

The Harvester



Preparing Souls

To Serve The Lord



Volume 37

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Number 9

Two Students Graduating in May



Dylan Johns came to us immediately after high school. He and his mom were active members of the Kissimmee church of Christ before moving to Brooksville. While a student, Dylan lived in the house that is graciously provided by the Orange Street church of Christ in Auburndale, Florida. He also served as a summer intern with the Spring Hill (Florida) church of Christ, and he has preached by appointment for other congregations. He has also spoken at youth events. Also while in school he has dated Kasey, from the Kissimmee church of Christ, and they are planning to be married May 20. He will begin work as the preacher for the Kissimmee church of Christ on May 15.



Scott Anthony Pfettscher came to us from the Towne Acres church of Christ in Muncie, Indiana. He was pursuing a BA degree in youth ministry at Anderson University (which he completed in 2015) when he was converted through the influence of his girlfriend, Hannah (now his wife), and through Bible study with one of our graduates, Brian Howard, who was serving as the local preacher. While in school, Scott has worked with the Eagle Lake church of Christ and also has preached by appointment for other congregations. At the time of this printing he was interviewing for full-time preaching work. After securing a work, he and Hannah plan to expand their family.

A MOST GLORIOUS WORK

By Brian R. Kenyon

There may come times in a preacher's work when he begins to doubt his ability and/or effectiveness. This may be due to opposition from within a congregation or perhaps he is facing challenges with his family that leave him feeling inadequate. At times like these, it is beneficial to examine Paul's teaching

in Second Corinthians 3:7-18. Against the backdrop of Paul's words here are the Judaizing teachers who were constantly trying to undermine the apostle's work. These Judaizers were trying to bind the Law of Moses as a requirement for salvation (cf. Acts 15:1, 5). Paul's response is encouraging.

GOSPEL MINISTRY IS GLORIOUS

The ministry in which Paul labored was far surpassing in glory than the ministry in which Moses and the Judaizers labored (2 Cor. 3:7-11 cf. Ex. 34:29-35). In this section Paul uses three arguments from the lesser to the greater to prove that the new covenant is far superior than the old. Leading up to these statements, Paul defended his apostleship against the influence of those who, among other things, had promoted aspects of the Law. This prompted Paul to show that his “letter of recommendation,” the Corinthian church, was written “in our hearts” by the Spirit, which in turn reflects the fulfilled promise of the new covenant (2 Cor. 3:1-6 cf. Jer. 31:31-34). Thus, in Second Corinthians 3:7-18, Paul made a comparison between the old and new covenants.

In this section, Moses is portrayed as a type of Paul. Paul ministered the new covenant while Moses ministered the old covenant. Since the covenant Paul ministered was much more glorious than that of Moses, Paul was in that sense superior. This superiority of Paul over Moses shows the inferiority of Paul’s opponents (cf. Heb. 3:1-6)!

First, the ministry of the Spirit is more glorious than the ministry of death.

But 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, ⁸how will the ministry of the Spirit not be more glorious? (2 Cor. 3:7-8)

The old covenant, which was glorious, was a “ministry of death.” The Law pointed to the necessity of keeping its commandments, but by itself provided no means of taking care of sin (cf. Rom. 7:7-

11; Gal. 3:10-12; Heb. 8:7-13). “Ministry [ministration, KJV]” is from *diakonia* (διακονία), which refers to service (2 Cor. 3:8-9; 4:1; 5:18; 6:3; 8:4; 9:1, 12-13; 11:8). “Written and engraved on stones” alludes to the Ten Commandments, symbolic of the whole Law (cf. 2 Cor. 3:3). “Was glorious” refers to the inauguration of the old covenant, symbolized by the brightness (“glory”) of Moses’ face as he came down from the mountain (Ex. 34:29-30). “Look steadily [look intently, NAS]” means to fix one’s eyes on, look straight at, stare (2 Cor. 3:13; Acts 1:10; 3:4, 12; 7:55; 23:1). “Glory of his countenance [of his face, NAS]” is a reference back to the skin of Moses’ face (Ex. 34:29, 35). The “glory” of the old covenant, symbolized by Moses’ face shining, was “passing away” (2 Cor. 3:7b). “Passing away [done away, KJV; fading, NAS],” as used here, means to cease (2 Cor. 3:11, 13-14; 1 Cor. 13:8, 10-11). This “indicates that the process was going on at the very time Moses was talking to Israel” (Thompson 47). How much more glorious is the “ministry of the Spirit” than the fading Law?

Second, the ministry of righteousness is more glorious than that of condemnation.

For if the ministry of condemnation had glory, the ministry of righteousness exceeds much more in glory. For even what was made glorious had no glory in this respect, because of the glory that excels. (2 Cor. 3:9-10)

If the old covenant “of condemnation” was glorious, then the new covenant “of righteousness” is much more glorious (2 Cor. 3:9). The Law was a “ministry of condemnation.” It could not by itself deal with the sin that it exposed (cf. 2 Cor. 3:7; Rom. 7:9-10). The new covenant is a “ministry of righteousness.” It brings people to Christ,

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where there is “no condemnation” (Rom. 8:1). “Righteousness” refers to what God requires; what is right, righteousness, uprightness, justice; (God’s) putting (man) in a right relationship (with Himself) (Newman 46). The Gospel contains God’s righteousness (Rom. 1:16-17), and Christ’s work on Calvary is how people are made righteous (Rom. 3:21-26).

Though the old covenant was glorious, its glory is no comparison to the new (2 Cor. 3:10). “Just as the light of the sun makes lesser lights seem as nothing, the new covenant is incomparable in its radiance” (Thompson 49). Therefore, the permanent ministry is more glorious than the faded away ministry (2 Cor. 3:11). The new makes possible the “righteousness” that the old intended but could not deliver due to the weakness of the flesh (Rom. 8:1-4; Heb. 8:8).

