING), “we reflect the same glory” (IE), “reflecting like bright mirrors” (Weymouth), “we continue to reflect like mirrors” (Williams), and “we all, with unveiled faces, reflecting like mirrors” (Montgomery).

The text by no means suggests that we are looking at our own image. That is a wholly incorrect representation. The reflection is not coming from us – the ones who are

beholding. Rather, it is coming from the object of our steadfast gaze.

This “beholding” is an unwavering look, a lingering consideration, and a continuing exposure. It is something having to do with understanding, discernment, and comprehension – all of which require a proper focus and concentration. As we look upon the glory of the Lord Jesus, the glory reflects back upon us, transforming and conforming us to the “Image” we are beholding.

Chapter 28

THE GLORY OF THE LORD

“ But we all, with open face beholding as in a glass the glory of the Lord.” (2 Cor 3:18)

Here is what we are beholding – not our own glory, which is a reflected glory, but “the glory of the Lord.” We are not beholding the glory of the Lord IN our own face but WITH an “unveiled” face. While it may technically be true that the glory of the Lord is found in us, that glory has no transforming power – and transformation is the point, as this text will confirm.

CLARIFICATION

The “glory of the Lord” is what we are said to behold, and that glory is seen in the message of the New Covenant, which is the Gospel of Christ. The most precise and thorough revelation of God is found in “the Gospel of His Son” (Rom 1:9).

1. The righteousness of God is revealed in the Gospel: “For I am not ashamed of the gospel of Christ: for it is the power of God unto salvation to every one that believeth; to the Jew first, and also to the Greek. For therein is the righteousness of God revealed from faith to faith: as it is written, The just shall live by faith” (Rom 1:16-17).
2. The love of God is revealed in the Gospel: “Hereby perceive we the love of God, because he laid down his life for us” (1 John 3:16).
3. The grace of God is revealed in the Gospel: “But none of these things move me, neither count I my life dear unto myself, so that I might finish my course with joy, and the ministry, which I have received of the Lord Jesus, to testify the gospel of the grace of God” (Acts 20:24).
4. The Kingdom of God is revealed in the Gospel: “And this gospel of the kingdom shall be preached in all the world for a witness unto all nations; and then shall the end come” (Matt 24:14).
5. The peace of God is revealed in the Gospel: “And how shall they preach, except they be sent? as it is written, How beautiful are the feet of them that preach the gospel of peace, and bring glad tidings of good things!” (Rom 10:15).
6. The blessing of God is revealed in the Gospel: “And the scripture, foreseeing that God would justify the heathen through faith, preached before the gospel unto Abraham, saying, In thee shall all nations be blessed” (Gal 3:8).
7. The salvation of God is revealed in the Gospel: “In whom ye also trusted, after that ye heard the word of truth, the gospel of your salvation: in whom also after that ye believed, ye were sealed with that holy Spirit of promise” (Eph 1:13).
8. The hope granted by God is revealed in the Gospel: “For the hope which is laid up for

you in heaven, whereof ye heard before in the word of the truth of the gospel” (Col 1:5,23).

9. Life and immortality are brought to light through the Gospel: “But is now made manifest by the appearing of our Savior Jesus Christ, who hath abolished death, and hath brought life and immortality to light through the gospel” (2 Tim 1:10).

Chapter 29

THE GLORY IS GATHERED TOGETHER IN CHRIST

All of this is gathered together in the person of Christ, who is the appointed vehicle through whom this glory emanates. This is most precisely stated in the next chapter. A single verse will suffice to buttress the point here. “For God, who commanded the light to shine out of darkness, hath shined in our hearts, to give the light of the knowledge of the glory of God IN THE FACE OF Jesus Christ” (2 Cor 4:6).

It is the appointed objective of every hearer of the Gospel to consider it, ponder it, and dwell upon it. This focus is placed upon the Person proclaimed in that Gospel – the Lord Jesus Christ. No benefit comes to us independently of Him. God, in fact, has nothing to give us that is not given through His Son. All of God’s will is fulfilled in and through Him. Access to God is gained through Him. Jesus is the expositor of God Himself, as confirmed in Scripture.

1. JESUS REVEALS THE FATHER. “All things are delivered unto Me of My Father: and no man knoweth the Son, but the Father; neither knoweth any man the Father, save the Son, and he to whomsoever the Son will reveal Him” (Mat 11:27).

2. JESUS DECLARES THE FATHER. “No man hath seen God at any time; the only begotten Son, which is in the bosom of the Father, He hath declared Him” (John 1:18).

