Grace to You :: *Unleashing God's Truth, One Verse at a Time*

The Glory of the New Covenant, Part 7
Scripture: 2 Corinthians 3:17-18
Code: 47-21

Let's open our Bibles to 2 Corinthians chapter 3 as we bring to a close this wonderful study of a great chapter, a chapter on the glory of the new covenant. I have to offer an apology to those of you who have not been with us for this series because we are sort of pulling together the remaining strands. And I apologize that some of it may be a little bit hard to grasp because you haven't had the benefit of the foundation that has been laid for the last couple of months as we've been studying this chapter. We'll trust the Spirit of God, however, to minister truth to your heart as He is able.

In our final message on this rich chapter, we come to a verse that has been a favorite verse of mine for many years. In fact, very often when I sign my name in a book or a Bible I will put 2 Corinthians 3:18 under my name because I for years and years have loved this verse. In fact, I used to say it was my favorite verse but I keep vacillating and shifting to various different verses from time to time as the Lord applies them in my life.

On one occasion a few years ago, maybe ten, I was asked to write a book on my favorite verse, and at that time I chose this verse and wrote a book that some of you may even remember. This verse is a treasure, let me read it to you, verse 18. "But we all with unveiled face, beholding as in a mirror the glory of the Lord are being transformed into the same image from glory to glory, just as from the Lord, the Spirit."

Now that verse presents really what is the process of Christian growth. It presents what is the process of sanctification by which a believer is being conformed to the image of Jesus Christ. Let me just give you a brief bit of background in Romans 8:29, the Apostle Paul tells us what the purpose of God was in saving His people. He says this, "Whom He foreknew He predestined to become conformed to the image of His Son." The saving purpose of God was to create a redeemed humanity who would be like His Son. Imitation is the highest form of flattery, and certainly it was true in the trinity as God made an eternal promise with the Son to create a redeemed humanity who would be made like Him. And so we were saved to become like Christ. That's why the Bible says, "It does not yet appear what we shall be but when He shall appear we shall be like Him." That's the goal, that's the purpose of our redemption, that's why God saved us, to make us like Christ. And in time as we await the reality of that, we progressively become more and more like Christ, that's sanctification waiting for glorification. We are ever becoming more and more like Christ.

Paul saw that as the very reason for life as a believer. He said, "This one thing I do..." that's a pretty remarkable statement. If you can take all of Pauline theology with regard to the Christian life and reduce it to one thing, it's a pretty important thing. If he only did one thing, I want to know what the one thing was. "Forgetting those things that are behind, he said, I press toward the goal for the prize of the high calling of God." What is the prize? Christ's likeness, that's what we're going to be when we get to heaven. What is the goal? The prize in eternity is Christ's likeness. What is the goal? The goal in time is Christ's likeness. Paul says I know what I'm going to be and I'm in pursuit of it here and now. To know Christ, to fellowship with His sufferings, to be made conformable to His death, to experience the power of His resurrection, to be like Christ was the passion of His life. It was the singular thing he was involved with. It was the one thing he did.

Here in this verse we are told that as we gaze at the glory of the Lord, as we focus on the reality of Jesus Christ, God revealed in Christ demonstrating His glory, as we look at that glory, we are transformed by the Holy Spirit from one level of glory into the very same image. In other words, the Holy Spirit is ever increasingly making us like Christ. This is sanctification. This is the goal of Christian living.

More than any other single verse, this one shows how believers move into Christ's likeness. No question that this is the objective of our life. We are all to come to the measure of the fullness of the stature of Christ, according to Ephesians chapter 4. Paul writing to the Galatians in chapter 4 and verse 19 said, "I am in birth pains until Christ is fully formed in you." He said to the Colossians that we teach every man in order that we may present every man perfect. In other words, we want to bring every one of you as close to the very image of Christ as we can. That's the goal of Christian living and that's what that verse is saying. God by His Spirit moves us toward Christ's likeness, taking us from level of glory to the next, to the next, to the next.

So this verse is really at the heart of Christian experience. It is also a verse that talks about glory. And glory is a key theme in this passage, as you know. And what it is saying here is that there is a work of increasing glory in the life of a believer. Now get that. There is a work of increasing glory in the life of a believer. New covenant believers experience an increasing glory, in contrast to Moses who had on his face...what kind of a glory?...a decreasing glory, a fading glory.

