

**Study 7.**  
**The Glory of Christ in Us**  
**(2 Corinthians 3)**

Can we say there is a revelation of glory in us? The majesty of God's revealing presence in Israel, and then, in Jesus Christ, may suggest this is too grand to contemplate. However, the light of the knowledge of the glory of God shines in our hearts in the face of Christ (2 Cor. 4:6).

We remember that Jesus said the glory the Father gave him, he gave to his disciples, so they would be one, and the fact of their being loved like Christ would be evident to the world (John 17:22-23). We behold his glory, full of grace and truth, and receive from his fullness (John 1:14, 16). This is what the gospel is and ever must be, a revelation of God's glory directly to the hearts of those who believe. This is what we have needed more than anything because we are created to reflect God's glory. Here is how it happens.

Coming now to 2 Corinthians 3, the preaching of the gospel is a ministry of glory (v. 8). That is, by proclaiming the gospel, the wisdom and power of God are being revealed in the lives of believers (1 Co. 1:30). Christ is our righteousness, sanctification and redemption and, in the reception of these gifts, we are seeing, and experiencing the glory of God. That is, the glory is not ours but consists in God revealing himself—the light of the knowledge of the glory. People who look for a 'glorious conversion' and a 'glorious discipleship' may still be more interested in themselves than in God. Glory, honour and power belong to God, but he reveals himself to us, and in us.

Paul thinks of himself as a servant delivering a letter (v. 3) written by Christ, with the Holy Spirit (vv. 3, 6, 17), on the hearts of his hearers, a letter so plain that it can be read by anybody. As Jesus prayed in his prayer, the glory is there for the world to see.

This ministry of glory, says Paul, is delivered with confidence, competency and boldness (vv. 4, 6, 12). This competency and confidence does not come from the preacher but from the fact that God is fulfilling his promise to bring in a new covenant in which the Spirit is given and the law is written on the heart (v. 6, with Jer. 31:31-34). If we focus on what God has promised, we can be confident. If we focus on what we can, or even should do, there must always be ambivalence, equivocation and then capitulation.

At Corinth, and as often among God's people, there is an inclination towards a legal relationship with God, so Paul compares his ministry to that of Moses. His was certainly a ministry of glory. He had seen, or heard, the moral glory of God: the Lord himself being merciful and gracious but not passing over sin (Ex. 34:6). But, after delivering the Lord's message, he would veil his face because of the glory shining from it (Ex. 34:33-35). Paul says this hiding was to respect the fact that the glory was temporary (vv. 7, 13), and also, perhaps, that the people were sinful and not able to continue looking at it. (Moses didn't need to hide the fact that the glory on his face faded after a while. That would have been obvious.)

Jesus says the least in the kingdom is greater than John the Baptist, greatest of the prophets (Lk. 7:28).

The glory of delivering the law was a fading glory because it would be administered as a covenant of law, and its effect would be condemnation for everyone who came under it. Paul says this ministry has come to have no glory at all (v. 10). This is bad news for legalists!

Moses seems to have realised this because he looked to the day when a new prophet would come (Dt. 18:15-19), and when God would circumcise the hearts of his people (Dt. 10:6). Ezekiel anticipated a day when the Spirit would enable the keeping of the law (Ez. 36:27;

37:14). Paul says Jews (or any other legalist) cannot see the glory Moses saw. A hardness, or veil, prevents them seeing the glory of God. Only Christ can take this veil away, that is, take this hardness of heart away. So, be unveiled; turn to Christ; let his glory shine!

As in Paul's day, there are still those who seek glory in having the law, or a form of law, by which they hope to be justified. They cannot see that this glory was intended to fade, to make way for the greater glory of Christ and his gift of righteousness. Our law systems, of whatever kind (cf. Gal. 3:3, 8-10), are an already faded glory, and need to give place to Christ. There can be no confidence in our ministry if we put our trust in the law or our fleshly exuberance. Worse still, the glory of God in his grace is compromised. But Paul talks about 'having this hope' (v. 12), that is, the hope generated by God fulfilling his covenant, and Paul opens this up for us.

The gospel is a ministry of glory because it delivers righteousness (v. 9). It is valid because God made Christ to be sin so we may become God's righteousness in him (2 Co. 5:21). In declaring that we are righteous, as a gift, God reveals the glory of his grace (Ep. 1:6-7).

From Paul's letter to the Romans, we could add that this righteousness is what God gives, as a gift (Rom. 1:17; 3:21-22). He justifies the ungodly and faith is credited as righteousness (Rom. 4:5—not in the sense that faith equals righteousness but in that we trust God's gift). It is valid because God put Christ forward as a propitiation (Rom. 3:25) delivering Christ over to our sins (Rom. 4:25) in place of us (Rom. 1:24). It is valid because we are united with Christ by faith, so that his death is reckoned as ours, and his resurrection is reckoned as ours (Rom. 6:3-11). So we should reckon this to be so, just as God does.

Righteousness is a gift, but then it has in mind a total renovation of the believer: Paul himself is constrained by the love of Christ (2 Co. 5:14). Christ died for all so that those who live, that is, those who trust in Christ rather than themselves, should not live for themselves but for him who died for them (2 Cor. 5:15). How can we who died to sin live in it any longer (Rom. 6:2). But the gift of God declaring us righteous remains just that, a gift for all who believe. God has reconciled us to himself (2 Cor. 5:18) and we rejoice in this reconciliation (Rom. 5:11).

When the Spirit takes the things of Christ and shows them to us, there is freedom from sin, from false trust in the law and freedom to reflect the glory of the Lord, to be truly human.

This is the glory of the Lord, that is, Jesus Christ, placing himself in our place, and us in his place, and declaring us righteous. And Paul says we behold this Lord of glory without a veil. There is no further covenant to anticipate, no hiding behind law to avoid the Lord himself, just a beholding of Christ. We see his glory as reflected in a mirror (cf. 1 Cor. 13:12) but without a veil, and the effect is that we ourselves are transformed from one degree of glory to another (cf. Col. 3:10).

It is clear that the glory of this righteousness is not ours! Paul says we have this treasure in fragile pots so that it is clear that the glory is God's. It is as *grace* extends to others that God is glorified (2 Co. 4:15). And it is after our brief affliction in this world that we will be blessed with 'an eternal weight of glory'.