

# Paul's Plea for Spiritual Discernment

by Cornelius Van Til

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*Paul's message in 2 Corinthians 3 emphasizes the importance of spiritual discernment for New Testament believers, who are able to see with open faith and understand the glory of the Lord.*

**Duration:** 42:33

**Scripture:** Exodus 19:5

**Topics:** "Discernment"

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## Description

In this sermon, the preacher emphasizes the importance of spreading the light of the gospel to those who are still in darkness. He warns against false teachers and encourages the listeners to stay true to the truth they have come to know. The preacher draws parallels to Moses and the words of Jehovah, highlighting the significance of obedience and the promise of being a holy nation. Ultimately, the preacher urges the audience to share their experiences and revelations with others, so that they too may see and understand the truth.

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## Transcript

Beloved congregation, the theme this afternoon to which I would call your attention is Paul's theme for spiritual discernment. It is based upon the passage of Paul in 2 Corinthians 3 verse 18, where we read, For we all, with open faith, beholding as in a glass the glory of the Lord, are chained into the same image from glory to glory, even as by the Spirit of the Lord. If ever Paul the apostle was tempted to compromise the gospel, it was when he first came to Corinth.

The Corinthians were Greeks. The Greeks boasted of the wise men of their past, of Socrates, of Plato, and of Aristotle. Surely greater thinkers than these have never appeared.

These wise men have searched the universe out for the bottom of reality. Some of them said that man is related to the God. Others said he is not.

All of them were uncertain. A general agnosticism prevailed. This agnosticism produced what they thought was great tolerance on religious matters.

After all, no one could know for certain what was true about the God. The opinion of one would be as good as the opinion of another, but no better. Would not Paul do well under these circumstances to offer the gospel as a new hypothesis for the explanation of his religious experience? How else could he get a

hearing for these scientifically minded people? Would they even listen to him if he claimed to know the truth? Would he not be ignored as a fanatic? Would he gain any converts if he spake in forthright fashion of the living God, manifest in the world, and of Christ, the Redeemer of men? But Paul would not compromise his gospel.

For months he labored with the Corinthians. The Jews blasphemed. The Greeks turned aside.

Very few converts were made. Paul, perhaps you are wrong after all. Your gospel antagonizes men, sugar-coated, just a little.

That will find you an entrance. Thence Paul spake the Lord to Paul in the night by a vision. Be not afraid, but speak, and hold not thy peace, for I am with thee, and no man shall set on thee to hurt thee, for I have much people in this city.

Encouraged by this heavenly vision, Paul challenged the wisdom of the Greeks. In his first epistle to the Corinthians, he writes, Where is the wise? Where is the scribe? Where is the disputer of this world? Hath not God made foolish the wisdom of this world? For after that, in the wisdom of God, the world by wisdom knew not God, yet pleased God through the foolishness of preaching to save them that believe. He determined to know nothing.

Among them saved Jesus and him crucified. He did not request the place for his God in the Greek Parthenon. He demanded the destruction of the Parthenon itself.

His God had made the world. Their gods were but idols made by the hands of men. He did not offer Jesus as a teacher of equal rank with Socrates.

He required that they bow at the foot of the cross. He had used great plainness of speech in thus challenging the wise men of the world. And the secret of it all? Paul believed in the God whose face confronted him everywhere.

He believed in that God whose hands the hearts of kings are as watercourses. Paul believed in Christ. He believed in that Christ who stopped him on the way to Damascus to change him from a persecutor into an apostle.

He believed in the Holy Spirit. In my speech, he says, and my preaching was not with enticing words of man's wisdom, but in demonstration of the Spirit and of power. The Holy Spirit has blessed his ministry.

There is a church at Corinth now. There are those who have believed what I have not seen, nor heard, nor have entered into the heart of man. There are those who have received not the Spirit of the world, but the Spirit which is of God, that they might know the things that are freely given to us of God.

That which was impossible with men has proved to be possible with God. But again the Jews blasphemed and the Greeks ignored or ridiculed. What did Paul think of himself? Did he know more than all the wise men of the past? Again the temptation comes to Paul to compromise his message.

Again he resists the temptation. They ridiculed his claim to special knowledge from God. He does not condescend to justify himself by appealing to their own standards.

