

From Glory to Glory

2 Corinthians 3:17 – 4:6

“¹⁷ Now the Lord is that Spirit: and where the Spirit of the Lord is, there is liberty. ¹⁸ But we all, with open face beholding as in a glass the glory of the Lord, are changed into the same image from glory to glory, even as by the Spirit of the Lord.” (2 Corinthians 3:17-18)

What is your story? Step back to look at your whole life – birth to the present. And then from your new birth in Christ to the present. Where have you been? Where are you going? Do you feel as if your life is like a circus? Or are you accomplishing your purpose? What is your story? According to the world’s storyline, the only true freedom is freedom from God. But the problem is that a life lived without Him – in His glorious freedom – is a boring, ho-hum existence. Oh sure, people try to build their lives around their nerve endings instead of around what is never-ending. But as the author of Ecclesiastes reminds us, that lifestyle leads to emptiness. But there is a storyline in the Scriptures that is very different from the storyline in society. The world’s story is the old, driving drumbeat, “You just can’t change. You just can’t change.” But the storyline in the Word is very different. Here we learn the glorious truth that believers are being changed to be like Jesus, little by little, from glory to glory.

*Glory to glory; to God be the glory! Now this is our story in God’s Holy Word
Glory to glory, from glory to glory, now we are becoming like Jesus our Lord.*

Overview: 2 Corinthians is a defense of Paul’s apostleship. He had been criticized, and some were dismissive of his leadership (2 Corinthians 10:8-13). It is likely that these criticisms began with false teachers. In chapter 3, Paul reminded them that he did not need to commend himself. Indeed, their stability in the Gospel was the recommendation for his ministry. Not that Paul was sufficient in himself (3:5). But the glorious Gospel of the New Covenant is sufficient. The covenant made with Moses, though glorious (3:7, 9, 10-11), was a ministry of death carved in stone (3:7). Though it reflected God’s glory, it was a ministry of condemnation (3:9), designed to awaken the conscience. But the glory of the New Covenant outshines the glory of the Old. The Old letter killed (3:6), but the Spirit gives life! This is the ministry of the Spirit (3:8), a glory that will last forever (3:11).

The Veil Illustration: Paul illustrated the difference between the Old and New Covenants by comparing belligerent Israel with individual believers today. When Moses returned from meeting with the Lord (3:13), he put a veil over his face. He did so because the Israelites, whose hearts were hardened (3:14), could not bear to look upon God’s glory. To this day (3:14-15), this hard-heartedness continues among most of the Jewish people – rejecting their Messiah. So the veil represents the hardened heart. But there are Jewish and Gentile believers who have turned to the Lord (3:16) and the veil has been removed. These have been set free by the presence of God’s Spirit (3:17). Indwelt by the Spirit, they can bear to look upon God’s great glory (3:18), and in so doing, they are transformed to be more like the Lord.

Why can believers be transformed “from glory to glory?”

Consider these words in 2 Corinthians 4: **“³ But if our gospel be hid, it is hid to them that are lost: ⁴ In whom the god of this world hath blinded the minds of them which believe not, lest the light of the**

glorious gospel of Christ, who is the image of God, should shine unto them. . . ⁶ For God, who commanded the light to shine out of darkness, hath shined in our hearts, to *give* the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ.”

These words explain how God authored the Creation and how He continues to author each new creation (in the sense of 2 Corinthians 5:17). In Genesis 1, we learn that the Spirit of God moved upon the face of the waters at the very beginning. God said, “**Let there be light, and there was light!**” (Genesis 1:3). He commanded it, and it was so. Every person was born as a sinner, blinded, and “**darkness was upon the face of the deep**” (Genesis 1:1). The “Father of Lights” (James 1:17) who commanded, “**Let there be lights in the firmament of heaven**” (Genesis 1:14) to give light upon the earth. And in a magnificent display of His power, look at the almost offhanded remark in Genesis 1:16, “. . .**He made the stars also.**” (One magazine estimates that there are about 2 trillion galaxies in the observable universe; each galaxy contains an average of 100 million stars, but galaxies like our own Milky Way galaxy may contain 200 billion!) And what has “The Father of Lights” done in His new creation? James 1:18 declares, “**Of His own will begat He us with the word of truth, that we should be a kind of firstfruits of His creatures.**” 2 Corinthians 4:6 makes the direct connection between the first Creation and the New Creation (i.e. believers). “**For God, who commanded the light to shine out of darkness, hath shined in our hearts, to *give* the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ.**”ⁱⁱ

