

2 Corinthians Class 4 Transcript

Welcome back to FI Online. Glad you could join us once again.

Before we get into class number 4 this evening, we did receive three questions last time from class number 3. So we'd like to begin by addressing those. Actually, there were **four questions**, but the first two are pretty much the same.

Was there a transcript for us to download for class three?

And the **second** one was:

How do I get a transcript for the class?

Well, offering transcripts for the FI Online classes is a relatively recent addition to what we've been able to do, and we're very happy to make them available for you. But, please understand that producing the transcripts for the FI Online classes is not really a simple process.

The recordings are first run through a transcribing software program to get a basic copy of what's said. The software isn't perfect, and there are often many typos and corrections that need to be made. If a presenter mispronounces a word, or says something that sounds similar to another word, the software program does its best, but sometimes it doesn't get it right. You can imagine, when we use Greek and Hebrew words, what a challenge it is for the software.

Those rough copies are then sent to a team of volunteers who listen to the recordings and try to correct any mistakes that are there. Sometimes they can't understand what the presenter said. Sometimes the speaker stumbles over some words, and the reviewer has to try to figure out what it was he was actually trying to say. Sometimes they even have to contact the speaker to clarify what was said. If it were not for these volunteer reviewers, we simply would not be able to produce the transcripts at all.

We often use then a final reviewer to go over the transcripts one more time. Once they have completed their work, they return the edited copy to headquarters, and the manager of the transcription program goes over everything again to make sure it's clear and to answer any final questions that might remain. The bottom line is that all of this requires a great deal of time. And, sometimes we are so involved with other projects that they may not have time to get the transcripts ready for publishing at the same time we're ready to show that particular program for FI Online. We'll still post them under the appropriate class as soon as we have them completed. And we do appreciate your understanding and patience as we do this.

[3:00]

Next question.

In the second chapter of 2 Corinthians, Paul does exhort the congregation to forgive the wrongdoer after repentance. But, on an individual basis should we also forgive someone who does not repent?

Well, I think there are several factors that have to be considered in answering a question like that. First of all, we have to remember that all sin is against God. And He is the One who must

provide forgiveness as far as the ultimate judgment of the individual is concerned. My forgiving or not forgiving someone has nothing to do with whether he's been forgiven by God. God can see the heart, and therefore only God knows whether there is genuine repentance or not. We don't have the ability to judge that. Now, obviously, if someone is continuing in their sin, we would be able to conclude there hadn't been repentance, but again, that's not really our place to judge.

Second, since we do not have the ability to forgive sin in the sense of ultimate judgment, our forgiveness is not about forgiving the sin but forgiving the harm that may have been done by the sin. If the individual sin had nothing to do with me, then again, my forgiveness or lack of forgiveness is really irrelevant.

But suppose the individual's sin did cause me harm. In that case, I have a choice to make about forgiving the individual for the harm done. Is there a value in withholding forgiveness in such a case? Who is harmed by my withholding forgiveness? It is possible to forgive someone for the harm they've done without putting myself in a position where they can harm me again. We need to keep in mind that God provided a way for forgiveness for us prior to repentance.

Romans 5 and **verse 8** said: *But God demonstrates His own love toward us, in that while we were still sinners, Christ died for us.*

That seems like a good model for us to follow.

[5:14]

Question **number 4**—the last one.

The picture you showed of the relief from the Arch of Titus—showing his victory over Jerusalem—does beg the question as to why would some historians even question the existence of King David, Solomon, and their kingdoms.

Well, there are probably a couple of factors, again, that we would need to consider. First of all, historians—for that matter, any writer—has to have a certain purpose in mind for what he writes. Any writer has to select information that they will include and what they will omit from the account. One of the more familiar secular sources that we sometimes use for the history of the first-century area of Jerusalem and Judea is the author Flavius Josephus. Sometimes he's called Josephus Flavius. But, when Josephus wrote his histories, he intended to prove to the Romans that the Jews were in fact a noble people who deserved the respect of the Romans. At this point, of course, the Romans had looked down upon the Jews as just simply a troublesome province. But as a result of Josephus' perspective and his desire to make the Jews appear very noble, he very often glossed over some of the more difficult parts of the history that could have been embarrassing. And, he also sometimes seems to have embellished some of the stories and made them sound better than the Scripture really tells us they were. So, we have to keep that in mind as we read any history.

To be fair, outside of the Bible there is really not much written history from secular sources that supports the existence of David, Solomon, and for that matter, many of the others who are well-known to Bible readers. Probably the most well-known of the Israelite kings that shows up in

other areas, other nations' histories, would be Omri. And certainly, that's not one of the kings that we would look to in Israel as being a good king. But we don't find much in the historical record of other nations about David and Solomon and all of those that we know of.

Even so, we, as a result of that, would recognize that those who study archaeology and who look at this area of the world tend to have a certain skepticism about what the Scripture says. Very often they don't want to rely much on what Scripture says at all. Part of the reason for that is because if you do, your colleagues in the field very quickly tend to discredit you, and therefore it's usually easier just simply not to make an issue of it.

Of course, there are also historians and writers today who have a vested interest in disproving the biblical accounts. Especially, for example, Muslim scholars who deny that the nation of Israel ever existed, as the Scripture describes it, and who deny that the Jews ever really ruled in Jerusalem in ancient times. Even though this often places them in the same category as Holocaust deniers and Flat Earth people, they still very often are willing to ignore the facts and compromise their integrity if they think it's going to give them some advantage. So yes, it does happen. There are many people who are in that position.

But as the true archaeologists continue their work, as time goes by, it seems that more and more the evidence is there that backs up exactly what the Scripture says. Probably we will not see science make a big turn and suddenly become supporters of the Scriptural account. But at the same time, we will be able to see, as time goes by, that there is, I think, ultimately a very good bit of **solid** historical evidence for what Scripture says.

