

Have you seen his glory? John, the disciple of Jesus, who wrote the Gospel of John, wrote in verse 14 of chapter one, the word became flesh and made his dwelling among us.

We have seen his glory, the glory of the one and only Son, who came from the Father, full of grace and truth. Have you seen his glory? This morning, we're beginning a new series in the book of 2 Corinthians.

Who has found 2 Corinthians, particularly to be an awesome book? Anybody read it? If you haven't read it, read it again.

We're going to be, Lord willing, studying it for the next month, the month of September. And as I've been reading it over and over again, I'm just so struck by how wonderful it is.

Points us to Jesus, talks about the suffering that we often experience in life and the God of all comfort and the importance of generosity.

We see that glory is one of the main themes, the glory of Jesus and the fact that as believers, we experience His glory and are changed into ever-increasing glory. Have you seen His glory? You'll get used to that question today.

Did you know that the concept of glory in the Old Testament is the word kavod and it means, who knows what it means, kavod, the glory of the Old Testament? Abigail knows at the front, she's a Hebrew scholar. What does it mean?

Weighty, the word glory in the Old Testament is a word that describes God as weighty. Do you know how many G's you are coming under sitting there? One.

So, I have learnt this week as I studied a bit about G's. So, you're experiencing one G of gravity. If you jump into someone's fast electric vehicle and it does not to a hundred in three seconds and they take off and you...

what somebody do for me in action, what happens to your head? That is the weight of maybe three G's. I could be just out by one, but it's say three G's of gravity.

It's three times your body weight you're experiencing in that moment. That's why it's very hard to raise your hand. But who experiences the most G's typically in society?

Fighter pilots, they might be pulling say nine G's and then they black out. They certainly are struggling to lift their hands because gravity is pushing down on them. What an incredible way to describe the glory of God.

People in the Old Testament that fell to the ground, they didn't just fall to the ground because they thought, gee, you look pretty glorious. I think I'll fall to the ground. Maybe I should get prostrate.

It would seem that the Bible is saying, no, no, they fell to the ground under the weight of his glory.

So when you think of the Philistine God, Dagon, whose was toppled over in the presence, in the presence of the Ark of the Covenant, the glory of Yahweh, it's the power of his weight that toppled the God of the Philistines. Amen?

The glory of God is his weightiness. And then in the New Testament, the word is doxa. And doxa originally meant reputation and honor.

But throughout the use of the word in the New Testament, it became known as bright. The word doxa is radiant brightness. So, you have this idea of glory in the Old Testament as weighty, and in the New Testament as bright.

That's why when Jesus is transfigured on the Mount of Transfiguration, they can't look at him. It's so bright, so radiant, the glory of Jesus. Have you seen his glory?

Have you seen the glory of the one and only Son of God?

As we study Chapter 3 today of 2 Corinthians, we're going to see that beholding the glory, the glory of Jesus, is actually very important so that we can receive freedom and the transforming power of the Gospel.

We need to experience and receive and know the glory of God in Christ. Our theme for the year is Everlasting, and so Everlasting in 2 Corinthians will point us to this idea of Everlasting Glory.

See if you can count how many times you hear the word Glory or Glorious in this passage. 2 Corinthians 3, verse 7.

Now, if the ministry that brought death, which was engraved in letters on stone, came with glory, so that the Israelites could not look steadily at the face of Moses because of its glory, transitory though it was, will not the ministry of the Spirit

be even more glorious? If the ministry that brought condemnation was glorious, how much more glorious is the ministry that brings righteousness? For what was glorious has no glory now in comparison with the surpassing glory.

And if what was transitory came with glory, how much greater is the glory of that which lasts? How many glories did we have? Ten glories.

It's a bit of a confusing passage, really. So many words. Tom's we read the word glory or glorious.

What it's saying is that Moses, even though he met with God, he met with God and knew God like no one else compared with what we have as Christians.

