

Transfiguration Sunday
February 15, 2015

“Glowing with the Glory of Jesus”

2 CORINTHIANS 3:12-4:2

Therefore, since we have such a hope, we are very bold. ¹³ We are not like Moses, who would put a veil over his face to keep the Israelites from gazing at it while the radiance was fading away. ¹⁴ But their minds were made dull, for to this day the same veil remains when the old covenant is read. It has not been removed, because only in Christ is it taken away. ¹⁵ Even to this day when Moses is read, a veil covers their hearts. ¹⁶ But whenever anyone turns to the Lord, the veil is taken away. ¹⁷ Now the Lord is the Spirit, and where the Spirit of the Lord is, there is freedom. ¹⁸ 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. ^{4:1} Therefore, since through God's mercy we have this ministry, we do not lose heart. ² Rather, we have renounced secret and shameful ways; we do not use deception, nor do we distort the word of God. On the contrary, by setting forth the truth plainly we commend ourselves to every man's conscience in the sight of God.

I am holding in my hand a cross that was made in our Star Bible Camp. The cross is made of sticks that are glued to a thin sheet of plywood. Over the sticks there is a some glow in the dark glue. When you leave this cross in the sunlight or light of a room it will glow in the dark for a limited amount of time.

When Peter, James and John came down from the mountain after seeing Jesus' glory, their faces were glowing with joy and amazement. Later John would write, "We beheld his glory, the glory of the only begotten of the Father, full of grace and truth." Peter even wanted to put up a temporary shelter just to prolong the glory of that moment.

If suddenly Jesus returned to us in glory to take us home to heaven, what would your face look like? I believe your face and mine would show tremendous joy and excitement and anticipation. Jesus said that when that time comes we can look up in eager anticipation and joy.

What if Jesus does not come in glory this week? What if we find ourselves going about the routines of our life at our jobs, in our homes and in our community? Because of who Jesus is and the glory we have seen in him with our eyes of faith, there is a special glow that we have on our faces. We have this glow even when we are stressed or suffering pain or just putting up with the ugliness of sin we see primarily in ourselves and also in others. Let's use these words from the Apostle Paul to helps realize even more fully that we are **"Glowing with the Glory of Jesus."**

It's not about me

My primary reason for glowing is certainly not what I see in myself, but rather what I see in Jesus. Paul tells us "Therefore since we have such a hope, we are very bold. We are

not like Moses who would put a veil over his face to keep the Israelites from gazing at it while radiance was fading away." We are bold. We have hope. We reflect a glory that lasts forever in Jesus, not a fading glory that comes from our poor efforts at trying to make ourselves acceptable to others and to our God. We are not like Moses who had to put a veil over his face to keep the people from seeing his fading glory as he brought the law down to them from Mount Sinai.

Remember when Moses had to put this veil over his face. He went up to Mount Sinai and came back to the people with two tablets of stone that had the ten commandments on them along with other laws God wanted for his people. Because his face glowed so brightly he put a veil over it not just because it was hard for the people to look at him, but also because he did not want them to see the glory slowly fading from his face the way the light might slowly fade from a luminescent cross. He did not want the people to get the impression that the laws of God were fading just as the glory that was fading on his face. Without a clear understanding of God's laws people will see no need to have Jesus as their Savior.

Read the Old Testament. See what happened to God's people when they lost sight of God's laws. Paul says, "But their minds were made dull, for to this day the same veil remains when the old covenant is read. It has not been removed, because only in Christ is it taken away. Even to this day when Moses is read, a veil covers their hearts." What happens to people when their minds become dull and they no longer respect what God says about right and wrong? What happens when they no longer respect God's holiness and perfection? Their minds become dull. They make up their own rules and regulations. They put their own spin on what God said to them. By lowering the standards or glory of the law they actually thought they could measure up to God's glory by keeping the law. Paul says they have a veil over their hearts.

I have heard people say with a glow on their face and a joy in their voice, "My religion is the golden rule." The golden rule is this: "Do unto others as you want them to do to you." People are proud of their efforts to do their best to keep the golden rule. In their heart of hearts they sincerely believe they will be accepted by a holy and perfect God on the basis of their pitiful performance.

