



BELIEVERS CHAPEL

6420 Churchill Way | Dallas, Texas | 75230 | t 972.239.5371 | believerschapeldallas.org

Sermons of S. Lewis Johnson

2 Corinthians 3:12–18

Paul and the Ministry: 3

“The Boldness of the New Covenant Ministry”

TRANSCRIPT

[Prayer] Father, we are grateful that we have the privilege again of the study of the Scriptures together. We thank Thee for the teaching that is found within them, and we thank Thee, Lord, for the way in which the Holy Spirit has been our teacher and has enabled us to understand in measure at least, the significance of the gospel of the Lord Jesus Christ. And we thank Thee for the privilege of proclaiming the gospel of Christ, each one of us individually, not only behind a pulpit but in our daily conversation with our family and with our friends and with those with whom we come in contact. We thank Thee for the solemnity of the gospel and its relationship to the issues of life and death. Help us, Lord, to remember that always, and not to lose the opportunities that we have to make the Lord Jesus Christ known. We commit the hour to Thee. We ask Thy blessing upon this particular study and then in the studies that follow.

For Jesus' sake. Amen.

[Message] 2 Corinthians chapter 3, verse 12 through verse 18, and our subject tonight, “The Boldness of New Covenant Ministry.” Let me just review for a moment or two what we looked at last time, as we looked at chapter 3 of 2 Corinthians. Remember in the beginning, I mentioned the fact that 2 Corinthians is distinguished among the Pauline letters for three things. First of all, its matchless discussion of ministry, particularly Paul's own apostolic ministry, but there are naturally

many applications to all kinds of Christian service from the things that Paul says about himself. It is also known for its revolutionary discussion of Christian giving. The apostle sets forth the principles by which Christians are to give. And then in the last part of the chapter, and several chapters—last part of the book in several chapters, he gives a very stern admonition directed against Judaizing adversaries; as stern, practically speaking, as that which is given in the Epistle to the Galatians. We are particularly thankful for 2 Corinthians, because it is probably the most personal of all Paul’s letters, and if we wanted to, in a sense, feel the beat of Paul’s heart, you would more likely feel it in the epistle that he wrote to the Corinthians—this second one—than in any of his other epistles.

He began his discussion of the ministry because of the fact that he’d been very much concerned about the status of the church at Corinth, which had been a church that was born through his own preaching of the gospel; very concerned about their condition, and about the things that were happening in the church.

He had sent Titus on ahead, and when he arrived at Troas on his way, he was so disturbed, he said, so upset over their spiritual condition, that he determined to go ahead and make his way toward the—the city of Corinth, in spite of the fact that Titus had not yet come. But evidently, in Thessalonica, or in northern Greece somewhere, he met Titus who was returning from Corinth and gave him—Titus gave him a very good response of the spiritual condition of the church in Corinth. And out of that feeling of exhilaration that the apostle had because of the good news that Titus brought him, he expatiates on the ministry.

Remember in verse 12 of chapter 2 he had said,

“Furthermore, when I came to Troas to preach Christ’s gospel, and a door was opened unto me of the Lord, I had no rest in my spirit, because I found not Titus my brother: but taking my leave of them, I went from there into Macedonia. Now thanks be unto God, who always causeth us to triumph.”

And so then, beginning there his discussion of ministry, which is not concluded until the seventh chapter, Paul describes the high calling of the servant of the Lord Jesus Christ.

He answers his critics in the opening part of chapter 3. He replies to their charges of egotism. He reminds them that he does not need any letter of commendation to them or from them, because they, after all, were his own epistle. They were the products of his own preaching. And that—after saying that, he launches into a discussion of the advantages of New Covenant ministry as over against Old Covenant ministry.

