

ENGAGE

- We are contrasting the glory of the old covenant with the new.
- Discuss the dynamics of the veil over the eyes regarding the old Covenant and the veil over the heart with the New.
- My key verse will be verse 17. “where the Spirit of the Lord is, there is freedom.” Try and dial in to what that freedom means and how it impacts our analyses, attitudes and actions

EXAMINE**A contrast between the old and new covenants.***1. (7-11) The surpassing glory of the new covenant.*

But if the ministry of death, written *and* engraved on stones, was glorious, so that the children of Israel could not look steadily at the face of Moses because of the glory of his countenance, which *glory* was passing away, how will the ministry of the Spirit not be more glorious? For if the ministry of condemnation *had* glory, the ministry of righteousness exceeds much more in glory. For even what was made glorious had no glory in this respect, because of the glory that excels. For if what is passing away *was* glorious, what remains *is* much more glorious.

a. **The ministry of death:** Was it wrong to call the old covenant **the ministry of death**? No, because that is what the law does to us: It slays us as guilty sinners before God so that we can be resurrected by the new covenant. It isn't that the problem was with the law, but with us: *The sinful passions which were aroused by the law were at work in our members to bear fruit to death.* ([Romans 7:5](#))

i. Trapp on **the ministry of death:** “David was the voice of the law awarding death to sin, ‘He shall surely die.’ Nathan was the voice of the gospel awarding life to repentance for sin, ‘Thou shalt not die.’”

b. **Was glorious:** There was glory associated with the giving of the law and the old covenant. At that time, Mount Sinai was surrounded with smoke; there were earthquakes, thunder, lightning, a trumpet blast from heaven, and the voice of God Himself ([Exodus 19:16-20:1](#)). Most of all, the glory of the old covenant was shown in **the face of Moses** and the **glory of his countenance**.

i. “And although the gospel came not into the world as the law, with thunder, lightning, and earthquakes; yet that was ushered in by angels, foretelling the birth and office of John the Baptist, and of Christ; by the great sign of the virgin’s conceiving and bringing forth a Son; by a voice from heaven, proclaiming Christ the Father’s only begotten Son, in whom he was well pleased.” (Poole)

c. **The face of Moses:** [Exodus 34:29-35](#) describes how Moses put a veil over his face after speaking to the people. As glorious as the radiant face of Moses was, it was a fading glory: **which glory was passing away.**

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The glory of the old covenant shining through the face of Moses was a fading glory, but the glory of the new covenant endures *without* fading.

d. **How will the ministry of the Spirit not be more glorious:** If the *old* covenant, which brought *death* had this glory, we should expect *greater glory* in the new covenant, which brings **the ministry of the Spirit** and life.

i. The old covenant was **a ministry of condemnation**, but the new covenant is **the ministry of righteousness**. The old covenant **is passing away**, but the new covenant **remains**. No wonder the new covenant is **much more glorious!**

ii. The old covenant **had glory**, but the glory of the new covenant far outshines it, just as the sun always outshines the brightest moon. Compared to the new covenant, the old covenant **had no glory** because of **the glory that excels** in the new covenant.

2. (12-16) *The open and bold character of the new covenant.*

Therefore, since we have such hope, we use great boldness of speech—unlike Moses, who put a veil over his face so that the children of Israel could not look steadily at the end of what was passing away. But their minds were blinded. For until this day the same veil remains unlifted in the reading of the Old Testament, because the veil is taken away in Christ. But even to this day, when Moses is read, a veil lies on their heart. Nevertheless when one turns to the Lord, the veil is taken away.

a. **Therefore, since we have such hope:** Since our hope is in a more glorious covenant, we can have a more glorious **hope**. Because of this hope, Paul can **use great boldness of speech**. The old covenant restricted and separated men from God; the new covenant brings us to God and enables us to come *boldly* to Him.

b. **Unlike Moses, who put a veil over his face:** Even Moses did not have real boldness under the old covenant. A **veil** is not a “bold” thing to wear; it is a barrier and something to hide behind. Moses lacked boldness (compared to Paul) because the covenant that he ministered under was fading away and fading in glory.

c. **So that the children of Israel could not look steadily at the end of what was passing away:** From reading the account in [Exodus 34:29-35](#), one might first get the impression that Moses wore a veil after his meetings with God so that the people wouldn’t be afraid to come near him; the veil was to protect *them* from seeing the shining face of Moses. Here Paul explains the real purpose of the veil: not to hide the shining face of Moses, but to hide the *diminishing* glory of his face because the glory was fading. The **passing** glory of the old covenant contrasts with the enduring glory of the new covenant.

d. **Could not look:** Since the veil hid the face of Moses, the children of Israel couldn’t see *any* of the glory from his face. Therefore, the contrast isn’t only between **passing** glory and enduring glory, but also between *concealed* glory and *revealed* glory.