So it was with a man who came to Jesus and said, "Teacher, what must I do to inherit eternal life?" Jesus asked him, "What is written in the law?" He gave a perfect summary of the law with the words, "Love the Lord your God with all your heart and all your soul and with all your strength and with all your mind; and your neighbor as yourself." Jesus told him he had given the right answer and then added, "Do this and you will live?"

But then it says this man wanted to "justify" himself. He wanted to make sure that he could glow brightly by loving God and loving his neighbor. He wanted to know who his neighbor was. Did it include the man who was giving him a hard time at work, or that unruly neighbor living next door? Jesus told him the story of the Good Samaritan. Here was a man who went out of his way to help a Jewish man who did not like Samaritans. Jesus told this story to help us realize it is utterly impossible to glow and boast and be proud of the great job we do loving God and loving our neighbor. Jesus yearns and longs for all people to find their glory in him not in themselves.

Bear with me now as we seek to come up with a practical illustration of what Paul is telling us about maintaining the glory of the law so that it convicts us of sin and shows us our need of Jesus and his glory. Pretend for a moment that I have a rather well to do friend who brags about driving an old car with almost 300,000 miles on it. He brags about all the money he has saved. He even likes to point to the cheap tires on his car that have almost 80,000 miles on them. The problem is the tires are badly worn. There are bulges and the threads are showing. I need to convince my friend that his badly worn tires could result in a car accident or even his death.

Do you see the point? When people are glowing and even crowing about how good they are at serving God and making themselves acceptable to God, someone needs to talk to them the way Jesus talked to the man who came to him and said, "What must I do to inherit eternal life?" Someone needs to burst their bubble by telling them what the Lord tells us in the book of James. It says if we break one part of God's law we are guilty of breaking everything in God's law. We cannot glow about the failed glory we see in ourselves, but we do glow brightly about the glory we see in Jesus.

It is all about Jesus

Listen to what Paul wrote, "But whenever anyone turns to the Lord, the veil is taken away. Now the Lord is the Spirit, and where the Spirit of the Lord is, there is freedom." It is the Holy Spirit who removes the veil and opens your heart to see the glory and the freedom you have in Christ. In Acts 16 it says of Lydia, "The Lord opened her heart to believe." By myself I can never see God's plan to rescue me. I will always remain clueless. 1 Corinthians 2 says, "No eye has seen, no ear has heard, no mind has conceived what God has prepared for those who love him" but God has revealed it to us by his Spirit.

What a glow the Apostle Paul must have had on his face as he was writing these words to the Christians in Corinth. "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 have unveiled faces. We shine brightly for the Lord because we find our glory not in ourselves but in Jesus. Later in this letter Paul will say with great joy, "We always carry around in our body the death of Jesus, so that the life of Jesus may also be revealed in our body." Sit next to Paul as he writes this letter to the Corinthians. See him smiling with joy as he writes about his ministry of the Gospel in chapter five of this letter: "Therefore if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation; the old has gone, the new has come! All this is from God who reconciled us to himself through Christ and gave us the ministry of reconciliation."

We are constantly being transformed and changed as Paul says "into Jesus' likeness with an ever increasing glory." The closer you live to Jesus' glory instead of your own glory the brighter you will shine for him. I recall having a little luminescent plastic cross next to my bed when I was a child. On the base of the cross it said, "Keep it in the light and it will shine." I have been with Christians who were going through difficult times in their lives. Oh, how brightly their lives shined with the glory they had in Jesus their Savior not in themselves.

Paul writes that we don't lose heart. "Therefore since through God's mercy we have this

ministry, we do not lose heart. Rather, we have renounced secret and shameful ways; we do not use deception, nor do we distort the word of God. On the contrary, by setting forth the truth plainly, we commend ourselves to every man's conscience in the sight of God." We don't have to pretend to be someone we are not. We don't have to fabricate a false glory just to impress people and make them think we are wonderful Christians. Just be who you are in Christ and in his glory.

I have noticed when I visit people in the hospital, the people I meet in the halls and in the elevator after the visit seem to be more friendly to me than before the visit. Then one day it dawned on me that it may be that my face looks intense as I go to the visit because I am thinking of what I am going to say and what Scripture to read. After sharing the comfort of the gospel with dear Christians, the glory that they reflect with their faith in Jesus shines on me and then it finds its way on my face to others.

If Jesus returns in glory this week, I know your face will be glowing with joy. If he does not return, I know your face will glow with joy today and every day of this week because you have been on the mountain with Jesus. Amen.