3. THE FATHER IS SEEN IN JESUS. “He that hath seen Me hath seen the Father” (John 14:9).

4. JESUS MANIFESTS GOD’S NAME, OR PERSON. “I have manifested Thy name unto the men which thou gavest me out of the world:” (John 17:6).

5. JESUS DECLARES GOD’S NAME, OR PERSON. “And I have declared unto them Thy name, and will declare it: that the love wherewith Thou hast loved Me may be in them, and I in them” (John 17:26).

6. JESUS GIVES US AN UNDERSTANDING OF GOD. “And we know that the Son of God is come, and hath given us an understanding, that we may know Him that is true, and we are in Him that is true, even in His Son Jesus Christ. This is the true God, and eternal life” (1 John 5:20).

Unlike the glory that radiated from the face of Moses, the glory of the Gospel seen in the face of Christ must be beheld – steadfastly beheld. This is because the New Covenant is a covenant of holy familiarity. It is a covenant where men become acquainted with the Almighty (Job 22:21). That acquaintance is through exposure, not mere academics. That is, the substance of the Gospel must become the focal point of our thoughts.

This means that the Gospel is not intended to be the vehicle of initial salvation alone – when we are turned from darkness to light for the first time. Jesus did not tell His disciples to preach the Gospel to sinners, but to “every creature” (Mark 16:15). Paul was

“ready” to preach the Gospel to believers in Rome (Rom 1:15). He “declared” that Gospel to the believing Corinthians (1 Cor 15:1; 2 Cor 11:7).

The “glory of the Lord” is seen in the Gospel, and therefore that Gospel can never be reduced to a secondary consideration. It must ever be set before us as an object for profound and extended consideration.

That, of course, is one of the functions of the Lord’s Table (1 Cor 10:21; 11:23-28). It is a time when our thoughts are gathered and focused on Jesus – beholding the glory of the Lord!

Chapter 30

CHANGED INTO THE SAME IMAGE

“ . . . are changed into the same image . . . ” (2 Cor 3:18)

Other versions read, “are being transformed into the same image” (NKJV), “are being transformed into the same likeness” (NIV), “are being changed into His likeness” (NRSV), “are transformed into the same image” (ASV), “are being transformed into His likeness” (NIB), “we become more and more like Him” (NLT), “to the same image are being transformed” (YLT), “we are being changed to look more like Him” (IE), “are ourselves continually being transformed into the same likeness” (Montgomery), and “are constantly being transfigured into His very own image” (AMPLIFIED).

ARE CHANGED

Here we learn that conversion, or being “converted” (Acts 3:19; 28:27) is not a single event. Being “saved” is not fulfilled at a point in time. Rather, it is the initiation of a process in which continual change is experienced. Strictly speaking we are “BEING saved” (Acts 2:47; 1 Cor 1:18; 2:15, NKJV) There is a sense in which salvation is being “worked out” (Phil 2:12). It is a work that Christ Himself is finishing (Heb 12:2) – a work that is being performed “until the day of Jesus Christ” (Phil 1:6). There is a sense in which Jesus is presently saving those who are in Him, for “He is able also to save them to the uttermost that come unto God by Him, seeing He ever liveth to make intercession for them” (Heb 7:25).

This process is now referred to as being “changed,” “transformed” (NKJV), or “constantly transfigured” (AMPLIFIED).

The word “changed” is taken from the Greek word (meta-morph-oom-e-tha). This word means “to change to another form, to transfigure, transform” (THAYER), “be transfigured, be changed in appearance, of an inward change of nature, be changed, be transformed” (FRIBERG), and “to change one’s way of life as the result of a complete change of thought and attitude with regard to sin and righteousness” (LOUW-NIDA).

The Greek word used here is the one from which we get our English word “metamorphosis.” The meaning of this word is, “a change of physical form, structure, or substance especially by supernatural means; a striking alteration in appearance, character, or circumstances; a typically marked or more or less abrupt change in the form or structure of an animal (as a butterfly or a frog), occurring subsequent to birth or hatching” (MERRIAM-WEBSTER).

God has placed in nature two examples of the kind of change to which this refers. It is not the mere adopting of some new habits. The change is of a miraculous nature, as seen in the butterfly and the frog. It also takes place in distinct stages, gradually moving from one form to another. Upon their change, both of these creatures take an altogether different appearance, have radically different abilities, and subsist in a different environment.