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- e. **For until this day the same veil remains unlifted:** Paul says that most of the Jews of his day could not see that the glory of Moses' ministry faded in comparison to the ministry of Jesus. Because the **veil remains unlifted**, they can't see that the glory of Moses' ministry has faded and they should now look to Jesus. Since the **same veil** that hid Moses' face now **lies on their heart**, they still think there is something superior or more glorious in the ministry of Moses.
- f. **Nevertheless, when one turns to the Lord, the veil is taken away:** Paul could say of his fellow Jews that **a veil lies on their heart**, but he could also say that the veil can be taken away in Jesus. Paul knew this well because he was once veiled to the glory and superiority of Jesus.
- i. Many Christians with a heart to preach to their Jewish friends wonder why it is rarely so simple as just showing them that Jesus is the Messiah. This is because **a veil lies on their heart**. Unless God does a work in them so they turn to the Lord and have the veil taken away, they will never see the fading glory of Moses' covenant and the surpassing glory of Jesus and the new covenant.
- ii. Of course, it could be said that the Jews are not the only ones with **a veil... on their heart**. Gentiles also have "veils" that separate them from seeing Jesus and His work for us clearly, and Jesus is more than able to take those veils away. This points to the essential need of *prayer* in evangelism. It has been rightly said that it is more important to talk to God about men than it is to talk to men about God, but we can do both of these important works.

3. (17) *The liberty of the new covenant.*

Now the Lord is the Spirit; and where the Spirit of the Lord is, there is liberty.

- a. **The Lord is the Spirit:** From the context of [Exodus 34:34](#), we see that when Paul says **the Lord is the Spirit**, he means that the Holy Spirit is God, just as Jesus and the Father are God.
- b. **Where the Spirit of the Lord is, there is liberty.** Paul's thinking follows like this: When Moses went into God's presence, he had the liberty to take off the veil; the presence of the Lord gave him this liberty. We have the Holy Spirit, who is the Lord. We live in the Spirit's presence because He is given to us under the new covenant. So, just as Moses had the liberty to relate to God without the veil in the presence of the Lord, so we have **liberty** because of the presence of the Holy Spirit.
- i. We should also consider what Paul is *not* saying. He is not giving license to any Pentecostal or Charismatic excess because **where the Spirit of the Lord is, there is liberty**. We have great liberty in our relationship with God through what Jesus did and through what the Holy Spirit is doing, but we never have the **liberty** to disobey what the Spirit says in the word of God. That is a perversion of true liberty, not a Spirit-led liberty.
- c. **There is liberty:** Paul really has in mind the *liberty of access*. He is building on what he wrote in [2 Corinthians 3:12](#): *We use great boldness of speech*. Boldness is a word that belongs with **liberty**. Because

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of the great work of the Holy Spirit in us through the new covenant, we have a bold, liberated relationship with God.

i. "A liberty from the yoke of the law, from sin, death, hell; but the liberty which seemeth here to be chiefly intended, is a liberty from that blindness and hardness which is upon men's hearts, until they have received the Holy Spirit." (Poole)

4. (18) *The transforming glory of the new covenant.*

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 by the Spirit of the Lord.

a. **We all with unveiled face:** Paul invites every Christian to a special, glorious intimacy with God. This is a relationship and transforming power that is not the property of just a few privileged Christians. It can belong to **all**, to everyone who has an **unveiled face**.

i. How do we get an **unveiled face**? *When one turns to the Lord, the veil is taken away* ([2 Corinthians 3:16](#)). If we will turn to the Lord, He will take away the veil and we can be one of the "**we all**."

b. **Beholding as in a mirror the glory of the Lord:** We can see **the glory of the Lord**, but we cannot see His glory perfectly. **A mirror** in the ancient world did not give nearly as good a reflection as our mirrors do today. Ancient mirrors were made of polished metal, and gave a clouded, fuzzy, somewhat distorted image. Paul says, "We can see **the glory of the Lord**, but we can't see it perfectly yet."

i. There may be another thought here also: "Now as *mirrors*, among the Jews, Greeks, and Romans, were made of highly polished *metal*, it would often happen, especially in strong light, that the face would be greatly *illuminated* by this strongly *reflected* light; and to this circumstance the apostle seems here to allude." (Clarke)

c. **Are being transformed:** As we behold the glory of God, we will be **transformed**. God will change our lives and change us from the inside out. Though the old covenant had its glory, it could never transform lives through the law. God uses the new covenant to make us **transformed** people, not just *nice* people.

i. Everyone wants to know, "How can I change?" Or, everyone wants to know, "How can *they* change?" The best and most enduring change comes into our life when we are **transformed** by time spent with the Lord. There are other ways to change, such as guilt, willpower, or coercion, but none of these methods bring change that is as deep and lasts as long as the transformation that comes by the Spirit of God as we spend time in the presence of the Lord.

ii. Yet, it requires something: **beholding**. The word means more than a casual look; it means to make a careful study. We all have something to behold, something to study. We can be transformed by the glory of the Lord, but only if we will *carefully study* it.