Well, thank you for your questions. Again, after the end of tonight's class, you will have one hour to turn in any questions, and we'll try to answer those before the beginning of class number 5.

Now, as always, we want to have God's blessing. So if you would please join me, bow your heads, and we'll ask God's blessing on this class.

[Prayer]

[10:30]

Last class we finished through the first few verses of the third chapter of **2 Corinthians**. So, let's just quickly refresh where we were, and then we can go on from there.

As we begin that **third chapter**, Paul says: **verse 1** *Do we begin again to commend ourselves? Or do we need, as some others, epistles of commendation to you or letters of commendation from you?*

In other words, he's saying, "Well, do we need some kind of official recognition before you're able to listen to what we bring to you?"

And he goes on to say: **2** *You are our epistle written in our hearts, known and read by all men;*

"We can't hide what you are, and you are the evidence that God is using us to spread the truth."

Verse 3 He says: *clearly you are an epistle of Christ, ministered by us (or served by us), written not with ink but by the Spirit of the living God, not on tablets of stone but on tablets of flesh, that*

is, of the heart.

And we referred back to the passage in **Ezekiel 34**—or **36 [verse 26]** that talks about God's Spirit writing His way on our hearts, on tables of flesh instead of tables of stone.

So we pick it up here in **verse 4**. He said: *And we have such trust through Christ toward God.*

In other words: "Our confidence that we have is in the work of Jesus Christ in your life. We don't have to worry about some kind of outward kind of recommendation or endorsement from someone else. We recognize Jesus Christ working in you."

And he goes on to say: **verse 5** *Not that we are sufficient of ourselves to think of anything as being from ourselves, but our sufficiency is from God,*

So, in other words, he says, "We don't claim that your growth or your progress as Christians is because of us. God can perhaps use us as a tool, but the growth is—the credit belongs to God."

Expositor's says this:

Still speaking of this confidence before God, he disowns any ability to form a competent judgment of the results of his own ministry or any personal right to lay claim to the results of what was in reality God's work.

Now again, remember, Paul's dealing with some individuals here who are basically trying to undermine him and his position in his relationship with the brethren in Corinth and his position as an apostle. So, Paul is saying, "Okay, I'm not going to come along like someone who claims: 'Well, look what I did.'" And he's saying, "No, I don't have that. I don't have the ability by myself to do this. And I know that. And I give God all the credit for what's taking place."

I think any minister of Jesus Christ would readily acknowledge that he is inadequate to fully care for God's people in the way that God's people need that care. It is only by God's help and inspiration that the minister can even attempt to fulfill that responsibility. And we all know that. Many times our human inadequacies are painfully obvious. But if people focus on those, well, then they often can fail to recognize that God has chosen and ordained a person for a specific responsibility, and that therefore, God will give him the help that he needs in spite of whatever human failings may be there. Many times, we in the ministry can recognize our own shortcomings. And recognize we wish we could do this better: "I wish I had more ability in that way." But different ministers have different strengths and different "growth areas," as we sometimes say, and God can use anyone to accomplish His purpose. If we're yielded to God, He's able to make up for those shortcomings, and, He's able to strengthen us so that we can truly provide the help that's needed.

[14:33]

Verse 6 He goes on to say, referring that his sufficiency is from God: *who also made us sufficient as ministers of the new covenant,* —

It's literally: **a new covenant**, —of "a new way, a new approach" he's going to talk about.

—*not of the letter but of the Spirit; for the letter kills, but the Spirit gives life.*

Now what's he telling us there? Well, first of all, in talking about a *new covenant*, there are two different words that are used in Greek to describe something as "new." One of those, **neos**, is a word that means *new* in the sense of: "It's new in time." It's not new in its design or anything in that way. It may be just like something before, but it's new as far as time.

One of the examples I saw explaining this was taking a simple pencil. And, you could take a pencil that you just purchased, and it's "new" in the sense of *neos*, but it's certainly not a different design than pencils that existed for decades. So, it's new in time, but not different in any particular way.

The other word is **kainos**. And that's the word that's used here, or a derivative of it, which means "new in its character; something that's different." So, when we talk about this New Covenant, Paul is not simply saying that it's something that has come along new, newly—it's just come along, and it's more recent than the old. It's a different type of covenant. It's got different characteristics to it. And he will begin to explain that.

Now he talks about here—and it's not necessarily the way we might phrase it today, but he says: *the letter kills*. Well, what does he mean by that? Well, under the Old Covenant—the Old Covenant provided many, many blessings. And, it also said that if you disobey God, then death comes about. The Old Covenant had no way to offer life beyond this physical life. It simply tells us: "Here's the standard to live by." And if we don't, the end result of that is going to be death. It points us **to** the newer covenant. It points us to the sacrifice of Jesus Christ, which **will** make eternal life possible. But the Old Covenant, by itself, couldn't do that. And Paul's going to develop that concept as we go a little bit further on.

So he says that *the letter*, the old letter of the law, the Old Covenant could not produce life. But, he says *the Spirit*, God's Holy Spirit, does impart life. Now, again, we're not going through the book of **Romans** right now. But the book of **Romans** tells us that it is through the gift of the Spirit of God—if *the Spirit of God dwells in you*, he says in **Romans 8 [verse 11]**, then *He who raised up Christ from the dead* will raise up **your mortal** body. So, having the Spirit of God dwell within us is essential to be able to have eternal life. You couldn't receive the Spirit of God under the Old Covenant, but under the New Covenant, yes, you can. God's Spirit is made available. So, he's telling us that the Old Covenant, with all of its wonderful things— and he's going to say very positive things about that Old Covenant—it didn't have the ability to give life. We needed something more. So we can't turn back to that old way in hopes of having life. It's not going to work.

