

2 Corinthians Chapter 3 v 7 - Chapter 4 v 21

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[0 : 00] If you have 2 Corinthians, particularly chapter 4 open, 3 and 4 we were reading from just a few moments ago, that will be helpful to you in a moment or so.

In the Genesis account of creation, we read that on the fourth day God made two great lights, the greater light to govern the day, the lesser light to govern the night.

Now we know what those two lights are, we call them the sun and the moon. And this lesser light, the moon, although it gives off a light, we see that on a clear night, particularly recently where we've had a full moon, even on a full moon on a clear night it only is a reflection of the sun.

It has no light in itself, the moon is but a lump of grey rock, but when the sun shines upon it, it gives a reflection, up to 12% of the sun's brightness.

The Lord Jesus Christ spoke of himself as the light of the world. He is the one true light of the world. And yet, amazingly, he calls his people, he calls us believers, the light of the world as well.

[1 : 27] In Matthew 5, 14, you are the light of the world. But whatever light we give as Christians, it is like the light of the moon.

It's a borrowed light. It's not a natural light that shines out from us because of our charismatic personality or whatever it may be. It's a light that God has, first of all, shone into our hearts.

We read that there in 2 Corinthians and chapter 4. God, who said, light shine out of darkness, has made his light shine in our hearts to give us the light of the knowledge of God's glory displayed in the face of Christ.

Over these past several weeks, as a church here, we've been thinking about this 500th anniversary of the Reformation and thinking of Martin Luther particularly, who the Lord used and raised up, but other Reformers as well throughout Europe during the 16th century.

These men and women rediscovered the gospel of the Lord Jesus Christ. They weren't teaching anything new. They were teaching what the Bible taught, but had been lost and hidden for centuries.

[2 : 39] Sadly, the wonderful good news of God's salvation in Jesus had been concealed by the church of the day, the Catholic church, under its traditions, its rituals, and its false teachings.

But as people learned the truth, as they heard the gospel through return to the Bible, countless thousands, if not tens of thousands, if not hundreds of thousands, throughout Europe were set free to enjoy the goodness and the blessing of God in Christ.

Now, what we've been looking at, particularly over the past weeks, are five simple phrases which sum up the Reformation truths that Luther and the others discovered.

We've seen and looked at four of them. Well, four and a half, really. First of all, we looked at Scripture alone, or sola scriptura. Scripture alone, the Bible, they taught, reveals God's will for humanity concerning life and salvation.

The Bible alone is where we're to turn. Then we looked at faith alone. It's not by anything that we can do, not by our good works, but only as we place our faith on Jesus Christ and what he's done for us, that we can be saved, justified, made right with God.

[3 : 58] And therefore, Christ alone, only through Christ, do we come to know God and experience God's blessings of salvation, not through a priest or through an organization, through a church, a pope, or anything else, Christ alone.

And then, fourthly, grace alone. All we have in Christ is God's free, undeserved gift to sinners, whom he saved, without any contribution or help from ourselves or from anyone else.

And the final phrase we began to look at just a couple of weeks ago was, to God's glory alone, solo dea gloria, to God's glory alone. And each of those first four explanations tell us about how God saved us, the means by which God saved us.

But the fifth of them reveals why God saved us, the purpose, the reason for sending his Son into the world to be our Savior. And we thought, just a couple of weeks, that primarily the reason why God has saved and worked and given grace to us is so that we might see what a glorious God he is.

It reveals his glory, reveals his beauty, reveals his wonder, reveals how marvelous he is. And there's that classic statement of Martin Luther himself, who for years had been a monk and had sought to make himself right with God through all the religion and the rituals, fasting and prayers that he did, but never could until he began to read the Bible.

[5 : 31] And eventually, after he had read the Bible and thought through the Bible, something happened. And he says this, And that's what happens.

When somebody puts their faith and trust in God, something happens. God causes a person, as we read here, to see the light of the gospel that displays the glory of Christ.

