



BELIEVERS CHAPEL

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The Sermons of S. Lewis Johnson

2 Corinthians 3:12-16

"Paul on Moses and the Veil"

TRANSCRIPT

Mr. Pryor said that he really enjoyed that hymn there, and I know it was because I was standing by him singing because that was the first time I had ever sung that hymn, and I and the melody occasionally met while we were going. And, Mark, I want to say that reminded me again of how much we appreciate having you here, because were it not for you singing, I don't know how that hymn would have sounded. [Laughter] But anyway, I think it's a good idea to sing it again and maybe the tune and I can have closer fellowship than we did last time.

At 8:30 this morning, there were two things that happened that were rather interesting. First of all, I was reminded again of my past sins, and Wilfred Webb got up and mentioned my mistake of three or four years ago when I forgot to move my clock forward. And I got up and reminded the congregation, which was rather small, that it was not a mistake. He said that he doesn't make many mistakes but he did make this mistake. And I said that wasn't a mistake. That was an oversight. And I said, furthermore, that there was quite a bit of discussion in the papers about that and the big question, the big issue three or four years ago was: what did he know? But now, I did not get a single response -- thank you, Ross. [Laughter] This morning that crowd was so dead that I don't think they made the connection with President Reagan, and maybe they

haven't yet. I don't really know. Anyway it went over like a lead balloon, too. And then I realized that probably the reason there were so few people here this morning was that the rest of the crowd was out listening to Oral this morning out at Church on the Rock.

So I'm glad you're back now. And you heard him at the first service out there. And heard the report of what he's been able to do, and now you can settle down to the exposition of the word. Well, it's nice to look out and realize that you have arrived and that you've turned your clock forward. And I turned -- I was so anxious that I would not make another -- have another oversight, that I turned my clock forward before two o'clock in the morning. I really turned it forward about eight o'clock in order to be absolutely certain. It's the one that goes off right by my head in the morning with an alarm that wakes me up on Sunday morning. But I turned it in advance, and Martha was almost ready to turn it another hour forward and I -- I've already turned it forward.

So anyway let's turn to 2 Corinthians, and we're going to read verse 12 through verse 16. But before we do, I want to read again the passage in Exodus chapter 34 which is the background of Paul's comments here in this part of 2 Corinthians chapter 3.

So Exodus 34 verse 29, and this event that Paul will use in 2 Corinthians 3 is an event that occurred at the second giving of the Law of Moses. And verse 29 of Exodus chapter 34 reads,

"And it came about as Moses came down from Mount Sinai (and the two tablets of the Testimony were in Moses' hand as he was coming down from the mountain), that Moses did not know that the skin of his face shone because of his speaking with Him. So when Aaron and all the sons of Israel saw Moses, behold, the skin of his face shone, and they were afraid to come near him. (Now notice that particularly because I'm going to make a comment based on that statement: They were afraid to come near him.) Then Moses called to them, and Aaron and all the rulers in the congregation returned to him; and Moses spoke to them. And afterward all the sons of Israel came near, and he

commanded them to do everything that the LORD had spoken to him on Mount Sinai. And when Moses had finished speaking with them, he put a veil over his face. But whenever Moses went in before the LORD to speak with Him, he would take off the veil until he came out; and whenever he came out and spoke to the sons of Israel what he had been commanded, the sons of Israel would see the face of Moses, that the skin of Moses' face shone, so Moses would replace the veil over his face, until he went in to speak with Him."

Now, turning to 2 Corinthians chapter 3 and reading verse 12 through verse 16, the apostle writes -- 2 Corinthians chapter 3 in verse 12,

"Having therefore, such a hope, we use great boldness in our speech -- and are not as Moses, who used to put a veil over his face that the sons of Israel might not look intently at the end of what was fading away. But in their minds were hardened. For until this very day at the reading of the old covenant, the same veil remains unlifted, because it is removed in Christ. But to this day, whenever Moses is read, a veil lies over their heart. But whenever a man turns to the Lord, the veil is taken away."