[18:00]

He goes on, **verse 7**, and he says: *But if the ministry of death—*

Let's read the whole verse and then we'll break it down a little bit.

7 ... *if the ministry of death, written and engraved on stones, was glorious, so that the children of Israel could not look steadily at the face of Moses because of the glory of his countenance, which glory was passing away,*

Okay, now we'll stop there lest we get confused with getting too much going at one time.

One of the things you note when you study the epistles of Paul is that Paul often wrote in very, very long sentences, and, trying to figure out where they go can be a little bit challenging at times. So, let's kind of start and take it "bite by bite," as we go forward.

What is this *ministry of death* that it's talking about? Well, it has to do with a way of serving that, even though we do serve faithfully, it's still going to end up in death. The kind of serving of God, where you're genuinely serving, but it can't produce life. The end result of that way of life is still death. Under the Old Covenant that was true. The Old Covenant could not provide for eternal life. The system of serving God provided through the Old Covenant was a **glorious** system, but it still couldn't transform the heart. And therefore, it couldn't provide life. Until the heart is changed, then we really can't hope for eternal life. Because, remember what we read back there in **Jeremiah [17:9]**, the *heart is desperately wicked*, and it must be changed if we're going to be a part of God's way of life.

So, he tells us to recognize that—that the system, the Old Covenant, couldn't change the heart. It takes the Spirit of God for that to come about, and therefore, it's going to be covered as we go forward in looking at that New Covenant.

But, he says, this Old Covenant system, well, it came with glory. And he refers to Moses. Now this is a kind of one of those sections that we don't often read in the Old Testament, but if we were to go to **Exodus chapter 34**, let's just look at a couple of verses there.

In **Exodus 34**, first of all, **verse 29**, it says: *Now it was so, when Moses came down from Mount Sinai (and the two tablets of the Testimony were in Moses' hand when he came down from the mountain), that Moses did not know that the skin of his face shone while he talked with Him.*

In other words, when Moses was speaking to God face-to-face—which is something that no one else was able to do—his face literally began to glow from the presence of God. And when Moses came down the mountain, his face was still glowing. He didn't realize that until it was pointed out, and then he took some action about that. And we'll see little bit more about it.

Verse 33 It says: *And when Moses had finished speaking with them, he put a veil on his face.*

Now you can imagine that seeing someone standing there with their face glowing would really attract your attention, and Moses wanted them to focus on what he had said, not on him. Plus, there's something else we're going to see as we go forward. There's a metaphor involved, because that glow on Moses' face wasn't always there. It began to fade as time went by. It wasn't that it wasn't genuine. It wasn't that somehow there was something wrong with it, but it began to fade, began to fade away.

[21:38]

And he goes on to say again, if—well, let's again pick it up so we get **[2 Corinthians 3] verse 8**. He says: **7**... *if the ministry of death, written and engraved on stones, was glorious, so that the children of Israel could not look steadily at the face of Moses because of the glory of his countenance, which glory was passing away, 8 how will the ministry of the Spirit not be more glorious?*

Now, we notice something here that, again, I think is very important. Since the Spirit of God

gives **life**—that was found back in **verse 6**—the system of serving that involves the Spirit of God, this New Covenant system is a system that is far more glorious than the old system, even though the old system **was** glorious.

Now I want to use perhaps a physical metaphor here to understand this. We're going to see consistently, as we go through this section, that Paul does not say negative things about the Old Covenant. He doesn't say there's something wrong with it.

Now when you read the biblical commentaries, you will find that most of the commentaries will try to find fault with the Old Covenant. They will say: "Oh, it didn't produce what was good. It didn't produce life, so God realized He had to throw it away and get rid of it." It was almost as if God didn't know that it wasn't going to produce life. Of course God knew that. When He gave it to them, He knew that. That was part of the reason for giving it in the way He did. He wanted **them** to understand that all of the physical service in the world doesn't change the heart. It doesn't mean that physical service and obedience to God don't matter. But there is the recognition that **that** can't produce the change of heart that every human being needs. That's going to take a miracle from God. It's going to take God's gracious—and I use that term as an example of the word "grace" —"a gift given from the goodness of the giver without regard to the worthiness of the recipient." By God's grace we receive the gift of the Holy Spirit, and through that gift the heart is changed, and God can then give us eternal life because we have a different heart.

Now, does that mean the system that God gave to ancient Israel, the Old Covenant, was somehow flawed and evil? No, of course not! It was a glorious, glorious Covenant. It stood out from what any people anywhere on earth had ever experienced. Sometimes people try to tie in the 10 Commandments with the ancient Code of Hammurabi. But when you begin to examine the two, you see: No! God's Covenant was far superior to **anything** any human being ever came up with. God's Covenant tried to help people think in the right way. God's Covenant set aside holy time, an opportunity to draw close to God. So, God's Covenant was very different than anything any human came up with. It was a **glorious** Covenant. And God told ancient Israel that: "When you obey this, other nations will see you, and they will say, 'What nation is there that has their god so close to them that he has given them such a wonderful way of life?'" It was intended to be glorious, not just to bring glory to God, but to bring glory to the people who kept it. But, it still couldn't change the heart. It didn't produce that.