Those of us who have put our faith in Christ, what we have post the life, death and resurrection of Jesus, post the giving of the Holy Spirit, what Moses had in his relationship with God was much less glorious than what we have access to.

It was less glorious because basically Moses told people clearly and explicitly through the Ten Commandments, just how far off the mark of perfection their lives were. His was, as is described in the text, a ministry of death, death.

Not a very nice way to describe your ministry, but it was. The law, which is what the Ten Commandments and other teachings are known as, the law is an executioner. This is what we learn in Romans 7.

It kills everyone who comes under it. The law points out that we have all sinned, Romans 3.23, and fallen short of what? The glory of God.

We have failed His perfect standards. Because Moses was interacting with God, it was a glorious thing. Yet in contrast to what we have experienced in Christ, it is so much less.

So, what you and I have as Christians, those of us who follow Jesus, is far more glorious than what Moses experienced. Would you agree? Not everyone is nodding.

Let me ask you again, have you seen His glory? Have you seen His glory? The glory of Jesus, weighty and bright.

Paul is writing to a church in Corinth that he planted. You can read about it in Acts chapter 18. He planted the church and spent at least one and a half years there teaching them about the kingdom of God, about the gospel.

Then he left, and he heard later that they had fallen into quite a few areas of sin, and so he wrote the letter of 1 Corinthians. And that addressed a lot of areas of sin for the church, based at Corinth.

And then he probably wrote another letter that we don't have, but he was in Macedonia, up the coast, in Philippi, and he heard that there were more issues in Corinth, this church that he had planted, and so he wrote the letter of 2 Corinthians.

It would seem that he was concerned that this church that he had planted was filled with people that didn't understand the glory of God in Christ, the glory of the gospel. They didn't understand that the kingdom of God is an upside down kingdom.

Power is inverted in this kingdom. Power is found in weakness and dependence on God. The cross is the path to true glory.

Suffering is part of discipleship, and generosity is the mark of genuine transformation in Christ. And he felt that all was not well in Corinth, and so he wrote again to his beloved church to point them towards an understanding of the glory of God.

Have you seen his glory? Have you seen his glory? Today's main passage is verse 12 to 18, where Paul writes, Therefore, since we have such a hope, we are very bold.

When you see therefore in the scriptures, you always ask, why is the therefore, therefore? Because of the immediate teaching about glory. In Christ, we have access to more weighty and brighter glory than Moses.

As odd as that is and sounds. So, we are bold. We behold the glory that is available to us.

And so Paul says, it is not without effect, this glory that we see, bright and weighty. It is not without effect, it is doing something to us.

And verse 13, he explains, we are not like Moses, who would put a veil over his face to prevent the Israelites from seeing the end of what was passing away.

But their minds were made dull, for to this day, the same veil remains when the old covenant is read. It has not been removed, because only in Christ is it taken away.

Even to this day, when Moses is read, a veil covers their hearts, a veil, a face covering, to prevent the people from seeing the fading glory that remained on the face of Moses having been in the presence of God.

Now, that's a pretty amazing thought, isn't it? That a human being could spend time in the presence of God, and there was what you might call an afterburn. There was a glow, a physical glow on Moses' face having been in the presence of God.

And so, Paul takes this and re-applies the idea of the veil, and he says, even today, in the first century, the Jewish people still don't see things clearly, so long as they are still waiting for Messiah, they see things dimly.

It's like there's a veil over their revelation. I was talking to a mate of my dad's years ago who was a very strong Jew, and I was fascinated to have this conversation, and I said to him, why is it that you don't believe Jesus is the Messiah?

Sort of cut to the chase, I suppose. And he said, he's very strong in his thoughts. He just said, how could Jesus be Messiah?

Scripture says that resurrection will happen when Messiah returns. Look around. The dead have not been raised.

And I said, but Jesus was the first fruits from among the grave. That's what the Bible says. The resurrection has begun.

It just hasn't been consummated and completed. That didn't win him over. Scripture would say there was a veil that covers his mind.