Now, the New American Standard Bible translates verse 16 whenever a man turns to the Lord. The original text says simply whenever it turns to the Lord, and so, consequently, there is natural discussion among translators as to what the “it” may refer to. And since in the immediately preceding verse we have reference to the heart, probably the reference is to the heart. But it is the heart of the man. And, furthermore, in the context it seems plain that Paul has primarily in mind the heart of a Jewish unbelieving man in his day. And so, it's possible that we should render it when a man -- that is, a Jewish, unbelieving man -- for that is obviously Paul's primary thought here. But

we'll leave it simply whenever a man or whenever the heart turns to the Lord, the veil is taken away.

And since I'm on that verse, I'd like to mention one other point. The word “taken away may be a passive” voice or a mental voice in Greek. Now, you don't have to understand that although you understand what a passive voice is from English. If it is passive, then we should render it simply, the veil is taken away. Now, we may take this in the Greek as a mental voice in which case once can translate it as we would translate an active verb. And therefore, it would mean he takes away the veil. Then, of course, we have to ask ourselves the question: to whom would the he refer? Some commentators refer it to the Lord. That is, when a man turns to the Lord, he takes away the veil. In my mind, that is probably not the way in which that should be taken. But it is a possibility, and I mention it, simply, because it is a possibility. If we read when a man turns to the Lord, the veil is taken away, it's obviously taken away by the Lord. And so the sense is really no different so far as spiritual and theological significance is concerned. May the Lord bless this reading of His word, and let's bow together in a moment of prayer.

[Prayer] Father, we thank Thee for the word of God and specifically for this portion of the word of God to which we have turned today and which is the subject of our thoughts as we reflect upon the things that the apostle desired for the Corinthians to understand in their situation and which have direct bearing upon us as we seek, by Thy grace, to live the Christian life today.

We thank Thee and praise Thee for this beautiful day, and we thank Thee and praise Thee for all of the blessings that are ours by virtue of the fact that we are, as we have sung today, creatures created by Thee. We worship Thee and praise Thee our great, creating God. And we thank Thee especially that, though Thou art our creator, Thou hast also in Christ loved us and brought us to the knowledge of him whom to know his life eternal. And therefore, Thou hast delivered us from our sins, brought us into the

relationship of righteous before God, marvelous, indescribable blessing that is ours through faith in Christ.

We are so grateful, Lord. We thank Thee that we have the righteousness that satisfies Thee. We thank Thee, too, Lord, for the whole church of Jesus Christ, and we ask Thou blessing upon the whole body today as the word of God is preached, whether over the radio, in the pulpits, or wherever Christ is proclaimed, may the Holy Spirit bless the ministry of the word of God to the accomplishment of the eternal purposes of our Triune God.

We pray particularly for those who have requested our prayers today. We remember them, Lord. We pray Thy blessing upon them; upon those who are bereaving, those who are sick, those who have asked for our prayers concerning questions and problems and things that face us in our daily lives. We bring them all to Thee. We thank Thee for Thou art well able to answer the petitions in a way that will glorify Thy name and bless Thy people.

We pray for the Believer's Chapel, its outreach, its elders, deacons, its members and friends, and the visitors who are here with us today. May this be a significant experience for all of us as we sing together and as we listen to the word of God.

We pray in Jesus' name. Amen.

[Message] The subject for today is "Paul on Moses and the Veil". The apostle has been discussing the passing of the old covenant and the surpassing glory of the new. And if we had the opportunity of asking the apostle, how would he contrast the old covenant and the new, I think the apostle would probably have expatiated along these lines -- perhaps other ways as well, but at least along these lines. He would have said the old covenant was a conditional covenant and, therefore, could never be fulfilled by sinful men. The new covenant is an unconditional covenant, one guaranteed by God and, therefore, one that can be sure and final and permanent for those for whom Christ has

died. He, no doubt, would have pointed out that the priesthood of the old covenant was a priesthood of sinful men; men who lived, ministered, and then died and were unable to secure the permanent blessings of the saving ministry of the Messiah to come. Whereas the priesthood of the new covenant is an eternal priesthood; the Lord Jesus, not only is an eternal priest but an infinite priest and, therefore, well able to secure all of the blessings that he has won by his purchase through his blood on Calvary's cross. And the apostle would no doubt, also, have pointed out that the many sacrifices of the Old Testament could never take away sin because they were animal sacrifices. But the Lord Jesus has offered the once-and-for-all sacrifice by which sins are forever taken care of.

