

Rev. Seth D. Bode †† Sermon 174, 02-27-2022 †† Transfiguration

“Lord God, you have appointed me as a pastor in your Church, but you see how unsuited I am to meet so great and difficult a task. If I had lacked your help, I would have ruined everything long ago. Therefore, I call upon you: I wish to devote my mouth and my heart to you; I shall teach the people. I myself will learn and ponder diligently upon your Word. Use me as your instrument – but do not forsake me, for if ever I should be on my own, I would easily wreck it all.”

“Sir, we would see Jesus.”

2 Corinthians 3

⁷ If the ministry that brought death (which was engraved in letters on stone) came with glory, so that the Israelites could not look directly at the face of Moses because of the glory of his face (though it was fading), ⁸ how will the ministry of the spirit not be much more glorious? ⁹ For if the ministry that brought condemnation has glory, the ministry that brought righteousness has even more glory. ¹⁰ In fact, in this case, what was glorious is no longer very glorious, because of the greater glory of that which surpasses it. ¹¹ Indeed, if what is fading away was glorious, how much more glorious is that which is permanent!

¹² Therefore, since we have this kind of hope, we act with great boldness. ¹³ We are not like Moses, who put a veil over his face, so that the Israelites could not continue to look at the end of the radiance, as it was fading away. ¹⁴ In spite of this, their minds were hardened. Yes, up to the present day, the same veil remains when the Old Testament is read. It has not been removed because it is taken away only in Christ. ¹⁵ Instead, to this day, whenever Moses is read, a veil lies over their hearts. ¹⁶ But whenever someone 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 But all of us who reflect the Lord's glory with an unveiled face are being transformed into his own image, from one degree of glory to another. This too is from the Lord, who is the Spirit.



We could say there was a problem with Moses' sermons. His sermons wouldn't end. I don't mean to say Moses was long-winded, although read Deuteronomy and you find out that he is. No, I mean there was no Gospel conclusion. Moses could not say that the laws of God were complete. Moses could not say, “*It is finished.*”

- He would tell the Israelites what to do.
- He would explain how to fight for the promised land.

- He would remind them life is finite and to number their days aright.
- Moses would show them how to offer sacrifices and how to devote their lives to the Lord. Day after day they would slay animals as offerings to God to make peace for their sins.

But these Old Testament sermons didn't have a conclusion. Moses couldn't get to the Amen. ***These OT sermons didn't have the big reveal of the Savior, Jesus Christ.*** There was no end to God's Law in sight. God was a frightful Judge and certainly a Helper, a Promiser and Mercy-filled, but not yet a Reconciler, Healer, Justifier, Messiah. And so the radiance of God in the face of Moses would fade.

Do you have a similar problem? Do the things of God fade, as if they never meet a conclusion? It may have to do with what you are looking for in a sermon. You may be looking for a sermon that helps you do everything perfectly. You may seek the sermon about a god who commends all the good things you've done. You may seek the short sermon about the god who gives you a list of 3-7 things you need to do to fix your life. The question is whether, if you could do all those things, that sermon would really end.

There is always more that must be done if the sermon is Law and Moses. We need that sermon to end, because the letter kills. The heart is veiled unless the Gospel and Jesus Christ are present.

JESUS ENDS SERMONS

1. We need that sermon to end

So we need the Law just as the Hebrews. We need Moses to start his sermon with us. After all, we discover what was really veiled. Let me explain the veil. In the presence of God, Moses' face was left with an unbearable radiance. When Moses went down the mountain and preached his message from God, his face shone. But the radiance would fade, and Moses would wear a veil.

Paul says in our text today that there is a deeper meaning to the veil of Moses—the level of the preached message. Like the veil that hid the light of God's glory when it faded, the message of the glory of God was also veiled.

Was it the power and glory of God in the face of Moses? We are told that the ***listeners, not the preacher***, were veiled. Their minds were dulled without Christ. ***What was truly veiled were their hearts.***

Just as no sermon of Moses was complete, their Hebrew hearts were dull and incomplete. God, who searches and knows all hearts, saw that their hearts were dull and incomplete. The Law of God by definition had no rest, especially when the Israelites realized they could not or would not follow it completely. So it is called here a ministry of death and condemnation.

The same is true for all people of all time. God's demands are a ministry of death and condemnation. You cannot say it is finished because you did the right things at the right time. You can only say it is unfulfilled because you did the wrong thing without end. All human hearts begin veiled, covered. Many return to be dulled, veiled, and covered. God would call any sinner without a Savior an unending sermon. Would He call you an unfinished sermon? Because you cannot lead a life of 100% perfection (no 99%*s*), you are unfinished in the sight of God. We thought we could complete God's laws, or we gave up because we knew we couldn't. ***All sermons apart from Jesus Christ are unfinished.***

The question is, is your heart still veiled? Have you dulled your heart by only listening for Moses? Do you want the sermon to end in Christ, or are you listening only for the good works you think will change your life, the 3-7 items that will change your life, so you can just get them done?

But it doesn't work that way. The sermon wasn't intended to simply be a lot of things that we cannot do...

2. The sermon ends in the face of God

On hearing the Gospel and the remission of sins, the Holy Spirit comes to console us. By faith we are now able to think sensibly and spiritually concerning God. *"But when the kindness of God's love appeared, He saved us; not because of the righteous works we had done, but because of His mercy"* (Titus 3:4-5). This affords us the beauty of verse 16, *"But whenever anyone turns to the Lord, the veil is taken away."*

For those who trust the message of Jesus on its face, the sermon has changed. That message comes with the Holy Spirit, who creates faith. Did you hear it? [Reread vss. 17-18 ¹⁷ *Now the Lord is the Spirit, and where the Spirit of the Lord*

is, there is freedom. ¹⁸ But all of us who reflect the Lord's glory with an unveiled face are being transformed into his own image, from one degree of glory to another. This too is from the Lord, who is the Spirit.] **We need the sermon to end and the sermon ends in the face of God.**

- ✓ We need the face of God and the sermon that says, "For you for the forgiveness of sins."
- ✓ We need the face of God and the sermon that says, "Those 3-7 things you wanted to do right; I have done them right for you."
- ✓ We need the face of God and the sermon that says, "In the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit."
- ✓ We need the face of God and the sermon that says, "It is finished."

True, we need a good measure of Moses' sermons to become aware and to be filled with sorrow. We also need to know the Son of God has died for those sins and has corrected our sinful patterns. He works to correct the problem from inside our hearts, so that we "*will and act according to his good purpose*" (Php. 2:13). We need the ministry that brought righteousness, the Gospel, the good news of Jesus.

Seeing God will be a blessing for soul and body (v16). It is an awareness of God, an experiencing and perceiving of God in body and soul. The elect will be blessed equally in both a clear seeing of God and through the full enjoyment of God as the highest good. The *visio Dei* or the "seeing of God" moves the blessed to two things: joy in God and praise of God.

To us who know the gospel of Jesus, God looks different than He once did. Jesus Christ is the radiance of God. When He was transfigured, He had the blinding, heavenly light of the divine glory shine on Him. This is a beautiful thing!

Because God is the highest good, to see Him is the way to His goodness, His joy, and His sweetness in the highest degree. He is the fountain of every good and therefore of all bliss.

Only in Jesus, justified, approved, unveiled. Only in Jesus is the greater glory. Only in Jesus is your sermon finished, Amen.

May the God of hope fill you with all joy and peace as you trust in Him, so that you may overflow with hope by the power of the Holy Spirit. Amen.