

Stephen Johnston

The impact of the New Covenant

(Sermon Summary)

Sunday evening, 14th August 2022

Reading: 2 Corinthians 3:12-18

This sermon continues our study of the New Covenant from 2 Corinthians 3.

Moses' veil

The Apostle Paul says that 'we are very bold' in proclaiming the Gospel message, unlike Moses who put a veil over his face. Exodus 24 describes how when Moses went into the Lord's presence, the glory of the Lord was reflected in his face so that it shone. After hearing from the Lord, Moses would teach the people, and then when he had finished teaching, he would put a veil over his face. Paul explains that Moses did this so that the people would not see the radiance fading away. The radiance of Moses' face was temporary, just as the Old Covenant was temporary.

Moses knew that the Old Covenant would not last. The Israelites would never be able to keep their side of the Old Covenant. In fact, Moses warned them that they would turn away from the Lord soon after Moses' death. The people did not believe this because their minds were hardened. It was as if a veil was over their minds, preventing them from realising that their hearts were sinful and that they would never be able to fully obey the Law.

We see that the veil remains

Today, the veil is not over Moses' face but over our hearts. We have proud, sinful, unbelieving hearts but the 'veil' makes us think that we are good enough for God. If this is your attitude, you must ask God to remove the veil and show you what you are really like.

The impact of the New Covenant

The veil is removed

Under the New Covenant, the veil is taken away. People see their own sinfulness. They realise that they cannot fulfil their part of the Old Covenant, thus realising that the glory of the Old Covenant has faded. Instead, they see the glory of the New Covenant, which is all bound up in Christ.

The veil is taken away through Christ. The Spirit reveals Jesus to us and we grasp his significance. This happened to Paul on the road to Damascus when he saw the glory of God in the face of Christ. We too can see Christ with the eye of faith.

Freedom

‘Where the Spirit of the Lord is, there is freedom’. The law brings slavery; it stops us from receiving blessing. Under the New Covenant the penalty of the law is taken away, we are set free from sin and no longer have to try to earn God’s favour. Moreover, the Spirit gives us the power we need to start keeping God’s law.

Transformation

The Spirit transforms us into the image of Christ, from one degree of glory into another. Under the Old Covenant, only Moses could see the Lord, but now we all have access to come into God’s presence and see His glory.

How can we see His glory? We see it in creation, but most of all we see it by looking at Jesus, the image of the invisible God. We see Jesus as we study His Word, especially the Gospels. And the impact of this is a gradual transformation into His likeness. The image of Christ in us will never fade, but as we behold Him, it will grow brighter and brighter. This is the purpose for which we have been saved.

One day that transformation will be complete, but in the here and now we must make every effort to purify ourselves, just as He is pure.

We do not lose heart

Let’s not worry about what the world thinks of us. Let’s have confidence and boldness in the Gospel, remembering how privileged we are to have had the veil removed. Let’s keep looking for opportunities to see Jesus and become more like Him.