Many things could be said about the believer in the Mosaic Law. For example, what's the relationship of the believer and the law? Let me just summarize in a few statements my own personal views. First, the nature of the law is that it is a covenant of work's righteousness not a covenant of grace. It is composed essentially of a command, obligation, and sanctions or penalties. And, second, the Mosaic Law is a unity. It's moral, civil, and ceremonial features all belong to the one law; therefore, to break any aspect of the Law of Moses is to be guilty of breaking all. And, third, the purpose of the law included at least these aims, to give the knowledge of sin, to insight to sin with that aim in mind, and, finally, to prepare men for Christ. And, fourth, the Mosaic Law as law had a temporary validity. The apostle makes that quite plain in this particular chapter and in others as well. And, fifth, the believer is not under the Mosaic Law as a final criterion of the Christian life today. There are some things that one might say in support of that, such as Scriptures say the Lord Jesus died to the law. The Scriptures say that we have freedom from the law.

There are, however, some evasive answers that are frequently given to this question and include this: the believer is under the moral law but not the ceremonial law. But the law that is done away is specifically said to be inclusive of the Ten Commandments. That's found right here in this particular chapter. It's that which was

written and engraven in stone that Paul says here is done away. Another evasive answer is the believer is under the moral law but not under the penalties of the law. But, again, the sanctions or the penalties are part of the law. And thus to be under law is to be under the penalties and sanctions. Otherwise, it's not the law. And then, third, it's sometimes said that he's under the moral law as rule of life but not for salvation. But, of course, the believer was never under the moral law for salvation even in Old Testament times. And then finally, it's sometimes said, he's under the Sermon on the Mount but not under the Law of Moses. The Scriptures say simply that the believer today is not under law.

Now, one can argue in great more -- in much more detail, and I don't want to do that because it's not really the place to do it here. But to my mind, the Scriptures teach that the believer today is under the Spirit of God as guide and under the Apostolic message as his detailed criterion of life. We should remember that nine of the Ten Commandments are found in the New Testament. The fourth, the law concerning the Sabbath, being the only exception. In other words, the will of God and the content of grace, as revealed in the entire word, is the believer's responsibility. Life under the Spirit by the mercies of God will fulfill the law and its righteous requirements. And so the believer who by God the Holy Spirit's direction lives in harmony with his guidance and teaching, will live the kind of life, Paul says, that the law can find no flaw in it.

The professing Christian whose life is characterized by a life out of harmony with the moral law as seen in the Mosaic Law as, according to the New Testament and according to the Old Testament as well, is not a true believer. In other words, there has to be evidence, if not to us -- and it doesn't have to be in our eyes -- but to the Lord. There has to be evidence of a true faith. If one has life, there will be a definite response. Liberty does not mean license. In fact, it means, as Paul puts it in Romans 7, marriage service of the Lord in the spirit.

Now, it's my own personal opinion and, again, I reiterate it's my own personal opinion, that a lot of the heat generated over the believer's relationship to the law is semantic. Or to put it in other words, the intensity of the heat generated over the issue of the believer and the law is largely unnecessary. And that if we realized that if these two positions are compatible in the fact that the man who lives by the spirit will not violate the moral principles of the Law of Moses, then it seems to me we should permit freedom of how we analyze the relationship of the believer and the law. I think I've given you what the Scriptures teach, but I do have good friends who like to say we are under the Ten Commandments. In that case, I can only say that the believer who walks by the Spirit, with the exception of the fourth commandment, will not violate -- willingly -- the commandments that Moses was given.

Now, the passage that we're looking at today is a -- not an easy passage. And I hope you will bear with all of the exposition this morning. And if you find it rather difficult to follow, I'm sure that almost all of us who have tried to understand Paul's thought as he moves through this section will have a great deal of sympathy with you. In the background is the enacted parable illustrating the inability of Israel to behold the glory of the Lord permanently due to their iniquities. And so, when Moses came forth with the law and the glory shining upon his face and gave the words of God, when he finished with the words of God, he put the veil on his face, went back into the presence of the Lord, took the veil off, received further message from the Lord, came out with his face shining, gave the message, and when he finished, put the veil on. That particular event is, in Paul's thinking, a kind of enacted parable of the truth that he would like to get over. And one of the truths that he wants to get over, no doubt, is that we are unable -- that is, speaking as an Israelite -- we're unable to behold the glory of the Lord permanently due to their iniquities, speaking of Israel at that particular time. And then also, due to the fact that Moses spoke with the glory of the Lord upon his face -- that afforded irrefutable proof of the fact that Moses had an authentic ministry at this particular time.