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d. **Into the same image:** As we look into “God’s mirror,” we are changed **into the same image** of the Lord. When we spend time **beholding** the glory of the God of love, grace, peace, and righteousness, we will see a transforming growth in love, grace, peace, and righteousness.

i. Of course, this is how you can know someone is really spending time with the Lord: They **are being transformed into the same image**. However, much depends on what we “see” when we look into “God’s mirror.” In this analogy, “God’s mirror” is not a mirror that shows us what *we are* as much as it shows us what *we will become*, and what we will become is based on our picture of who God is. If we have a false picture of God, we will see that false picture in God’s “mirror” and will be transformed into that **same image** – much to our harm, both for now and eternity.

ii. Not everyone sees the truth when they look into the mirror. Thirty-year-old David gets up every morning, and his morning routine only gets as far as the bedroom mirror, where he sees a horribly distorted face – a crooked, swollen nose covered with scars and a bulging eye. The pain from his deformities made him quit college and move in with his parents ten years ago. Since then, he rarely leaves his room, afraid to let anyone see him. His four cosmetic surgeries have done nothing to help his condition because the problems with David’s appearance are only in his *mind*. Experts call it *body dysmorphic disorder*, or BDD. It causes people to imagine themselves as deformed, ugly people when they really have a normal appearance. Psychiatrists call it a hidden epidemic, and one psychiatrist said, “Patients are virtually coming out of the woodwork. I’m meeting with one new patient each week.” Most BDD sufferers are convinced the problem is with their face. Those afflicted live with such an overwhelming sense of shame that they can barely function. One young teacher in Boston tried to continue her job but often ran out in the middle of class, afraid that her imagined hideous appearance showed through her thick makeup. A Denver businessman called his mother from the office 15 times a day for reassurance that he did not look grotesque and spent hours in the bathroom stall with a pocket mirror trying to figure out a way to improve his appearance. Some try to cope with harmful rituals, such as cutting themselves to “bleed” the damaged area. BDD sufferers are usually convinced that the problem is with their body, not their mind. They don’t want to see anyone but plastic surgeons and dermatologists for their problem.

iii. Thankfully, we don’t have to be in bondage to a false image of ourselves or of God. When we **behold** the picture of God as He is in truth, we will be transformed into His image. This is God’s great design in our salvation, *for whom He foreknew, He also predestined to be conformed to the image of His Son* ([Romans 8:29](#)). Calvin speaks to this great design of God: “That the image of God, which has been defaced by sin, may be repaired within us... the progress of this restoration is continuous through the whole of life, because it is little by little that God causes His glory to shine forth in us.”

e. **Are being transformed:** This work of transformation is a process. We are **being** transformed; the work isn’t complete yet, and no one should expect it to be complete in themselves or in others. No one comes away from one incredible time with the Lord perfectly **transformed**.

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f. **From glory to glory:** The work of transformation is a continual progression. It works *from glory to glory*. It doesn't have to work from *backsliding to glory to backsliding to glory*. God's work in our lives can be a continual progression, **from glory to glory**.

g. **By the Spirit of the Lord:** With these last words, Paul emphasizes two things. First, this access to God and His transforming presence is ours by the new covenant, because it is through the new covenant we are given **the Spirit of the Lord**. Secondly, this work of transformation really is God's work in us. It happens **by the Spirit of the Lord**, not by the will or effort of man. We don't *achieve* or *earn* spiritual transformation by **beholding as in a mirror the glory of the Lord**. We simply put ourselves in a place where **the Spirit of the Lord** can transform us.

QUESTIONS

- In what ways was the Old Testament compared to the New Testament? (6-11)
- Why is the New Covenant ministry more glorious?
- What application does Paul derive from this fact?
- What was the purpose for the veil that Moses wore at Sinai? (13)
- What happened to that veil? (14)
- What can people do to help them understand the Bible better, if it's veiled to them?
- What does the veil now cover? (15-16)
 - How is that displayed in lives?
- What condition exists when the Spirit of the Lord is present? (17)
- How do we under the new covenant behold the glory of God? (18)

- vs 17,18 What is the difference between the Lord and the Holy Spirit?
- What effect does the Holy Spirit mean to have on the believer's lives?

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