

Changed from Glory to Glory

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[0 : 00] I'd like us now to turn together to 2 Corinthians in chapter 3 and verse number 18.

2 Corinthians 3 and verse 18. Here we read there, and we who with unveiled faces all reflect the Lord's glory are being transformed into His likeness with ever increasing glory which comes from the Lord who is the Spirit.

We who with unveiled faces all reflect the Lord's glory are being transformed into His likeness with ever increasing glory.

In the authorised versions these words are written, changed from glory to glory and from glory and to glory.

To think that putting men on the moon is now something of history.

[1 : 46] Today we have curiosity, that marvellous machine rumbling its way on the surface of Mars.

We have Usain Bolt, like lightning. We have Chris Hoy the same. And just this past week or more we heard of the passing of Sir Bernard Lovell, one of the pioneers of radio astronomy whom I remember when he was given an honorary degree from the University of Edinburgh, who was described as a celestial eavesdropper.

We have Mo Farah, people who do amazing things, wonderful people.

And I think we should never lose our sense of wonder at what people achieve and the staggering discoveries which are made by many people in the world today.

We marvel at their achievements and they have a certain glory. But one of the quite astonishing things that we are told in the Bible, that there is a group of people who have a glory that is unmatched by any human achievement here on earth.

[3 : 36] And it's a glory that actually increases as time goes on. We read about it in our text this evening in 2 Corinthians 3 in verse 18.

And the group of people referred to is composed of very ordinary folk, but in whom something quite extraordinary has happened.

And I want us to think a while about this and discover a little of what is going on in the lives of these individuals.

And first of all, I want us to see what is meant by this word, glory.

It's a lovely sounding word and it's a word that is used very frequently in the Bible.

[4 : 50] The Old Testament root of the word comes from something that had weight about it, something substantial, and when it is used with reference to God, it speaks of the absolute perfection of God in his moral character, in his holiness, in his goodness.

And what one writer has used with deep respect, we can call the intrinsic worth of God, something substantial indeed.

And the Old Testament people saw this glory of God in the pillar of fire and of cloud that led them from their captivity to Canaan.

And they saw it in a light, a mysterious light, a pure light that settled over the mercy seat in the tabernacle, a reflection of the pure nature of God.

And it was the joyous exercise of Old Testament worship to praise the Lord as we've been doing this evening, responding to the glory of God.

[6 : 36] And in the New Testament, the language comes to mean the same thing as we see in the Old Testament. And it's indeed something substantial, because if you look here at chapter 4 in 2 Corinthians and at verse 17, for example, where Paul says, our light and momentary troubles are achieving for us an eternal glory that out far outweighs them all.

Paul brings together this sense of substantiality, of weight. The authorised version calls it the weight of glory.

And it so often refers to the absolute worth, the perfection of God. And in the New Testament, that is most strikingly shown to us in the Lord Jesus Christ.

In 2 Corinthians 4, we read about the, in verse 4, there, the God of this world has blinded the minds of unbelievers so that they cannot see the light of the gospel of the glory of God, who is the glory of Christ, who is the image of God.

And earlier on in chapter 3, we read the same thing. And the apostle John, as he started his gospel, tells us about Jesus.

[8 : 30] He said that we beheld his glory, the glory of the one and only who came from the Father, full the pluroma of grace and of truth.

It's no wonder that James in his letter spoke of Jesus as the Lord of glory.

It is a wonderful word. It's the description of the wonderful nature and character of God seen in the person of Jesus Christ.

But when we read our text, we see something different. We see the glory is revealed and then it becomes reflected in that group of ordinary people whom I mentioned earlier.

We who with unveiled faces all reflect the Lord's glory and are being transformed into his likeness with ever increasing glory which comes from the Lord who is the Spirit.

[10 : 15] So who is being referred to here, this group of people? Paul speaks about we, who are the we that he's referring to?

If we go back to the first chapter in the verse and at verses 21 and 22, we read there, now it is God who makes both us and you stand firm in Christ.

He anointed us, set his seal of ownership on us and put his spirit in our hearts as a deposit, guaranteeing what is to come.

These people who are standing firm in Christ, they are Christians.

They have responded to the Gospel when it was first to them in the first instance in Corinth when Paul preached there and of course it refers to all who are Christians today.

[11 : 31] They've come under the ownership of God, that's what it means, sealed with the Spirit.

And we are free from the bonds of the law and living in the sunshine of God's grace.

There are people who are not what they once were, but there are people who are not yet the finished product.

It's something that's going on in their lives. So then let us see what the text has to say as we tie all these things together.

In the first part of the verse, the we, the believers along with the apostles, we with unveiled faces reflect the Lord's glory.