In other words, he draws a contrast between the Mosaic Law and the ministry of the Mosaic Law, and the ministry of the New Covenant, the ministry of the Lord Jesus Christ. He says concerning the New Covenant ministry, that it is life giving. It does not bring men to the knowledge of their death before the Lord as the Law does. He says, ‘The Law kills. The Law is responsible for death. The Law is the means of condemnation. But in the case of the New Covenant ministry, it’s the means of life.

In other words, it confers life, as over against the Old Covenant ministry, which commands that we do certain things, which we are unable to do because we’re sinners. He also says that the ministry of the New Covenant is—is exceedingly glorious, not just glorious.

Now in this, he responds perhaps to someone who might say, “But after all, was not the Law given by Moses, and was not Moses given the Law by God? And so therefore, the Law must have a glory, being the revelation of the character of God, so far as righteousness is concerned.” “Well yes,” Paul says, “it’s true. It did have its glory. It was a glorious covenantal ministry, but the New Covenant ministry is exceedingly glorious.” And so he says there is a greater glory attached to the revelation of the character of God in the person and work of Jesus Christ.

This is something that we sometimes forget. We keep saying the Law is the revelation of the character of God. True, and we’re grateful for it. But there is a revelation of the character of God that is greater, and that is the revelation of the character of God in the cross of Jesus Christ. For

there, we see mingled mercy and also judgment. Grace is manifested there, and God’s glory is enhanced by the sufferings and the resurrection of the Lord Jesus Christ.

Furthermore, he says, in the case of the New Covenant, it is a permanent ministry, because it confers eternal life, and so it is not a temporary covenant, it’s a permanent covenant. The Mosaic Covenant was a temporary covenant. It had its beginning on Mount Sinai, and it had its end on Mount Calvary, where the Lord Jesus Christ died, and as he died, the veil of the Temple was writ in twain from top to bottom, signifying that the Mosaic system now has lost its validity, for those who are in touch with the Lord God. It was important for its time. It served the purpose of God. It was a glorious ministry, but it was a temporary ministry, whereas in the case of the New Covenant ministry, it is a permanent ministry.

Now, the apostle in verse 12, having pointed out these advantages of this New Covenant ministry and its superiority, states in verse 12,

“Seeing then that we have such hope, we use great boldness.”

Now, I commented in—as the last hour closed, that it would be nice if the apostle had written “we use great plainness of speech,” because that’s a good thing for preachers always to do if they can; to use great plainness of speech. But the word translated here “great plainness of speech” in the Authorized Version, is a word that really means “boldness.” So he says, “Since we have such a hope, by virtue of this New Covenant ministry. It’s glorious. It’s permanent. It conveys life. It’s no wonder that we are bold in the proclamation of such a message.”

Now, that’s a very practical comment the apostle makes. In effect he says, “We who know the Lord Jesus Christ, and who have eternal life by virtue of the ministry of the Lord Jesus, and we who now participate in the benefits of the New Covenant, this New Covenant is so great and glorious, we ought to boldly proclaim the gospel of Jesus Christ. We have reason to be bold in the proclamation of our truth, because it’s the truth of God, and it’s a great truth.”

Well, that’s the transition from the advantages of the New Covenant ministry to the boldness with which he unfolds New Covenant ministry.

It’s rather striking to remember that, as a result of the Lord Jesus Christ’s resurrection, he is now alive, and he also is one who supports us in the proclamation of the gospel of Christ. In John Masefield’s play, *The Trial of Jesus*, the Roman centurion who’s given—who is given the name Longinus—there is some tradition to the effect that, that was the name of the Roman centurion who said, “Truly, this was the Son of God.” He stood at the foot of the cross, and in John Masefield’s play, he’s heard talking to Claudia Procula, Pilate’s wife, just after the crucifixion. And she says—because, remember, she had a dream about the Lord Jesus, and she warned Pilate, “Don’t have anything to do with this man, because I’ve suffered many things in a dream because of him just recently.” That was a good biblical dream. A lot of people having dreams today that are not biblical dreams, but this was a biblical dream.

