

How To Embolden Your Christian Life

(2 Corinthians 3:12-18)

Do you need more boldness in your spiritual life? Do you feel like you are fizzling before the finish? If so, this passage is for you. The Judaizers were trying to mix the old covenant with the new, as we discussed in the last lesson. An emboldened Paul now writes to correct this problem. Therefore, this passage provides **three** principles that will help embolden our Christian lives.

First is ...

Ponder the basis for boldness (3:12-13).

After explaining the new covenant, Paul writes, *since we have such a hope, we are very bold* (3:12). The word translated bold, or "great plainness of speech" (PARRESIA, par-ray-see'-ah) means confidence. It is to say something plainly and unreservedly.

Paul's boldness is the result of his *hope* in the new covenant. The word hope in the Bible doesn't refer to wishful thinking. It is instead a confident expectation. Biblical hope is to believe in something in the future as if it has already happened. Abraham had this kind of *hope*. What do we read about him in Romans 4:18?

Paul continues by writing we are not like Moses, *who would put a veil over his face so that the Israelites might not gaze at the outcome of what was being brought to an end* (3:13). When he addressed the Israelites, Moses put a *veil over his face* to conceal the radiance of his face. Why did he do that? There were two reasons. First, his radiant face frightened the Israelites. Second, he knew it was *being brought to an end*, which means his shining face was fading away. Moses believed if the rebellious Israelites saw his face diminish in radiance, they would be less inclined to obey God.

His shining face symbolizes the diminishing glory of the old covenant. However, the glory of the new covenant will never fade in the slightest. The writer of *Hebrews* states that Jesus is worthy of more glory than Moses (Heb. 3:3). Then, in chapter 13, he prays God will equip his readers with every good thing they need for doing God's will and being pleasing in His sight (Heb. 13:21a). At the end of that verse, what does he pray about Jesus Christ (Hebrews 13:21c)?

To embolden your Christian life, **ponder the basis for boldness**, which is the eternal glory of Jesus Christ, and ...

Peel away any spiritual veils (3:14-16).

Referring to his early ministry Paul writes, *But their minds were hardened* (3:14a). When Paul visited a city, he would usually preach to the Jews in a synagogue. What does Acts 18:4 record about his first visit to Corinth?

Of all people, Jews should be excited and energized by the new covenant. Instead, *their minds were hardened*. Then, Paul writes that to this day, at the reading of the old covenant, the same veil remains because it can only be removed in Christ (3:14b). The veil that covered Moses' shining face obscured the glory of God from the Israelites. This illustrates that the glory of Christ was obscured to the Jews because they still have a spiritual *veil* on their hearts.

Only by believing in Christ can the *veil* that obscures God's glory be *taken away* (3:14c). Jesus is the full revelation of God's glory, of which the old covenant gives only a glimpse. The apostle John writes that Jesus is *the Word and the Word became flesh and dwelt among us* (Jn 1:14a). Then, what does he write in the rest of that verse?

Next, Paul writes, *Yes, to this day whenever Moses is read a veil lies over their hearts* (3:15). When the Jews meet in their synagogue, they read from the Torah, the first five books of the Bible. But as they hear it read, *a veil lies over their hearts*. They cannot see the One to whom the Law is pointing. Because the *veil* is on their *hearts*, they can't see that all the sacrifices in the book of Leviticus point to the ultimate and final sacrifice—the death of Jesus on the cross.

However, not only the Jews, but everyone has a *veil* of some kind. It might be a veil of pride, materialism, sin, or whatever. Therefore, Paul writes, *But when one turns to the Lord, the veil is removed* (3:16). Paul uses Moses and his veil to illustrate this. What does Exodus 34:34a-b record?

In the same way, when someone *turns to the Lord Jesus, the veil is removed* (3:16). The *veil* is whatever clouds a person's understanding of the Gospel. The phrase *turns to the Lord* refers to repentance. The word translated *repentance* in the Bible is the idea of a conscious turning from living our old way to living God's way. A true response to the Gospel is expressed by Paul's words describing his ministry. What is it (Acts 20:21)?

Two things are required for anyone to have the *veil* removed from his or her heart. First is *repentance toward God*. The only access to God is by repentance. But that is not enough. The second requirement is *faith* in the Lord Jesus Christ. This means believing in and accepting all the promises of Jesus. *Repentance without faith* in the Lord Jesus is useless.

However, even after becoming a Christian, you can still have a *veil* over your heart. There is one way to know. Ask yourself this question: "Am I really bold and excited when given the opportunity to share the Gospel?" If not, you have some kind of veil over your mind and heart. It might be a problem of priorities that results in not regularly attending Bible study or worship. Or, it might be a lack of prayer or personal Bible study. Or, it might also be the veil of some sin in your Christian life that dims or covers the glory of God in your life.

To embolden your Christian life, **ponder the basis for boldness, peel away any spiritual veils, and ...**

Properly respond to the Holy Spirit's ministry (3:17-18).

In these two verses, Paul writes about the ministry of the Holy Spirit. He is the only One who can remove the *veil* from our eyes. The Holy Spirit is the personal, spiritual Ambassador of Jesus Christ. In John 16:8, what does Jesus say about the ministry of the Holy Spirit?

The word translated *convict*, or "reprove," (ELENCHO, el-eng'-ko) means to find guilty or to expose facts. First, the Holy Spirit convicts us in our hearts that we are sinners. Second, He convicts us of *righteousness*, or the right things to do. And, third, He convicts us that we will face *judgment* for our response to Him.

Knowing the ministry of the Holy Spirit, what does Paul write in verse 17?

The Holy Spirit takes away the *veil* and frees us to respond properly to the claims of Christ.

Because of the Holy Spirit's ministry, we can all have an *unveiled face*, behold *the glory of the Lord*, and be *transformed into the same image from one degree of glory to another* (3:18a-c). We *behold the glory of the Lord Jesus* as we read, hear, and study the Bible, by which we are being *transformed*. The word translated *transformed*, or "change," (METAMORPHOO, meta-mor-fo'-o) is the Greek word from which we get our word "metamorphosis." In science, we use that word to refer to the transformation of a caterpillar into a butterfly. It refers to a change from the inside out. How is this process further explained in Romans 12:2a-b?

As we are enlightened by the Bible through the power of the Holy Spirit, we will *refuse to be conformed to this world* and will be *transformed* into bold believers.

This is not our own doing, as Paul explains, *For this comes from the Lord who is the Spirit* (3:18d). As we read, hear, and study the Bible, the Holy Spirit helps us apply it to our lives, so we are transformed ethically, morally, and spiritually.

As we behold the *glory of the Lord* in the Bible, we grow in Christlikeness and become mirrors who boldly reflect His glory. That is the reason for what command in 2 Peter 3:18?

Unlike Moses' fading glory, the *glory* of Jesus Christ in us becomes brighter and brighter, going *from one degree of glory to another* (3:18c), as we grow in Christ.

To embolden your Christian life, **ponder the basis for boldness**, peel away any **spiritual veils**, and **properly respond to the Holy Spirit's ministry**.