Now God's glory, the fact that it was revealed to His people is not new. There's nothing new about the idea that God revealed His glory to His people...He did. He revealed His glory to Adam and Eve in the Garden when His presence was there. And they walked and talked with Him in the cool of the day. He revealed His glory to the children of Israel when He appeared as a cloud by day and a pillar of fire by night. And I've told you in the past that God literally took all of His attributes, mercy and grace and kindness and love and holiness, and somehow transformed them into visible light. And that was the representation of His presence. He revealed His glory to His people. He revealed His glory to His people when He came down into the tabernacle and the glory filled the tabernacle so that the

priests couldn't even minister. He revealed His glory to His people when He came down at the completion of the temple and His glory was manifest. And theologians have always called that the Shekinah, which means presence, the presence of God is manifest in light since God is a spirit and you cannot see a spirit, God manifests Himself in this blazing light.

But certainly the most unusual manifestation of the Shekinah occurred in Exodus 34. In Exodus 34 we have the record of Moses. And he goes up into the mountain. And I'll just refresh you because some folks may have missed it. It's behind this text, as we have noted. Moses went up into the mount, Mount Sinai, to receive the Law of God. And there he came face to face with God's glory. It says in verse 29 of Exodus 34, "It came about when Moses was coming down from Mount Sinai and the two tablets of the testimony were in Moses' hand as he was coming down from the mountain, that Moses did not know that the skin of his face shone because of his speaking with Him."

What had happened was that the glory of God was all over the face of Moses. It was on him. Now the glory of God had not only come to men but on men. For the first time the glory of God was literally on the face of a man. So when Aaron and all the sons of Israel saw Moses, behold the skin of his face shone, and they were afraid to come near him, it would be blazing like the sun. And Moses called to them and Aaron and all the rulers in the synagogue returned to him after kind of fleeing because of the brightness and Moses spoke to them. And, of course, he spoke to them the things that God had given him to speak. And afterward, all the sons of Israel came near and he commanded them to do everything the Lord had spoken to him on Mount Sinai. When Moses had finished speaking with Him, he put a veil over his face. Why? So they could look at him, so they could be around him without being blinded. But whenever Moses went in before the Lord to speak with Him, he would take off the veil until he came out. And whenever he came out and spoke to the sons of Israel what he had been commanded, the sons of Israel would see the face of Moses that the skin of Moses' face shone. So Moses would replace the veil over his face until he went in to speak with Him.

When he was talking with God he could leave the veil off. When he came out to speak to the people he left the veil off so they would see that this was the radiating glory of God...they would, in effect, see the glory of the old covenant, the glory manifested in the old covenant portrayed on his face. And then when he had recited that from the old covenant which God wanted him to say, he would put the veil over so he wouldn't blind the people.

So we see from that incident that the glory of God came in the Old Testament time two people and even on this occasion on people. The old covenant had a glory, both in its civil and its ceremonial and its moral component, the old covenant had a glory. It was from God, it was holy, just and good. It had divine features, it was the divine revelation, that is to say it revealed the nature of God, it revealed the will of God, it revealed the redemptive purpose and plan of God. It unquestionably had a glory. And Paul wants that known. In fact, in verse 7 he says, "That ministry in death in letters engraved on stones came with glory."

Paul had been accused by the Judaizers and by the Party of the Circumcision depreciating and downgrading and denigrating the Law of God. And here he says, not so, it came with glory. In fact, so much glory, he says in verse 7, that the sons of Israel couldn't look intently at the face of Moses because of the glory of his face. Yes, the old covenant had a glory, it was from God. It demonstrated God's character, God's will for man and God's redemptive plan and purpose, but the new covenant, says Paul, has a greater glory and he says in verse 9 that the new covenant called a ministry of righteousness abounds in glory. It has in verse 10 a surpassing glory. It has in verse 11 a remaining glory.

Now it is that glory, that surpassing, abounding and remaining glory of the new covenant that is really the theme of verse 18. Now listen as I sort of pull that together. The old covenant had a glory, it was given two men placed on men. The new covenant has a glory that is placed in men...in men.