But now let's look at the section. We're going to begin at verse 12 and verse 13 where Paul speaks of the boldness of himself and the concealment of Moses. He writes, "Having therefore, such a hope, we use great boldness in our speech." You'll notice the little word, the connecting conjunction "therefore" which introduces an inference from the preceding context. And he has just said in verse 11 for if that which fades away was with glory -- now he's talking about the law; graven and stones. If that which fades away was with glory, much more of that which remains -- that is the new covenant ministry -- is in glory. Therefore, because of the abiding glory of the new covenant ministry, the apostle states, therefore, having such a hope, we use great boldness of speech. We have great openness in the proclamation of the new covenant. We do not, as Moses, have to use the veil for the message now is not the message of the law. The message now is the message of grace, mercy, and life for believers. And faith may behold the glory of God without ceasing. Moses' face shone, and those who were looking at Moses could observe the glory of God upon his face, though it was fading for a limited time. Paul says now we are able to observe the glory of God permanently.

Now, I'd like for you to drop down to chapter 4 in verse 4 through 6 because Paul is still talking in -- along the same lines. And he says in verse 4 of 2 Corinthians chapter 4, "in whose case the god of this world has blinded the minds of the unbelieving that they might not see the light of the gospel of the glory of Christ, who is the image of God, for we do not preach ourselves but Christ Jesus as Lord and ourselves as your bond-servants for Jesus' sake. For God who said light shall shine out of darkness, is the one who has shone in our hearts to give the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Christ."

So the apostle is simply saying this that because of what transpired, a new covenant, ratification and ministry, we actually are able to see the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Christ. And therefore, having such a hope, we use great boldness of speech. We're not like Moses who had to put a veil over his face and had, in

a sense, to be to that extent embarrassed by the revelation that he was giving. It was an impermanent one. The apostle says, no, we have a permanent message. And not only a permanent message, but one that is full of grace and mercy by virtue of the fulfillment of the unconditional new covenant in the Lord Jesus Christ.

Looking now at verse 13 where he says, "and are not as Moses, who used to put a veil over his face that the sons of Israel might not look intently at the end of what was fading away." I'd like for you to remember that when we read the Scriptures, I made reference to the fact that it was important to notice that when Moses came down, the children of Israel were afraid to look upon his face. One might ask the question: why were they afraid? Well, in the preceding chapters in chapter 33, chapter 32 and the earlier part of chapter 34, Moses made it very plain that there was great stress by the Lord God upon the wickedness of the children of Israel. Several times they are called people who have stiff-necked attitudes to the Lord God. They were rebellious in heart. Several times that's stated with reference to them in the immediately preceding context in Exodus chapter 33.

Here, let me read just one of them -- or one or two of them. In chapter 33 in verse 5, we read, "For the LORD had said to Moses, 'Say to the sons of Israel, 'You are an obstinate people.'" That's a word that means stiff-necked. In chapter 34 in verse 9, we read, "If now I have found favor in Thy sight, O Lord, I pray, let the Lord go along in our midst, even though the people are so obstinate." Or it is a people who are stiff-necked. And another time in this particular context, the same thing is stated.

So in the preceding context, there is a great deal of stress on the fact that Israel was a stiff-necked and rebellious people. And, furthermore, in the immediately preceding context, it was stated that no one -- the Lord said this -- no one can look upon my face and live. So when Moses came down with the glory shining upon his face, they were fearful, first of all, because in the presence of a Holy God being sinful meant they felt their own wickedness and unholiness, very much like Peter in the boat when the Lord

Jesus Christ was revealed and the miracle he performed, he burst forth with "Lord, depart from me for I am a sinful soul." So the same kind of thing was true there. But there was another thing that the apostle sees there that's not found in the Old Testament. And this is an application that he makes because he says that the sons of Israel might not look intently at the end of what was fading away.

