

Grace, mercy, and peace be to you from God our Father and from our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ! Amen! Dear brothers and sisters in Christ:

“And we all, with unveiled face, beholding the glory of the Lord, are being transformed into the same image from one degree of glory to another. For this comes from the Lord who is the Spirit” (2 Corinthians 3:18).

Today, we celebrate the Transfiguration of Our Lord, and we remember how Peter, James, and John were given a glimpse of Christ’s unveiled glory upon the Mount of Transfiguration. But it is the Apostle Paul who will help us understand what truly took place upon that mountaintop. Essentially, it was the lesser – *the Law* – giving away to the greater – *the Gospel*. It is through this experience that we too are transformed into the image of God.

As great as the Old Covenant was, it was meant to only be temporary. The Old Covenant as revealed in the Old Testament Torah and the Prophets was never to be an end in themselves, but merely served God’s people as a guardian until the Messiah would come.

Well, that time has come! So, upon the Mount of Transfiguration, we see Moses and Elijah passing the torch to Jesus. The time of Moses and Elijah had passed. They served as types of the coming Messiah. They served to prepare us for the coming Messiah. There atop the mountain, Moses and Elijah, who represent the Old Covenant, which cannot save, point us to Jesus, who is the promised Savior.

Now, the Old Covenant also came with glory, as we heard about Moses’ shining face in our Old Testament lesson, but that glory was only “reflected” glory. Here, in our epistle, Paul compares that glory to a fading glory, because Moses’ glowing face would come to an end, so, ***“Moses ... would put a veil over his face so that the Israelites might not gaze at the outcome of what was being brought to an end”*** (2 Corinthians 3:13).

This is teaching us that the Law cannot save us. For the Law can only show us our sin and our need for something more permanent. Even if we kept the Torah, we would never reach the perfection God demands. In fact, in Galatians 3, Paul reminds us that the Law of Moses only had a teaching function. The Law of Moses was to only serve as a guardian instructing Israel on how sins would be truly atoned. So, with each animal that was sacrificed, Israel was being taught that without the shedding of blood, there could be no atonement. With every Passover celebration, Israel would be taught to look to the “*Lamb of God,*” who would once and for all take away the sins of the world.

That was the Old Covenant. It was glorious, but it was also veiled, and it was intended to fade away.

Sadly, many have never seen beyond that Old Covenant. So, a veil remains.

For the Jews of Paul’s day through today, a veil remains. Each Sabbath day, they hear a public reading of the Law of Moses – and they hear it the same way as the Israelites at the foot of Mount Sinai heard it. They view the Law of Moses as the final word, the cure-all and end-all. They fail to see that it is only temporary. They have rejected Jesus as the Christ, for only in Christ is the veil taken away.

But this veil is not just over the hearts of the Jews, this veil is over all who have not yet been enlightened by the Gospel. We all know family, friends, and neighbors who do not know Jesus as their Lord and Savior. For many of our unbelieving friends and neighbors, it is actually “*the god of this world*” (2 Corinthians 4:4) that has blinded their minds from seeing the light of Christ. It is the devil himself, who holds the veil over the hearts of unbelievers, so that they cannot see the light of the Gospel.

By our own reason and strength, we cannot remove this veil. This veil is only removed when the Holy Spirit reveals Jesus to us through Word and Sacrament as He “*calls, gathers, enlightens ... in the one true faith.*” Otherwise, we miss seeing the One who is behind the veil: Jesus Christ on every page in Scripture, Jesus absolving your sins, and Jesus under the bread and wine of the Lord’s Supper!

It is only through the Holy Spirit’s work in us that we are able to recognize Jesus for who He truly is.

Paul and the Church at Corinth have true hope in the Gospel. God had indeed chosen them in Christ just as He has chosen you.

And yet, this veil remains for many. This veil remains because of our sinful condition, since we came into this world turned from God, due to original sin. It is because of sin that this veil has kept many in Israel from receiving Jesus and it is because of this veil that many refuse to enter a church building. Remember, ***“[Christ] came to His own, and His own people did not receive Him. But to who did receive Him, who believed in His name, He gave the right to become children of God, who were born, not of blood nor of the will of the flesh nor of the will of man, but of God”*** (John 1:11-13).

God became man with the purpose of being glorified. Not through the glory atop the Mount of Transfiguration, but glorified by being lifted up on the cross. As Jesus was lifted up, the Old Covenant was being fulfilled. Through Jesus' shed blood, the veil was lifted. As Jesus draws His dying breath, He cries out, ***“It is finished”*** (John 19:30). The veil is not only being lifted, but it is also being torn from top to bottom.

As soon as God died on the cross, many were brought to repentance, but this conversion was only by the grace of God. As the veil is shredded, we can now see Jesus for who He truly is: our Savior from the Law, our Savior from sin, death, and the devil.

Through the power of Holy Spirit and His dwelling in us, it is not just Jesus who is transformed, but also you and me. By God's grace, we have unveiled faces, so we reflect the glory of Christ as the Gospel dwells in us. The Law of Moses could never produce such a change, because we cannot keep it perfectly. But the Gospel can, because the Gospel is all about Jesus and what He accomplished for us on the cross!

At the Fall, we lost the image of God. But through Christ's atoning death and His glorious resurrection, we are gradually being transformed back into the image and likeness of God. Through the Holy Spirit, the veil of spiritual dullness and misunderstanding has been removed. So, as believers in Christ, we are in the same sense like Moses at Mount Sinai. So, the glory of God shines on us directly. But we have something more than Moses, for we have the glory of the New Covenant, the gospel of forgiveness and freedom and life. ***“For where the Spirit of the Lord is, there is freedom”*** (2 Corinthians 3:16).

The message of the Gospel produces a metamorphosis in Christians. This is a daily transformation, which the message of the Old Covenant, the Law, could never do. This daily transformation comes from the New Covenant, the Gospel, for which we receive in Word and Sacrament, God's Means of Grace.

Now, this daily transformation will not be complete until we either die in Christ or Christ returns in glory on the Last Day – *whichever comes first*.

Until that Day, the Holy Spirit continues His transforming, His transfiguring work, in us as we continue to hear the Word and receive the Sacraments.

As we grow in our transformation into the lost image of God, we fear, love, and trust in God above all things; we gladly hear, learn and take to heart the preaching of the Gospel and in Bible studies; we partake of His gifts; we love our neighbor as ourselves; and simply confess Christ when and where God gives us the opportunity.

We, as baptized believers in Christ, are those whom the Holy Spirit has lifted the veil, so we can become bold confessors of the New Covenant, like Paul, for God said, ***“Let light shine out of the darkness”*** (2 Corinthians 4:6) for Christ has ***“called you out of the darkness into His marvelous light”*** (1 Peter 2:9). Amen.

The peace of God, which surpasses all understanding, keep your hearts and minds in Christ Jesus, our Lord. Amen.

+ SOLI DEO GLORIA +