

2 Corinthians 3:12-4:2 ¹² *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. 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.*

The Glory of Christ is Unfading

- 1. His glory transforms us**
- 2. His love is reflected in our lives**
- 3. His glory is fully ours in eternity**

A sunrise shines with magnificent glory. The sky is on fire with the early morning light. Hues of orange and red gently blend on an endless tapestry of crisp morning air. The beauty of God’s creation is on display. But soon the sun climbs to a higher elevation, the light fills the sky, and dawn turns to day. The glorious moment of sunrise fades away into the beauty of the day.

Light shimmers off freshly fallen snow. The reflection of the light is as brilliant as the sun itself, but soon clouds collect again, the sun is covered by a thick blanket of grey, and a dreary overcast dominates the landscape. The dazzling display is only temporary.

Lightning flashes across the night sky. It is a sudden bolt of magnificent power glowing against the dark backdrop of the evening. Its brilliance is breathtaking, but in an instant it is gone.

All these things have a beauty; they have a glory that is all their own. But this beauty is temporary; this glory fading. The brilliant colors of the sunrise fade, the freshly fallen snow collects dirt and debris, and the skies become grey. Lightning is brilliant but it is here and gone. Its magnificent glory is only temporary. Today, however, we see that unlike all these beautiful things in God’s creation the glory of Christ is unfading. And that unfading glory has lasting effects and eternal blessings for us. His glory transforms us. His love is reflected in our lives. His glory is ours forever in eternity.

Paul in these verses from 2 Corinthians reminds of this unfading glory of the gospel of Jesus Christ. He wants to make it clear that the gospel of Jesus floods our lives with its

brilliance each and every day; and one day we will dwell in the fullness of his glory for all time. This is our confident hope. This is the joy that we have as Christians. This is the message that we gladly share.

Paul draws our attention to the unfading glory of the gospel not by pointing to sunrises or local scenery, but Paul drives his point home by drawing from Old Testament History. He tells of the story that we heard in our lesson from Exodus chapter 34. In this account Moses receives the 10 commandments from the holy God and as Moses comes back into the presence of the people his face shines with the reflection of God's glory. Moses would cover his face with a veil because even the reflection of God's holiness struck fear into the hearts of the people. He also wore the veil as he read the law to the people to keep the people from staring at his face as the radiance of God was fading away.

Paul makes reference to this Old Testament account to make a striking contrast between the glory of God reflected in the giving of the law to Moses and the full glory of God seen in gospel of Jesus Christ. Paul writes in chapter 3 versus 7, ***“Now if the ministry that brought death, which was engraved in letters on stone, came with glory, so that the Israelites could not look steadily at the face of Moses because of its glory, fading though it was, will not the ministry of the Spirit be even more glorious?”*** In other words, if the law of God which condemns us as sinners came in glory how much more will the gospel which saves us come with unfading glory.

In Christ the true glory of God is revealed. As we gaze upon Christ we see the law fulfilled. In Christ we see the perfect righteousness that the law required and that perfect righteousness is given to us by our substitute. In Christ, therefore, we see the glory of salvation. In him we have the sure and certain hope of heaven. We have confidence before the Lord. We have freedom in his perfect obedience. We have forgiveness through his sacrifice and life through his blood. We will dwell with God in his eternal glory because of the life, death, and resurrection of Jesus Christ. More brilliant than a stroke of lightning, more beautiful than a sunset, more dazzling than freshly fallen snow is the good news of the Gospel. This is the glory of God in the face of Christ.

This good news transforms our hearts. It changes our lives. The good news of Christ Jesus sets us free to live for God. The law shows us that we could never make things right with God on our own, but Christ shows us that he has given salvation to us for free. Each and every day this glorious news fills our hearts. The love of Christ Jesus who lived and died for us daily moves us to love one another. Paul rejoices in this continual change that comes as we grow in this gospel by writing these words, ***18 And we, who with unveiled faces all reflect the Lord's glory, we are being transformed into his likeness with ever-increasing glory, are being transformed into his likeness with ever-increasing glory, which comes from the Lord, who is the Spirit.*** Our hearts are transformed by his gospel and his glorious love is then reflected in our lives as we gladly follow his commands. Our lives are transformed by his grace.

Unfortunately there are many who miss out on the peace that this message brings. There are those who still look at God through the veil of the law. Many do not see God clearly when they think that in order to “get right with God” they have to take the first steps and do their best to be good people. There are many who thus think that it is through the law that they are saved; that salvation is earned. But that cannot be the way. Following the law cannot save anyone, because we are sinners. Looking to the law for salvation can only reveal a holy God who is not pleased with our failure to measure up. The law was not given so that we could earn God’s favor, but the law was given to reveal a need for a Savior. God gave his people the law so that the Savior Jesus could fulfill it and give them a new and more glorious covenant. He came to give them the glory of the gospel. This gospel tells us that God loved us first and now he wants us to have that joy that changes our lives and leads us to love as he has loved us.