How does this veil of unbelief get taken away? Well, Paul tells us in verse 16, whenever anyone turns to the Lord, the veil is taken away.

So whether you're a Jew or a non-Jew, a Gentile like most of us, a veil of blindness, spiritual blindness needs to be removed.

A veil of deception, a veil of unbelief needs to be removed so that a human being can see the glory of God in the gospel of Jesus. That is the life, death and resurrection of Jesus.

And in the glow of that glory, the story of the gospel, we repent and believe. Whenever anyone turns to the Lord, the veil is taken away. And that's just another way of talking about repenting, isn't it?

Turn to the Lord.

What an incredible truth that when we turn to the Lord, we turn away from the allegiance to a whole world view of what is important and we put our faith and belief and confidence in Christ, his death and resurrection, his ability to save us and also

be our Lord. Well, the Bible says we will be saved. That's how the veil is taken away. So then in verse 17, Paul says, now the Lord is the spirit and where the spirit of the Lord is, there is freedom.

So he's now talking about the consequence, the effect of receiving the glory, of seeing the glory of Christ.

And we all, after this idea of freedom, we all who with unveiled faces contemplate the Lord's glory, are being transformed into his image with ever increasing glory, which comes from the Lord, who is the spirit. Did you hear that?

What Paul is saying is no veil, no veil, the glory, the weight and brightness of Jesus, God in Christ, the glory of God, equals freedom and transformation. Hallelujah.

So, turn to the Lord, no veil, see the glory, experience the glory, and this will lead us to freedom and transformation. So, let me ask you for the seventh or eighth time, have you seen his glory? Can you see that?

Thank you for that. That's good. I want to get some response every now and then.

Can you see that beholding the glory of God is not negotiable? It may have sounded weird at the start when I said, have you seen his glory? Well, you need to have seen his glory.

It's not an optional extra. Where the Spirit of the Lord is, there is freedom, and we all who with unveiled faces contemplate the Lord's glory are being transformed.

It's not without effect, transformed into his image with ever increasing glory, which comes from the Lord who is the Spirit. Glory seen, the result, freedom and transformation.

The actual text, the Greek text that we see in our NIV, we with unveiled faces contemplate the Lord's glory, is not exactly what it says in the original language.

Some of you, like some I'm looking around who are smiling, in the New King James version or other versions, you will see the text says, those of us with unveiled faces, beholding him as a mirror. Beholding him as in a mirror.

Isn't that a wonderful way to describe receiving and comprehending the glory of God? Such that the glory is reflecting from my heart and mind like I'm a mirror. What it's saying is, I'm getting it.

Amen? I'm actually, whoa! God is seeing in me the reflection of his glory because I am comprehending it.

I am seeing his glory. Paul says in the next chapter, in Chapter 4, for God who said, let light shine out of darkness, when did that happen? Creation.

The creator God who said, let light shine out of darkness, made his light shine in our hearts to give us the light of the knowledge of God's glory displayed in the face of Christ. Isn't that incredible?



He says, the glory of the God who spoke the universe into existence, he says, I'll let light come out of darkness. That glorious God has put his glory, the light of the knowledge of God's glory, in our hearts. Have you seen his glory?

Have you seen his glory? Or do you live with a veil? Or do you live with a veil?

Now, theologically, if you're a Christian, you don't have a veil. You've been born again. You've been forgiven.

The blood of Christ has covered your sins, as it has mine, by faith in Christ. But wouldn't you agree we can live as though we have a veil? We can live in such a way that it feels like we shouldn't have access to the glory of God.

We don't comprehend and experience and reflect the glory of God. So I wonder if we could be a little bit practical and have a think in the text. What are the causes for the glory to be veiled in our lives in the 21st century?

Well, chapter 3 verse 14, it says, Their minds were made dull. Hardness of heart. Hardness of heart will make you insensitive and will veil the glory of God.

The veil is tied to an inner stubbornness in scripture, a dullness toward God's word. If you, if your mind is dull, I wonder if pride has played a part in that. Bitterness.