At any rate, he says—she said to Longinus in Masefield’s play, “Do you think he’s dead?”

“No lady, I don’t,” he said.

“Then where is he?”

“Let loose in the world, lady,” replies Longinus, “Where neither Roman nor Jew can stop his truth.”

Well, we have the privilege of representing someone who had been let loose in this world, where neither Roman nor Jew can possibly stop his truth. And there could be no greater privilege than the privilege of giving the gospel of the Lord Jesus Christ. So we use great boldness of speech. Plainness, yes. We ought to have plainness, but boldness is what he’s talking about.

Now, he’s going to draw a little contrast between the ministry of the New Covenant and the ministry of the Old Covenant, and since he’s speaking as the minister of the New Covenant, in drawing the contrast, it would be natural for him to turn to the man who was preeminently the minister of the Old Covenant; and that’s Moses. So he says,

“We use great boldness of speech and not as Moses who put a veil over his face, that the children of Israel could not steadfastly look to the end of that which is abolished.”

“And not as Moses.” Now, this is a very interesting thing, and we’ll not understand this unless we turn back to the Old Testament and read the context that Paul has in mind. And it’s in Exodus chapter 34. Exodus chapter 34, verse 29 through verse 35. Now, you remember, in the book of Exodus, among other things, in addition to the call of Moses and Moses’ deliverance of the children of Israel out of the land of Egypt, he also is given instructions concerning the Tabernacle, and he is given the Law. But, remember, when he first is given the Ten Commandments, he comes down and finds the children of Israel had forgotten all about him, and they’ve already constructed the golden cow out of the gold, silver, and metals, and they are worshiping the golden cow because they don’t know what’s happened to Moses. He’s been up on the mountain, and as far as they’re concerned, their faith is so little, that in that short period of time, they’ve gone back to the worship of the idols. Well, Moses was so angry, that he broke the Ten Commandments.

Now, the second giving of the Law takes place, and this is in the account of the second giving of the Law, and we read in verse 29 of Exodus 34,

“And it came to pass, when Moses came down from Mount Sinai with the two tables of testimony in Moses’ hands, when he came down from the mount, that Moses knew not that the skin of his face shone while he talked with him.”

So evidently, some of the glory of the face of God, probably God the Son, because, remember, no one can see God the Father and live. It was a theophany, so far as Moses was concerned. Some of the glory now is reflected on Moses’ face.

“And when Aaron and all the children of Israel saw Moses, behold, the skin of his face shone, and they were afraid to come near him.”

There was something about the glory of God on the face of Moses that caused them to tremble; very much I'm sure, like the feeling of Peter when the Lord Jesus, in the midst of the experience by the side of the sea said, “Peter, launch out a little bit into the lake.” He'd fished all night and caught nothing. He said, “Go on out in the middle of the lake.” Every fisherman knows you don't fish in the middle of the lake in the middle of the day. Fish in the shallows. Furthermore, he wasn't a fisherman. Speaking as a man, he was not a fisherman. He said, “Peter, go on out into the middle of the lake.” You know, some of the liberals said the Lord Jesus looked out and saw a school of fish playing out there, and so he told Peter to get in the boat and go out where the school of fish was playing. Can you imagine Peter? He spent his lifetime making money fishing, that he would overlook a school of fish out there, while a carpenter would see them? Ridiculous. Ridiculous. That's the kind of faith you have to have in order to be a liberal theologian. [Laughter] It's great faith. Great faith.

And at any rate he said, “Launch out.” And he said, “Don't do it the way you've been doing it Peter, put your net down on the other side.” And he enclosed a great multitude of fish, and as he looked around, he realized that the—it wasn't simply Jesus of Nazareth in the boat, it was the Lord God of Israel, and so he cried out, “Depart from me for I'm a sinful man O Lord.”