Let me put it to you as simply as I can. We have more in common with a transfigured Christ than we do with Moses because, you remember in Matthew chapter 17 that Christ pulled back the veil of His flesh and He was transfigured before him, He was metamorphosized, transformed, and the glory came from within. Like John 1:14, "We beheld His glory, the glory as of the only begotten of God, full of grace and truth." It is an inward glory that radiated from Christ. With Moses it was a topical application of glory, it was an external glory. We have more in common with the glory that Christ manifested in His transfiguration than the glory that Moses manifested on the mountain because in Christ ours is an internal glory. Why? Because that is the nature of the new covenant. The glory is placed within us. Why? Because the living Christ is placed within us. Christ in you, the hope of...what?...glory.

And so, when the Judaizers would come into the city of Corinth or anywhere else, as they had done here, and start to preach old covenant glory, old covenant law, old covenant ceremony and advocate the fact that the old covenant was essential for salvation, the old covenant had a saving component, the Apostle Paul would deny that. And here he denies it in a number of ways, as we have already noted, culminating by saying the old covenant had an external glory but the new covenant has an internal one. In fact, as we behold the glory of the Lord we are moved, literally transformed from one level of glory to the next by the Holy Spirit.

The old covenant had a fading glory, the new covenant has an unfading glory. The old covenant had a decreasing glory, it would diminish on the face of Moses and he'd have to go back up and get another load of it. The new covenant does not have a decreasing diminishing glory, it has an increasing glory. There is no fading reflection of a covenant that cannot save. There is an ever-increasing exposure of a covenant that can and does save. And thus the new covenant is superior to the old covenant. That's Paul's final point here. He is defending himself and all true preachers who preach the new covenant. Paul recognizes that the non-saving old covenant had a glory but it was a

faded glory, it was a veiled glory. It had to pass away and be replaced by a new covenant. The old covenant could only minister death, says verse 7, it could only minister condemnation, says verse 9. It could only stir up sin and render men guilty. It could not save them.

On the other hand, the new covenant is much superior. Why? Let me remind you of the points. It gives life, verse 6, the letter kills but the Spirit working through the new covenant gives life.

Secondly, it provides righteousness, verse 9, he calls the new covenant the ministry of righteousness. The old covenant couldn't provide righteousness. All it could do is curse. No one by virtue of keeping the Law of God could achieve righteousness.

Thirdly, it is permanent...it is permanent. It remains, says verse 11, it remains as in contrast to the old covenant which is replaced.

Fourthly, the new covenant is superior because it brings hope, verse 12, having therefore such a hope we use great boldness in our speech. The old covenant was a hopeless thing, all it did was bring the sinner to the point of overwhelming guilt and shame. He realized his sinfulness. He realized there was nothing in him that could change that. He had no capacity to achieve righteousness on his own. It left him in terrible despair, crying out for the mercy of God. But the new covenant brings hope.

Fifthly, we noted that the new covenant is clear. In verses 13 through 15 Paul talks about the fact that the glory of the old covenant had to be veiled. And there is in that an illustration of the obscurity of the old covenant, types and symbols and pictures and ceremonies, and offerings, none of which were the reality but were all pictures of the reality to come. And there was a certain obscurity to the old covenant that is revealed in Christ. The mysteries are revealed in the new covenant.

Sixthly, the new covenant is superior because it is Christ centered. I love this, he says verse 14 at the end, the veil is removed in Christ. Verse 16, "Whenever a man turns to the Lord, the veil is taken away." Everything becomes clear in a Christ-centered life. And so the new covenant is superior because it gives life, provides righteousness, is permanent, brings hope, is clear, is Christ-centered...and number seven, is empowered by the Spirit. I wish we had finished this point last week, we didn't, let me finish it today.

Verse 17, "Now the Lord is the Spirit and where the Spirit of the Lord is there is liberty." The agency, the divine agency working through the new covenant is the Holy Spirit. And the Spirit is none other than Yahweh. In other words, the same God who wrote the Old Testament is the one who wrote the New through his Spirit, the same God who wrote the moral law which damns men is the God who wrote the new covenant which redeems them. The same God who renders all the world guilty and every mouth stopped is the same God who manifests Himself in His Spirit to liberate men and to free

them. The same God who put them in bondage under the law is the God who brings them liberty through His Spirit.