Lust-filled idolatry. Spiritual apathy. What are some other causes for the glory to be veiled?

Chapter 3, 14 to 15 says, Israel's veil remains when the Old Covenant is read. There is this reliance on the Old Covenant, on works, on performance. Paul is saying, don't cling to the law, to works righteousness.

It will blind you. It's not your spiritual resume that allows you to see the glory of God. It's the grace of God.

Unbelief. In verse 4 of chapter 4, Paul says, the God of this age has blinded the minds of unbelievers so that they cannot see the light of the gospel that displays the glory of Christ. But that can happen to believers.

Unbelief. Spiritual warfare from the evil one. And fourthly, living for human glory.

In chapter 5 and chapter 10, Paul criticizes the super apostles. And he says, I'm not living for them for human applause. I'm living for God's applause.

So scripture says, whenever anyone turns to the Lord, the veil is taken away. So how do we move towards Christ if right now you are far from seeing his glory? What do you do if you have a hard heart?

And let's face it, some of us do, right? As if it's not true. We know what it's like to have a hard heart towards God, to be spiritually dull, to be not getting what the guy talking up the front is talking about.

But what are you talking about? Seeing the glory? What do you even know what you mean?

Well, you might be dull. There might be a veil. You don't get it that there's a glory that we need to see and receive and comprehend and behold so that we can receive the freedom and the transforming power of God through his revelation.

So, what could we do if our hearts are hard? Honest confession, honest confession. Say to God, Lord, my heart feels dull.

I feel like I'm going through the motions, but I'd love to see you again in your glory. Practice vulnerability. Share your struggles with others.

You know, hardness thrives in isolation. Amen? Hardness thrives in isolation.

We are softened. Our hearts are softened in the warmth of community. Return to wonder.

It's not about trying harder, but meditating on the beauty of Christ. Fear and obey, as we saw last week. Or admiration and amazement is a great way to soften our heart.

What about reliance on the old covenant? How do you move towards Christ out of reliance on self-sufficiency? Shift from a checklist to relationship.

It's not about earning, it's about receiving. Release your self-righteousness. If you're keeping score on how many times you come to church and your acts of doing good, that's not how we impress God.

It's by receiving His grace, isn't it? Reacquaint yourself with the great passages of the Bible that are about grace, like Ephesians 2. It is by grace you have been saved through faith.

This is not from yourselves. It's a gift, the gift of God. What about unbelief?

How do we move towards Christ out of unbelief? Name the doubt. Stone it.

In Mark 9, the man said, Lord, I believe, help my unbelief. Speak against unbelief as a spiritual reality. Move into spiritual warfare against the unbelief and lean on the community of faith.

Let them help you in your season of unbelief. What about living for human glory? We move towards Christ by checking your audience.

Who are you living for? Is it an audience of one? Or is it some other human being?

Practice hidden service. Do acts of kindness that no one sees. It's a way of living for God's glory and not human glory.

Boast in weakness. Share a struggle. Your failure, your failure, your needs in your small group community.

Paul says, whenever anyone turns to the Lord, the veil is taken away. I think this is a rhythm, isn't it? Not just a one-off, but a rhythm of coming before God saying, help me Lord, I want to turn back to you.

I'm moving, I'm starting to become cold. I want to turn back to you. I would say, to be honest, these are all practical steps, but nothing takes away the veil more, even more quickly than simply beholding his glory.

Like seeing it, experiencing the glory like the weight of gravity, like the brightness of the sun, the glory of Jesus. Have you found that we're all different in this? How do you most clearly behold the glory of God?

There's lots of different ways, isn't there? For some, it's acts of service. Just either doing acts of service or receiving the love of another person.

It's like, wow, I'm just opened up to the glory of God. For some of us, I'm like this studying the Bible as I get more and more deeply into the word. I feel like I'm just, whoa, I'm just, I might be tearing up.

My heart is full. It's just, I need to be doing that. For others, it's, who's a worship music beholder of the glory of God?