[25:20]

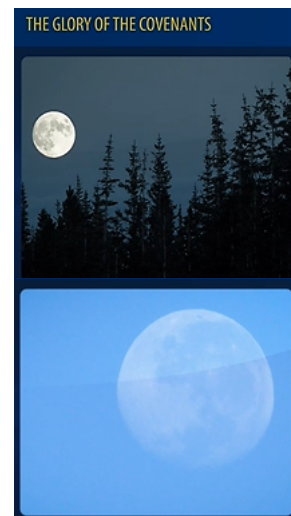
Now I would like you to think simply of an example that probably many of us have seen. If you've ever gone out on a dark night and you've seen the full moon, it is a beautiful sight to see, something that is absolutely stunning! And on a night like that, when it's dark and the full moon comes up, it lights up the whole landscape. You can see all kinds of things because of the light reflected from the moon. It is a **glorious** thing to see. But what happens as the night progresses and the full moon is still there, but we approach sunrise, and the sky begins to lighten, and the sun begins to come up? Well, the glory of the moon begins to kind of fade away.

Now, it's not that it wasn't glorious in the first place. But when something brighter comes along, then, what we had, what we saw that was glorious begins to fade into the background in the light of something that's much brighter. It can't compare to the light of the sun. So maybe a physical example like that can help us get a little bit of the picture of what we're talking about.

Now, could it be as well that Paul is also making the point that those who want to go back to that old system, or who begin to advocate that Christians need to live by the Old Covenant standards, maybe they fail to recognize that what we are called to is something even more glorious than the genuine glory that was a part of the Old Covenant? I think even in our day today, sometimes people, sincere people, think that somehow we're more righteous if we incorporate Jewish customs and words into our lives as Christians. I've known people who, instead of talking about the first five books of the Bible as "the Bible," they'll talk about "Torah," as if somehow this Hebrew word "Torah" has some magical significance before God. No, it's just a physical sound, doesn't change things.

Sometimes we've had people who wanted to wear tassels under their garments as the ancient Israelites were instructed to do. Or people who want to examine how Jews kept the Passover so we can see how we should do these things. No, that was a glorious Covenant. It was a wonderful thing. We'll consider that Passover, in a sense. If you stop and think about it, the Old Testament Passover commemorated the greatest deliverance in the history of mankind. It was a marvelous deliverance as God brought Israel out of Egypt. It was a wonderful thing. It was a wonderful thing to remember, and we should remember it. It was a milestone in all the history of God's people.

But the **New** Testament Passover shows us something even greater. It shows us an eternal **spiritual** deliverance from the slavery of sin through the sacrifice, not of a physical lamb, but of God in the flesh, Son of God, given for us. Now when you compare those two, which one is more glorious? If we focus on the first one, aren't we not recognizing the glory of the New Covenant Passover with Jesus Christ as our sacrifice? There is a much greater glory. It doesn't mean we have to somehow denigrate what took place when Israel came out of Egypt. God performed **amazing** miracles to bring them out, and they're wonderful lessons for us. What God performed through the sacrifice of His Son was far more glorious. So we don't want to go back to what was something less glorious and forget about what is more glorious. And I think that's a part of what Paul is talking about there. The ministry of the Spirit is far more glorious.



[29:47]

He goes on to say: **verse 9** *For if the ministry of condemnation —*

Now again, it's not saying God's system was intended to condemn, but it's simply saying that under that Old Covenant, man failed. We couldn't, without the help of God Spirit, forsake sin. We couldn't overcome it. The slavery to sin couldn't be broken. So, in that sense, that Old Covenant ended up, through its laws, bringing condemnation upon us because we sinned.

... if the ministry of condemnation had glory, —

It's glorious because the system God gave—the laws—were wonderful. But *if that had glory, —the ministry of righteousness exceeds much more in glory.*

It goes far beyond that glory of the Old Covenant—this *ministry of righteousness*. Another translation puts it: *the ministry marked by, and leading to, righteousness*.

Part of the glory of the New Covenant is that it gives a more adequate picture of the character of God, of what He's truly like. It isn't just a series of dos and don'ts, physical laws written on tables of stone. It's the whole spirit and intent of God's law, written on the tables of the heart. That's a far more glorious thing.

He goes on to say: **verse 10** *For even what was made glorious (again, the Old Covenant) had no glory in this respect, because of the glory that excels.*

In comparison to that New Covenant, the Old Covenant, for all of its glory, is very small. That's something that we recognize, as he says in the next verse, is passing away.

Verse 11 *... if (he says) if what is passing away was glorious, what remains is much more glorious.*

Other translations put this as: *what is in the process of being done away*. There was a learning process that took place. Just as for you and I, when God began to call us to the truth of God (I should say: for you and me) —as God called us to the truth, we recognize there was a process we went through. We had to unlearn some of the old ideas we had. We had to come to recognize things in a new way.

I think of, in my own case, when my family first began to keep the Feast of Tabernacles. I would have to say that my perspective on it was far more physical than it is today. We tended to think about all of the physical things that were involved, and how we could stay in a nice place and have nice meals and all of those things, and, ah—okay; those things are fine. But I think all of us understand today that the Feast of Tabernacles is a lot more than physical feasting and nice places to stay. Those things help us to appreciate the Feast. They give us, as Paul puts it later in **Colossians [2:17]**, kind of a *shadow* of the *things* that are *to come*, a silhouette that helps us to get a little better picture. But we understand today and we derive a lot more from the Feast because we've recognized a different approach. That way that we began with—that was more physically-oriented—that kind of gradually begins to pass away. And we begin to take on an understanding that's greater.

The Old Covenant was given a temporary glory, just like the glory on Moses' face. It was never intended to last forever. By contrast, the glory of the New Covenant is a permanent glory that will **never** be superseded, nor will it ever pass away.

[33:38]

Now we should note that throughout this, Paul **never** denigrates the Old Covenant or its system. He repeatedly treats it as glorious, as worthy of respect, while recognizing that it has been replaced with something that is far greater.