In other words, there is no conflict. It isn't one God of the Old Testament, old covenant, and another God of the New Testament, new covenant. It is the same God. The Lord is the very Spirit who liberates from the bondage of the old covenant. All that the old covenant was ever intended to do was to drive men to despair and then the despair to plead for mercy and grace from a kind and loving God. And the Spirit of the Lord is that saving power who applies the new covenant salvation to the repentant believer, listen to this, in any age. When an Old Testament person saw the Law for what it really was, a ministry of condemnation, a ministry of death, and when they were slain, as it were, and when they feared hell, and when they realized their sinfulness, and when the Law had done its work and they had a repentant heart and they came to God and pleaded for mercy and pleaded for grace and pleaded for forgiveness which they didn't deserve but which they pled for, and God in grace looked at them and forgave them...that work of transformation that occurred there was the Spirit of God's work. And He was applying, listen, the new covenant work of Christ retroactively to that penitent sinner. But it was the Spirit's work. Salvation any time whether in the Old Testament or the New Testament under the old covenant or the new covenant was, is, always will be the work of the Spirit who is none other than the Lord. And isn't it marvelous, the same God who wrote the Law is the same God who liberates the repentant sinner from the bondage of the Law? Like Romans 8 says, "And sets him free to keep the Law, not as a means of death anymore but as a means of life and blessing."

Now in talking about that, and that was review, in talking about that the question came up...what was the Holy Spirit's function in the Old Testament? Because if you've been involved in a dispensational background in studying the Bible you perhaps have thought that the Holy Spirit didn't do anything in the Old Testament, He didn't arrive until the Day of Pentecost and there just was a big sort of blank in the Old Testament in terms of the ministry of the Holy Spirit. Nothing could be further from the truth.

We started to point that out last week. Let me just remind you of what we said. In the Old Testament we see the Holy Spirit work in four areas crystal clear, unquestionably this is revealed in Scripture. One is creation, we went into that. Two is empowerment. The Holy Spirit came upon So-and-so and he did this. Three is revelation, the whole Old Testament came to the writers of the Old Testament by means of the Holy Spirit, very clearly, 2 Peter 1:21. Fourthly, and this sometimes where people get confused, the Holy Spirit not only in creation, empowerment, revelation but in regeneration...in regeneration. Old Testament believers were regenerated, they were born again, they were made new, they were transformed by the power of God through the agency of the Holy Spirit. That should be patently obvious.

Why? Well, first of all, they were all wretched sinners, they were all totally depraved. Their hearts were deceitful above all things and desperately wicked. They had no capacity to change. They

couldn't do anything to alter their wretched condition. Can the Ethiopian change his color?...can the leopard change his spots?...says the prophet. The answer is no. So there are all of humanity trapped in this terrible condition of utter depravity and inability, they can't do anything to please God, even their righteousness is...what?...filthy rags.

Now how on their own are they going to start to love God, please God, hate sin, serve God and worship God? It can't happen. It can't happen. It's filthy rags. They have to be regenerated.

We also saw in the Old Testament that the Holy Spirit convicts of sin. Way in Genesis 6 the Holy Spirit striving with man. We also saw in the Old Testament that believers loved God. They loved His Word...read Psalm 119, "O how I love Thy law," that's not true of somebody who hasn't been transformed. They were transformed to love God, they were transformed to love and obey the Word, they were transformed to hate sin. That was the work of the Holy Spirit. They were regenerated, new born people. They were transformed people just like we are. There's no question about that otherwise they never had the capacity humanly to change. God had to change them.

Think of it this way. Hebrews chapter 11, you have all those heroes of faith, starting with Abraham and going all the way through. All those are heroes of faith and they're all examples to us about how to live the life of faith. We're surrounded by a cloud of witnesses, testifying to the power of a life of faith, and they're all Old Testament believers. They're our models. Abraham is the father of our faith. Abraham was a regenerate man.

We closed last time in John 3, let me take you back there and just touch lightly on John 3. Jesus' conversation with Nicodemus. Now remember, Jesus hasn't died yet. There hasn't been a resurrection yet. No Pentecost. The Holy Spirit hasn't come. The church has not formed. So what you have here is an Old Testament conversation, old covenant. The new covenant was ratified in the blood of Christ, His blood hasn't been shed so the new covenant isn't in place yet. So you have old covenant conditions. And Jesus says to Nicodemus, this ruler of the Jews, "Truly, truly I say to you...in verse 3...unless a man is born again he cannot see the Kingdom of God." That is a static principle in God's redemptive plan. You don't get into My Kingdom unless you're regenerated. This is not something that happened after Pentecost, this is long before. This is before Jesus even died. This is in the terms of old covenant era.