For God makes his light shine in our hearts to give us the light of the knowledge of God's glory. But the Reformers did much more than simply rediscover doctrine, if I can put it that way.

If you think the Reformation was all just about rediscovering doctrine in the Bible, then it's more than that. What they found there was life-transforming doctrine.

Life-transforming doctrine. The wonders that came pouring out of the Scriptures changed everything in the lives of those who put their faith in Christ.

[6 : 48] So the Catholic Church believed that God was only glorified in the sacred parts of life, the religious parts of life. Those activities that occur within the church, performed by those who have been set apart, have a vocation to do those things.

It was only there that God was pleased. Only there that God was glorified in the Mass, in the prayers, and so on, in church, we might say. Everything else outside of that was unimportant.

Everything outside of that was mundane, earthly, unspiritual, worthless. So if you wanted to serve God, and to please Him, then you must become a monk, as Luther did.

Or become a nun, or a priest, or something else like that. And even then, it was only when you did those religious things as that monk, when you performed the Mass, or prayed, or chanted, or fasted, or whatever, it was only then that you were doing good works for God that amounted to anything.

When the Reformers discovered and declared to God's glory alone, they were applying it to the whole of the Christian's life. They were recognizing that every moment of the life of a believer is set apart, sanctified for God, belonging to Him, and worthy in His sight.

[8 : 09] God is not glorified only by saving us. That is, His glory can be seen in what He's done, in the wonder of His salvation, but God is glorified in us and through us, to God's glory alone.

That's what Jesus meant, I believe, when He speaks about calling us the light of the world. For He goes on to say, there in that same verse, in Matthew chapter 5, You are the light of the world.

A town built on a hill cannot be hidden. Neither do people light a lamp and put it under a bowl. Instead, they put it on its stand, and it gives light to everyone in the house. This is the verse, 16.

In the same way, let your light shine before others, that they may see your good deeds and glorify your Father in heaven. The Christian's life is something which glorifies God.

The prayer of Paul to the Thessalonian Christians reflects the same. 2 Thessalonians chapter 1, verse 12. He says this, We pray this so that the name of our Lord Jesus may be glorified in you.

[9 : 22] And when he's writing to the Corinthians about their practices and their behavior, he sums up everything in 1 Corinthians 10, 31. So whether you eat or drink or whatever you do, do it all for the glory of God.

Even the unpleasant effects of our Christian witness, when people misunderstand and oppose us, Peter in his second letter, chapter 2, verse 12, says this, God is glorified in the life of every believer as we live out our faith day by day.

Our good deeds are not for our glory, but for his glory. Because whatever we do that is good, we do because of God's enabling and equipping of us to do it.

Here's Ephesians 2, verse 13. It is God who works in you to will and to act in order to fulfill his good purpose. God is at work in us and through us for his glory.

Jesus said the same thing when he assured his disciples in John 15, 5. If you remain in me and I in you, you will bear much fruit.

[10 : 49] Apart from me, you can do nothing. This is to my Father's glory that you bear much fruit, showing yourself to me, my disciples. So what does this mean?

What does it mean for us today? What does it mean for you and me? In what way is God glorified in your life and mine as Christians?

I just want to pick up three things. I just want to pick up three things. Three things that Scripture tells us about how God is glorified in your life and mine.

And this is the privilege of every believer. This is not just for the select few. This is not just for the missionary, the minister, for the children's worker, for somebody else.

This is for every single believer, Jesus said. You are the light of the world. First of all, we glorify God when we live as Christ's people in this world.

[11 : 48] That's what Jesus was saying there in Matthew 5. You are the light of the world. Live that life and let your light shine. Now I'm not talking, and I don't believe Jesus is talking about evangelism or personal witness or preaching or some other proclamation of the gospel.

He's simply talking about living. Think about it. A light shines because it is a light. It doesn't shine to become a light.

It is a light, and it shines. It's just doing what comes naturally to it. So for every Christian, every believer, we are shining lights because we are shining lights.