In his grace God gives us this glorious gospel of Jesus Christ. Our holy God brings salvation through our Savior Jesus who lived as one of us and died in our place. As he prayed on the mountain of Transfiguration the face of the glorious son of God shone like the sun. His appearance was as brilliant as a flash of lightning. Jesus’ clothes were as dazzling as the whitest of snow. Jesus’ glory was revealed before he died in deepest humility on another mountain. His glory was revealed to assure us that this was all part of God’s plan. The holy Son of God would willingly lay down his life on the cross to give us his righteousness, to give us forgiveness, to give us his glory now and for all eternity.

Those who do not look to the law for salvation but instead look to the cross, they see God rightly. In Christ Jesus we see God in his perfect holiness and all his saving glory. Though perfectly innocent he willingly suffered in our place. What wondrous love!

This love changes our hearts. We know we are loved by God and that leads us to love each other. Our actions don’t make us right with God, but knowing Christ who makes us right with God changes our actions. The love of Jesus transforms us to gladly live for Christ and live like Christ. We love others because we have the love of Christ in us and on our hearts. When we consider how loving he has been to us we naturally reflect that love in our lives.

The idea of love is on the hearts and minds of many these days as Valentine’s Day is coming up on Thursday of this week. While this isn’t exactly a religious holiday it is a day that reminds all of us to love and to show love to each other. But a day is only a day. Flowers bought for this special day fade. Chocolates are consumed and heart shaped boxes are thrown away. That yearly reminder to love is only a reminder. This one day in the year flips off the calendar and then fades away.

The love that Christ gives to us through his gospel, on the other hand, is love that daily and continually renews us in our love for each other. His love is powerful. His glory is in our lives through the power of the gospel and the glory of that gospel is unfading. We have the sure hope of heaven and we have a life forever changed by his love.

As so husbands on this February 14 and all the other days of the year remember the love of your Savior and reflect that love in the way that you love your wife. Christ calls

husbands to love their wives as he loved the church and gave himself up for her. His command is to love perfectly. We have not measured up. We have fallen miserably short. But consider the glorious message of the gospel and be renewed to live a life of love. Consider this: Jesus has forgiven you for all the times that your eyes wandered in lust, for all the times that you raised your voice in anger, for all the times that you took for granted this special gift that God has given you. In love Jesus died for all those sins. All those sins and all the rest of your many sins are all are covered over by his perfect love. All your failures and wrong doings are washed away by the cleansing blood of our glorious and gracious Savior.

We know what we are supposed to do. We know we are supposed to love. We have the law of God written in our hearts, written on stone tablets, written in black and white. The law's motivation is only temporary. It may change our behavior for a while. But the law cannot save us when we fall. We stumble, we let our emotions get the best of us, patience is tested, and tempers flare. Wives you have not respected and loved your husband perfectly. Neighbors have not loved neighbors. Brothers and sisters have fought and hurt each other. Sons and daughters have disrespected their parents and failed to obey them. Friends have betrayed friends.

Yet we have a God who forgives us. The glorious gospel picks us up and offers powerful and lasting motivation. It not only affects our behavior but it changes our hearts. We are right with God because of Jesus. He is the glory of God. His forgiveness transforms us. He leads us to gladly follow his commands. His love changes our hearts and leads us to reflect his love in our lives. His love leads us to love on the 14th of February and every other day on the calendar. His love leads us to renounce shameful sins against our neighbors, our loved ones, and our God. The love of Christ leads us to live for God. His love leads us to share the forgiveness of Jesus with others in the way that we reflect his love in our actions and in the way we share his gospel with others.

This glorious gospel drives away hatred, and sin, and fear. We are not afraid of a holy God but we know we have a Savior who intercedes for us. And we are not afraid to share this good news either. We speak with confidence about God's love. We know we are made right with God. We are transformed daily to live more like him. We know the love of Jesus. We know his righteousness. His righteousness and glory has been placed on us through faith and therefore we know that we will see Christ Jesus in all his unfading glory when we dwell with him in the unending bliss of heaven.

Today we get a glimpse of that glory in the transfiguration and our hope is confirmed and renewed in the powerful message of the gospel. This gospel is a message that is just as beautiful and powerful this morning as it was thousands of years ago. As brilliant and as glorious as this good news will be today it will be just as glorious tomorrow and the next day until our Lord comes again and gives us his full glory. Dear friends in Christ we have the glory of Jesus and we will one day have it in full and for all time for the glory of Christ Jesus is brilliant and it is unfading. Amen.