I think if we use maybe another metaphor—at least one that helps me. I've always enjoyed being outdoors, and especially sometimes at night, when you get out away from all the city lights and you begin to look at the night sky, it is absolutely a glorious thing to see. Now it's sad that today many people don't have that opportunity. In fact, I was just recently reading an article about the International Dark-Sky program, where states in the United States, and even in places around the world, where they set aside certain areas to keep light—artificial light—from intruding so that people can go there and still be able to look up at the night sky and see it in all the glory that's there.

It is estimated that in this country [USA], 80 percent of all Americans have **never** seen the Milky Way. Because there's so much artificial light around us, you never get to see it. I read that statistic, and I thought: You know, it's been **decades** since I've seen the Milky Way. We're always surrounded by all these artificial lights, and we fail to see what a beautiful sky is out there. When you have that opportunity—you get to a place where it's dark and you have the opportunity to look at the night sky—then you really begin to understand what David was saying when, in the **Psalms [19:1]** he says: "The heavens proclaim God's glory."

Now, when you look up at that sky, it is awesome. It's something that I think—for many of us at least, when you have that opportunity—makes you feel very, very small. You really recognize how tiny you are in comparison to this vast creation that God has put out there. And yet, we also recognize that what we look at with just our naked eye is only a tiny fraction of what's there.

Some of you will remember that a number of years ago, when the Hubble telescope was launched, that the scientists decided to point it in a direction that seemed to be completely empty, that there wasn't anything there. And basically, as I remember the description, they said it was like if you took a plastic straw and you look through it—held it up to your eye and looked through it—that tiny little area that you would see was completely black, and there was nothing there. They pointed the Hubble telescope at it, and they found that that area was **filled** with **hundreds and hundreds** of galaxies. And of course, all of those galaxies represent millions, even billions of stars that we can't even see.

So, in a sense, I draw the metaphor here that when we look at God's way of life, when we look at it initially with our naked eye, we are in awe of what we see. But as time goes by and we're able to see more deeply—the Spirit of God works within us and opens our minds to see more deeply—then what we see is so much more glorious, so much more amazing, so much more awe-inspiring. I think that's the metaphor that I would draw from what Paul is saying here. The Old Covenant, which *is passing away*, was *glorious*, but *what remains is much more so*.

[37:27]

So he says, **verse 12**: *Therefore, since we have such hope, we use great boldness of speech—*

The term that he uses here for *boldness* has to do with “frankness, fearless candor.”

“We speak out boldly.”

Now again, when you consider the way Judaism was in the first century—and for that matter what it’s tended to be down through the centuries since then—a great deal of emphasis was placed upon what this rabbi says or that teacher says, and you know: “So-and-so says this... and well, what about this person? They say that.” And, okay, that’s because they basically are just giving their opinions. And some people are wiser and have more considered opinions than others.

But, what we’re seeing with the help of God’s Spirit is not simply somebody’s opinion. And therefore, what we see in God’s truth, we’re able to speak boldly. We don’t have to apologize. We don’t have to say: “Well, you know, as I see it—I think it’s likely that Jesus Christ is really going to return, and we may live forever.” No, we can say confidently: “This is the plan of God. Every human being is going to have a full opportunity for salvation.” We don’t have to guess about the fact that God is going to give everyone a full opportunity. We don’t have to guess about what happens to people who don’t have that opportunity in this life. We don’t have to theorize about how God might find some other way to save them, even though Scripture makes it clear there’s only one pathway to salvation; it leads through Jesus Christ. If you try to get there any other way, **you won’t get there**. But we understand, with boldness, how God has a plan that is going to include everyone. And that’s a part of this New Covenant that God has given.

Verse 13 He says: *unlike Moses, who put a veil over his face so that the children of Israel could not look steadily at the end of what was passing away.*

Now, if you’ll notice something—I often looked at this and thought: “Well, you know, he put the veil on there to hide the glory.” No, that’s not it. The glory is fading away. He put the veil on so they wouldn’t see it fading; they would recognize the glory.

Exodus 34 [verses 33-35] seems to indicate that for a period of time, whenever Moses met in the tent of meeting with God, Moses’ face would glow. When Moses came out of the tent, he spoke God’s message to the people, and then he put on the veil so the people would not be able to see the gradual fading of that glory.

Now that can be seen, in a sense, as a metaphor for the Old Covenant. It was glorious as it came, but its glory was gradually fading. And, eventually, it’s going to be replaced by the New Covenant. Since the Old Covenant would not pass away for centuries, Moses wanted the people to focus on the glory, not the fading away. If they’d comprehended that the Old Covenant was going to be replaced, well, many would’ve just neglected it and said: “Well, I’ll just wait for the new one.” But that isn’t the way they were supposed to do things.

[40:49]

But (verse 14) their minds were blinded. —

They couldn't really understand. Without the Spirit of God, they couldn't grasp it. In fact, the word *blinded* here is a word that has to do with a callous. It's like a cataract forming on the eye. So if you've experienced cataracts, you understand; they don't just suddenly spring up, and you're blind. But it's a gradual dimming. You can't see light as well. You can't focus quite as clearly. And that's the word that's used to describe *their minds* being *blinded*. They didn't see clearly.

And many times, when a person has a cataract, they don't even realize it. They don't realize that their vision is getting dimmer or they can't see as well. They may think: "Well, it's just as you get older your eyes don't focus as well," when, in fact, there's actually like a callous forming over their eyes.

So, he says: **14** *But their minds were blinded. For until this day the same veil remains unlifted in the reading of the Old Testament, because the veil is taken away in Christ.*

The veil doesn't now keep them from seeing the glory; it keeps them from seeing that the glory's faded and has been replaced. So they keep looking at that old system, and yet God has replaced it with what's new. Jesus Christ, who is God in the flesh, reveals a far greater glory than the Old Covenant offered, but they're not able to see it; they just can't grasp it.

