

**Sermon – 2 Corinthians 3:7-18**  
**The glory of the New Covenant**  
**(16 August 2020)**

- **Introduction**

- Continuing our series on 2 Corinthians
  - Week 1 – Roger talked about the correspondence between Paul and the church in Corinth – the letters going back and forth – some we have and some that have not – Paul engaging in the reality of ministry life – here doing so at a distance – like a correspondence course in Christian discipleship
  - Week 2 (last week) – Richard shared with us two pictures – that we, the church, are a living letter that speaks about Jesus – a letter not written on paper or parchment but on the heart, and that through us God diffuses the aroma of Christ in every place.  
Wonderful images!
- Here we are in week 3 – thinking about the glory of the New Covenant – and this passage reminds me of taking a wedding
- In the notes that I write to myself – during the first hymn, I have to remind the bride to put back her veil (if she is indeed wearing one)
- The veil is part of the wedding tradition – taking the veil back at the beginning of the

service allows the bridegroom to enjoy the beauty of his wife to be..... and to check that he has indeed got the right woman before he goes on to say 'I do'

- This passage from 2 Corinthians is all about veiling and unveiling – not of a bride-to-be but of God's glory

- **Point 1 – 2 references to veiling**

- Paul makes 2 references to veiling in this passage
  - Moses veiling himself before the Israelites
  - The veiling of our minds when scripture is being read
- Moses veiled his face so that the Israelites wouldn't see the glory fading from his face as he returned from being in the presence of God – here in v13, referring back to this incident in Exodus 34:33-35
- Moses had to veil his face from the Israelites to stop them seeing the shining glory which Moses had as a result of being with God, even though he had only glimpsed God from behind
- Paul then uses this idea to tell his readers that actually when the Israelites/Jewish people read the Hebrew Scriptures (which for us is the Old Testament) their minds remained dull – they could figure out what they were reading about or listening to – it was as if a veil was drawn

over their minds so that they couldn't understand what was going on

- **Application** - do we sympathise with them? Do we find that we come to the Bible not expecting it to say anything to us? Perhaps our reading or hearing is a very cursory experience – we are not 'in tune' at all – perhaps we are doing it because we feel we must, not because we anticipate anything happening as a result. Are the scriptures veiled for us?

- **Point 2 – And then the unveiling**

- Paul then tells his readers how to unveil their minds
- Paul contrasts the veiled and the unveiled – Moses veil acted as a barrier to Israel, however the veil is removed in Christ so Christians can 'behold' or 'see' God's glory
- Paul's challenge – do we live in the realisation of that glory – with unveiled faces, able to contemplate the glory of the Lord (v18) – as we do this we are more and more transformed into the likeness of Christ – and as we do so we become more and more aware of the freedom into which he has called us (see v17)
- Both Moses and the Law are not ends in themselves but rather they point towards Jesus - so the veil over Moses face and the symbolic veil over their minds when they hear the law of Moses read in the synagogues symbolises the

lack of hope they have because they refuse to see that Moses and the law point to Christ

- We can see the Lord more clearly as we read and hear the Scriptures – inspired by the Spirit – this is how spiritual transformation takes place
- Spiritual transformation is seen in the idea of ‘turning’ (verse 16) which could either mean ‘convert’ or ‘repent’ here – the implication is that when someone turns to the Lord they will be able to understand the true meaning of the Bible
- **Application** - Paul refers to a veil of ignorance when the scriptures are read – so people did not understand – so what are our veils which prevent us from understanding the scriptures? From seeing the glory of God and his new covenant with us, expressed in and through Jesus

- **Conclusion**

- Pauls reminds us that the Spirit gives boldness (v12), sight (v16) and freedom (v17) to all who turn to the Lord – the Spirit is the catalyst for spiritual transformation (perhaps not surprisingly!)
- V18 describes the spiritual transfiguration of the human personality by the Spirit – this is a radical, progressive transformation into the likeness of Christ – which is available not for a

spiritual elite but for us all – How do we achieve this?

- Turn to the Lord – this is what the term repentance means – 180 degree turn about away from our sins and towards our Lord
- Remove any and every veil that might hide him from us – by prayer and by reading our Bibles afresh - God is invisible but the Bible shows us his glory
- Reflect his glory and no other -
- “The Holy Spirit’s role is to transform people and Christian communities into the likeness or image of Jesus Christ” – Greg Elsdon – it is in this transformation that we find true freedom
- Once a person turns to Christ, the veil is removed and the glory of God expressed in Jesus can be clearly seen – the glory of the new covenant expressed in the life death and resurrection of Christ is revealed – the veil is removed and we can see it
- Paul doesn’t want the work he is undertaking as an apostle of Jesus to be veiled – he wants to be sure that everyone sees the glory (not of Paul but of the Lord)
- The hope of God’s people is to participate in the glory of God when we finally come into his presence – may that be our hope today as we seek (with God’s help by the Spirit) to lift away

anything that is veiling God from us and from the glory of his new covenant that he has established with us, through Jesus Christ today.