GOSPEL MINISTRY IS CONFIDENCE

Paul was more confident in his ministry than Moses ever could be (2 Cor. 3:12-18 cf. Ex. 34:33-35). Those in the new covenant can speak much more boldly (2 Cor. 3:12-13). They have the hope that accompanies the permanent covenant. Moses and those trying to keep the old covenant did not have this hope because the old covenant was only transitory.

Moses’ veiling his face prevented the children of Israel from seeing what was fading away. There are various views as to why Moses’ face was veiled. One is that God wanted to prevent the Israelites the privilege of seeing the glory fading away. Their sins were the reason why that glory would fade, and thus Paul was concerned with the “interruption and concealment of that glory, rather than its fading” (Hughes 109-110). Another is that God wanted to avoid “personal embarrassment” for Moses of “having the people realize the splendor of his face was fading, or that he did not want to undermine their confidence in the present dispensation by letting them see that it was transient” (Harris 337). Either way, Moses’ face being veiled shows lack of confidence.

Those adhering to the “old testament” are blinded, until they accept Christ.

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. ¹⁵But even to this day, when Moses is read, a veil lies on their heart. ¹⁶Nevertheless when one turns to the Lord, the veil is taken away. (2 Cor. 3:14-16)

As the Israelites’ minds were blinded in Moses’ day, so are those in Paul’s day who want to adhere to the “old testament.” The Israelites of old could not see the truth. “Blinded [hardened, NAS]” actually means stubborn or

without feeling (Jn. 12:40; Rom. 11:7) (Newman 158). Those in Paul’s day who adhered to the Law could not see the truth. The “same veil” over their eyes also “blinded” the Israelites. Even though the Scriptures were constantly “read” in public, the Israelites refused to understand the nature of the “old testament.”

The truth of the “old testament” can only be seen “in Christ” (2 Cor. 3:14b). As Moses removed the veil when he went before the Lord (Ex. 34:34), so would the veil be removed when those adhering to the Law turn to the Lord Jesus (cf. Jn. 5:39).

Being blinded, or prejudiced, is the only explanation as to how they could hear the “old testament” read repeatedly and still not see the truth. However, when the heart is turned to the Lord, the veil is taken away (2 Cor. 3:16). “Turns” means to turn back, return; turn to, and is sometimes translated “converted” (Mk. 4:12; Jas. 5:19-20). “One [it, KJV; a man, NAS]” is inherent in the third person singular verb. However, the subject of the verb can refer back to the “heart” (verse 15 cf. Rom. 6:16-17).

Those from whom the veil has been removed partake in the glory of God.

Now the Lord is the Spirit; and where the Spirit of the Lord is, there is liberty. ¹⁸But we all, with unveiled face, beholding as in a mirror the glory of the Lord, are being transformed into the same image from glory to glory, just as by the Spirit of the Lord. (2 Cor. 3:17-18)

As the veil was removed from Moses’ face in the Lord’s presence (Ex. 34:34), so blindness is removed from those who come to the Lord. Some take “the Lord” in “the Lord is the [that, KJV] Spirit” to refer to the Father since the context of Exodus 34:29-35 refers to the Father, while others take “the Lord” to refer to Jesus, but either way, the meaning is the same. The point of the context is not to affirm the Godhead, but to show that the covenant Paul ministered was much more glorious than the one Moses ministered. As the Lord was the unveiling point for Moses, so the Spirit is the unveiling point for those who accept Christ’s covenant. “The Spirit” in this context symbolizes the new covenant (cf. 2 Cor. 3:3, 6, 8). In one sense, the new covenant may be termed the covenant of the Holy Spirit (cf. 2 Cor. 5:5; Acts 5:32; 19:2-3; Rom. 8:9; 1 Cor. 3:16; Gal. 4:6). Since the Law by itself brought bondage by exposing sin without a remedy (cf. Rom. 7:7-8; Gal. 3:10), the fulfillment of the Law in the new covenant of the Spirit brings freedom (cf. Rom. 6:18-23; 8:1-2).

With the blindness removed, the true glory of God is known (2 Cor. 3:18). “Beholding as in a mirror” means to reflect (cf. 1 Cor. 13:12; Jas. 1:23), or “to look at something as in a mirror, to contemplate something” (Bauer

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424). This beholding is “continuous and free from interruption” (Rogers and Rogers 398).

Those who come to the Lord are changed into that same glory. “Are being transformed [changed, KJV]” means to be changed in form (Mt. 17:2; Rom. 12:2). Since Christ is the perfect “image” of God (cf. 2 Cor. 4:4; Col. 1:15), and since Christians are in Christ (Gal. 3:27), Christians are in that sense changed into His image (cf. Rom. 8:29). Paul’s use of “glory to glory [one degree of glory to another, ESV]” indicates that far from losing its intensity, or luster, “the glory experienced under the new covenant progressively increases until the Christian finally acquires a ‘glorious body’ like that of the risen Christ” (cf. Phil. 3:21; Rom. 8:23; 1 Jn. 3:2) (Harris 338).

CONCLUSION

Even though a preacher’s opposition may not come from those who are binding and adhering to the Law of Moses, the principles of overcoming are the same. Con-

stantly being reminded of the glorious nature of Gospel ministry will help keep preachers from becoming discouraged. It will also give them the confidence they need to continue to “Preach the word!,” to “Be ready in season and out of season. Convince, rebuke, exhort, with all longsuffering and teaching” (2 Tim. 4:2). 

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