This is the kind of change that takes place as we steadfastly behold the glory of the Lord in the mirror of the Gospel. It is a very real moral and spiritual change. Our thinking is changed, so that God's thoughts are now our thoughts – quite unlike the condition of those under the Old Covenant (Isa 55:8-9). His ways become our ways. His laws are in put into our minds and written upon our hearts (Heb 8:10).

A static religion – where there is no fundamental progression – is one in which Jesus is not resident. In such a case, the people are not focused upon Him, and have become distracted to other things. Our text is not speaking of mere possibilities or ideals. This is what happens when our attention is focused on “The record God has given of His Son” (1 John 5:10-11). There simply is no possibility that an individual's attention can be focused on the Subject of the Gospel without that person being “changed.”

A religion that leaves a person unchanged should be immediately abandoned – cast away as the rubbish that it is! It must be regarded as “dung,” just as Paul considered his own past – steeped in Jewish tradition (Phil 3:8). Just as surely as Moses could not remain in the presence of the Lord of glory without the skin of his face being “changed,” so it is impossible for the person who beholds the glory of the Lord to remain unchanged!

When a church – any church – must resort to canned procedures to try and awaken the people to righteousness, there is something that is fundamentally wrong. When Paul had to write the Corinthians in such a manner as to constrain them to conduct themselves properly, it was because they had been diverted from the Lord of glory. Their eyes had been turned to men (1 Cor 3:4) – and thus their spiritual change was aborted! They had reverted to a carnal state, from which they had once been delivered (1 Cor 3:1-3) – and therefore they ceased to progress.

Rather than changing upward, they were in a state of moral and spiritual decline. They allowed fornication among them (1 Cor 5:1-5). They did not consider the impact of suing one another before carnal judges (1 Cor 6:1-5). They were unable to discern when it was proper to marry, and how to handle challenging circumstances within marriage (1 Cor 7:1-16). Paul had to reason with them about being mindful of weaker brethren, whose conscience was in a state of formation (1 Cor 8:1-13). Some of the Corinthians could not see that Paul was an Apostle, and was worthy of their support (1 Cor 9:1-27). They had forgotten about the experience of the Israelites, that was recorded for our admonition (1 Cor 10:1-12). The church in Corinth was not making an association of their assemblies with edification (1 Cor 11:1-19). Instead of the Lord's table being a place of blessing among them, it became the occasion of Divine judgment (1 Cor 11:20-34). Somehow, the purpose served by spiritual gifts was no longer seen among them (1 Cor 12-14). Some of their number had ceased to believe the dead would be raised (1 Cor 15:1-52). What had happened among these people?

The Corinthians were no longer being “changed” – that is precisely why Paul had to write them two Epistles filled with rebuke and elementary teaching. This kind of pattern is so

prevalent today that it is actually thought to be the “common” condition of the church. We are living in a time when religious careers are being tailored for dead and lifeless churches! Preaching and expounding Christ Jesus has now been classified with religious relics. The church has so many problems it needs a “counseling staff.” It cannot worship the Lord, so it has invented a “worship leader.” It’s youth are going astray so they have created a “youth minister.” A vast array of workshops and clinics have been developed to address the “practical needs” of the people. The church is not expanding, so “church planting” courses are being offered. Divorce is so common among professing Christians that we now have “divorce recovery” classes and clinics. So many preachers have fallen into moral sin that whole ministries are now devoted to their recovery.

This is a fair representation of the “church” culture of our day. In fact, the church at Corinth has, for all practical purposes, been “restored.” It was shameful for Corinth to have such traits (1 Cor 6:5; 15:34), and it is shameful for them to exist today as well!

These conditions are the direct result of a lack of “change” – the kind of change that DOES take place when we “behold . . . the glory of the Lord.” It is not possible to behold this glory and remain unchanged! It is not that decline is not apt to happen as we “behold.” It is that is CANNOT happen when our attention is not properly focused! A person cannot run the race set before him, “looking unto Jesus,” and go backward, or be diverted into a spiritual alley (Heb 12:1-2). That circumstance cannot happen when the glory of the Lord is shining upon our face!

Our text says that as we behold the glory of the Lord we ARE changed! It does not say we ought to be changed, but that we “are changed.” It does not say that it is possible for us to be changed, but that we “are changed.” It is time for the church to hear this message preached with insight and power. A lack of change among those professing the name of the Lord is not acceptable! There is no religious identity that can compensate for a lack of change! There is no community involvement that can offset the absence of change! There is no Christian program than can make up for the need of change. If the Holy Spirit affirms that change occurs when we behold the glory of the Lord, then where that change is lacking, the people are not beholding the glory. It simply is not possible to validate any other conclusion!