So in the presence of God, we feel our unworthiness. And as Moses came down with the glory of God upon his face, they were fearful. And so we read in verse 31,

“And Moses called unto them; and Aaron and all the rulers of the congregation returned unto him; and Moses talked with them. And afterward, all the children of Israel came near; and he gave them in commandment all that the Lord had spoken with him in Mount Sinai. And till.” [Now, the Authorized Version says “till,” but that should be “when,” and I'm sure it's corrected in most of

your other versions that you have.] “And when Moses had finished speaking with them, he put a veil on his face. But when Moses went in before the Lord to speak with him, he took the veil off until he came out. And he came out, and spoke unto the children of Israel that which he was commanded. And the children of Israel saw the face of Moses, that the skin of Moses’ face shone; and Moses put the veil upon his face—face again, until he went in to speak with him.”

Now, the Apostle Paul is a great interpreter of the Word of God, and one of the things that the apostle was very careful to see from the study of the Scriptures is, that there are passages all over the Bible that are typical in significance. That is, they’re designed to represent things that are to come. They are historical events, but there is a historicity about the events, and there is also something about these Old Testament events that reflect what is to come in the future. There is a correspondence.

I remember three or four years ago, we were talking about some of the typical things, and I pointed out that a “type” has historicity and correspondence. Now, the reason for this, is that God controls history, and so the Old Testament history is controlled in such a way that it reflects, ultimately, the ministry of the Lord Jesus Christ which he will have. And so the apostle being a believer in the providence of God and God’s divine control of history, knew that the events of history were intended to proclaim truths, and he sees in this instant—instance, something of a typical truth.

Now, we, Sunday morning, were talking about the Lord’s Supper, and I made reference to Paul’s statement in 1 Corinthians 5 where he says, “Christ our Passover was sacrificed for us.” He recognized the Passover as a typical event. It was an historical event, but it also corresponded to the slaying of the Lamb of God who would come, and the lambs of the Old Testament all pointed forward to the Lamb of God.

Now, as Paul reflected upon the incident in which Moses went up into the mountain, spoke with the Lord, received a reflected glory upon his face—which he came out, having it upon his

face—face. He spoke to the children of Israel, and they were fearful, and then he put a veil on his face because, as Paul—as Moses stayed away from the Lord God, evidently, the glory faded. And so he put it on his face, Paul will say, “in order that they might not see the end of that which was being done away with.”

Now, if Moses came out, his face was full of the glory of God, and as they kept looking, that glory began to fade, there might be some reflection on the ministry that Moses had. And so what he did was, he came out from the presence of God, and then as he spoke to the children of Israel, he put a veil on his face. But when he went back into the Lord—for this went on over a period of time while he received all of the Law—while he went into the Lord, he’d take the veil off, so that he was in the presence of the Lord without the veil, but put the veil on afterwards.

Now, you see, Moses was not able to speak with “boldness” about his ministry, because it was not a permanent ministry. It was a ministry that was, even in its expression of the glory fading, told that the significance of the Mosaic Law would one day fade away. That’s what Paul has in mind when he says,

“We use great boldness of speech,” because our ministry is permanent. It doesn’t fade away. “Not as Moses,” verse 13 of 2 Corinthians 3, “who put a veil over his face, that the children of Israel could not steadfastly look to the end of that which is abolished.” [That is, the Old Covenant ministry, or the Law.] “But,” he says, “their minds were blinded. For until this day remaineth the same veil untaken away in the reading of the Old Testament; which veil is done away in Christ.”

Now, Paul goes on to say one of the reason that they—reasons that they have not understand—understood the significance of the New Covenant ministry, as over against the Old Covenant ministry, is that their minds are blinded. Their thoughts, their minds, they are hardened. So that up to this very day, Paul sees in this veil, a picture of the blindness of the nation Israel. So up to this very time, in the reading of the Old Covenant, their minds are blinded.

“Which veil is done away in Christ. But even unto this day, when Moses is read, the veil is upon their heart.”