So, he says, **verse 15**: *[But] even to this day, when Moses is read, a veil lies on their heart.*

Now what Moses said was true. It was a wonderful message. It was **glorious**. But it only went so far. It couldn't change the heart. So, he says that the veil's still there. They read the words; they hear what Moses said; and they focus on a Covenant that was given thousands of years ago.

It's important to note here that in some ways, the veil is different. In Moses' case, Moses put the veil on to keep the people from seeing. But, in this case, **they** put the veil on. And it's over their own hearts. They're still unable to see, but it's not because **God** obscured their vision. It's, **they** keep the veil there. They don't remove it because the only way it's removed is through Jesus Christ. He takes away the veil. He enables us to see what we couldn't see otherwise.

[43:32]

So, he goes on to say: **verse 16** *Nevertheless when one turns to the Lord (turns to Jesus Christ), the veil is taken away.*

Now turning *to the Lord* must, in this case—now sometimes we read *Lord* in the New Testament, and we think of God, and that's fine. But many times in the New Testament, the word *Lord* is a reference to Jesus Christ. And here it clearly is, because these were Jewish people. They didn't need to turn to **God**. They'd already turned to God. What they didn't turn to when they should have was Jesus Christ, God in the flesh. So he said: "When you turn to **Him**, *the veil is taken away*. You're able to see; you're able to comprehend."

So, when they're willing to do that, then they can see the glory of this New Covenant and realize how much greater it really is. When the person turns **to** Jesus Christ, he enters into a permanent condition of having the veil removed. That was unlike the time of Moses, when the veil was removed and replaced each time Moses spoke with God. You turn to Jesus Christ—the

veil is taken away completely.

Now he goes on to say: **verse 17** *Now the Lord is the Spirit; and where the Spirit of the Lord is, there is liberty.*

Now again, we've just been using the word *Lord* to refer to Jesus Christ. Now he says—same word, *kyrios*—*the Lord is the Spirit*. Okay. Jesus Christ comes into our lives **through** the Holy Spirit.

We have sometimes said—and I think it's an interesting metaphor—that the Holy Spirit is the way the Godhead inserts itself into the physical creation. Jesus Christ, God the Father are Spirit. They dwell in a dimension of spirit. We dwell in a dimension that's physical. How does spirit insert itself into this physical world? And, it is through the Holy Spirit. The Holy Spirit comes and lives within us. And, in **John [14:17, 23]**, Jesus described that as: "My Father and I come and dwell **within** the converted person. We dwell within them." The Holy Spirit dwells within us. So it is through that Holy Spirit that the Godhead comes and dwells within us.

And, it says this, that *where the Spirit of the Lord is, there is liberty*. Now some struggle with this because, they say: "Oh, well, in this case, this must not be true that it's talking about Jesus Christ in this way," because they refer back to the Old Testament passage. And, they say: "Therefore, that refers to the Father, because Jesus Christ didn't do anything there." Well, we understand that the Lord of **Exodus chapter 34**, speaking to Moses, **is** in fact the one who became Jesus Christ in the New Testament. So therefore, we recognize this as a reference to Jesus Christ.

[46:47]

Now it's interesting, one of the commentaries says this: "Some take *kyrios*—*Lord* here—to be Christ, and they interpret Paul as saying, 'The personality'"—oh, excuse me; let's try that again. I said that the wrong way. "Some take *kyrios* here to be Christ and interpret Paul as denying the personality of the Holy Spirit." Well, if we say the Lord Jesus Christ is this Holy Spirit, then yes, we are denying that the Holy Spirit is a separate entity.

Now, again, this commentary says: "Well, some people say that." Yes, some people do, because we recognize the Holy Spirit is not a separate entity. And that fits perfectly with what's said here. It is the Holy Spirit that brings us freedom. But it's not freedom to do anything that crosses our minds. It is a freedom to serve God without being enslaved by the power of sin. All of us, if we are mature enough to look at our lives and recognize where we've come from, we know that sin held us captive. We were **enslaved** by certain sins.

Now there may be different sins for different people. Some people were enslaved by one sin; some by another. For some it may have been lust. For some it may have been greed. For some it may have been pride. For many people it may be a combination of those things. But we were controlled by that. We were enslaved. We did things that we look back upon and say: "Why did I do that?" We realize that we were slaves. We were captive to sin. But Jesus Christ comes on the scene, through the Holy Spirit, and breaks the chains of that captivity to sin and gives us freedom—freedom to serve God instead of our own lusts, our own desires. The Holy Spirit **never** leads us to transgress the law of God. That would be senseless. The Holy Spirit will

never lead us to do that.

But we go on here, [2 Corinthians 3] verse 18: *But we all, with unveiled face, —*

Okay. How does our face end up unveiled? Because we've turned to the Lord; we've turned to Jesus Christ, and the veil is removed.

... we all, with unveiled face, beholding as in a mirror the glory of the Lord (That's kind of like seeing a reflected glory of the Lord.), are being transformed into the same image from glory to glory, just as by the Spirit of the Lord.

That sounds kind of complicated. What do we mean by that? Paul—some of the things, as we've read at the end of 2 Peter [3:16]—Paul tells us—oh, excuse me—Peter tells us that Paul wrote *some things hard* to be understood. Well, the way this is put together, it may be a little difficult to understand.

I like a different translation here. Sometimes the *Amplified Bible* tries to add extra words to help us understand a little better. And I happen to like this translation. Here's the way the *Amplified Bible* translates verse 18. It says:

And we all, with unveiled face, continually seeing as in a mirror the glory of the Lord, are progressively being transformed into His image from [one degree of] glory to [even more] glory, which comes from the Lord, [who is] the Spirit.