The greatest mission field of our day is the American and European church! It has lapsed into a state of spiritual stagnation, where religious careers and carnal ambitions can be achieved. Within the modern church, it is easier to sell a contemporary Christian music CD or a “how-to” book than to generate any interest in Jesus! A focus upon the Word of God in general, and the Gospel of Christ in particular, is not in vogue. Those who condescend to deal with Scripture at all, often choose to splash around on surface matters, trying to “make the Bible relevant.” Too much time is spent “trying to make things happen.” In the New Covenant, everything is so designed as to guarantee that proper things will happen. Properly focused, people will “be changed!”

Chapter 31

INTO THE SAME IMAGE

“But we all, with open face beholding as in a glass the glory of the Lord, are changed into the same image.” (2 Cor 3:18)

The “change” of reference is not simply refraining from unacceptable conduct. Properly

perceived, stopping the use of drugs is not the “change” of reference! Refraining from immoral practices is not that “change!” Stopping the practice of stealing, or lying, or maltreatment of one’s neighbor, is not that “change.” All of those things can be accomplished without Jesus, without the Spirit, and without beholding the glory of the Lord. It is WHAT WE BECOME that constitutes “change,” not merely what we cease to be.

One might argue that such a definition is not significant enough – that what we do not do is a most critical part of being “changed.” From one point of view, this may appear to be a correct assessment – but it is not altogether proper. When “change” is defined by what we no longer do, it is because ceasing this or that is what produced the change. Such a change was not the result of one’s nature, or basic constitution, but of a disciplinary approach. Proper spiritual change is the REASON for ceasing sinful habits, not the result of that cessation. That is, a moral change has taken place in the individual that has made transgression repulsive to the one who is “changed.”

But let us get more to the text, and leave this philosophical approach. It is what we are changed “into” that is the real point! As we behold the glory of the Lord in the Gospel, we are “changed INTO the same image” that we are beholding! The reflected image that we are beholding is not our own, but that of Jesus Christ – “the face of Jesus Christ” (4 Cor 4:6). In other words, we become “like Him” – which is the predestinated purpose of God (Rom 8:29).

Ultimately, when the Lord appears in all of His own glory, being unveiled by the Father (1 Tim 6:15), then we shall also “appear with Him in glory” (Col 3:4). At that time, in the fullest and most precise sense, “we shall be like Him, for we shall see Him as He is” (1 John 3:2).

In the meantime, we are being “changed” into His image within – being prepared, so to speak, to be “clothed upon with our house which is from heaven” (2 Cor 5:2), which is the resurrected body. Just as Jesus, while He was maturing in this world, “increased in wisdom . . . and in favor with God” (Lk 2:52), so those who “behold the glory of the Lord” are now increasing in “wisdom and spiritual understanding” (Col 1:9), and growing “in favor with God.”

This “change into the same image” is a moral and spiritual transformation. That is, it is an inward change that impacts the entirety of our life in this world, and before the Lord “with whom we have to do” (Heb 4:13). We are being “transformed by the renewing of our mind” (Rom 12:2), or “renewed in the spirit of your mind” (Eph 4:23). That is, we are being brought to perceive things as the Lord sees them. We are acquiring His preferences, participating in His life, and realizing His preferences. It is what Scripture refers to as being “made partakers of Christ,” and “participating in the Divine nature” (Heb 3:14; 2 Pet 1:4).

Whereas once we were fundamentally unlike God, although created in His image (Rom 3:23), now we are being modified at the foundation of our persons, in a fallen world and a corrupt body, we are actually making progress toward the Divine likeness. The “new man,” created in Christ Jesus (2 Cor 5:17), is “renewed in knowledge after the image of Him that created him” (Col 3:10).

AN EXAMPLE OF “CHANGE”

But we all, with open face beholding as in a glass the glory of the Lord, are changed into the same image from glory to glory, even as by the Spirit of the Lord.” (2 Cor 3:18)

An example of the marvelous transformation that is realized by beholding “the glory of the Lord” is seen in the early disciples. Following His enthronement, Peter and John were found, boldly preaching the Jesus whom they had accompanied for over three years. They spoke with such marvelous confidence and boldness that it arrested the attention of the people. It is written that they “took knowledge of them, that they had been with Jesus” (Acts 4:13). That is, they “began to recognize them as having been with Jesus” (NASB).