Do we begin, he says, to command ourselves when we say that we are unto God a sweet savor of Christ in them that are saved and in them that perish? No, my fellow Christians, I plead with you not to be led

astray by these false teachers. You know that what I have spoken is the truth. You know that you yourself once thought this truth was nothing but foolishness and fanaticism.

You yourself are manifestly declared to be an epistle of Christ ministered by us, written not with ink but with the Spirit of the living God, not in tables of stone but in fleshly tables of the heart. Paul will continue to speak plainly. He will continue to challenge the false assumptions of men.

He knows the natural man receives not the things of the Spirit of God, for they are foolishness unto him. Neither can he know them, because they are spirit discerned. But he also knows that the Holy Spirit of the sovereign God freely gives that spiritual discernment which they need.

Thus when he tells the Corinthians that he has used great plainness of speech, he suddenly turns aside to a glorification of the dispensation of the Spirit. In the midst of a discourse that speaks of his own ministry as an apostle of Christ, he turns to a panegyric on the dispensation of the Spirit in general. Of this panegyric on the Spirit and his work, our text forms the climax.

In it, Paul glories in the spiritual discernment of the New Testament believers. One, Paul glories in the nature of their spiritual discernment, for it is the New Testament as over against Old Testament believers. The nature of the spiritual discernment of which Paul's speech appears first and foremost in the fact that it is the direct fruit of the liberating work of the Holy Spirit.

But we all, says our English translation, that brings out at once the contrast with the Jews of the old dispensation. This contrast there is, is there no doubt. It is even the burden of our text.

Still there is a more immediate connection of our verse with that which is preceded. It is because the Holy Spirit has made us free that we now see with open faith. Those who have not the Spirit are still in darkness.

They retain the veil upon their faces. The Spirit has lifted this veil from the face of those that believe, and that has made them free. The liberty here intended, says Hodge, is the glorious liberty of the children of God.

It is the liberty wherewith Christ has made us free. It includes freedom from the obligation to fulfill the law as a condition of salvation. Therefore it includes also freedom from a legal slavish spirit.

We have not received the spirit of bondage, he says, again to fear, but the spirit of adoption, whereby we cry, Abba, Father. This includes freedom from the dominion of sin and from the powers of the devil. It includes freedom from the bondage of corruption, not only as to the soul, but also as to the body.

Incidental to this liberty is freedom from all ignorance and all subjection to the authority of men, except so far as it represents the authority of Christ himself. The Old Testament saints did not enjoy the fullness of this liberty. We must distinguish here very carefully.

There were true believers in the Old Testament times, and there were those who could not enter because of unbelief. The contrast of our text is primarily concerned between believers in the Old and believers in the new dispensation. The believers in the old dispensation did have a portion of the spirit.

If they had not had this, they would not be believers at all. They did all eat the same spiritual meat and did all drink the same spiritual drink, for they drank of that spiritual rock that followed them, and that rock was

Christ. Yet it was not till Pentecost that the Holy Spirit came to dwell with his people in the fullness of his power.

Then the sons and daughters began to prophesy, the young men to see visions, and the old men dream dreams. But Paul also contrasts the New Testament believers with those who do not have the spirit at all. Even after Christ had come, there were Jews who refused to see in him the fulfillment of the law and the prophets.

In Corinth, the Jews blasphemed. They were therefore in principle no different from the Greeks. Plato spoke deeper than he knew when he gave us his analogy of men in the cave.

Men are prisoners, he said. They sit in a cave where their faces store darkness. Their heads are chained.

They cannot behold a single ray of the sun. At best, they see shadows of things upon the wall of the cave. To these Jews and Greeks alike and chained in prison's dark, Paul preaches Christ as the power of God and the wisdom of God.

Those who were called, both Jews and Greeks, had been set free. These were the ones who now could see. No longer did they sit in the cave.

They saw the light of the sun. Paul rejoices greatly in the fact they do. So he emphasizes the fact that we all see with open faith.

It seems that he thinks of Moses as he went up to the mount. He thinks of the words of Jehovah, which Moses had to speak to the people. Now therefore, if ye will obey my voice indeed and keep my covenant, then ye shall be mine own possession from among all people.