He further says, verse 6, "That which is born of the Spirit is Spirit," and then at the end of verse 8 talks about one who is born of the Spirit. The Spirit is the agency of this regeneration. The Spirit is the agency of this transformation, this new birth, this metamorphosis that must take place because if it doesn't take place you can't enter the Kingdom of God. And that was true for Nicodemus and Nicodemus was living before the new covenant was ratified.

So when you say, "Well what did the Holy Spirit do with regard to the life of a believer in the Old Testament?" I'll tell you what He did. First of all, He provided the revelation of truth because the Holy Spirit was behind the revelation, the truth which the believer could believe. Then the Holy Spirit convicted of sin. Then the Holy Spirit transformed the person and energized that person to be obedient to God, to love Him, to hate sin.

Furthermore, I'll take it a step beyond. I believe the Holy Spirit kept believers in the Old Testament just like He keeps them now. You couldn't make...you couldn't get yourself saved. You want to know something? You couldn't keep yourself saved either. You're kept by His power and that would have to be true in the Old Testament as well. I believe the Holy Spirit regenerated and preserved every elect believer. It was He who worked in their hearts.

Take Samson, Samson who fell into the deep, deep sin with Delilah. How did he end up so triumphantly? I'll tell you how, because he was kept by the Spirit. In the midst of all of that iniquity God never abandoned that man. He was dependent on the Spirit. Could he have kept himself in saving grace? No, not anymore than he could have put himself there. Do you remember what David said when he was really gushing out of his heart the pain of his own confession in Psalm 51, confessing to the sin of murdering Uriah and having an affair with his wife Bathsheba? Do you remember what he said? "Create in me a clean heart, O God, and renew a right spirit within me." What was he asking for? He was asking for divine intervention in his life, for a washing and a cleaning. He didn't say, "Lord, this is tough and she was pretty but I'm going to...I'm going to...I'm going to do my best, I'm going to crank this deal up and I'm going to try to resist next time." He wasn't on his own. He knew where the only source of cleansing and strength would come from and that was God. Create in me a clean heart, O God, if You don't do it, I can't do it. He knew. Purity, holiness, sanctification, preservation, it's all the work of the Holy Spirit...all of it.

Let me give you another illustration that maybe would pass you by and you'd never think of it. Look at Luke 8 and it just struck me this week, I don't know that I've ever had the thought before but as I was perusing and reading all the way through Matthew this week and all the way through Luke to see what I could find about references to the Holy Spirit, I came across Luke 8:15 and it was quite a startling verse when I read it in the context of the work of the Holy Spirit. It's about the sower and the seed, remember that? And it says this, "And the seed in the good soil, these are the ones who have heard the Word in an honest and good heart and hold it fast and bear fruit with perseverance." And I thought to myself, "Now who in the world are those people?" These are the ones who have heard the Word in an honest and good heart. Who is that?

Now you remember that the sower went out to sow and some fell on rocky ground and some fell on weedy or thorny ground and some fell on hard ground and bore no fruit. But some of it fell on good ground, remember that? And the seed in the good soil...well what is good soil? You say, "Well that's..." The soil here is what? What does the soil represent? Human heart, right? The human

heart...hard, cluttered with the worldly cares and affairs or unwilling to suffer. So who has a good heart? Is there a segment of humanity that just have good hearts? I don't think so. The heart of man is...what?...deceitful and desperately wicked. There is none that does good, no not one, they are all wretched, rotten, vile, they've gone sour like spoiled milk, the poison of asps is under their lips. They know nothing but iniquity. There isn't any such thing in existence as a good heart. There isn't anything. An honest and good heart, what is that?

I'll tell you what it is. It's a heart that's been worked on by the Holy Spirit. Right there you have to have the agency of the Holy Spirit to produce that. The ones who heard the Word in a prepared heart hold it fast, bear fruit with perseverance. You think they do that because there's something about better than other folks?