And how is it that they concluded these men had been with Jesus? It was because they preached like Him. They spoke like Jesus did. They conducted themselves as Jesus did. Their manners were the same as His. They had, in fact, been transformed. Once they had tried to have Jesus send away a woman who was pleading for His help (Matt 15:23). But they were not doing that anymore. They had been “changed.” Once they rebuked Bartimaeus for crying out for mercy, telling him to “hold his peace” (Luke 18:38). They did not do this again. They had been “changed.” Once, when Jesus’ enemies came to arrest Him, all of His disciples ran away, forsaking Him (Matt 26:56). That certainly occurred no more! They had been “changed.” Once they disputed among themselves who of them would be the greatest (Lk 22:44). That certainly occurred no more! They had been “changed.”

SUMMARY THOUGHTS

Why is it that the modern church is so much like the world? Why is so much sin found within its ranks? Why are their spiritual appetites so small? Why is there generally so little difference between those who profess Christ and those who do not? It is because such people have not been “changed!” And why is it that they have not been changed? Is not that the revealed mode of the Kingdom? Does not our very text inform us that this is the manner of the New Covenant?

Where appropriate change is not being realized, the people are not beholding “the glory of the Lord.” The people are not “looking unto Jesus” (Heb 12:2). They are not considering Jesus (Heb 3:1; Heb 12:3). That is why they are not being changed! It simply is not possible to concentrate on the Jesus of Scripture and remain unchanged!

If the Gospel is the appointed means by which the glory of the Lord is perceived, and if it is the means by which we are changed into the same image, how then can anyone defend the postulate that the Gospel is preached only to sinners – the unconverted! Who is it that will dare to champion a position that states the Gospel is not to be preached to the church? Is it not God’s “power unto salvation?” Is it really possible to be “changed” if the people are NOT exposed to “the glory of the Lord.” This is not the glory that is seen in God’s children, but the glory that is seen in His Son – the Son that is revealed in the Gospel, which is “the record God has given of His Son” (1 John 5:10-11)! That glory must be seen directly, not through the veil of human flesh – namely our flesh.

While we are exhorted to let our light shine, that light has no transforming power! Souls are not CHANGED by what they see in us! They can glorify God, turn their eyes toward

Him, and inquire because of our light, but they cannot be changed by it!

We must be exposed directly to the “glory of the Lord” in order to be altered by it – that is, to the glory radiating from the Gospel. Moses’ face was “changed” because he was exposed to the glory of the Lord. However, the glory that radiated from his face did not produce a change in those who saw it. That glory was not a transforming glory.

Chapter 33

CHANGED FROM GLORY TO GLORY

“But we all, with open face beholding as in a glass the glory of the Lord, are changed into the same image from glory to glory.” (Cor 3:18)

Other versions read, “with ever increasing glory” (NIV), “from one degree of glory to another” (NRSV), “with ever-increasing glory” (NIB), “brighter and brighter glory” (NJB), “We become more and more like Him” (NLT), “with one glory after another” (IE), “from one degree of radiant holiness to another” (Weymouth), and “from one degree of splendor to another” (Williams).

The “change” of reference is not an instantaneous one! It begins instantly, but it is consummated gradually – “from glory TO glory.” This gradation is not like something that simply grows bigger and bigger – like a balloon that is being filled with air. This is an increase like the rising of the sun, that grows brighter and brighter. It is an increase in which the Lord becomes more and more prominent. It is increase as in maturity – moving forward to an appointed objective and fulfillment.

Each successive “degree of glory” complements and prepares the way for the next. There is no degree that is at variance with another. Nor, indeed, is there a stage that can be eliminated, like taking a sort of spiritual shortcut. The larvae cannot simply sidestep the cocoon, sprout wings, and fly away. The tadpole cannot simply be moved to a water lily and suddenly become a frog, instantly spouting feet and a long tongue. Nor, indeed, have specialists in nature been appointed to wave a wand over the larvae like Moses held his water over the sea, suddenly changing it into a butterfly.

This is a change than does not come by human intervention. There are not members of the body of Christ that have been gifted to work transformation. This is something that requires the attention of the one being “changed, and the working of the mighty God of heaven.”

Here is the mode of the kingdom: “first the blade, then the ear, after that the full corn in the ear” (Mark 4:28). That is being moved from one stage of glory to another! Peter states it in yet another way, “But the God of all grace, who hath called us unto his eternal glory by Christ Jesus, after that ye have suffered a while, make you perfect, stablish, strengthen, settle you” (1 Pet 5:10). That is moving from one stage of glory to another.