This just moves you so much. Scripture says light and momentary sufferings is the way through the doorway to see the glory of God. Who is it getting out into creation and experiencing his majesty in creation?

There's lots of us. You got to do it. For some of us, it's just stopping in the early morning and being quiet, sitting in his presence and just beholding his glory.

For all of us, it's the truth of the gospel, isn't it? The life, death and resurrection of the Son of God in our place.

So Paul says that when we see the glory of God, not through a veil, but like a mirror, God, through his spirit, he'll do a work in us. He's going to produce freedom and he's going to transform our heart and mind into the likeness of Jesus. Freedom.

Behold his glory and there is freedom. When we behold his glory, we see that he's kind and merciful and good and always loving. Can anyone relate to on a really hot day diving in to a pool?

And it's just perfect temperature. And you just slide along the bottom of the pool or into the ocean. It's just like, it's hard to beat that for freedom, don't you reckon?

Just diving in to a pool and just being like, I'm free. Do you know that today? Or are you carrying the burden of the weight of your sin, not the glorious weight of the God who created us and loved us in Christ?

The freedom that we can experience is visceral. It's real. It changes us when we see the glory of God.

And we are brought to a place where that glory changes us into ever increasing glory as we become more and more like Jesus. Freedom and transformation. So Paul said that Moses had a ministry of death.

I mentioned Romans 7. Let me just read a little bit as we finish and sort of head towards the table of remembrance.

Paul wrote in the end of Romans chapter 7, I find this law, remember he had the ministry of death, Moses, I find this law at work, although I want to do good, Paul says, evil is right there with me.

For in my inner being, I delight in God's law, but I see another law at work in me, waging war against the law of my mind and making me a prisoner of the law of sin at work within me. What a wretched man I am.

Who will rescue me from this body that is subject to death, this body that the law of Moses is saying, you are a failure. It's a ministry of death. The law is an executioner.

And we all come under that. We say with Paul, what a wretched human I am. Who will rescue me from this body that is subject to death?

The Old Testament law leaves a veil over our face. But when we turn to Christ, and you can do it today for the first time, if you're willing, and we understand what he has done for us in the cross and the resurrection, Romans 7 25 is true.

Thanks be to God who delivers me through Jesus Christ, our Lord. I feel like a complete failure. I am undone by the law of God pointing out my sin, but thanks be to God who delivers me through Jesus Christ, our Lord.

Then that leads us to Romans 8, 1, which if you haven't discovered it, you need to discover it, and if you can safely get on the roof of your house.

I didn't say that publicly, but if you could, it is a great thing to get on the roof of your house and yell out, Therefore, there is now no condemnation for me, for those who are in Christ Jesus, because through Christ Jesus, the law of the Spirit

who gives life has set you free, has set me free from the law of sin and death. Hallelujah. Get on the roof if you can, do it safely. Or just go wherever you can and scream it out, Therefore, now there is no condemnation for me.

I know I deserve it, I know that, but Jesus Christ has died in my place and has set me free from the power of sin and death. Who will rescue me, this wretched man, from the power of sin? Thanks be to God, Jesus has done it.

He died in my place. And so then, Romans 8 leads on, this is the last scripture I'm going to read, verse 28 of chapter 8. We know that in all things, God works for the good of those who love him, who have been called according to his purpose.

For those God foreknew, he also predestined to be conformed to the image of his son, glory to glory, more and more like Jesus, that he might be the first born among many brothers and sisters, and those he predestined, he also called, those he called,

he also justified, those he justified, he also glorified. He glorified. Have you seen his glory? The glory of the one and only son of God.

Yes, if you're a Christian, the answer is, yes, I have. Amen? Yes, I have.

What an immense, wonderful truth we come under today. God, who is glorious, has revealed his glory to us in Jesus. I pray that your answer is yes to that question.

Have you seen his glory? It is weighty and bright and worthy of our best. Amen?

And worthy of our best