

HOME CHURCH GUIDE:

- CHECK-INS: Introduce, check-in
- CARE: Needs in the group
- COMPASSION: What is the group planning? Are you inviting your neighbours to join in?
- GROUP ANNOUNCEMENTS Church-wide and group-only
- DIG IN: "Breaking the Ice" question (group facilitator), discuss questions as a group
- PRAYER: Final questions, prayer huddles for personal requests. Consider breaking into small groups (huddles) of 2-4, by gender, if large enough.

FOR REFLECTION AND DISCUSSION:

(NT Wright)

1. Ice Breaker - How was your break?
2. Read Ex 34.29-35. Paul uses this story where Moses finds himself pleading for the Israelites after they worship a golden calf. This deep and heartfelt prayer called forth from God a fresh revelation of himself and Moses glimpsed God's glory so much that he had to cover his shining face with a veil because the Israelites were afraid of him. Only when Moses turned back to the Lord in the tabernacle did he remove the veil. What argument is Paul making by using this story (3.7-11)?
3. How does Paul continue to use the Ex 34 passage to explain in 3.12-19 why he is so bold in his ministry?
4. 3.18 can be understood as seeing the glory of the Lord in each other; or, a use of imaginative prayer to gaze on Christ. What do you think of either interpretation? Neither one undercuts the power or purpose to see the glory of Jesus. Why would it be so astonishing to see each other being transformed from one degree of glory to another by the Holy Spirit?
5. What practical difference does it make if we began seeing each other as reflecting Christ's glory?
6. What about the imaginative prayer practice of envisioning oneself looking at Jesus?
7. Paul speaks of the relationship with the Old Covenant with the New in Jesus. What are you hearing in this?
8. If the Spirit was at work before from time to time and through the law, but now all the time because of Jesus sending the Spirit in fullness, what does that mean in our lives if we have direct access to God's power?
9. In what ways might we see the Spirit uses what is incomplete or old to bridge us to a point of turning to God in Jesus?
10. Other thoughts on this passage?



CONNECT WITH US ANYTIME!

- Get information, make comments, ask questions, share thoughts
- Prayer requests
- Sign-up for our weekly e-newsletter
- Join a Home Church

2 CORINTHIANS SERIES FREEDOM?

What threatens our flourishing? What does real freedom look like, and what gives us the power to be free? How does Jesus ground all freedom? What are practices that help us be empowered, confident people?

The Apostle Paul addresses some issues from those who want to mix-and-match various religious traditions with Jesus, and why this does not work for freedom. A buffet does not grant the freedom it claims. There is a path that gives you power to live a fulfilling life of love—a Jesusy life.

TAKE OFF: STORIES

"Brother Seymour generally sat behind two empty shoe boxes, one on top of the other. He usually kept his head inside the top one during the meeting, in prayer."

REVIEW

OUTLINE: WITHERINGTON'S RHETORICAL STRUCTURE

1. The epistolary prescript (2 Corinthians 1:1-2)
2. The epistolary thanksgiving and exordium (2 Corinthians 1:3-7). "the beginning or introductory part, especially of a discourse or treatise."
3. The narratio (2 Corinthians 1:8-2:14), which explains some of the facts that occasioned the letter and climaxes with a further thanksgiving and transition (2 Corinthians 2:15f.).
 - a. The context or background of the topic
 - b. "The narratio gives a brief account of the situation your paper addresses. Include anything that is necessary to bring the reader up to date on the topic. What is the current situation? What created the situation? The narratio can also include the "Who Cares?" of your topic. Who is affected by this? Who is researching this? What is the current academic conversation about the topic?"
4. The propositio (2 Corinthians 2:17), which states the basic fact under dispute.
5. The probatio and refutatio (2 Corinthians 3:1-13:4), which includes:
 - a. Paul's defense of his ministry and of his anti-Sophistic rhetorical approach (2 Corinthians 3:1-6:13)

FLIGHT: THROUGH THE TEXT

"...In the Christian church, we still have both "ministry of condemnation" and a "ministry of the Spirit," which brings life...Jesus Christ [left us]... with his very own internal Spirit to change us from within...Often the church can hold on too tightly to the old way of doing things, assuming it is the only right way of doing things. We become very set in our ways, and there is a sense of security in doing the familiar and relying on old rules and regulations" (J. Diehl, 141).

2 CORINTHIANS 3:7-11 NEW-MINISTRY GLORY SETS THE OLD ASIDE

2 Corinthians 3:7-9 The glory of the Two Ministries Compared ^{3:7} But if the ministry that produced death—carved in letters on stone tablets—came with glory, so that the Israelites could not keep their eyes fixed on the face of Moses because of the glory of his face (a glory which was made ineffective), ⁸ how much more glorious will the ministry of the Spirit be? ⁹ For if there was glory in the ministry that produced condemnation, how much more does the ministry that produces righteousness excel in glory!