Yet another way of depicting this “change” is found in a personal acquaintance with the Lord: “increasing in the knowledge of God” (Col 1:10). Stated another way it is fulfilling the admonition, “walk and to please God, so ye would abound more and more” (1 Thess 4:1). The Philippians were told much the same thing: “And this I pray, that your love may abound yet more and more in knowledge and in all judgment” (Phil 1:9).

Chapter 34

INCREASE IS THE MANNER OF THE KINGDOM

The nature of the Kingdom Jesus is presently governing is to grow, or increase.

That is what Isaiah prophesied: “Of the INCREASE of his government and peace there shall be no end, upon the throne of David, and upon his kingdom, to order it, and to establish it with judgment and with justice from henceforth even for ever. The zeal of the LORD of hosts will perform this” (Isa 9:7).

That is how Daniel was given to see it: “And in the days of these kings shall the God of heaven set up a kingdom, which shall never be destroyed: and the kingdom shall not be left to other people, but it shall break in pieces and consume all these kingdoms, and it shall stand for ever” (Dan 2:44).

This is how the Lord Jesus represented the Kingdom: “It is like leaven, which a woman took and hid in three measures of meal, till the whole was leavened” (Luke 13:21). And again, “Another parable put he forth unto them, saying, The kingdom of heaven is like to a grain of mustard seed, which a man took, and sowed in his field: which indeed is the least of all seeds: but when it is grown, it is the greatest among herbs, and becometh a tree, so that the birds of the air come and lodge in the branches thereof” (Matt 13:31-32).

The Apostolic doctrine also spoke of this increase: “But speaking the truth in love, may grow up into him in all things, which is the head, even Christ: from whom the whole body fitly joined together and compacted by that which every joint supplieth, according to the effectual working in the measure of every part, maketh INCREASE of the body unto the edifying of itself in love” (Eph 4:16). And again, “And not holding the Head, from which all the body by joints and bands having nourishment ministered, and knit together, INCREASETH with the INCREASE of God” (Col 2:19). And again, “But GROW in grace, and in the knowledge of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. To him be glory both now and for ever. Amen” (2 Pet 3:18).

Spiritual growth is depicted as shining “MORE AND MORE unto the perfect day” (Prov 4:18). The life of the believer is said to be “from faith to faith” (Rom 1:17), pressing toward the mark (Phil 3:14), and apprehending that for which we have been apprehended (Phil 3:12). The “more and more” concept is woven throughout Apostolic teaching (Phil 1:9; 1 Thess 4:1,10). There is also the “much more” view (Rom 5:9,10,15,17,20; Phil 2:12). And who can forget the New Covenant accent on abounding and abundance (Rom 15:13; 2 Cor 8:7; Phil 1:9,26; 2 Pet 1:8; 1 Cor 15:58; Col 2:7)?

Where is there the slightest hint of any degree of acceptance of mediocrity, stagnancy, averageness, fruitlessness, or perpetual spiritual childhood? Those in Christ are admonished to advance from childhood to maturity (1 Cor 14:20). They are exhorted to seek the things that are above, and to set their affection upon them (Col 3:1-2).

The mode of spiritual life is always upward, onward, and further! That is, there is no provision made for anything else! God has no grace for the slothful, the indolent, the idle, and the lukewarm! There is no room reserved for those who are content to remain at a distance from the Lord – none at all! Everything about salvation – every single aspect of it – is calculated to produce growth, advance, and spiritual maturity.

Our text is showing us HOW this is accomplished. It is the result of focusing on “the glory of the Lord.” That glory permeates the heart like the glory of God on Sinai affected

the skin of Moses' face. It changes the beholder to be like the One he is beholding! Let it be clear, there is no other kind of salvation that comes from God. All other purported salvations are spurious! They present "another Jesus" contained in "another gospel."

Chapter 35

BY THE SPIRIT OF THE LORD

" . . . even as by the Spirit of the Lord." 2 Cor 3:18)

Other versions read, "just as from the Lord, the Spirit" (NASB), "which comes from the Lord, who is the Spirit" (NIV), "for this comes from the Lord, who is the Spirit" (RSV), "this is the working of the Lord, who is the Spirit" (NJB), "as the Spirit of the Lord works within us" (NLT), "it comes from the Spirit of the Lord" (IE), "as derived from the Lord the Spirit" (Weymouth), "since it comes from the Lord who is the Spirit" (Williams), and "[for this comes] from the Lord [Who is] the Spirit" (AMPLIFIED).