We are bringing glory to God because we were made to bring glory to God. We don't have to do anything extraordinary or out of the ordinary to do that.

Simply as we live as God's people in this world, following his word, led by his spirit, we glorify him. Here's what Paul writes to the Philippians in chapter 2, verse 14.

[12 : 54] Do everything without grumbling or arguing so that you may become blameless and pure, children of God without fault in a warped and crooked generation where you shine like stars in the sky as you hold firmly to the word of life.

Simply living the Christian life, doing the things that God would have us to do, being the people he wants us to be, reflects his glory to the world around about us.

You see, there is no division between the sacred, that's the religious, and the secular. There's no division between the spiritual and the material, the heavenly and the earthly.

And that was exactly what the Catholic Church taught and believed. But that's what the Reformers discovered. We are not more glorifying God because we are in church this morning than we shall be glorifying God when we're in work tomorrow.

This is not our Christian worship, if I can put it that way. This is not our glorifying God session of the week. Everything, every part, 24-7, 365 days of the year, is for God's glory and honour.

[14 : 11] There are no special times, if I can put it that way, and unspecial times. There is being a Christian or not being a Christian. And being a Christian means that you shine, means that you give glory to God, means that he is glorified for you.

And that reality that the Reformers rediscovered in the Bible changed the whole world and changed the whole view to everything. That's why when we read through the Scriptures, we find again and again teaching about how we're to behave, how we're to live, how we're to glorify God in the workplace, in the family, in the home, in the streets, whatever.

However, how do you view your job? Is your job just a necessity? A necessity to pay the bills?

To keep a roof over your head? To keep food on the table? Is it a grudge and a grind? Is it something that you put up with because, well, I just have to go to work?

Listen how Paul writes to slaves, okay, slaves. You may feel like you're a slave to your boss, but you're not. They were the general workers of the day.

[15 : 27] He says this, Slaves, obey your earthly masters with respect and fear, with sincerity of heart, just as you would obey Christ. Obey them not only to win their favor when their eye is on you, but as slaves of Christ, doing the will of God from your heart.

Serve wholeheartedly as if you were serving the Lord, not people. Do you see how he radically changes the situation? He's a slave in the first century. His job was to clean out the toilets of his Roman master, a most despicable and unpleasant job, and he says you're doing it as unto the Lord.

You're doing it for the glory of Jesus. You're doing it to serve God. So, dear friends, when you go to the office tomorrow morning, or you go to the workshop tomorrow morning, or you go to the factory tomorrow morning, when you go to work, dear friends, do you go with this sense, I am serving the Lord here, right where I am in this workplace?

Now, you may feel that your job is not important. It doesn't matter whether I go to work in the morning apart from the pay the bill, but the reality is this, whether you think your job is important or vital or not, it matters because God has placed you there for his glory.

Whether you're a teacher or a call center worker, whether you're a policeman or a bin man, whether you're a shop assistant or a nurse, wherever God has placed you, you are there so his glory can be seen in and through you.

[16 : 55] And that means the same in the home, in the family. That's why we have teaching about parents and children. This whole change of view about family life, if you're a husband or a father or a grandfather, then be a husband to your wife, and a father or a grandfather to your children for God's glory.

You are there to glorify him in that role. And if you're a wife or a mom or a grandmother, then likewise, whatever your position calls you to do, do it to the glory of God.

What you're doing honors him in the way you do it. It brings him glory. Changes everything. School. It's a place to glorify God.

The supermarket. Likewise, driving your car. And I don't mean just having a fish symbol on the back. That won't bring glory to God if you cut people up and you get road rage.

That's why I don't have one on the back of my car. No, no, no, no. Our leisure time, our TV watching, our online activities, everything is now seen as being in the sphere of glorifying God and honoring him.

[18 : 13] And to God alone be the glory. Is that your view of life? Is that your view of the things that you do?

Is that your prayer? The reasons I chose that little song that we sang there, in my life, Lord, be glorified. That's to be our prayer. In my workplace, Lord, be glorified.