Now that is, of course, a reference to the fact that, in the synagogues of Paul’s day, the Mosaic Law was read. When they went into the synagogue service, they had certain prayers that they offered. They read also from the Mosaic Law. They read from the prophets. Remember when the Lord Jesus was here, and began his ministry in the synagogue in Nazareth. He stood up to read and sat down to teach. He was reading the portion from the prophets, for he read from Isaiah that day. So in their synagogue service, they read from the Law, they read from the prophets, and Paul says they read, but they don’t understand. The reason, is because they’re still living under the Old Covenant ministry. They’re still living under Mosaic Law. They still are so blind that they think that one receives eternal life by what one does. They are still putting themselves under the Law.

“Even unto this day, when Moses is read, the veil is upon their heart.”

It is a most remarkable thing, of course, that the Jewish nation today, as a nation—not as individuals, for there are many Jewish-believing Christians. But as a nation, they are spiritually dull. It is one of the anomalies of human history. As a people, the Jews are among 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 attainments exceed those of other races. It is likely they’ve distinguished themselves in all of the walks of life. In astronomy, they’ve had Sir William Herschel. In music, Mendelssohn. In philosophy, Maimonides. In state craft, Israeli. In history, Neander—a Christian too. In archaeology, Cyrus Adler. We could mention Nelson Glick today, one of the outstanding modern archaeologists. In jurisprudence, Baron Reddy. We could also add men like Felix Frankfurt—some won’t necessarily like his particular viewpoint, but nevertheless, a man who attained to the top of the field in his profession. In science, Albert Einstein.

When this national brilliance is brought to the Bible, which they have given us, there is a mysterious lack of understanding. The Jewish nation gave us both the Scriptures and the Savior, and yet their mind is dull to the Scriptures, and their head is dead to the Savior. At this very moment, there are celebrations going on in Judaism, but those celebrations are celebrations of a way of salvation by good works. If you have listened to your television or your radio for the past few days, you have seen that repeated.

What are we doing in Rosh Hashanah, and so on? What are we doing at this time? Well, we’re making confession for our sins; sins that we have done against our friends. We’re saying that we’re sorry to them, and we are also making plans to dedicate ourselves to doing good works during the coming year. They are absolutely dull to the teaching of the Scriptures, which they have given to us as the agents of the Holy Spirit. It is a remarkable thing, and it is only explained by the fact that, as a nation, they have rejected the Lord Jesus Christ, and in judgment prophesied in the Old Testament, they’ve been scattered to the four corners of the earth. But they have a future, a glorious future. And down through the years, the remnant has responded, and some of the finest of the Christians have been Jewish Christians, and some of the finest today are Jewish Christians.

I serve on the faculty at Trinity Evangelical Divinity School, and one of the men who’s a colleague of mine in the theology department is the son of my old Hebrew—Hebrew teacher. And he’s a—himself, the son of a Jewish man, and teaches theology at that institution. I just got a call the other day from my son who told me that, from their church in Nashville, two students were going to Trinity Evangelical Divinity School this fall, and for me to be on the lookout for them. “One of them,” Sam said, “was the son of a very prominent businessman in Nashville. And the other,” he said, “is a young Jewish believer in Jesus Christ.” And so I’m looking forward to meeting both of these men.

But in the church of Jesus Christ, there have been believers down through the years; David Baron—well, there are many of them. There’s no use to delay by mentioning their names. But as far as the nation is concerned, blindness in part or hardness of heart has come in part to Israel—not to

everyone—until the full number of the Gentiles come in, and all Israel—Israel as a nation shall be saved, for God has given them inviolable, unconditional promises, and they shall come.

But Paul now, speaks of the blindness that is upon them. “Even unto this day, when Moses is read, the veil is upon their heart.” And how true that is today. If you were to go over to the synagogues around in this community here, when the Scriptures are read, the veil is still upon their heart. They don’t read Isaiah 52 and Isaiah 53, and speak about the glorious substitutionary atonement of the messianic king who is to come. They don’t talk about the servant of the Lord, and how he will shed his blood, that we might be saved. They don’t speak about things like that. They talk about good works and ethics, and they say that we are being very unrealistic when we don’t.