The "change" of which our text speaks is not automatic – it is not impersonal. It is not like a law, so that if you will behold the glory, you will be changed as though by something impersonal. This change results from beholding "the glory of the Lord," but it is "the Spirit of the Lord" who actually accomplishes that change.

The wording of the text is very precise. Earlier "the Spirit" is identified as the Lord Himself: "the Lord is that Spirit" (v 17). The meaning is simply this: it is the glory of the Lord that we are beholding, and it is His glory that is transforming us. This by no means excluded the ministry of the Holy Spirit, which is foundational throughout the New Covenant. However, it is not the glory of the Spirit that we are required to behold! Nowhere in Scripture – I say nowhere – is the Spirit Himself the focus of attention. His work is always and ever in strict concert with our focus upon Jesus Christ – the Christ revealed in the Gospel. When the Spirit speaks, it is "not of Himself" (John 16:13). We are not admonished to look to the Spirit, but to Jesus (Heb 12:2). We are not to pray to the Spirit, but to the Father (Phil 4:6). We are not to believe on the Spirit, but upon the Lord Jesus Christ (Acts 16:31).

The Spirit effectively works, but not for us – He works in us for Jesus, who has sent Him from the Father (John 15:26). Ponder the glorious nature of His work.

1. He leads us to subdue the flesh (Rom 8:14).
2. He washes, sanctifies, and justifies us (1 Cor 1:30).
3. He moves us to confess that Jesus is Lord (1 Cor 12:3).
4. He distributes the various spiritual gifts (1 Cor 12:8-11).
5. He revealed the mystery of God to Christ's holy apostles and prophets (Eph 3:5).
6. He enables us to wait for the hope of righteousness (Gal 5:5).
7. God inhabits the church through the Spirit (Eph 2:22).
8. We obey the truth "through the Spirit" (1 Pet 1:22).
9. He sheds the love of God abroad in our hearts (Rom 5:5).
10. He brings joy to those who are in Christ Jesus (Rom 14:17).

11. We abound in hope through the power of the Holy Spirit (Rom 15:13).
12. He “renews” and refurbishes the people of God (Tit 3:5).
13. He intercedes for us when our own knowledge is deficient (Rom 8:26-27).

Chapter 36

BY THE SPIRIT OF THE LORD

But we all, with open face beholding as in a glass the glory of the Lord, are changed into the same image from glory to glory, even as by the Spirit of the Lord.” (2 Cor 3:18)

All of these things are done by the Spirit as the Representative of Jesus Christ, who is the Lord who emanates the glory we are beholding.

When is it that the Spirit accomplishes these required changes? How is it that He actually moves us from one increasing stage of glory to another? It is while we are “beholding the glory of the Lord!” If there is no beholding, there will be no changing, no advancement, no increase, no conformity to the image of God’s Son! If we will behold the glory of the Lord, pondering the “glorious Gospel of the blessed God” (Cor 4:4; 1 Tim 1:11), the Spirit will transform us. That is what Jesus has sent Him to do, and He will do it when we become enamored of Jesus!

Let it be clear to you: the Spirit will not do His conforming and changing work until our hearts are enthralled with the Christ of the Gospel. If we do not look intently on the glory of the Lord, retrogression is inevitable, for God has made no provision for spiritual stagnation, or remaining perpetually in the same place. Those who imagine there is a place in Jesus to remain unchanged in a static state have simply been deluded. Such a place does not exist! Further, if we do not gaze steadfastly on the glory of the Lord, the Spirit will not work within us. He can only work to the degree that we are “looking unto Jesus.”

Within this context, it becomes clear why we are admonished, “grieve not the Spirit, whereby we are sealed unto the day of redemption,” and “Quench not the Spirit!” (Eph 4:30; 1 Thess 5:19). There simply is no way to please God, enjoy His favor, or be conformed to the image of His Son independently of the work of the Holy Spirit. Further, the Holy Spirit will work in us only to the degree that we are focused upon the Lord Jesus, who is the One upon whom God the Father has fixed His own attention. He does not change those who are focused on a movement, or a humanly devised project, or some one’s opinion of what the Bible teaches.