For all the earth is mine, and ye shall be unto me a kingdom of peace and a holy nation. All the people had answered together, all that Jehovah hath spoken we will do. But the Lord knew how little they understood what they had said and how hard were the hearts of many of them.

He did not allow them to come up to the top of the mountain with Moses, said the Lord, and thou shalt set bounds unto the people round about, saying, Take heed to yourselves that ye go not up into the mount, or touch the border of it. Whosoever touches the mount shall be surely put to death. No hand shall touch it, but he shall surely be stoned and shot through, whether it be beast or man.

Even after Moses had come to the top of the mountain, he was charged to go down again to warn the people, lest they break through to Jehovah today, and many of them perish. Then said Moses, The people cannot come up to Mount Sinai, for thou didst charge us, saying, Set bounds upon the mount, and sanctify it. But the Lord insisted that Moses, though he was now aged, should go down to charge the people anew, not to gaze upon him.

Then came the terrible lightnings and thunderings on the mountaintop, and Mount Sinai, the whole of it, smoked, because Jehovah descended upon it in fire, and the smoke thereof ascended as the smoke of a furnace, and the whole mount quaked greatly. Is it wonder that the people trembled? Is it wonder that they quaked with fear? And they said to Moses, Speak thou with us, and we will hear, but let not God speak with us, lest we die. In contrast to all this now, Saul takes his people straight to the top of the mountain.

Pentecost has come. There was also the sound of the mighty rushing winds, but it brought no fear. And there appeared unto them tongues parting as thunder, like as a fire, and it sat upon each of them, but they did not tremble.

They were filled with the Holy Ghost. These Parthians and Medes and Elamites and dwellers in Mesopotamia. Moses kept warning the people not to come near unto Jehovah.

Paul keeps inviting the people to come right into his presence. That is the contrast Paul has in mind. But does not Paul fear for his own authority and standing with the people? Did not the people stand in awe before Moses, the man of God, just because it was he alone that went to the top of the mountain to speak with the Lord? Yes, that is true.

But how gladly Moses and the prophets would have seen it otherwise. The true prophets of God, even in the Old Testament, dispensation, did not rejoice in the spiritual ignorance of the people. They lamented it.

They were as lonely giants walking in the Valley of Dwarfs. Oh, that all God's people were prophets was the burden of their prayer. And now all the people are the prophets.

That prayer of Moses has now been heard. It is Pentecost. And now all God's people have preached.

The veil has been rent. From the top downwards, God's people, may all of them come into the presence of God. What joy this for the true servants of God.

Is their office now jeopardized? Is there no need of ministers of the gospel? Does Pentecostalism follow from Pentecost? Does Quakerism and Bookmanism and Testimonialism replace the sacred ministry of the word? Not in the least. Paul presupposes the permanence of the ministry. He rejoices in its greater fruitfulness because of the spiritual visions of the people.

As a great artist would rejoice in an increase of artistic appreciation on the part of those who abuse the portrait. So this great artist of the gospel, who has so often openly set forth a crucified risen and savior, rejoices that now there are those who really understand, who have real genuine spiritual discernment. Did Paul mean that in Corinth things were now actually ideal? Not at all.

There was in Corinth much lack of true spiritual discernment. The Corinthians were yet carnal. Paul spoke to them as unto babes.

There was factionalism. They doubted the resurrection. There was lack of discipline.

There was discipline that was too severe. Things were not by any means what they ought to be. The church of the Lord Jesus Christ was for Paul first and all of an object of faith.

But it was gradually being realized in this world. Paul therefore did all he could to have the Corinthians live up to what they have in Christ. He would have us ministers of the gospel do all we can to bring the people up to that level of spiritual discernment which is theirs in Christ.

Our special gifts are to be at the service of the church as a whole. We shall not covet a sort of refined Roman Catholicism in the guise of Protestantism. We shall not be higher up in the scale of being than are the simplest of men.

And then Paul stresses that it is we all with open faith that we see. Paul rejoices not only the fact that in the new day all believers see. He rejoices to note that how they see.

They see with open faith. What good would it have done if Moses could have taken all the people to the top of the mountain if they had poor eyesight? The bright light of the glory of the Lord would have blighted their vision. Paul gives a striking example of this.