Now, Moses doesn't make any reference to that so far as I can tell in that Exodus 34 passage, but the apostle sees in this an application of the truth that he has come to know by virtue of his own conversion. And it was this: not simply was Israel a sinning people, but the law itself was a revelation, an administration that was to fade away. It was a temporary thing, and it was reflected in the fact that Moses came from the presence of the Lord with the Lord, the glory upon his face began to fade. And so the apostle sees in that an evidence of the fact that one could anticipate that the Law of Moses was a temporary administration that came from the Lord God.

Now, of course, Paul writes after the fact so to speak, ex post facto. It's already done. And therefore, he can write with a great deal of application of what he sees in the Old Testament although Moses, so far as I can tell, does not say specifically that. Now, I know that that's not easy to follow what Paul is saying here. It reminds me of a well-known preacher in his day who was preaching to his congregation, and he was a very learned man. And being a very learned man, he often got very far ahead of his very unlearned parishioners. And one day, he was particularly deep in the truth, and they were lost. And after many tedious sentences and many a complicated paragraph, he said to them, "Perhaps some of you at this point are suspecting me of Eutychianism" which was probably the last thing that came to their minds if they understood what a Eutychianism was. But in case you have been suspecting me of Eutychianism, as I have been trying to explain what Paul is talking about, I am not a follower of Eutyches who confused the two natures of Christ in such a way that there could be no real atoning

work. But it's important for us, in expounding the word of God, to expound the difficult passages as well as the simple.

W.R. Maltby, who was a well-known British preacher, once said concerning Peniel where Moses wrestled with the Lord. He said, "Remember Peniel and wrestle with the great themes even though they throw you." So perhaps you think that I've been thrown by this theme, but I'm wrestling with it anyway.

Now, we turn to verse 14 and verse 15, and the apostle goes on to make further applications. Here the past and present hardening of Israel. Verse 14 and verse 15 and we read, "But in their minds were hardened. For until this very day at the reading of the old covenant, the same veil remains unlifted, because it is removed in Christ. But to this day, whenever Moses is read, a veil lies over their hearts." So the apostle sees Israel's inability and unwillingness to receive God's word in his day though they possessed the glory of God in the Mosaic Law as an enacted parable, as a kind of spiritual illustration of the present inability of Israel's descendants. The glory seed has been interrupted by their disobedience.

That word but that begins verse 14 contrasts their response with glorious revelation of the moral law. But their minds were hardened. That's why they were unable to respond to the revelation of God in the Mosaic Law. Their minds were hardened, and having fallen in the Garden of Eden and having persisted is -- as sinning men when the Law of Moses came, it simply pointed out their own sin. And as the years and the ages passed, Israel, as a nation, became a hardened nation. The apostle emphasizes this truth in Romans chapter 9 and chapter 10 and chapter 11 using even some of the same words that are found here.

Now, he moves from the past: But their minds were hardened, to the present in verse 14 by saying: For until this very day at the reading of the old covenant, the same veil remains unlifted, because it is removed in Christ.

Now, that's a kind of bold transference of thought. That's one reason, incidentally, why we find this difficult because the illustration has Moses with the veil on his face. But suddenly the apostle has, I say, boldly transferred the veil and now it's not on Moses' face, but it's on the face of the children of Israel who, in their synagogues, are hearing the Law of Moses read. So that's why people find this difficult. But their minds were hardened. For until this very day at the reading of the old covenant, the same veil remains unlifted. The veil that was on Moses' face, that prevented Israel from seeing the fading glory, is now upon the minds and hearts of the children of Israel in preventing them from seeing the glory of God, not simply in the old covenant but also in the new. So just as unbelief curtained their hearts from the knowledge of God by his word then, so now at the present time unbelief has drawn a curtain over the hearts of Israel from the knowledge of God through his word.

There is something that the Lord Jesus says that, I think, has very direct bearing upon this. You may remember the statement that the Lord made in his encounters with the Jewish people of his day. In John chapter 5 in verse 46, he made a very interesting application of the Old Testament. He said, "For if you believed Moses, you would believe Me; for he wrote of Me. But if you do not believe his writings, how will you believe My words?" You can see from this that the Lord Jesus identified the Old Testament and the New Testament as being revelations of God. There is no such thing as saying, I believe Jesus Christ, but I do not believe the Old Testament. In other words, if we believe the Lord Jesus Christ, we will believe the Old Testament. If we believe Moses, we will believe in Christ. If you do not believe Moses' writings, how will you believe the words of Christ? So all of the great truths set out in the Old Testament by Moses as he gave the law of God, are truths that the believer in the Lord Jesus Christ by the word of the Lord Jesus is to believe -- and must believe as Jesus said. So the things that are said in the Old Testament are equated with the things that are said in the New Testament so far as our obligation to believe them is concerned.

