

## Transformed By Christ

2 Corinthians 3:18

10/4/17; Grace Church of Lockeford

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We will primarily be focusing on verse 18. However, the reference to a veil is better explained as we go back and start reading at verse 7. Paul is contrasting the written law with the Holy Spirit. In verses 7-8 he references when God gave Moses the ten commandments. His argument is that if that event was so glorious that the Israelites could look at Moses' face, how much more glorious will the ministry of the Spirit be?

This is clearly expressed in verse 9. The Law condemns. If it had glory and it couldn't even make us righteous, how much more glory comes with the Spirit? In verse 10 Paul argues that the coming of the Holy Spirit is so glorious that it makes the glory of the Law as if it was not glorious at all! Verse 11 explains his logic. The Law is done away with in Christ. He fulfilled the Law and therefore it is passing away. But what remains, the Holy Spirit received by grace through faith, is much more glorious than the Law ever was!

What is Paul's point? Dwelling in us is something more glorious and life altering than anything found in the Law. We have the Holy Spirit living inside of us!

In verse 12 Paul introduces something interesting. We are bold because of the hope (confident expectation) we have in Christ through the Holy Spirit! When Moses came down from the mountain he had to put a veil over his face (v. 13). Paul uses this as an illustration of a lack of boldness because of the temporary nature of the Law. If we were to read the account in Exodus 34-35 we would discover that the people were frightened by Moses' shining face! They asked him to cover it. Paul ascribes this desire to the blindness of their hearts and minds (v. 14). Paul then takes the veil Moses wore and uses it as an analogy of the blindness of Israel. Their minds are blinded when they read the OT. There is a veil that can only be "taken away in Christ"!

In verse 15 Paul states that the veil is present on their hearts even now, when Moses is read. What is glorious is that when we trust in Jesus Christ, the veil is taken away and we are able to understand Scripture (v. 16). Paul explains how this is possible in verse 17. The Holy Spirit is God and where He is there is liberty. There is no veil! There is nothing preventing us from understanding the Word of God. All of this is Paul's setup, the groundwork and foundation for verse 18. Apart from the Holy Spirit there is blindness and an inability to understand Scripture. But when the Holy Spirit comes and gives liberty we are able to see and understand!

Verse 18 describes this ability to see and understand as having an "unveiled face". We are not blinded! We can see and understand. This ability to see and understand is described as beholding the glory of the Lord in a mirror. The Word of God is like a polished mirror that reflects and reveals the glory of the Lord! There is something really important about this analogy. A mirror only reveals something to you if you look at it. A mirror will still reflect when you look away, but it doesn't reveal anything to you until you look in it! God's Word is the same. It reflects God's glory whether we read it or not. But when we read it, God's glory is revealed to us!

"Glory" is the Greek word δόξα (doxa) meaning *Glory, the manifest presentation of God's infinite and majestic nature*. I love this! God's Word reveals to us the manifest presentation of God's infinite and majestic nature! That is what we see when we read and study the Word. We discover who God is!

Those who avoid the Word of God avoid glimpsing His glory. When we do not see the glory of God revealed in His Word, we are not changed by it. Transformation into the image of God is only possible as we see that image revealed in His Word! We have to look into the mirror of God's Word to see His glory and be transformed by it!

"Transformed" is the Greek word μεταμορφόω (*metamorphōō*) meaning *be changed; be transformed. To be or become changed in outward appearance or expression as manifesting a change in nature or essence*. This is where we get our English word metamorphosis. Like a caterpillar changing its form and becoming a butterfly, we metamorphose into the likeness of God! This only happens as we study the Word! We are conformed to the

image of Christ! *Rom. 12:1-2* exhorts us to be transformed by the renewing of our minds. Our minds are renewed by the Word of God. *Rom. 8:29* declares that we have been predestined to be conformed to image of God's Son. This same idea is present here in 2 Cor.

Image is the idea of likeness. We gain Christ's image. This is done gradually during this life. The process of sanctification is from glory to glory and it comes through the agency of the Holy Spirit. Here's what I found so encouraging in this passage. We are being transformed into the image of Christ! This is something that is taking place! The more we read and study the Word of God, the more we will bear His image. This is what the Holy Spirit is doing in you and me! What a glorious blessing of salvation.