What happens to those who saw something of the glory of the Lord while not prepared for it? He sees the Jews of his own day. They insist on reading the Old Testament without recognizing Christ in it. They were fools and slow of heart not to see that the Christ had to suffer and to be raised again on the third day.

Yet they seem to see something of it. Paul preached to them the gospel of the resurrection of the Lord. What happened when he did? They blasphemed.

The more light they had, the more blind they became. They were exposed to the light of the Son of Righteousness. Just that it was that made them blaspheme and to express their faith in the darkest of darkness that was given unto the sons of perdition.

Are we not then distorting the figure which Paul employs? If these Jews had a veil on their faces, were they not protected from the light? Oh no, they were not. They were not protected though they did not see. The light irritated their eyeballs underneath this veil.

There is no veil sufficiently heavy to keep men from being irritated by the gospel. They will antagonize it if they will not believe it. They can never be neutral with respect to it.

And Paul, bold as he is, rejoices in the fact that he is a part in working out the mysterious plan of God. He is a sweet savor of Christ unto God in them that are saved and in them that perish, to the one from death unto death, to the other a savor of life unto life. He, Paul, an apostle of the Lord Jesus Christ, an able minister of the New Testament, was working for God and under God and with God for the consummation of the ages.

But most of all he rejoices in the vision of the redeemed. He may take his people to the top of mountains. He need not fear that they will be blinded by excessive light.

Moses and the prophets saw their panoramic vision alone. Now all may see. Now all may see with telescopes that bring near things that are far away, close up to them.

Things that seemed at a distance and vague are now brought nigh and made clear to all. Thus the apostle contrasts the people of the new day on the one hand with those Jews who had no vision at all and on the other with those who had the power of sight but who had no telescopes with which to see the distant panoramic scenes. Does Paul not fear that his offices, his influence, will be jeopardized? Would he not rather be the lonely mountain climber that has seen something that no one else has seen in order to boast of visions and of revelations that he has had? No, he would not.

He would take them all to see what he has seen. There remains enough for him to do. As the minister of Christ to them, he will point out the beauties of the scene.

Having therefore such hope, we whose great plain is of speech and are not as Moses who put a veil on his face, that the children of Israel should look steadfastly on the end of that which was passing away. Moses

had put a veil on his face because there was a veil on the faces of hearts of those to whom he was speaking. As the minister of the old covenant, he could not speak plainly.

He could not proclaim the whole counsel of God to them. They would have been further confused by it. The brilliance of the objective redemption had to be dimmed because of poor eyesight, the spiritual obtuseness of those to whom it came.

But Paul speaks plainly and fully, and need not be anxious that such speaking is now in vain. He has fed them with milk, but now he will also feed them with solid meat. Nor is it as though he can sometimes do this, and then again he cannot.

He is not speaking of moments of high spiritual attainment to be followed by a descent into the valley of the mist below. The veil he intimates in the form of his expression is not lifted so that it may at any time drop again. The veil has been entirely and permanently removed.

If you approach a distant mountain peak gradually, your vision may from time to time be obscured. There are the foothills and smaller mountains that obstruct the view of the highest mountain toward which you are climbing. But Paul thinks of the whole party as having arrived at the top of the mountain, and each of the party has a telescope of his own.

They see, and they see constantly, and they see clearly, and they see all of them together in unison. No, tell me not if this is untrue to Pauline thought and to Christian experience. We speak of ups and downs in our Christian life.

Paul does not teach perfectionism, yet as we are holy in Christ, as we are without sin in Christ, so we also see constantly in Christ. The Church of Jesus Christ is an object of faith, but what is an object of faith is gradually being realized. Therefore, Paul's labors are not in vain in the Lord.

No, they are most abundantly fruitful. He can speak unto them, not as unto carnal, but as unto spiritual men. Such is the nature of the spiritual discernment of the New Testament believers.

Through the power of the Spirit, the congregation of Jesus Christ, old and young alike, equipped with a telescope of faith, are led by the servants of the Lord to see, to see without interruption, and to see unitedly as one body the glory of the Lord. And then Paul glories in the object of this spiritual discernment. What is it now that they see? They see there a glorious vision.