Why can believers be transformed “from glory to glory?” We have been transformed in by the glorious light of the Gospel of Christ. (4:3-4, 6)

If you know Christ today, take a moment to praise God! The god of this world (Satan) has blinded the minds of men so that they cannot see the glorious light of the Gospel of Christ. But God shined the light into your darkness! He gave you light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ. This is not merely knowledge about God; this is the personal knowledge of God!

*All who are lost have been blinded by Satan, the god of this age, the dark ruler of night
God who commanded the light out of darkness has shined in our hearts by His great gospel light*

Glory: What is meant by the word “glory?” In the Old Testament, it carries the idea of “weight” in the sense of weighty honor and fame.ⁱⁱⁱ In the New Testament, “glory” refers to honor or opinion. It can also refer to “brightness” (in the sense of 1 Corinthians 15:41, “glory of the sun,” etc.). Romans 6:4 portrays this glory as power: “Christ was raised up from the dead by the glory of the Father.” Ephesians 1:18 pictures “glory” as riches: “the riches of the glory of His inheritance in the saints.” Even our material needs are provided by His riches in glory by Christ Jesus (Philippians 4:19). As we shall see in the next message, passages such as Romans 11:36 call us to honor, appreciate and proclaim the fame of the glory of our God. 1 Corinthians 10:31 calls us “to do all to the glory of God.”

How is it that we see the light of the glory of the knowledge of God in the face of Jesus Christ? In Him, mercy and truth meet together, “**righteousness and peace have kissed each other**” (Psalm 85:10). God

is Holy and cannot tolerate our sins; He is just and cannot overlook our sins. But God's love provided the way that we could be saved through Christ; His grace offers us the free gift of eternal life.

Philippians 2 explains: **"⁸ And being found in fashion as a man, he humbled himself, and became obedient unto death, even the death of the cross. ⁹ Wherefore God also hath highly exalted him, and given him a name which is above every name: ¹⁰ That at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, of *things* in heaven, and *things* in earth, and *things* under the earth; ¹¹ And *that* every tongue should confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father."**

Here is the great Gospel light! Look into the face of Jesus Christ; consider what He did for you. He humbled Himself – from the height of heaven's glory to transform your personal story. God raised Him from the dead and highly exalted Him. One day, every knee will bow and every tongue confess that Jesus Christ is Lord to the glory of God the Father.

What does this mean for each believer today? We are being transformed progressively "from glory to glory" on a regular basis. 3:17-18; 4:1,2,5

"¹⁷ Now the Lord is that Spirit: and where the Spirit of the Lord is, there is liberty. ¹⁸ But we all, with open face beholding as in a glass the glory of the Lord, are changed into the same image from glory to glory, even as by the Spirit of the Lord." (2 Corinthians 3:17-18)

How is this transformation taking place?

By the Holy Spirit! He gives us liberty. The change "from glory to glory" is by the Spirit of the Lord. (3:17-18)

By the faithful ministry of others, (4:1-2, 5) who carefully teach and preach the Word of God. You show the glory of God when you share what you have been learning with others. This is the very nature of a church ministry. It is not about psychological mumbo-jumbo about temperament types and mankind's view of the soul. It is the careful presentation of the Scriptures in order to speak to the every man's conscience in the sight of God! We see the Lord's glory most clearly in the Word of God. Get as much of the Word as you can. It is "the perfect law of liberty!" (James 1:25)

What Does This Mean for You Today?