In my home, Lord, be glorified. In my leisure activities, be glorified. And that can be very hard for some of us.

Because in that workplace or in that home or in that situation, we find ourselves struggling. Maybe the only Christian in that family home. Maybe the only Christian in that workplace.

Maybe the Christian in that class at school. And we struggle to be Christ's people there. But everything is affected by this.

[19 : 10] You are there for the glory of God. And God is glorified in you and through you. You matter. You are his glorifying agent.

And then there is, as I said, I've only picked three. But that really covers everything. But I'm going to narrow it down just to one. And then I'm going to bring it to a conclusion with a third.

When we serve as Christ's people in the church. Now, in 1 Peter in chapter 4, we have Paul, sorry, Peter writing these things.

He's talking to Christians, us, of course. He's saying this. Above all, love each other deeply. Because love covers over a multitude of sins. Offer hospitality to one another without grumbling.

Each of you should use whatever gift you have received to serve others as faithful stewards of God's grace in its various forms. If anyone speaks, they should do so as one who speaks the very words of God.

[20 : 12] If anyone serves, they should do so with the strength that God provides. So that in all things, God may be praised through Jesus Christ. To him be the glory and the power forever and ever.

We are brothers and sisters in Christ. We are one with each other. We are parts of the same body. The Reformation and the truths that were discovered in the Bible brought everybody onto the same footing before God.

In the Catholic system, you had the Pope and then you had the bishops and the priests and you had the monks and you had the rest of humanity. These were the important people. These were the people who God favored.

You had the saints, of course, who were the people who did such good things in their lives. They went straight to heaven and didn't have to go through purgatory and all these other things. The Reformation says none of us is better than the other.

Because nothing that we do can earn our forgiveness with God. Nothing that you do can make you right with God. You are right with God because of what Jesus has done on your behalf.

[21 : 17] So you are all on the same setting. You are all righteous. You are all acceptable. You are all holy in his sights. And therefore, when we serve one another, we do not do it because we have to so that it might make us right with God.

We do it because we love one another. It changes the whole view of church. It changes the whole view of everything that we do. We don't earn our forgiveness, but we serve one another because we are part of the same family.

We want to give. We want to serve. We don't serve because we want to be noticed or because we want to be promoted in our view or ideas or because we want to be praised or because we feel we have to do it.

If we don't do it, nobody else will do it. That cannot be a good reason for serving as Christ's people in his church. It must be, above all, love each other deeply.

And all of this flows from the realization that our lives belong to God. See, one of the things that, again, was a problem in the Reformation days was this.

[22 : 34] You had the priests who alone could offer to God, do for God the things that pleased him. In other words, they did the things that you couldn't do as an ordinary Christian.

And particularly, what was a real problem was that when they performed the Mass, what we would call communion, but it was, they were making another sacrifice to God. And as they were sacrificing to God, they were paying off for the sins of the people.

And you didn't have to be there. The priests just had to do the Mass. You just had to say the words. And magically, it was knocking, as it were, sins on the head.

But when we became Christians, and what the Reformation discovered is this, we are all priests. We are a royal priesthood. We all have, not only relationship with God, but we all bring sacrifice to him.

Not the Mass, not sacrifices for our sins, because they've been paid for at the cross. But we give ourselves freely and willingly to God. Romans chapter 12.

[23 : 42] Paul writes this, verse 1, excuse me. Therefore I urge you, brothers and sisters, in view of God's mercy, because of what he's done for us, to offer your bodies as a living sacrifice, holy and pleasing to God.

This is your true and proper worship. So your life and mine belongs to God, because he's bought it and purchased us, and we're to give our lives freely and gladly to him, to glorify him, to serve him.

Just a hundred and so years after the Reformation began, a group of godly Christian men met together in Westminster to put together what's become the Westminster Confession.

And part of that came questions and answers. The catechism, the teaching. The very first of those questions is this, what is the chief end of man?