It's very interesting that this question of the veil lying upon the hearts of the children of Israel has had an impact upon Christian art. For example, in the Cathedral in Strasbourg in France and also in Rochester in England, there is Christian sculpture which portrays a blindfolded synagogue alongside of a clearly seen church in both of these cathedrals. So you have a synagogue sculptured and by the side of it a church. But over the synagogue the sculptor has placed a blindfold to illustrate the truth. You remember in the Book of Acts, Luke says Moses had him -- had those who read him in every one of the cities today and so a reference made to the reading of the Old Testament in the worship of the synagogue and now Paul says in the reading of the synagogue there is a veil. But he says that veil is removed in Christ. Notice the last statement there in verse 14. The same veil remains unlifted because it is removed in Christ. Only in Christ is the failure to understand the word of God removed. Only there is there justifying righteousness. Israel sought to find righteousness by their works. Only in Christ and his saving work on Calvary's cross may one find righteousness. But that righteousness is not a works righteousness, it's a faith righteousness and only in Christ is there a living spirit to enable us to live in a way that is pleasing to the Lord God. So only in Christ is the veil removed. Obviously the apostle is making application of the truth and of this enacted parable of Exodus chapter 34.

And, finally, in verse 16 he comments on the path to the unfading glory in Christ. But whenever a man turns to the Lord, the veil is taken away. Now, this is, as you can see, a general principle that is extracted from Exodus chapter 34 in verse 34. Let me read Exodus 34, verse 34. Perhaps you can get some idea of how the apostle read the Old Testament from this. Now the text reads, "But whenever Moses went in before the LORD to speak with Him, he would take off the veil until he came out; and whenever he came out and spoke to the sons of Israel what he had been commanded. The sons of Israel saw the face of Moses, that the skin of Moses' face shone." But notice the first part, whenever Moses went in before the Lord to speak with Him, he would take off the veil.

Now, that's the thing that the apostle uses when he says in verse 16, "But whenever a man turns to the Lord, the veil is taken away."

Now, actually, that's what we might call an application of the passage in Exodus 34, verse 34. Exodus 34 says that when Moses went in before the Lord, the veil was taken off. But Paul sees in that a general principle. That is, when a person turns to the Lord, the blindness and dullness that come from unbelief are removed. So you can see how he applies the statements of chapter 34 to the truth of his day. So what we have then is a general principle extracted from that verse. And, furthermore, what makes it even more significant to me is the word "turn." Whenever a man turns to the Lord, that's the standard New Testament word for conversion; used a half a dozen times, approximately, for a Christian conversion. So the apostle on the basis of the Old Testament is now applying the truth that when a person turns to the Lord, the dullness and blindness of unbelief is removed by the Lord God.

But he doesn't say is removed by the Lord, he says it's removed. As I mentioned, some do translate it: he removed the veil; that is, the Lord. But under any circumstances the dullness and blindness can only be removed by the Lord. So the human activity is men turning to the Lord. I guess you notice that Moses, that term "Moses" which is used in Exodus 34, verse 34, is omitted here. The apostle is not talking about the historical act, but he's applying the truth illustratively. So he says, but whenever a man turns to the Lord. So he sees in Moses' act an illustration of the general truth that when a man turns to the Lord, the heart -- I think is the subject of that -- the divine result is the veil is removed.

Now, I want to say a few things about this because I think it's important for us to note this. We have, occasionally, people saying that you may believe the New Testament, and you may forget the Old Testament. We've already said that our Lord's statements in John chapter 5 refute that idea. But one either believes all of the Bible -- that is inclusive of the Mosaic Law -- or he doesn't believe the New Testament words of the Lord Jesus

Christ. They stand together, the Old and the New Testaments. But there is another thing that is sometimes said, and that is that the Old Testament does not really reflect the ministry of the Lord Jesus Christ. People occasionally say words that are very close to that. I won't bother to stop and talk specifically about it. But one thing I would like for you to notice is that when we find the Old Testament described in Paul's writings here, he says: But whenever a man turns to the Lord. To whom does he refer when he says when a man turns to the Lord? Well, it's clear from the context that he's talking about turning to the Lord Jesus Christ. When a man turns to the Lord -- the Lord Jesus Christ -- the veil is taken away. But now in the Old Testament we read when Moses went in to the Lord. The Hebrew text has *Yahweh*. Who was the Yahweh?