Now sometimes we say, "You know, So-and-so has a good heart." Well, sorry, after the Holy Spirit's worked on it it's a good heart but before that it's not. So, you see, all of this that we read in the Old Testament and through the gospels regarding salvation assumes divine intervention, divine operation. And that's the work of the Holy Spirit. As the Holy Spirit hovered over the formless and void creation and brought it into form, so He is the agent of new birth, of recreation, of regeneration, born again by the Spirit. Salvation like every other spiritual work is not by might or by power but by My Spirit, says the Lord, Zechariah 4:6.

So, Old Testament saints did experience the work of the Spirit. Now furthermore, I think the Spirit was there with them in their life. Let me show you why. Look at John 14, John 14, now this is a very, very definitive part of Scripture, chapter 14 verse 16 and 17. Jesus is in the Upper Room Discourse leaving His disciples and is about to die. And they're feeling the loss severely and He says, "I'll ask the Father and He'll give you another helper, just like Me," another, allos not heteros, another of the same, He'll be with you forever, you're not going to be alone, don't worry, I'm leaving but someone else is coming? Who is it? Verse 17, "The Spirit of truth, the world can't receive Him because it doesn't behold Him or know Him." Now listen to this, "But you already know Him because He abides...what?...with you." Now there's a key word. It would be impossible for those men, those disciples to function in any way pleasing to God if the Holy Spirit wasn't with them, to lead them, to guide them, to protect them, to preserve them, to empower them. You know Him because He abides with you, He's living with you.

Then He says this, "And will be..what?...in you." Now therein is the glory of the new covenant. He's been with you, He will be in you. You say, "Well what's the difference? This is hard for me to understand. But there is a fullness, there is a degree to which we experience the power and the enabling of the Spirit of God that goes beyond the experience of an old covenant believer.

Go back with me for a moment to John 7...John 7. And look at verse 37, Jesus says, "If any man is thirsty let him come to Me and drink." And then in verse 38, "He who believes in Me as the Scripture

says," and then He quotes out of Isaiah, "From his innermost being shall flow rivers of living water." Anyone who believes in Me is going to have a gushing fountain inside of him, from his inner most being, out of his belly means deep in his inner man. Verse 39, "This he spoke of the Spirit whom those who believed in Him were to receive." What? He just said in John 14 that He's with you, what do you mean that you're going to receive Him? Well, you're going to receive Him for the Spirit was not yet given because Jesus was not yet glorified, He's with you and yet you haven't received Him yet. What? How can He be with you and you haven't received Him yet? And the answer is, Old Testament saints experience the presence of the Holy Spirit or they never would have been Old Testament saints but there is a fullness and a richness and a degree and a depth to which the new covenant believer experiences the Holy Spirit unknown to them. And it is a fullness, it is a gushing river from inside. And that's why I say again, we're more like the transfigured Christ than we are the shining Moses.

What is the difference then between the Spirit's work in a New Testament Christian and an Old Testament Christian? The only answer I know is the degree is different, the extent is different, the manifestation, the fullness is different. And we can be thankful and praise the Lord that we have the immense privilege of being new covenant believers. It's touch enough living this Christian life, I'll take every bit of the fullness of the Spirit that I can get, won't you?

And lest you think that sounds like it's maybe not exactly fair that those people should have less than we have, maybe, of this river of power, may I remind you that we have less than the next batch of folks coming along? That's right. You say, "What are you talking about?" Well what happened on the Day of Pentecost when the Holy Spirit came and Jesus was glorified and the Spirit came and the river began to flow from inside believers and it still flows today under the marvelous working of God as He gives us His Spirit and we become the temple of the Holy Spirit which you have of God and He's in us, as wonderful as that event was on the Day of Pentecost, that was only a preview of what Joel said in Joel chapter 2. And Joel said in Joel chapter 2 and it is repeated by Peter on the Day of Pentecost in Acts chapter 2 that there will come a day in the last days when I will pour forth My Spirit on all mankind, your sons, your daughters will prophesy, your young men will see visions, your old men will dream dreams. In those days I'll pour forth My Spirit, they will prophesy, I'll grant wonders in the sky above and signs in the earth beneath and all of this.

And what's he talking about? He's talking about the great and calamitous day of the Lord in the establishment of the Kingdom of Jesus Christ. Listen to this, there is a fullness of the Holy Spirit coming in the Kingdom of Christ that is greater than what we are experiencing today. God is free to unfold these fullnesses at whatever level and degree He chooses. The Old Testament saints were not made perfect without us. They were lacking something of the flowing internal river of the power of the Spirit which we enjoy, but we are lacking something of the fullness of the expression of the Holy Spirit which will be the experience of those in the coming Kingdom when Jesus reigns on earth.