**CHALLENGE:** Get into the Word, see God's glory, and be transformed into His image!

Unveiled - ἀνακαλύπτομαι (*anakalyptomai*) *uncover; unveil. To be uncovered (unveiled) v. — to be or become not covered (by a veil); exposed.* Verb, perfect, passive, circumstantial participle, singular, dative, neuter. What's important here is that Paul is using this as an illustration of blindness.

“although Moses' face was unveiled when he was conversing with God and was reporting God's words to the congregation, it was thereafter veiled until he returned to the Lord's presence (*Exod. 34:33–35*). Christians, however, see the divine glory with permanently uncovered faces.” Murray J. Harris, *The Second Epistle to the Corinthians: A Commentary on the Greek Text*, New International Greek Testament Commentary (Grand Rapids, MI; Milton Keynes, UK: W.B. Eerdmans Pub. Co.; Paternoster Press, 2005), 313.

Beholding as in a mirror - κατοπτρίζομαι (*katoptrizomai*) *reflect; contemplate. To mirror-gaze v. — to gaze at something (normally oneself) in a mirror.* Verb, present, middle, circumstantial participle, plural, nominative.

### **The Bible Exposition Commentary Chapter Three: From Glory to Glory (2 Corinthians 3)**

Under the Old Covenant, only Moses ascended the mountain and had fellowship with God; but under the New Covenant, all believers have the privilege of communion with Him. Through Jesus Christ, we may enter into the very holy of holies (*Heb. 10:19–20*)—and we don't have to climb a mountain!

### **The Bible Exposition Commentary Chapter Three: From Glory to Glory (2 Corinthians 3)**

The “mirror” is a symbol of the Word of God (*James 1:22–25*). As we look into God's Word and see God's Son, the Spirit transforms us into the very image of God

Glory - δόξα (*doxa*) *glory. Glory (divine) n. — the manifest presentation of God's infinite and majestic nature; normally conveyed to humanity as superlative brightness.* Noun (direct object), accusative, singular, feminine.

“We are being transformed into the same image, from one degree of glory to another.” Murray J. Harris, *The Second Epistle to the Corinthians: A Commentary on the Greek Text*, New International Greek Testament Commentary (Grand Rapids, MI; Milton Keynes, UK: W.B. Eerdmans Pub. Co.; Paternoster Press, 2005), 315.

### **2 Corinthians: An Introduction and Commentary 2. Exposition of Exodus 34:33–35 (3:12–18)**

If we were to ask Paul in what way believers behold the glory of God, his answer would be that they do so as the ‘veils’ are removed from their minds so that the truth of the gospel is no longer hidden from them. Thus it is in ‘the light of the gospel’ that they behold ‘the glory of Christ, who is the likeness of God’, and they see ‘the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Christ’ (*4:3–6*).

### **Faithlife Study Bible Chapter 3**

Paul suggests that believers will progress through ever-greater degrees of glory (*doxa* in Greek). This may mean that they will learn and grow more in their relationship with Him over time. Alternatively, this progress may begin with the indwelling presence of the Holy Spirit and culminate in the transformation of the physical body into a glorious one (*1 Cor 15:50–54*).

Transformed - μεταμορφώω (*metamorphoō*) *be changed; be transformed. To be transformed v. — to be or become changed in outward appearance or expression as manifesting a change in nature or essence.* Finite verb, present, passive, indicative, first person, plural.

### **The Bible Exposition Commentary Chapter Three: From Glory to Glory (2 Corinthians 3)**

Metamorphosis describes the process that changes an insect from a larva into a pupa and then into a mature insect. The changes come from within.

### **The Grace New Testament Commentary 3. New Covenant Priority in Ministry (3:4–18)**

If the Corinthians desired to become Christlike, they would need to look intently at God's Word. As believers do this, they go from glory to glory, that is, from one degree of glory to another.

Image - εἰκών (eikōn) *image*. *Likeness n.* — *similarity in appearance, character, or nature between persons or things*. Noun (direct object), accusative, singular, feminine.

### **Summarized Bible: Complete Summary of the New Testament Chapter Three**

v. 18. Those who yield to the working of the Holy Spirit may be made more and more into the image of Christ (Rom. 8:29). The Holy Spirit longs to bring us into conformity to the “family likeness” even before the hour when we shall see Him face to face and be made like Him.