Now again, I think that captures the sense. We look at God. We see His glory reflected. How is it reflected? Well, you and I don't have the ability to look directly at God. We don't see Jesus Christ in His glorified form right now. So what do we see? Well, we see—in the New Covenant we see God's law, but we see it in a new way. We see it guided by the Spirit of God. So instead of looking at this law and seeing it as a listing of dos and don'ts, we look beyond that, and we see there is a spiritual intent of this law. We recognize that, in fact, God's law reveals to us the character and mind of God. And, that law is intended to help us to **see** the reflected glory of God. His law reflects His character. So, how do we see that?

[51:31]

Well, let's take, for example, the law which says that you are not to commit adultery. Now that seems pretty physical, doesn't it, because adultery is very much a physical act—although we do recognize that a person can be guilty of the spirit of adultery without ever committing a physical act at all. In other words, if a person lusts, as Christ said in His sermon on the mount, then that individual is really guilty of transgressing the spirit of that law. Now what does that tell us about God? Well, when an individual makes—or when two people, we should say, make the commitment of marriage before God—they “covenant before God,” as we say, “in the presence of witnesses”—but the covenant is made with God that we promise an **exclusive** relationship with one another. We make a commitment. We say: “This is the way we will live the **rest** of our lives.”

Okay. When we don't do that, whether it's physically or even in the mind, then we are violating a promise that we made. We promised before God we would live in a certain way. Now, God certainly doesn't commit adultery. That's not even something He's capable of. How does it show

God's character? What it shows us in that promise is that God wants us, when we give our word, that we will be faithful to that word always—just as God is always faithful to His word.

So when we look at that commandment, we're not just looking at some physical limitation on this physical life. We're looking at a principle that is going to be a guiding principle for us throughout eternity. If we are going to be representatives of God, then we must be **like** God in that our promises must be **kept**. We must be faithful **no matter what**.

Now again, we could look at all kinds of different aspects of God's law and recognize this shows us about the character of God. This tells us what God is like. We see the reflection of God's glory in His law. Okay. And as time goes by, we see even more. We recognize things more deeply. We come to realize there's so much more to serving God than just going through a list of dos and don'ts.

So we are gradually being transformed into **His** likeness. We are becoming more like Him. And the more we see His glory, then this gives us our standard that we shoot for. Remember what we saw back there in **Ephesians [4:13]**? We covered that a couple of years ago as we looked in FI Online classes—that we are to *come to the measure of the stature of the **fullness** of Jesus Christ*. That's so much more than the letter of the law. Now, was there something wrong with the letter? No. That was glorious. That was a **wonderful** system of law. But, what God gives us in the New Covenant is far more glorious.

And, it's interesting too, as we look at this, that when it talks about *with unveiled face*, the verb form is passive. And what that means is that **we** didn't take the veil away; God did. He removed that veil from us. And we see. We see *from glory to glory*, or an increasing glory instead of a fading glory. That's what happened with Moses; the glory faded. But we see a glory that gets greater and greater and brighter as time goes by. So, it is an increase in glory. And this glory comes to us by—or literally, the Greek here is "from" —it comes out from God to us. It is God giving us His glory. It's not a glory that we're producing.

So, it's a beautiful section here, as we finish up there in **verse 18 of chapter 3**.

Well, let's move on to **chapter 4**. We have time to continue for a bit more.

[56:00]

We begin in **chapter 4** and **verse 1**: *Therefore, since we have this ministry (this service, which involves this New Covenant), as we have received mercy, we do not lose heart.*

Now again, I like another translation here. Let's look at the translation from the *New Revised Standard Version* here.

He says: **verse 1** *Therefore, since it is by God's mercy that we are engaged in this ministry, we do not lose heart.*

Have you ever lost heart? The word there refers to just kind of being so overwhelmed that you lose your motivation to accomplish something. It just seems like you have one thing on top of another, on top of another, and we begin to lose heart. I think that happens to all of us from time to time.

But he tells us here: Since we recognize that it is by God's grace that He gives us this mercy, then we don't lose heart, even in the face of difficulties. Now think about what Paul is talking about here. Paul has been accused in front of these people. He's sacrificed his life. He has been abused and persecuted in a number of ways. We've seen examples—for example in Philippi, where he's beaten, he's thrown in jail. Prior to that he'd been stoned. He's been through many things because of his dedication to this calling, this ministry that he's been given. And, when it comes from outside the Church, well, it's not an easy thing to take, but, you sometimes can say: "Well, okay. They don't know any better."

You know, as we saw in various places—we're just covering with the students here in Foundation Institute the passage at the end of **Acts chapter 7** where Stephen is stoned. And his last words are: "Don't hold this against them. They don't really realize what they're doing." And when people persecute us from outside, we can kind of feel that way: Okay. I'm sorry it's happening, but they don't really understand.

What happens when it comes from inside? What happens when the people you have served begin to doubt your motives, begin to question whether your motives are really sincere? That can be a difficult thing to take. And that's what Paul was facing. It can be really discouraging to face accusations and criticisms from others, especially from the people you've been serving. But Paul says he's going to remain positive, because [of] the realization that the opportunity he has been given to share the gospel has come from God.

So he goes on to say, **verse 2**: *But we have renounced the hidden things of shame, —*

That means the behavior—well, another translation puts it: *the behavior that shame hides*. Or, the things that one hides out of a sense of shame. Paul says: "We've renounced those things."

—not walking in craftiness —

Which has to do with kind of deceiving people, having hidden motives.

