

## **Beholding The Glory Of God**

### **Context**

In the letter of 2 Corinthians, Paul is once again dealing with the church at Corinth, like what we have recorded in 2 Corinthians. Since that letter, it seems that Paul has visited the Corinthians. Where there are several issues listed from Paul to the Corinthians, it seems that a central issue is that there are these false teachers (potentially people claiming to be apostles) that are carrying a false Gospel.

2 Corinthians 2.14–17, leading into chapter 2, is setting up that the Corinthians have the true gospel, and that they are bearing witness to it as opposed to these false teachers in their midst.

### **Written by Christ (3.1–6)**

In this section, Paul uses the extended metaphor of a letter to describe what the Corinthians are to Paul. This is an interesting descriptive image because it brings to mind all the things that letter can do.

Letters can: express thoughts and feelings; instruct the listener/reader; recommend one person or group to another; carry important message; they are also receptacles of memory.

Paul here starts chapter 3 by asking if he needs a letter of recommendation, which is obviously meant to be answered in the negative. The Corinthians know Paul, they know who he is, and Paul stresses this by saying that they are his letter of recommendation from him and to him. A letter of Christ (the new covenant) written with the Spirit of the living God on their hearts. The Corinthians are Paul's recommendation because they have this new covenant in their hearts, which was put there by Paul as a true apostle of God.

Paul's confidence in the gospel is not something innate in himself, but rather through seeing the rejuvenating power of the New Covenant (see also Jer. 31.31–34; Eze. 11.19–20 for prophecies of the New Covenant bringing life), which comes from God. This idea is also contrasted with the Old Covenant being of stone and death.

### **The Glory of the New Covenant (3.7–11)**

For the rest of this chapter, Paul is making a further contrast of the superiority of the New Covenant of life as opposed to the Old Covenant of death. This might indicate some of the false teachings coming from the opponents to Paul that were causing problems in the Corinthian church, or it may just be a strong metaphor that these Christians would have been familiar with, which makes it a good argument from Paul to prove his point as a true apostle of God.

The Law of Moses and the Ten Commandments are referred to as the ministry of death in verse 7. However, even though it was ultimately a ministry of death, it still brought with it a measure of glory. Glory so great that the people of Israel could not look upon Moses' face when he witnessed it first-hand.

The story being referenced here is in Exodus 34, where the covenant is renewed with the people following the incident with the golden calf. Moses talks with God, receives His message on Mt. Sinai, and goes down to the people. His face contained a portion of the glory of God, and those that saw it could not look at it without feeling uncomfortable.

Something that had the power to do something that strange and awesome with Moses ultimately pails in comparison with the strength of the New Covenant. The Old Covenant, which had a measure of glory, passed away, and now we have an everlasting New Covenant.

### **Veiled Hearts (3.12–18)**

Paul is saying here, that with Christ, the metaphorical veil over our hearts is lifted. We see the light come from others, and if we've also turned towards God, they see the light in us as well. The power of Christ and the New Covenant allows us to look closely at his glory.

There are some who do not desire to look at the full glory of God, and only want to look at it in part, or not at all, but those of us that have seen his glory should have boldness to march forward bearing his light.

We can see the glory of God today through his word and those of us that have also had the veil removed and see Him and proclaim Him in our daily lives.

### **Application**

The biggest application point we can make from this passage, is the need to live a transformed life. Think to Romans 6, which talks about this New Covenant as being entered through baptism and through death into life and rejuvenation.

Paul also talks about the transformative nature of the gospel in 2 Corinthians 4. Christians are to renounce the things which are evil and go about projecting His light. It's also a continual process. Each day we view upon Jesus the more like Him we become. The more like him we become, then the more we can go out into the world.

Let us not become like those that continue to look onto the Old Covenant and only focus on a small part of His glory, but let us view the whole thing, live transformed lives and encourage others to also look onto the full glory of God.