So, Old Testament saints, they were renewed. They were saved. They were kept by the power of the Holy Spirit. They were assisted by the Holy Spirit. He was there with them, prompting them toward love and obedience and a hatred of sin. But in the new covenant He comes inside and there is a fullness and a richness that has not been known before. I think it comes through in intimacy, in strength, in power, in consistency as we become the temple in which He dwells. And then you'd have to add the dimension of 1 Corinthians 12:13 where the Holy Spirit makes us one body in constituting the church.

So that is the work of the Holy Spirit. Go back to 2 Corinthians chapter 3 and you can see that it's not different in kind, it's only different in degree between the Old and the New. And the great news is, verse 17, that wherever the Spirit of the Lord comes and ministers regeneration, there is liberty, there is freedom, no longer slaves to Law, no longer slaves to Satan, no longer slaves to fear, no longer slaves to corruption, no longer slaves to sin, no longer slaves to death, the Spirit sets people free from all that bondage. And that will tell you that the God who gave the Law didn't give the Law to damn men, He gave the Law in order to lead men to the fact that they needed a Savior so that they could come to His provision in the new covenant. The same God by His Spirit revealing the old covenant revealed the liberty and liberation that comes from the new covenant.

That leads us then to the last point. We finally get to verse 18, part of which we've already discussed. The new covenant is superior because it gives life, provides righteousness, is permanent, has hope, is clear, centers on Christ and is empowered by the Spirit. Lastly, the new covenant is transforming...it is transforming.

It is transforming in a marvelous way. When the veil is off, Christ is seen, chapter 4 verse 6, we see the glory of God revealed in the face of Jesus Christ, when that happens, we're transformed. Let's look at verse 18, "We all...not just one man, not just Moses...but we all with unveiled face beholding as in a mirror the glory of the Lord are being transformed." Once you see Christ and you see the glory of God revealed in Christ, that's what chapter 4 verse 6 is saying, God has revealed His glory in the face of Christ, and once you look into the face of Christ and you see the shining glory of God, that is all that God is is revealed in Christ, once you see that Christ is God and God is revealed in Him, once you see Him for who He is. That's talking about salvation. Once the veil is off and you look as clearly as if you were looking in a mirror right in front of your eyes without any obstruction and you see the glory of the Lord, a process of transformation takes place. Metamorphoo is the word, continual progressive action of transformation. And what are we transformed into? Into the same image. What? Into the image of the glory of God, the image of the glory of God revealed in the face of Jesus Christ. What does it mean? We are continually being transformed into Christ's likeness, continually being transformed into Christ's likeness, moving from one level of glory to another level, to another level, to another level, to another level. That's just talking about progressive sanctification.

Opposite of the glory on the face of Moses which was diminishing, diminishing, diminishing, diminishing, as new covenant believers, the glory is increasing, increasing, increasing. It is not a fading glory. It is an ever-increasing, shining glory. We go, as Psalm 84:7 says, from strength to strength to strength to strength. And who is doing that? End of verse 18, "Just as from the Lord, the Spirit." The Spirit is the Spirit who gives us liberty from the Law...He doesn't want us to go back to the old covenant, don't be entangled again with the yoke of bondage, Christ has made us free, Galatians 5 says, don't go back. If you go back to the yoke of bondage, you've rendered Christ of no effect. You have the new covenant, why go back to a fading diminishing glory when you can come to the new covenant, look at the glory of Jesus Christ and as you gaze at His glory be transformed from one level of glory to the next? Nothing can stop that. " Whom He foreknew He predestinated, whom He predestinated He called, whom He called He justified, whom He justified He...what?...glorified." Nothing can stop the process, we're just moving from one level of glory to the next, from one level of manifesting Christ to the next. When you're a new Christian Christ is...you're a little bit like Christ, He's a little bit manifest in your life. Hey, so much so that pagans might even call you Christians. They did it as a mocking term because these people were acting like Christ. And as you grow, Christ is more and more evident in your life. That's...that's what we're involved in, that's the one thing we're involved in in progressive sanctification, that's the goal of my life, I just want to move from one level of glory to the next, ever more like Christ.