Would Paul have rejoiced so greatly in the fact that all could see, and that all could see constantly if there was nothing very great to see? What is then the vision that they do see? They see the glory of the Lord, which is the glorified Lord. Here, too, we deal in a contrast, and here, too, we deal with a twofold contrast. In contrast with what the New Testament believers see, Paul thinks of those who see nothing at all, who are outside of Jesus Christ, whether in those days or of any other day.

He thinks of those who see nothing at all. He thinks of those who have the Spirit of the world and of what they see. What did they see? They saw only the wisdom of the world conceived.

The world by its wisdom knew not God. They changed the glory of the incorruptible God for the likeness of an image of corruptible man and of birds and four-footed beasts and creeping things. Therefore they crucified the Lord of glory afresh.

They understood not his suffering and the glory that should follow. They knew not that wisdom which had been hidden, which God ordained before the world unto our glory. What did many of the Christians do when Paul told them of Christ and the firstfruits of them that slept? What did they do when Paul told them that Christ, whom they had crucified, must reign till he hath put all his enemies under his feet? Even the last enemy, which is death itself, they sneered, they scoffed.

They saw no empirical evidence, they said, for the resurrection of the body, and so there could be no such thing. They did not wish to be so dogmatic about things that are beyond human experience as was Paul. How different, then, the case of Moses and the prophets.

Moses knew God as the creator. He knew God as the one who doeth all things according to his will. He knew that man had sinned against God and was driven from the place of glory, even from paradise.

He knew the holy God and he spake of the commandments requiring absolute obedience of man. He saw the awful majesty of God, Jehovah, on Mount Sinai. He knew the promises of God to his chosen people, a promise of a glorious future.

He saw far off the vision of him, that prophet like unto himself, that should come through whom the promises should at last be fulfilled. In comparison with the wise men of the Greeks, Moses saw a glorious vision. The Greeks and all sinful men could see nothing but darkness.

They could see no glorious future. They knew no God who controls all things. They knew no prophet that could tell them of such things.

They knew no priest who sacrificed for sin. They saw no king who will be victorious over evil. So then Paul stands with Moses over against those of the world who do not see it all.

Yet he and all the New Testament believers with him see far more than even Moses saw. How the true Old Testament saints long to see that further day, yea, they went to glory at their death, but it was the glory by anticipation. Moses who saw what he saw on the Mount Sinai came back on another mount, this time the Mount of Transfiguration.

He and Elijah spoke with Christ of his decease that he should accomplish at Jerusalem. Enter not now into the land of glory, they said to Jesus on this mount. As it were to Jesus, enter now, not now into glory, lest we be cast out of glory.

We are in glory because thou art to suffer for us. Walk then, we beseech thee, with the Via Dolorosa to the cross, the way of sorrows. You must go alone.

Then Jesus set his face steadfastly toward Jerusalem where he should suffer. Yes, even while in his humiliation he was glorious. His disciples beheld his glory, the glory as of the only begotten of the Father, full of grace and of truth.

But Paul thinks here of that glory which you'd follow, that glory which you'd follow all his suffering. Behoved it not the Christ to suffer these things and to enter in his glory? He that said, but I seek not mine own glory, was raised up in glory by him whose glory he sought. Christ was raised from the dead through the glory of the Father.

To him was given a name which is above every name. To him was given the kingdom of the earth which Satan promised him if he only refused to suffer. Lift up your heads, O ye gates, and be ye lifted up, ye everlasting doors, and the King of glory will come in.

Who is this King of glory? Jehovah strong and mighty, Jehovah mighty in battle. Who is this King of glory? He who was declared to be the Son of God with power according to the spirit of holiness by the resurrection from the dead, even Jesus Christ our Lord. He is the King of glory.

It is Christ now risen, now ascended, now seated at the right hand of the Father whom the Apostle saw and whom he was anxious that all the whole Church of Jesus Christ should see with him. It was him that he rejoiced to see together with all his fellow believers. Together they see him.

Together they see him constantly. Together they see him clearly. They see him in a glass.

But does not Paul then speak of seeing in a glass darkly? To be sure he does. But in that passage of 1 Corinthians 13 he compares what we see now with what we shall see hereafter. Now are we the sons of God, he says, and it doth not yet appear what we shall be.