—nor handling the word of God deceitfully (making it say things it really doesn't say), but by manifestation [of] (openly showing) the truth commending ourselves to every man's conscience in the sight of God.

It's evident that Paul's methods, his motives have been questioned by some of his critics. And his answer is simply to say: "Okay. If you're going to judge us, then listen to what we teach. Look at what we do. Our teaching and our example show much about what our motives really are. In fact, they show more about what our motives are than anything we can say. We can defend ourselves. We can become very upset. And we can attack our attackers, and do all of those things." But Paul basically says: "Okay. You're hearing a lot of attacks. You're hearing people say negative things about us. Okay. What did we do? What did we say? How did we conduct ourselves? Did we take your money? Did we do things like that? Did we in some way, while we were serving you, we were kind of hiding all those ugly things that we didn't want you to see? No. Look at us. If you're going to judge us, then don't judge us on what our accusers say. Judge us on what we've done."

[1:00:35]

You know, there are many of you who have been around long enough that you remember that there are a lot of accusations that have been made against Mr. Herbert Armstrong, and things that happened in the past, and so on. Of course, many of those accusations are totally untrue. But stop and think: Is your life different, better, because of the things that you learned through God's servants, however flawed any of them may have been? Is your life better? Are you a different person in a positive way? Would you rather go back and be what you used to be? Don't judge by the accusations. Judge by the fruit. What's been produced? Has God taken a hand in your life? Has He used fragile, flawed human instruments to produce the character of Jesus Christ in you? If so, then how should you look at those flawed human beings? Do you look at them as accusers do? Do you look at them, recognizing that all of us received an awful lot of mercy from God to be able to do what we do?

So he said: "Okay. We commend *ourselves to every man's conscience*. Examine us. Okay. Your *conscience in the sight of God*. We can't hide from God what we are. God knows whether we've been hiding away secret sins or any of those things. He knows the genuineness of what we do. So examine us in that way."

*But (he says, **verse 3**) even if our gospel is veiled (People can't see it and understand it.), it is veiled to those who are perishing,*

Now again, we read there in **chapter 3 verse 16**: ... *when one turns to the Lord, the veil is taken away*. But if for some people, they're not seeing it—and again, probably the implication here is: "Well, if the gospel is—if God is really behind you, then how come the Jews aren't seeing it? How come so many of your own people aren't seeing it?" And he's saying: "Well, God is the one who determines when the veil's taken away. Only God can do that. We can't take the veil away by preaching more effectively. If you're not willing to turn to Jesus Christ, then the veil is not going to be taken away." The veil doesn't imply they will never understand. Remember Moses' veil was temporary. It didn't stay there forever. So the veil is a temporary thing, and Paul is making that point.

And he goes on to say, [**chapter 4 verse 3**]: "if they're veiled, it's *those who are perishing*." Those who are going the direction that's going to lead to destruction are the ones who can't see and understand. Those who do understand are walking that way. They're not perishing.

And he goes on to say, **verse 4**: *whose minds the god of this age has blinded, who do not believe, lest the light of the gospel of the glory of Christ, who is the image of God, should shine on them.*

The responsibility for the blindness of those who don't see the truth is laid squarely on the shoulders of the god of this age, Satan. It's his purpose to thwart their understanding.

It's interesting—the phrase here, *the god of this age*, is translated by *Expositor's* as: *the one whom this age has made its god*. I think that's really graphic—*the one whom this age has made its god*. In this age, people don't listen to the true God. They listen to a false god. While Satan is *the god of this age*, he's not the god of the age to come, which is the focus of the gospel message. He has power in this age, but this age is soon to come to an end. And he's not going to be able exercise his power anymore.

[1:04:40]

I love the metaphor of *light* because God's truth is like a light that shines in the darkness. He talks about here, *the light of the gospel of the glory of Christ*. Notice, isn't this interesting? Here's another name for the gospel. We call it "the gospel of the Kingdom." We call it "the gospel of God." We call it "the gospel of Jesus Christ." Here it is "the gospel—the good news—of the glory of Christ." Why would the gospel be called that? Because when Jesus Christ returns and sets up His Kingdom, He will be glorified before all men. He will be sharing His glory. He told us before He left, and at that final Passover, that He **wanted** to share His glory with His disciples. This is part of the gospel message. God wants to share glory with you and me. He isn't just calling us to live forever. He's calling us to live in **glory** forever.

He goes on to say: *the gospel of the glory of Christ, who is the image, —*

When Paul calls—this is a quote from *Expositor's*: "When Paul calls Christ *the image of God*, he is asserting that Christ is the visible and perfect representation of the invisible God, the precise expression of the unseen God. When used of the relation of Christ to God, *image* implies both personality and distinctiveness." In other words, it's showing that there are two Beings, but they are perfectly in agreement. Jesus Christ shows us what the unseeable God is like. What an amazing thing that is! That's why Jesus Christ is the chief cornerstone upon which every other truth, every other bit of understanding is built. He reveals to us, in a way that we can see and comprehend, what the true God is like. In a sense, He is like a lens. When you look at Jesus Christ, you see through to God the Father and what He's like, what His character is and what He wants us to be like.

He said that the god of this world is blinding people, *lest the light ... should shine on them*. The problem is not that the light isn't there; the light is. They're blinded. A blind person can't see that light. If they're totally blind, they're unable to perceive the light, even though it shines on them.

Well, that's as far as we have the opportunity to go in this particular class. We thank you for joining us. We will pick up next time in **2 Corinthians chapter 4** and **verse 5** and continue on with Paul's lessons here.

Remember, you have one hour after the class is aired if you'd like to send in questions, and we'll try to answer those at the beginning of the next class.

Thanks again for joining us. Look forward to seeing you for class 5.

[1:07:39]