

THE MINISTRY OF THE NEW TESTAMENT | 2 CORINTHIANS 3:6-18

- Verses 9-11 included in session 7
- Verse 12 -
 - The "we" has not been used since verse 5 (and "us" in v. 6), so Paul is again speaking of himself, Timothy, and Silvanus (see 1:19).
 - Paul speaks of **such hope**, using the word ἐλπίς [elpis], a word that is entirely based in the future and not in present reality. The hope he speaks of is the hope of the **new testament** (v. 6), which is a *future* hope, not a present reality. For the Jewish nation, the *hope* of the future was (and is) the New Covenant.
 - Because of the **hope** of the New Covenant, Paul & friends **use great plainness of speech**. The word **plainness** is παρρησία [parresia], which is literally a *freedom of flow*, sometimes translated **boldness** (Acts 4:13) or **confidence** (Acts 28:31) or **openly** (John 7:13) or **plainly** (as here, and John 16:29).
- Verse 13
 - This verse contains an illustration, using the visible glory on Moses' face as an example of **that which is abolished**, namely the glory of the Mosaic covenant.
 - Note that while KJV says **is abolished** (past tense), the Greek is the *present passive participle*, thus *is being abolished*, just as **done away** in verses 7 and 11.
 - My speculation as to why the KJV went with a past tense is because *by our time* it was **abolished**, thus the past tense communicates good *current* theology for our day, but not for Paul's day.
 - Note that in the illustration it is the reflection of the glory on Moses' face that was fading, but the ultimate reference is to the glory of the Old Covenant.
- Verse 14 -
 - Now Paul is not talking about **the children of Israel** (v. 13) in Moses' day, but rather speaks of how, since that time, **their minds were blinded**.
 - Thus is made evident in that **until this day** (i.e.: the day of Paul's writing) there is a **vail untaken away in the reading of the old testament**. The tragedy is that this vail **is done away in Christ** (once again, *being done away*).
 - To understand this passage, it is important to recognize the background, found in Exodus 34:29-35.
 - In this passage, we are told that the vail was only on Moses' face *when the glory began to fade*.
 - The vail was so that the Israelites *could not see the fading of the glory*.
 - Thus, in this passage we are taught that the Israelites have a vail on their face when they consider the old covenant, and are thus unable to see that it has faded.
- Verse 15 -
 - This **vail...upon their heart** is presumably the same blindness we read about in Romans 11:7-10.
 - We call this blindness *temporary* because it will someday be done away (as in v. 16).
- Verse 16 -
 - Paul gives hope that **when it shall turn** then at that time **the vail shall be taken away**. This "begs the questions," namely
 - What is "IT?" -the interpretation here is key.
 - In context, **it is their heart** (v. 15), thus the lost nation of Israel.

- Sadly, many translations completely change this theology and make it true about all individuals (see NKJV, NASB, etc.)
 - The turning **to the Lord** must be *national* and not individual, because the New Covenant is a *national* covenant (which is yet another reason why *the church* is not under the New Covenant, for the church is not a nation).
 - How does the Jewish national heart **turn to the Lord**? They must collectively say, **Blessed is he that cometh in the name of the Lord** (Matt. 23:39). See also Acts 3:19, 28:27.
- Verse 17 -
 - Here **the Lord** refers to Jesus Christ, who is **that Spirit**.
 - What is **that Spirit** to which Paul refers? It is **the spirit** that **giveth life** (v. 6, note that v. 6 uses lower case "s.") Thus, Paul teaches that "where the spirit of Christ is," **there is liberty**.
- Verse 18 -
 - Since the **vail is done away in Christ** (v. 14), all those who are *in Christ* are with **open face** (i.e.: unveiled) looking (as if in a mirror) at **the glory of the Lord**. Looking at this glory, we **are changed** (that is, *are being changed*, a present passive participle) **from glory to glory**.
 - While this may be true of all believers, the **we all** likely more specifically refers to *believing Jewish believers* who are being changed from the glory of the Old Covenant to the glory of the New Covenant.

CONCLUDING THOUGHTS ABOUT THIS MINISTRY | 2 CORINTHIANS 4:1-2

- Verse 1 -
 - Paul goes back to 2 Corinthians 3:6, when he began the discussion of **this ministry**, in which he, Timothy, and Sylvanus were made **able ministers of the new testament**.
 - It was **mercy** that God gave this ministry to Paul (who was **less than the least of all saints** - Eph. 3:8), and because of this mercy Paul made a pledge that **we faint not**.
- Verse 2 -
 - Paul speaks of renouncing **the hidden things of dishonesty** - These are *shameful* things that could exist but would be kept hidden. Rather than hiding them, they renounce them.
 - There are three activities that describe them as they renounce these things:
 - **Not walking in craftiness** - The word **craftiness** is πανουργία [panourgia], from *pan* (meaning "all") and *ergon* meaning *effective work*. Thus, avoiding *working all the stops* to deceitfully get the desired outcome.
 - **Nor handling the word of God deceitfully** - the misuse of the word of God for one's own agenda is perhaps the greatest sin a preacher can commit.
 - **Commending ourselves to every man's conscience through the manifestation of the truth** - Paul & friends entrusted themselves to **every man's conscience** by making the truth known, and then letting each individual decide whether to receive them or reject them.