But in our text Paul compares what we see now with what the Old Testament believers saw. The mirror is here used as a symbol, not a glass through which we see darkly. That glass is no doubt the gospel in which Paul says he has spoken plainly.

That gospel now laid down in the scriptures is the mirror in which we may see the glory of the Lord. In that mirror all may see. In that mirror alone can we see the glory of the Lord.

It is indispensable or absolutely necessary. In that mirror we see the original and only picture of the glory of the Lord. The scripture is sufficient and authoritative, yet it is the risen Christ in the scriptures that we see.

How the apostle rejoices in the vision of the glory of the Lord. How he delights to show the congregation more and more of that glory of the Lord. That glory of the Lord is inexhaustible.

He turns the mirror then this way and that way. He wishes them to see every aspect of it. When through the lust of the eyes they turn to look at the right or to the left, he calls them back to look to the glory of the Lord.

When through the weariness of the flesh they grow faint, he stirs them up to look at the glory of the Lord. How he pleads with those who admire the mirror and obscure the vision of the people of God. He pleads with them not to bring men back into the darkness of Plato's cave.

He pleads with them to let Christ-freed men to be free indeed, to be free that they may see the glory of the Lord. But if they would obstruct or obscure the vision of the glory of the Lord, he withstands them to the face. God's people, he is determined, shall see the glory of the Lord.

Not even Satan can stop them from doing so. So Paul glories in the change that is wrought by the spiritual discernment. And when the people of God see the glory of the Lord, they are changed.

Here is something wonderful indeed. Paul paints the portrait of the glorified Lord as he and all New Testament believers watch this portrait being painted. As they see in it the mirror, something happens.

It is a lifelike portrait that they see. More than that, it is a life-giving portrait. They look at it again and again. They look at it constantly. Then suddenly they look at themselves. They see themselves by reflection.

What a contrast between themselves and that picture. How ugly they are, how vile. But they have watched the painting of the portrait by Paul the Apostle.

They saw the glory of the Lord and his suffering. They saw what had happened to him in a sense had happened also to them. They saw that he satisfied the demands of the law for them.

Hence there is no condemnation for them that are in Christ Jesus. Thus the ministration of condemnation is turned into the ministration of the Spirit. The Old Testament saints did not see clearly.

They saw no doubt the end of that which was to be abolished. They saw not clearly that the blood of bulls and of goats and of an heifer calf pointed only to the blood of the promised one. At best they wasted much effort in doubt whether their good works were not meant to satisfy the law as the condition of salvation.

Relieved of this enervating doubt, the New Testament believer can make steady progress on his pathway to sanctification. They walk on solid ground. They have seen Christ's portrait to them as raised from the dead.

They know they have been raised with him to newness of life. What certainty, what assurance of faith is theirs? The Spirit testifies with their spirits that they are the children of God. They know that they will proceed step by step with Christ into his glory.

For we through the Spirit, says Paul, wait for the hope of righteousness by faith. They walk in the Spirit. They shall not fulfill the lusts of the flesh, and the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, long-suffering, gentleness, goodness, faith, meekness, temperance.

They will stand fast in the liberty with which Christ has made them free and be not entangled again with the yoke of bondage. They will put off concerning the former conversation, the old man which is corrupt according to the deceitful lust, and be renewed in the spirit of their minds, that we may put on the new man which after God is created in righteousness and true holiness. They will put on the new man which is renewed in knowledge after the image of him that created him.

Finally they will be received into glory. By the Spirit they now understand that hidden wisdom which God ordained before the world unto our glory. They are not afraid of affliction and evil, for our light affliction, they will say, which is but for a moment, worketh for us a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory, while we look not at the things which are seen, for the things which are seen are temporal, but the things which are not seen are eternal.

They are heirs of God and joint heirs with Jesus Christ. If so be that they suffer with him, they shall also be glorified together. They do not even fear death.

Christ is to them the firstfruits of them that sleep. Christ has conquered the last enemy which is death. O death, where is thy sting? O grave, where is thy victory? The sting of death is sin, but sin has been paid for by the Lord of glory.

The strength of sin is the law, but if you are led by the Spirit you are not under the law. Hence they say, but thanks be unto God which giveth us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ. With this sense of

victory they are steadfast, immovable, always abounding in the work of the Lord, knowing that their labor is not in vain in the Lord.