- Old economy that is now taken up into the new economy of Christ and the Holy Spirit.
- Using a common ancient (Rabbinical, Greco-Roman, etc.) argument from the lesser to the greater

2 Corinthians 3:10-11 The Second Renders the First Inoperative ¹⁰ For indeed, what had been glorious now has no glory because of the tremendously greater glory of what replaced it. ¹¹ For if what was made ineffective came with glory, how much more has what remains come in glory!

"...Christians have to get used to setting their course by what cannot be seen rather than by what can (see 4:18); by what is going to last forever, rather than by what lasts merely for a while; not by lifestyles and cultures which will end in death, but by what brings life the other side of death" (Wright, 24).

2 CORINTHIANS 3:12-18 VEILED AND UNVEILED FACES AND MINDS

2 Corinthians 3:12-13 Bold New Ministers ¹² Therefore, since we have such a hope, we behave with great boldness, ¹³ and not like Moses who used to put a veil over his face to keep the Israelites from staring at the result of the glory that was made ineffective.

- This boldness is not based on Paul's personality type, extroversion, rhetorical skills, performance polish, but based on the hope of what Jesus has done and will do.

2 Corinthians 3:14-15 Veiled Minds While Reading Moses ¹⁴ But their minds were closed. For to this very day, the same veil remains when they hear the old covenant read. It has not been removed because only in Christ is it taken away. ¹⁵ But until this very day whenever Moses is read, a veil lies over their minds,

- Only here in the New Testament is the Hebrew Bible called the "old covenant".
- Veil imagery developed even more:
 - Since the problem that caused Moses to wear the veil in the first place was the state of the heart of the people, we can see it lies over the law itself. The law points to Christ but for those whose hearts are not ready it is veiled.
 - Veil is over the law and the actual hearts

Paul shows the results of both dispensations, but whereas in the former instance he concentrates on those results--death and separation from God--in the latter case he concentrates on the [Holy] Spirit himself. -John Chrysostom, Homilies, 2nd Cor.

2 Corinthians 3:16-18 Radical Unveiling of the Spirit ¹⁶ but when one turns to the Lord, the veil is removed. ¹⁷ Now the Lord is the Spirit, and where the Spirit of the Lord is present, there is freedom. ¹⁸ And we all, with unveiled faces reflecting the glory of the Lord, are being transformed into the same image from one degree of glory to another, which is from the Lord, who is the Spirit.

- **2 Corinthians 3:16**> Echos ex 34.34a Moses took the veil off when he went into the tent to speak with the lord. Paul now changes it into an aspect of becoming a believer, conversion with the people he is sharing Jesus with. "When one turns to the Lord, the veil is removed".
 - How can it be removed? Ex 34.34 - from Moses now to all of us, "Whenever anyone turns to the Lord - the word 'turn' here could mean 'convert' or 'repent' - the veil is removed. (We should note the implication: that, when someone turns to the Lord, they will be able to understand the true meaning of the Bible)" Wright, 37).
 - Origin - All scripture needs to be read with prayer that the Lamb, opens the "Sealed" book to us.
 - This phrase "turning" is also used 1 Thessalonians 1:9 - "you turned to God from idols, serving a living and true God".
 - 2 Corinthians 3:18> "all of us...are being transformed".
 - Vision of Jesus. Some options:
 - The gaze is on Jesus' face- they become what they admire (B. Witherington)... OR,
 - The gaze into one another's faces (NT Wright), those who are following Jesus, full of His Spirit... OR,
 - This implies that when anyone who believes in Jesus looks into the mirror and sees his or her own reflection, what that person sees is the "same image" as the Lord Jesus himself (J. Diehl, 137).
 - Spiritual Practices implied here. Do this regularly to experience transformation power/ co-operant grace.

"One degree of glory to another" - lit "From glory into glory". This reaches back to the earlier glories - from Moses/old covenant to the permanent glory of the new (cf John 1:17-18). This transformation is ongoing - spiritual, moral, in the community of faith until the last transformation at the coming of Christ (Rom 11:25, 12:1-2, 1 Cor 15:50-57, Rom 8:18-30).

PREP AND LANDING, HOW CAN THIS BRING YOU TO A NEW PLACE?

- Old/New Relationship with God/Ultimate/Etc
 - Old Religion vs New Direct in Jesus
- Turning towards open our life
- What we set our eyes on, we become