- [12 : 39] Now there's something wonderfully challenging about that. Paul was referring to that time in the Old Testament when Moses went up the mountain to receive the Ten Commandments and he spent time in the presence of God, in the Holy presence of God.
- And it was such an experience that he had that was hidden from the rest of his people. But Moses had such an experience in the near presence of God that when he was coming down from the mountain, his face was a glow with the presence in which he had been.
- He had to put a veil over his face. It was so bright, the people would be staggered at his appearance.
- But after Moses there were many who did not believe what God had said to them and they could not see the glory of God because a veil had come over them, not a veil to hide the glory that was glowing out from them, but a veil this time that was hiding from them the glory of God.
- But now as Paul, as Christians, that veil is taken away and we see the Lord in all his glory as our Savior and Master.
- [14 : 33] I think we've all been aware of the celebrations of athletes at the Olympics when having won a medal they have their moment of glory.
- But here is Paul telling something about your life and my life if we're Christian people that is beyond anything that these great athletes could ever enjoy apart from Christ.
- I'm sure you've enjoyed bright moonlight on a night when there's a full moon, no clouds and the moon is shining its light down upon us beautifully.
- But of course it's a reflected light, it's the light of the sun and when we're Christians our lives should be reflecting the light of the sun, S-O-N this time.
- And I think as I've said that's an amazing fact, it's also a very challenging one. Never notice the effect of this glory.
- [16 : 09] The apostle says we are being transformed into the likeness of Jesus.
- This word transformed, it's only used four times in the New Testament and we read about one of the times in the Gospel by Mark when it was referring to the transfiguration of Jesus.
- When Jesus was seen by the apostles he took with him in his heavenly splendour, white, blindingly white, whiter than any bleach on earth could make it.
- Purity, purity from heaven. And that is the kind of glory that should be being reflected out of your life and mine.
- One of the other uses of this word is in Romans chapter 12 and verse 2 where Paul says that we should be transformed rather than in enslavement of our minds by concentrating on the things of the Spirit, the things that are holy and just and good, filling our minds with these things so that this will be reflected in our lives outwardly rather than stuffing ourselves and being moulded into the things and the ways of the world.
- [18 : 09] We have to concentrate on what is godly rather than on what is worldly. So it's referring to a big change.
- In fact it tells us we are being changed, transformed into Christ's likeness and not only so but with increasing glory.
- I wonder how many of us are conscious of that. Some years ago I was at a Christian booksellers convention and coming along one of the corridors in the convention centre one day was a lady struggling to walk with the aid of her walking frame making very slow progress but with her very radiant face.
- And she had just authored a book which was called, Someday I'm Going to Fly.

She was conscious of all the restrictions of our physical handicap here on earth but Hilary McDowell, the Irish author of the book, had a hope of glory in the life to come when all these restrictions would be taken away and she would be absolutely free and the suffering would be a thing of the past.

[20 : 10] And our text is not speaking about heaven, it's speaking about here and now and the glory that it's speaking of that should be reflected from our lives is how we should be living in the here and now.

So what does it mean for us? Look at the final part of this verse, verse 18. So we fix our eyes not on what is seen, sorry in verse, that's chapter 3 verse 18, we who with unveiled faces all reflect the Lord's glory are being transformed into His likeness with ever increasing glory which comes from the Lord who is the Spirit.

This increasing glory comes from the Lord who is the Spirit, that is the Holy Spirit.

The glory is not inherent in us as Paul mentions in verse 7 of the next chapter, we have this treasure in jars of clay to show that the all surpassing power is from God and not from us.

It's not something that we can stand up and say look at me, I am glorious, it's something that we must be reflecting from which comes from the Lord.

[22 : 05] So the Lord's likeness should be seen in your life and in mine. It is what is sometimes called the work of sanctification, a work of God's free grace whereby we are renewed in the whole person after the image of God and are enabled more and more to die to sin and live to righteousness.

That's how our catechism, number 35 puts it. It's a process and we're involved in it and we surely ought to be when we consider what Christ has done for us.

I'm sure that we would all have to admit that there are many clouds as it were in our lives that stop a true reflection of the Lord shining out from us and we can only get rid of the clouds as we come closer and closer to the Lord Jesus.

When we put away anything that is displeasing to him or that is unlike Christ, the reflection that comes must be clearly seen and it must be of Christ and not of us.

So what a privilege, what greater privilege could anyone have than to have Christ's likeness clearly visible in our lives so that people will see the intrinsic worth of God in your life and in mine.

[24 : 16] Amen. Shall we pray? Dear Lord, we thank you for the opportunity to think of wild in your word and Lord we pray that we may behold your glory and we pray too that we may reflect your glory, that glory that comes through Jesus Christ.

May he make such a difference in us that our lives in every part will reflect him and bring honor to his name for his sake.

Amen.