

GOD IS AT WORK FOR HIS OWN GLORY – Beholding and Reflecting the Glory of God

Our great hope is to be a God-centered church, captivated by God's final pursuit of Himself. Ironically, in pursuing His glory our greatest joy is found. As a result, our confidence is not in ourselves, but in His work. God is always going ahead, behind, and alongside of His people. The Church is first and foremost His great work. Our calling is to participate in what He is already doing.

2 Corinthians 3.18 – And we all, with unveiled face, beholding the glory of the Lord, are being transformed into the same image from one degree of glory to another. For this comes from the Lord who is the Spirit.

Read 2 Corinthians 3.12-4.6

Context & Meaning

As we saw in lesson one, Moses requested to see God's glory, to gaze upon his bright splendor and weightiness. This request was granted by God. Moses was allowed to see God's glory but in a modified fashion. He was allowed to see 'his backside' from a safe distance, from the cleft of a rock. As a result of this, we are told in Exodus as well as in 2 Corinthians that Moses' face shown with the glory of God. This 'reflected glory' was so bright that Moses' had to veil his face from others who might behold it, namely the Israelites. But interestingly, this bright 'reflected glory' of Moses' face was also a fading glory. It was a glory that was not permanent, a glory that 'was being brought to an end' (3.13). We are told in verse 14 that the Israelites could not gaze on this bright, yet fading glory, because their minds and hearts were hardened, they refused to believe. The passage goes on to speak about a veil remaining for those who refuse to believe, but this time the veil isn't on Moses', it's on the hardened heart (3.15). But when one repents, that is, 'turns to the Lord,' a turning that is brought about by the Spirit, the Spirit who brings freedom. (3.16-17), the veil is removed. Summing all this up, Paul writes in verse 18 that Christians who have the law of God written on their hearts by the Spirit are now able, with unveiled faces, to behold the glory of the Lord (a glory that is found in the face of Jesus Christ), a beholding that brings with it a transformation 'from one degree of glory to another.'

Apply

By the work of the Spirit we have been graced with the great privilege of beholding the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ. But 2 Corinthians says that this beholding leads to a transformation, a transformation of one degree of glory to another. This somewhat vague phrase, put simply, means that as we behold the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ, we are being transformed into the image of Christ, an image of the crucified and risen one. And because this is indeed the case we, like Moses, have faces (lives) that are to reflect the glory of the Lord into the world, praying that the Spirit would remove the veil that remains over the unbelieving hearts of those we rub shoulders with on a daily basis.

For Reflection and Discussion – Beholding and Reflecting the Glory of God (*2 Corinthians 3.12-4.6*)

1. From this passage it would be right to say that one becomes like that which he/she worships, i.e. the beholding/worshipping the glory of the Lord leads to transformation from one degree of glory to another. What would this look like positively – worshipping the one true God revealed by Jesus? What would this look like negatively – worshipping an idol (modern idols – money, food, drink, sex etc...)? (see Psalm 115 in answering the latter question). Give examples.
2. Name some of the ways that God has given for us to behold his glory in the face of Jesus Christ. Would fellowship (beholding others face to face) be included as one of these ways?
3. I think you would agree that Christianity is a God-glorifying religion. But would you also agree that Christianity is a man-glorifying religion? Based on this passage as well as one Romans 8.30 and Colossians 3.4 how would you agree with or refute this statement? What implications does your answer have on your life?
4. What does Paul mean when he says that we are being transformed from one degree of glory to another? Explain how this idea is characterized as restoration or redemption.
5. What does it mean for us to reflect the glory of God individually as well as corporately as a church?
6. God's purpose is to make his glory known in the world. As Christians our calling is to 'get in' on his ongoing work by reflecting his glory in our spheres of influence. Take time to thank God for this amazing calling and to ask him for the wisdom and strength to fulfill it.