—Change your attitude and soften your heart; that hard heart is putting a veil over your eyes so that you can't see the glorious light of the Gospel of Christ. In last week's message from Matthew 2, we learned that the chief priests could quote Micah 5:2 off the top of their heads; but the wise men pursued the light they had from the bottom of their hearts. Which one are you like?

—Give thanks for the privilege of beholding the glory of God without a veil. Not everyone can see Him. If you can see Him, it is God who commanded the light to shine in your heart. Be grateful.

—Confident Assurance: As a believer, you can be assured that the Lord is changing you "from glory to glory" to be more like Himself. He is fulfilling His purpose for you (Psalm 138:8). You can set aside the

world's old drumbeat that "you just can't change." You are being transformed by His Spirit to produce the fruit of the Spirit (Galatians 5:22-25).

—Patience: If you listen to the world's storyline, your life is a bore. According to today's text, it's an adventure. It's the glorious adventure of taking the Word to the world. In Psalm 17:15, David wrote, "As for me, I will behold thy face in righteousness: I shall be satisfied, when I awake, with thy likeness."

—Seek His Face in 2019. In Psalm 27:8, David said to the Lord, when You said, "'Seek My face,' my heart said unto Thee, Thy face Lord will I seek." Prayer – seeking His face – leads to glorious change.

—Behold His glory in 2019. Learn to look in the Word of God to see the ways of God (Psalm 119:15). Tonight, if you were to sit out under the stars, you would let your eyes slowly adjust to see the wonders in the heavens. It's the same way in the Scriptures. Take time to meditate, to let your eyes adjust to see the glory of heaven in the face of Jesus Christ.

| | | |
|----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| <p><i>And the Lord shall deliver me from every evil work, and will preserve me unto his heavenly kingdom: to whom be glory for ever and ever. Amen. 2 Timothy 4:18</i></p> | <p>God is the Lord. God is the Deliverer. God is the Preserver. God is the Heavenly King. God is glorious and eternal.</p> | <p>Praise Him as Lord. Thank your Deliverer. Rejoice that He preserves you. Worship your King today. Give Him glory!</p> |
|----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|

Glory to Glory

Glory to glory, our wonderful story that we who were sinners were by sin deformed;
 Glory to glory, our glorious story that now by His Spirit, we're being transformed
Glory to glory; to God be the glory! Now this is our story in God's Holy Word
Glory to glory, from glory to glory, now we are becoming like Jesus our Lord.
 All who are lost have been blinded by Satan, the god of this age, the dark ruler of night
 God who commanded the light out of darkness has shined in our hearts by His great gospel light
 Coming with hearts that are tender before Him, we see the Lord's glory in Jesus' dear face
 Light of the Gospel of Christ we are seeing, the light of God's glory, the light of God's grace
 Now the Lord's Spirit is giving us freedom: our liberty comes from His presence divine
 No veil to blind us, no bondage to bind us, we're free to serve Jesus! Let His glories shine!

What is your story?

Pastor Gordon Dickson, Calvary Baptist Church, Findlay, Ohio

ⁱ Elizabeth Howell, "How Many Stars Are in the Universe?" Space.com, May 17, 2017 accessed at <https://www.space.com/26078-how-many-stars-are-there.html>

ⁱⁱ In the hymn, "And Can It Be?" Charles Wesley wrote, "Thine eye diffused a quickening ray, I woke, the dungeon flamed with light; My chains fell off, my heart was free, I rose, went forth, and followed Thee."

ⁱⁱⁱ Glory in Hebrew is (כְבוֹד, *kavod*) referring to weightiness. See the contrast in Isaiah 17:3-4 where the loss of "the glory of Jacob is made thin." In Isaiah 22:22-24, weighty honor is connected to glory. This is what Paul meant in 2 Corinthians 4:17 when he referred to "an eternal weight of glory." We get our English word "worship" from the concept of "worth ship" or giving a right valuation to God's glory.