There are some who teach that those who wear the name of Christ will be saved no matter what they do. But for such a thing to take place, God would have to save a people who were not changed, “from glory unto glory” by the Spirit of God! Such an absurdity postulates that the work of the Holy Spirit is not necessary at all. All of the remarkable benefits of salvation are thus represented as being set in place, but not really required. All of the exhortations to holiness become meaningless. Every threat of Divine wrath is then pointless. Thus, according to this heresy, deliverance is really not deliverance at all, but is only a weak and insipid formality that has left the people fundamentally the same – no change, no transformation, no metamorphosis! Such a person is totally unsuited for glory!

In the face of all of these things, our text affirms that salvation is not something

theoretical. It is not simply a matter for discussion, or an issue that is intended to be settled by a creed of some formalized theological position. Rather, the salvation of God is designed to eliminate the conditions caused by sin, and then orient the individual for glory – to reign with Jesus. Where this is not being done, nothing of any real consequence is taking place.

The salvation of God is achieved in the crucible of conflict, and results in the saved being “changed” into the image of Christ – conformed to the image of God’s Son. It all takes place while Jesus has, and continues to receive, our undivided attention.

Chapter 37

CONCLUSION

“But we all, with open face beholding as in a glass the glory of the Lord, are changed into the same image from glory to glory, even as by the Spirit of the Lord.” (2 Cor 3:18)

All of this may seem very apparent, but that is not at all the case. From the very beginning, the church has had trouble in this area – the area of seeing the nature and effectiveness of New Covenant life. Early on it was plagued with those who could not conceive of an approach to God that excluded circumcision in the flesh (Acts 15:1). Others saw life in Christ as providing for personal gain and misrepresentation (Acts 5:1-10). Still others sought to promote the keeping of days and other regulatory ordinances that really did not require Christ (Col 2:16-17). Some returned to a principle of Law, perceiving Christ as not sufficient (Gal 5:4). It was not long until whole churches left their “first love” (Eph 2:4). Some thought nothing of tolerating those within their number who held to doctrines Jesus Himself hated (Rev 2:14-15). There were actually churches who allowed some to teach Christ’s servants to commit fornication and eat meat offered to idols (Rev 2:20).

Some churches thought they had everything they needed, yet were miserable, blind, and naked before Jesus (Rev 3:17). Some had a name that they lived, yet were dead (Rev 3:1). There were some elders that usurped leadership, gathering followers unto themselves instead of Christ (Acts 20:29-30). In the time of Jude, certain crept into the church unawares, who were “ungodly men.” They turned the grace of God into “lasciviousness,” and denied “the only Lord God and our Lord Jesus Christ” (Jude 1:6).

With the advent of religious institutions and the invasion of spiritual Babylon, corruption within the church has accelerated. Generally speaking, within the professed church Jesus is really not the object of attention. It is enough to put His name on buildings, jewelry, and books that really have little to do with Him.

But all of this has not changed what God is doing in Christ Jesus. He is still revealing His Son and Himself in the Gospel. He still is changing those who fix their eyes on the Jesus of that Gospel, and refuse to move them away. The Holy Spirit is still advancing those beholders from one stage of glory to another, shaping and perfecting them for the world to come. Neither the heavenly agenda nor the means of fulfilling it has changed. Blessed is the person who insists on beholding the glory of the Lord in the face of Jesus Christ. That person is moving forward, being conformed to the image of Jesus by the Spirit.

As for professing Christian preachers, teachers, and leaders who are not delivering a word in which Jesus Christ is emphasized above everything else, they should be

terminated as officials or authorities within the church. They should not be supported, encouraged, or tolerated. Their presumptuous leadership should be forthrightly rejected. If they are not, in truth, laborers together with God (1 Cor 3:9), they should not be permitted to teach and profit from the churches. It is the allowance of such men that has brought the modern church to its present state. Their miserable teaching is what has produced a flawed people – just as surely as it did in Corinth (2 Cor 11:4) and Galatia (Gal 1:6).

Enough of saying what “Christians” ought to be, then confessing that is not what they are. Let there be a cessation of defending the existence of people who say they are “Christians,” and yet they are not becoming like Him. Let it be known that it is still true, “And EVERY MAN that hath this hope in him purifieth himself, even as he is pure” (1 John 3:3). Let the people of God be told, “Little children, let no man deceive you: he that doeth righteousness is righteous, even as he is righteous” (1 John 3:7). And again, “Herein is our love made perfect, that we may have boldness in the day of judgment: because AS HE IS, SO ARE WE IN THIS WORLD” (1 John 4:17).