Well, we know from the study of Scripture that the God that the Christians worship is a Triune God; God the Father, God the Son, God the Holy Spirit. In fact, the Father is Lord, the Son is Lord, the Spirit is Lord. So when we read the Lord in the Old Testament, we have options: the Father, the Lord the Son, the Lord; the Spirit, the Lord. Or turn it around, the Lord, the Father; the Lord, the Spirit; the Lord, the Son. Now, it's clear from the apostle's reasoning here that he regards the Lord to whom Moses turned as the second person of the Trinity, the Lord the Son. In other words, the covenant-keeping God, to whom Israel was related in the Old Testament, is the one who has ratified the new covenant, the Lord Jesus Christ. So whenever a person turns to the Lord, *Yahweh*, the second person of the Trinity, the covenant keeping God, the veil is taken away. So when a person turns to the Lord Jesus Christ, the veil is taken away.

Now, whenever a Jewish person comes to faith in Christ, that really transpires in their experience. It also transpires in ours. Now, Paul goes on to say in Romans chapter 11 that there is coming a day when this will take place with reference to the nation as a whole. He says in Romans chapter 11 in verse 25, "For I do not want you, brethren, to be uninformed of this mystery, lest you should be wise in your own estimation, that a partial hardening (that is, not everybody, there is a remnant according to the election of grace. A

partial hardening, that's the same root that is used in but there hearts were hardened.) A partial hardening has happened to Israel until the full number of the Gentiles has come in. And thus, all Israel shall be saved." Not simply a remnant, but there is coming a day when the nation as a whole shall turn to the Lord. Now, Paul doesn't say anything about that particularly in 2 Corinthians chapter 3, but that lies in the background.

Let me conclude then. Not only Israel but the church also may be under a veil from understanding Scripture. I don't know whether you've noticed this or not but the dullness of the Jewish heart and the blindness of the Jewish heart is one of the strangest anomalies of history. Think about it for a moment. As a people, the Jews are one of the most brilliant in the world. They excel in art. They excel in science. They excel in literature. By per capita count, their skill and attainment probably exceed those of all the other races. I trace that to the sovereign providence of the Lord God. Just think of how they've distinguished themselves in all walks of life; in astronomy, Sir William Herschel; in music, a Mendelssohn; in philosophy, a Maimonides; in state craft, a Disraeli; in history, a Nehanda; in archeology, a Cyrus Adler and also today a Nelson Blick; in juris prudence, a Barron Redding, we could also add Felix Frankfurter in our own experience in this country; in science, Albert Einstein. When this national brilliance is brought to the Bible, which they have given us, there's a mysterious lack of understanding. Even Jewish men today in many of their most significant periodicals will acknowledge that in Israel, Judaism is largely a system of ethics, and that's all. The Jewish nation, which gave us the Scriptures and the Savior and yet their mind is dull to the Scriptures and their head is dead to the Savior, the Lord Jesus Christ. That's one of the strangest things in human history, only explainable -- it seems to me -- by the teaching of the word of God.

But think also of the Christian church. We tend to look at Israel and we say: with all of those marvelous privileges, they turned against the Lord God, their hearts became hardened. They were rebellious, stiff-necked people and the Lord God had to discipline them. And finally, the discipline, as His word set forth, became the scattering to the four

corners of the earth which we see today. And so often -- and Paul has a word in Romans 11 addressed directly to us Gentiles that we should be careful and be careful that we do not act in conceit for we stand by faith just as they stood at one time, by faith. And just as He cast them away, He may cast us away, too. And we know from the teaching of the New Testament that the end of the church shall be largely an apostate end. And as we look at the status of the Christian church today and reflect upon the fact that when the word of God is preached today, the veil that lies over the minds of so many people who are in our congregation is truly amazing. One of the things that I constantly pray about by my bedside is that when I finish what ministry God has given me at Believer's Chapel, that I may not leave a people who are blind and dull to the things of the word of God. Think of all of these veils that are characteristic of us. The veil of prejudice. There are people in Christian churches today who say things like, "You cannot believe all of the Bible. You really cannot believe everything in Scripture. No one, with a sound mind, can believe everything in scripture and take it at its normal sense."