Do you remember the story of The Ugly Duckling? Great story. He was larger and more awkward and less attractive than the other ducklings. And they made fun of his clumsiness and his bizarre appearance. Crushed and forlorn, he sought refuge in a home whose pets were a cat and a chicken, but they scorned him as well because he couldn't purr or lay eggs. "You don't understand me," he complained, but they only mocked him all the more.

One day while he was out paddling around the pond, trying his best to be like other ducks, he caught sight of some graceful and elegant swans. He thought they were the most beautiful birds he had ever seen. And as he watched the beautiful movements of the swans, a strange feeling came over him. He couldn't take his eyes off of them and he couldn't shake the new sense of destiny that somehow overwhelmed him. The swans flew off and as he stretched his neck to try to follow their flight, he thought that he loved those swans more than anything he had ever loved before.

Winter came and all during the cold months the ugly duckling thought about the lovely birds he had seen and he had no idea what they were called or where they came from, but he hoped he would some day be able to see them again. At long last, spring melted the frozen ice on the pond and the ugly duckling was able to swim again and one day when spring was still very young, he saw two more of these beautiful birds. They swam straight toward him and fear gripped his heart. He was embarrassed to have such graceful creatures see what an ugly clumsy duckling he was. And as they approached them he bowed his head in humility and covered his face with his wings. When he did

that, he was amazed to see for the first time his reflection in the water. He was exactly like those beautiful creatures. He was never meant to be a duck. He was a swan.

As he removed his wings from his face he lifted his head...not straight up like an ostrich, but slightly bowed in gratitude and humility.

I can see an analogy in that. My own experience as a Christian is similar. My first look at Christ was like that of an ugly duckling who first saw the swan. I had an overwhelming sense of sinfulness and unworthiness and yet an irresistible attraction to Christ that turned my heart inside out. I responded from my innermost being because I knew that He represented what I was made to be. And I am both humbled and excited by the realization that the process of transformation is taking place and I am becoming more and more and more like Him all the time by the Holy Spirit. And that is a new covenant operation.

Isn't it true, you know, that ultimately we become like what we worship? If we worship money, we become materialistic. If we worship power and prestige we become cold and calloused. If we worship an idol, we become as spiritually dead and lifeless as a stone. On the other hand, if we worship Christ, we will be conformed to His image. If the veil is off and we behold the glory of the Lord that shines in the face of Jesus Christ, if He is our ever-increasing preoccupation then we are imperceptibly being transformed into His image by the Holy Spirit. This is the goal of the new covenant and this monumental verse shows us the increasing glory of sanctification that takes place by the Holy Spirit in the new covenant.

Folks, ceremonial, sacramental, sacerdotal works-righteousness systems offer us nothing. They didn't offer anything to the Corinthians and they don't offer anything to you either. All you need is Christ. All you need to do is get the veil off, look into the face of Jesus Christ, the Spirit of God begins the process of conforming you ever-increasingly into His image. That's what Christianity is. It isn't bells and whistles, it isn't candles and robes, it isn't Popes and Cardinals. Christianity is a relationship to Jesus Christ, it's a one-thing life, gazing at the glory of the Lord that shines in the face of Jesus Christ and being transformed into His image. It's the relationship that matters. Let's bow in prayer.

Father, we thank You again for Your truth, the power of Your truth. We thank You for the privilege of being new covenant believers who have received all of the benefits...life, righteousness, hope, Christ, the Holy Spirit, transformation. O Father, we thank You that we don't need to look beyond the pure gospel, everything is there. Help us to do that one thing to focus on Christ so that the glory that shines from within us may ever increase and the world may truly call us Christians, little Christs, because we so manifest Your glory that shines in Him. We pray, Lord, that You will remove from our lives those things that diminish the glory, that You would replace them with greater glory, that as we focus not on ourselves but on the glory of the Lord revealed in the face of Christ, as we lose ourselves in Christ You would move us by Your Spirit to become like Him. May Christ be the focus of

our lives. May He be our preoccupation. And we know that to gaze into Him and His glory means to open the Word and to see Him in all His beauty. Make us faithful to look into that mirror which is Scripture which reflects to us the glory of Christ and to become more like Him in order that He truly might be the firstborn among many brethren, not only in the life to come but in this life. May we be an honor to His name, whose name we bear and in whose name we pray. Amen.

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