All this the Apostle adds is just as you would expect from the Lord, the Spirit, that glorified Lord who has earned for his people, who has given to his people the earnest of the Spirit, as he went to his home in glory to prepare a place for his own. His work is now identified with the work of the Spirit. Thus the Lord whom they seek is also the Spirit who works within them.

He takes the things of Christ and gives them unto us. Is it any wonder that the Apostle rejoices in this change of those who look at the glorified Christ? As in the case of the Galatians, so in the case of the Corinthians, Paul might well say, my little children of whom I travel in birth again until Christ be formed in you. He knows that Christ is being formed in them.

True, this is of all the object of faith. We walk by faith, not by sight, that the change is real. Those who believe can see it in themselves.

The change may seem to be slow. This will not discourage them, nor will that discourage Paul. He has fed them with milk, but now he will feed them with meat.

He will boldly seek to elicit that which they have in Christ. He knows his appeals to them will not be in vain. When he appeals for the unity of the Spirit, they will realize their heritage and lay aside their factions.

When they doubt the fact of the resurrection, they will respond with joyful faith. They all see, they all see with open face, constantly and clearly. Paul's great plainness of speech will bear abundant fruit in their lives.

If thus they have looked at the glory of the Lord, they may even reflect that same glory among other men. They will let their light so shine before men that others, seeing their good works, will glorify the Father which is in heaven. Those others are still in Plato's dark cave.

Their heads are chained in darkness. They behold no glory. Hence they make no progress as they look at the shadows that take them for realities.

Hence they also think they are moving forward. They may even with penance and glorify what they call progress. She desires no isle of the blessed, no quiet seats of the just, to rest in a golden grove or to bask in the summer sky.

Give her the wages of going on and not to die. Alas, they will go on, on forever in the treadmill of vain opposition to God, in whom the God of this world has blinded the minds of them that believe not, lest the light of the glorious gospel of Christ, who is the image of God, should shine unto them. But God may be pleased to give unto some of them that light which now they spurn, and he will use for that purpose the light of the gospel as spread about by those who are changed from glory unto glory into the image of Christ.

My friends, as men about you are still in darkness of Plato's cave, they grow blindly about them for light. But when you let the light of the glorious gospel of Christ shine upon them, they turn from you. They cannot bear to see that light.

It blinds them. Will you then depend upon your eloquence, upon your attractive personality to make them see? Will you put a veil over your face in order to adapt your message to the spiritual blindness of those to whom you minister? Will you dare to speak plainly to those who are the contrary part? Eloquence and pathos will not in themselves soften the heart of Shylock, nor will argument and debate in themselves cause Plato to see. Men seek often to be wiser than God.

Ministers wish to have men to see the full light of the gospel, and we all as believers are anxious that they should. But they have methods of their own with which to do it. They will first bring men a part of the gospel, and then the other part.

They hope to make the gospel attractive by sugarcoating it just a little. To those who are without, they will offer the gospel as an attractive hypothesis that men might offer and consider, one among many points of view. But Christ abhors this.

It is not the man that judges him. He is the judge, and those that have not desired him to be their king. He will turn to his left hand and say to them, I have never known you.

Paul was beyond this stage when he first preached in Corinth. If you are still in doubt whether you will always and everywhere preach nothing but the full counsel of God, you have not even seen what Paul is taking for granted in our text. He knows he can and will do nothing but speak plainly the whole counsel of God.

That is absolutely settled in his mind, but now he rejoices looking back at the result of that determination. He had at the beginning been fearful. He had trembled when he first preached in Corinth.

This was a city of the great wisdom, of the greatest of all philosophers of all the ages. He had been tempted to let down on both the matter and on the content of his speaking, but he had not let down. He had trusted God.

Now God has blessed his efforts. Himself changed from one who blasphemed to one who gloried in the Lord. He had seen others change likewise.

He had honored God. Therefore God had honored him. He had spoken plainly.

Let us therefore as believers in the Lord Jesus Christ in our day also speak plainly. And now, beloved congregation of the Lord Jesus Christ, the Lord bless thee and keep thee. The Lord cause his face to shine upon thee and be gracious unto thee.

The Lord lift up his countenance and give thee peace. Amen.

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