Paul continues,

“Nevertheless, when it shall turn to the Lord.” That is, the heart. “When it shall turn to the Lord, the veil shall be taken away. Now the Lord is that Spirit.” And he means by that, that the Lord Jesus is, in the Spirit of Christ, the one who takes away the veil. “And where the Spirit of the Lord is, there is freedom.”

The freedom of the forgiveness of sins, the freedom to approach God in boldness, and finally in the last verse of the chapter—really, the climactic verse of this chapter, he says, “But we all.” Arthur S. Way, one of the greatest of the classical scholars, calls this part of 2 Corinthians 3, the hymn of the change. “But we all.”

Now, let’s stop for just a moment. “But we all.” What does he mean? Well, he means, first of all, we believers in Christ, composed primarily of Gentiles, but also of the Israel of God. “But “we all” as over against the servile Jews who, in the synagogue, hear the Word and do not understand it.

“But we all,” as over against those who are living under the Old Covenant. “But we all.”

Furthermore, he said, “But we all, with unveiled face.”

Now, what’s in the background of this passage or that passage in Exodus? How many people stood in the presence of God with unveiled face? Only one. Moses. But he says, “But we all,” as over against just Moses, who went in to the presence of the Lord to receive the Law. “But we all, with unveiled face.” The distinctions are gone. They’re no laity today, as over against the clergy, and the clergy are able to go in, but the laity are not. Everybody in the body of Christ is a priest of God. That means that every one of us has the right of access.

Do you use your out—right of access? When was the last time you entered the presence of the Lord and spent a little time with him? “But we all, with unveiled face.” We may pass through the fences. We may pass through all those barriers. We don’t have to stop if we’re a woman, in the court of the women. We don’t have to stop at the court of the Gentiles, if we’re Gentiles. We don’t have to stop in the court of the Jews because we’re not priests. And we don’t have to wait until the first of one day—the Day of Atonement—in order to enter into the holiest of all. We have the privilege—every one of us—at any moment, of entering into the holiest of all. “But we all, with unveiled face.” So we may ascend the mount of vision, and we may, as we converse with the Lord and listen to him, we may enter into an experience of transformation. Just like Moses did, Paul says. Look.

He says, “But we all, with unveiled face beholding as in a glass the glory of the Lord, are changed into the same image from glory to glory.”

By the way, he says “with unveiled face,” he means we don’t have to have a veil on our face. We actually can go in and be right there in the presence of the Lord Jesus Christ. No fear of a fading glory either. But he says, “We are changed.”

Now, some have sought to render this word, transformed in the sense of, changed by reflecting the glory of the Lord. I doubt that, that is the rendering. Moses reflected the glory of God, but we are transformed. The word that is used here, as in a mirror—“beholding as in a glass, the mirror of the Lord, are changed into the same image.” That word is a word that means essentially “to

be transformed.” It’s a word that involves participation in the essence. So, “But we all, with unveiled face beholding as in a mirror the glory of the Lord, are transformed into the same image.” It’s not simply that we reflect glory, which may fade away like Moses. Our glory is not skin-deep brightness like Moses, but we are transformed by participation in the very being of God. I don’t want to be too technical with you, but this word is built on the noun *morphoo*, which means “form.” That was a philosophical term in ancient Greek, but when a person had the form of something, he had the essential attributes of that thing.

So that when we read that Jesus Christ was in the form of God, it means that he possessed the essential attributes of deity. Sometime if you’re interesting—interested, go to the tape ministry and ask for the message on Philippians 2, 5 through 11, and I went into a little bit of detail dealing with this from the standpoint of the meaning of the word. So what it means, is a participation in the *ousea*, in the very being of God. It’s a change in one’s essential being. So that,

“When we behold as in a glass, the glory of the Lord, we are changed in our essential being into the same image from glory to glory, even as by the Spirit of the Lord.”