Always I wish that people would say that in my presence because I like to say, now of course I believe that the Scriptures are verbally and plenary inspired, but I'd like to say to such something like this, "Okay. Let's forget about a verbal plenary inspiration of Scripture, but let's just say that you're a Christian, you're a member of a Christian church, so obviously you're not going to believe everything in the Bible, you say. But, listen, you at least would believe the main story of the Bible, wouldn't you, the thing that the Bible is all about, regardless of these other little things which you may have some doubts? All right. What's the main point of the Bible? Christ, the Son of God, who offered a sacrifice for sinners. Have you really trusted him for your eternal salvation? If you believe just what the Bible says in its main message, that's it -- and I've usually found that when people come to Christ and believe that essential message and then they begin to read the Bible, it's not long before having become acquainted with the Bible they say, "You know, the Bible impresses me that it's the word of God throughout." And it's not

long before they believe the Bible is verbal and plenary inspired. And some of those people even believe it's inherent. Think of that.

There's the veil of wishful thinking. Believe in the love and mercy of God but not in the wrath and judgment of God. The veil of fragmentary thinking; choosing certain texts and believing in them but other texts, just passing by because they're not the kinds of text we like. The veil of disobedience, moral blindness, the pure in heart see God, so we read in Scripture, and the veil of an unteachable spirit. No one can learn if they're not willing to learn. As the Scots say in one of their little sayings, "There's none so blind as those who will not see." So when a person will not see, you cannot teach him anything, even the great truths of the word of God.

I close with this because the time is up. Paul's words, I say, are an enacted parable of Moses' experience. He saw in that an evidence of Israel's sin. He saw in it some indication that the law was a temporary enactment of God, a temporary revelation given on Mt. Sinai, destined to pass away on Mt. Calvary with the death of Christ. He saw also in the things that transpire, things that were true to his own experience. In fact, that's how he described his experience. In Philippians chapter 3 in verse 4 and following, he said this, and I close with the citing of these words. He said,

"Although I myself might have confidence even in the flesh. If anyone else has a mind to put confidence in the flesh, I far more: circumcised the eighth day, of the nation of Israel, of the tribe of Benjamin, a Hebrew of Hebrews; as to the Law, a Pharisee; as to zeal, a persecutor of the church; as to the righteousness which is in the Law, found blameless. But whatever things were gain to me, those things I have counted as loss for the sake of Christ. More than that, I count all things to be loss in view of the surpassing value of knowing Christ Jesus my Lord, for whom I have suffered the loss of all things, and count them but rubbish in order that I may gain Christ, and may be found in Him, not

having a righteousness of my own derived from the Law, but that which is through faith in Christ, the righteousness which comes from God on the basis of faith."

That's a man from whose eyes and heart the veil has been lifted. And as he says in verse 17, Brethren, may I say to you, brethren and sisters -- Paul says joined in following my example -- may God in His wonderful grace enable us to see that through the Lord Jesus Christ a new covenant has been consummated in which the forgiveness of sins that offered unconditionally on the basis of Christ's suffering the merits of his saving worth impudent to those, by God's grace, have come to understand their sin and need and who flee to Christ for the forgiveness of sins. Come to Christ. Believe in Him. Trust in Him. The veil having been lifted from your hearts, you will find the in the Lord Jesus the answer to all the problems of life, not the answer to all of your trials and troubles but to all of the problems of life. We invite you as an ambassador of the Lord Jesus to come to Him. May we stand for the benediction.

[Prayer] Father, we are grateful indeed for these marvelous words written by the apostle. There are many things about them, concerning which we may have some questions, but it's clear that the apostle had reason for boldness in the expression of the truth. For being a minister of the new covenant, he was a minister of the forgiveness of sins through the saving work of Christ based upon an unconditional covenant made with sinners.

O God, if there are those in this audience who have never believed in Christ, may the obtuseness and the stiff-necked condition, the rebellious condition of our hearts, be recognized through the Spirit's conviction, and may we flee to Christ for forgiveness of sins.

For Jesus' sake. Amen.