In other words, what is the purpose for our lives? The chief end of man, the purpose for our lives is to glorify God and enjoy him forever. That's it. God saved you that you might enjoy him and enjoy living for him and enjoy serving him and enjoy glorifying him.

[25 : 00] In fact, as John Piper puts it, really we glorify God when we do enjoy him. When we make him the very center and the light of our lives. And unless he is the center of your life, then you have no joy.

If Christ is not the one who is number one, the one who you find all the source of your delight in, the one who you love, then everything else is just nah.

Is Christ really the number one? Is Christ the center of your heart? Is Christ the one who when you wake in the morning say, Lord, today be glorified in my life. Today, Lord, I want to again renew that sacrifice and say, Lord, take my life, my body, all that I am for you.

Serving Christ's people in the church, we're to do it. Yes, because we love one another, not because we have to, not because we earn brownie points with God or with one another, but because we are brothers and sisters.

One last final thing, and this is to me probably the most astonishing, we glorify God when as Christ's people we shall be in the next world.

[26 : 14] Go back to 2 Corinthians in chapter 4 where we were before, and particularly verse 17, Paul's been talking about the struggles of life, the difficulties of life, the pain of life, and the realities of feeling, as it were, he says, we carry around in verse 10 the body of the death of Jesus.

It's not easy being a Christian. Don't think that what I'm saying is that, you know, we just go around with a happy smile on our face and that's how we glorify God. No, we go through the struggles. But verse 17, he says, for our light and momentary troubles are achieving for us, what, an eternal glory that far outweighs them all.

In this life, an amazing thing is happening. You and I as Christians are being transformed little by little. We are being glorified glorified little by little as we gaze upon, as we look into, and as we delight in the Lord Jesus.

We have that there in chapter 3, verse 18. We all, with unveiled faces, contemplate. Now, a footnote is got to reflect, but most commentators now, most translators now recognize that actually it's as we gaze upon, as we look upon the Lord Jesus, the Lord's glory, are being transformed into his image from ever-increasing glory.

There's change that's taking place. There's a metamorphosis that's happening in your life and mine. The more we go on with Christ, there's to be more, as it were, peeling away of the outside, and the more of the revealing of the inside, more of Christ, more of his loveliness, more of his beauty being seen in us.

[27 : 49] As we spend time with Jesus, more of him rubs off on us. But, a time is coming when we shall share in God's glory and be glorified as he is glorious.

That's an incredible thing. We shall be glorified as he is glorious. That's why he speaks about that eternal glory. In 1 Corinthians, sorry, in Romans and chapter 8, as well, Paul speaks about this incredible event that the whole world is looking forward to.

All of creation, he says, waits in eager expectation for the children of God to be revealed, to be unmasked, to be unveiled, as it were. For he goes on to say, the creation itself, then, will be liberated from its bondage to decay and brought into the freedom and the glory of the children of God.

When Christ comes again, there is going to be an amazing, as it were, opening of the cocoon of us, and we shall receive resurrection bodies like his body, glorious bodies, free from all sin and its ugliness.

We shall be like Jesus, glorious sons of God. John the Apostle writes about this wonderful hope that we have in John 3.

[29 : 09] And he says this, Dear friends, now we are children of God, but what we will be has not yet been made known, not yet revealed, but we know that when Christ appears, we shall be like him.

You may think of yourself as dull. Other people may think of you as dull. There's coming a day when the glory of God that is his will be upon you.

You will be glorious throughout eternity. Not that we become God, of course not, but everything that belongs to God, the characteristics of his beauty and his glory shall be ours.

And we shall be glorious for his glory and for our joy throughout eternity. To God be the glory great things he has done.

To God be the glory great things he is doing in, through, and for you. but all the more glorious is the glory yet to come.

[30 : 22] May the God who gives perseverance and encouragement give you the same attitude of mind toward each other that Christ Jesus had so that with one mind and one voice you may glorify the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ.

Amen.