In other words, we don’t simply, by reading the Scriptures or by beholding as in a glass the glory of the Lord, we don’t imitate the glory of God, but there is a real transformation.

Have you ever read Hawthorne’s story of “The Great Stone Face”? He tells of a lad who lived in a village below a mountain in New Hampshire—I assume he’s talking about Mt. Washington in New Hampshire. And there upon the mountain was that image of the great stone face looking down so solemnly, so seriously upon the people. Perhaps many of you have seen it. And there was a legend that some day, there was coming a man to that village who would be the means of great blessing. And the story gripped a young lad, and he used to slip away. Hour after hour he’d stand looking up at the great stone face, and thinking of the story about the one who was going to come, who would look like this man, and be the means of great blessing. And when the young boy became

a young man, he still did that, and as the young man became a man, he still would go out and look at the great stone face. And when the man became an old man, one day he walked into the village, and somebody looked at him and said, “Look, he’s come, the one who has the great stone face.” He had looked so long at the great stone face, that he looked like the great stone face himself.

When I went through theological seminary, the law—Dr. Lewis Sperry Chafer used to ask us occasionally to sing the song “Take Time to be Holy.” And we would sing it, and then when we’d get to the last stanza, because Dr. Chafer always led the singing in Chapel—“tell it not in Gath, publish it not in Askelon, lest the uncircumcised down at the seminary here,” but we have—we have the pulpit stand, which was given to me by Dr. Lincoln, who taught English Bible down there. When they got a better pulpit in the Chapel, they didn’t need that one, but it’s the old one that Dr. Chafer had. He’d come in with his little music stick, and he’d tap it on the side like this. This is not it. It looks something like this. And he’d tap it on the side, and all the Chapel would come to order, and he’d lead the singing. He was a music major. They sang so well that people would come from all over the community down there to hear the men sing in Chapel. And so a lot of the businessmen, if they were driving near there, five or ten or fifteen minutes to ten, they’d come over at ten o’clock. Chapel used to be at ten in those days, and so they’d come in just to hear the men sing. They sang like a choir, the whole congregation. That’s the way you ought to have choir—that’s the kind of choir you ought to have in a church. I’ve always felt that; never have seen it. When I get to heaven, it’s going to be like that. There are not going to be any choir directors in heaven. We’re all going to sing like a choir, including the choir directors. I’d like to see the day when Believers Chapel sang like a choir without a choir diri—director. I love good singing from the heart. People think I’m against singing. It’s not. I’m just against the professional kind that doesn’t have any reality to it.

Well, at any rate, Dr. Chafer, when he’d get to the last hymn—last verse of the hymn, he would say, “Now, let’s sing it this way. Take time to behold him.” And he’d make the point that, if we’re going to be holy, we’re going to have to spend time beholding him. This was the text that I

associated it with, because Dr. Ironside, in his commentary, associates that text with Dr. Chafer doing that.

You see, if we really spend time in the Scriptures, the Scriptures will be responsible for a transformation of us. That’s what he says. “But we all, with unveiled face beholding as in a mirror.” I won’t go to James 1 to show you that the Word of God is like a mirror. “Beholding as in a mirror, the glory of the Lord, are changed into the same image from glory to glory, even as by the Spirit of the Lord.”

The Bible changes individuals. It is by the Bible that we are sanctified. It is through the fellowship that we have with the Lord Jesus Christ in the Scriptures that we are transformed. This is the promise of the Word of God.

One of the things which modern psychology has definitely demonstrated, is what we call “intergrade.” There’s a marked tendency for mutual assimilation between persons who love each other and are continually in each other’s presence, and other—under each other’s influence. A photographic society in Geneva, many years ago we are told, took photographs of seventy-eight married couples, and of an equal number of brothers and sisters. And they put the pictures together, and they looked at the pictures, and do you know what they discovered? The married people looked more like one another than brothers and sisters. Oh, I can see some looks on the faces of some of the women here. I’m sorry Martha. I’m sorry, but it is a truth of psychology. You see, people who live with one another, love one another, who are with one another constantly, they do tend to be assimilated to one another.

Well, that’s psychology. This is something greater than that. This is the promise of the Word of God; that if we spend time in the Scriptures, they will transform us; transform our very being. And our responsibility—well, it’s very simple. “But we all, with unveiled face beholding.” For those of you who read the Greek New Testament, that’s a present active. That’s our responsibility. “Beholding as in a mirror, the glory of the Lord” as in a glass.

And you know, the one—the—the wonderful thing about this—I wish I had another fifteen or twenty minutes, but I don’t—the wonderful thing about this, is that this transformation, is a transformation that is a permanent thing. No one is ever the same after spending time in the Scriptures.

Do you remember the incident in which Mary and Martha entertained the Lord Jesus Christ? Martha went right into the kitchen, began to prepare some things. Mary sat at his feet and went on hearing his Word. Do you remember Martha came out and complained because Mary was not helping? And the Lord Jesus said, “Martha, Martha, thou art anxious and troubled about many things, but one thing is needful. And Mary hath chosen that good part which shall not be taken away from her.”

For, you see, to send—spend time at the foot of the Lord Jesus in fellowship with him, is an experience that is transforming, and that experience that transforms, is something that is permanent. It flows out of the New Covenant ministry of the Son of God who shed his blood that we might have the remission of sins, that we might be brought into relationship with him. “We are changed into the same image from glory to glory, even as by the Spirit of the Lord.” Now, if you need any incentive to study the Scriptures, it would seem to me, that would be sufficient.

Let me just tell two quick things. H. A. Ironside was one of the great Bible teachers of the last generation. I love to hear him preach. He eventually went blind, and when he was seventy-five or eighty, people read the Bible for him. His wife would stand and read the Bible for him, and then he would preach. But he read the Bible through every year, for many, many years, in addition to the other ordinary reading which he did, because he preached almost every day. But he had a practice of reading the Bible through every year, which he did for I say—I don’t know how many years. Fifty, seventy-five years. As a blind man in New York City, he held up the Bible in the meeting and said, “My only regret is that I’ve not read this book more and other books less.” He was a man who came to the seminary, and pulled down the Jewish Talmud, and over a period of a relatively short time, read through the Talmud. He was that much of a reader.

Fifteen years ago, I was at ‘Founder’s Week Conference’ at Moody Bible Institute, and Wilbur Smith was there, and many of you know of him. He was very well known in evangelical circles. He said that here was a man in Newcastle Presbytery in Maryland, who was a believer. He had his Ph.D. degree from Harvard, in days when that meant something in the field of psychology. He was friendly to Dr. Smith. He had had a church. He was now retired and had had a stroke. He had a small little church, which stayed small. Wilbur Smith visited him when he had his stroke, and he was sitting in his chair before a bookshelf with his scholarly books before him in the bookcase, and the Bible on the table by his side, and he said, “Wilbur, my only wish, is that I’d read those books less, and this book—he put his hand on the Bible—this book more.”

Well, that’s the way I feel too. And I feel that we all would be much, much better off if that were our experience.

May God help us to have fellowship with the Lord with unveiled face beholding as in a glass, the glory of the Lord, knowing that we have the promise that we shall be transformed from glory to glory by the Spirit of the Lord. We close in a word of prayer.

[Prayer] Father, we are grateful to Thee for this wonderful promise contained in the apostle’s words. What greater fellowship could we possibly have than fellowship with our blessed Lord through the Scriptures? O God, give us the desire to do that, and then the will to carry it out.

For Jesus’ sake. Amen.