

2 Corinthians Chapter 3 v 7 - Chapter 4 v 21

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[0 : 0 0] Good morning. Very warm welcome to all of you, but particularly it's good to welcome folk from Emanuel Church in Leeds. They're all the good-looking ones, the young people there. You've had a weekend, Robinhood's Bay, is that right? And you had a good time?

Encouraged. Excellent. Well, it's lovely to have you with us. It's a real joy to share fellowship with you, and we trust that together we might know the Lord's presence and blessing and help several other folk away, and some are unwell, and we're remembering them in prayer a bit later too. The verse that we're thinking about as we come to worship is Romans 11, verse 36, and here Paul writes, for from him, that's God, and through him and for him are all things. To him be the glory forever and ever. Amen. Everything that we have and everything that we are comes from God. Life itself, strength, health, particularly, of course, our salvation and the forgiveness that we have in the Lord Jesus. And therefore, our response to him is only right that we give him the glory, give him the praise, give him the honour that he deserves for all his good gifts. And our first hymn is a hymn, verse number 43 in our books, oh, how the grace of God amazes me. And we should always be stunned, always in awe of what God has done for us by his grace in saving us. Let's stand and sing 43.

Let's continue in that theme of thanksgiving and rejoicing as we come to prayer. Let us pray together.

Father in heaven, oh Lord our God, mighty and glorious, wonderful and faithful and true, we come to you this morning with our hearts ringing as we've sung of the wonders of all that you've done for us. As we realise again and think again and consider again what a marvellous gift of grace you have given to us. That we should be called children of God. That we, oh Lord, who are by nature sinful. That we, oh Lord, by practice have sinned against you and broken your commandments. Lord, in thought and word and deed. That, Lord, we who've lived many years of our lives in rebellion against you. Lord, that you should call us your children. That you should turn us around. That you should bring us to yourself. That you should set us free from the captivity and the chains of sin. That you should make us to be, oh Lord, those who are born again of your Holy Spirit. Renewed, transformed, changed.

Oh Lord, we thank you that you did this for us. And as we thought at the very beginning, it was all of you. For from you and through you and for you are all things. Lord, there is nothing that we could contribute or give. Nothing that we could bring. All we could bring was our sin. All we could bring was our shame and our dirt. But Lord, you cleansed us and washed us. You made us new people and you made us to be your people. Oh Lord, we thank you that we were lost and you found us. We were blind and you gave us sight. We were dead and you raised us to life. We were hell bound. And now, oh Lord, we are heaven journeying, voyaging on our way to that place, oh Lord, prepared for us by Jesus. Thank you that this life in which we live is not pointless or mediocre. That we're not simply watching the clock and counting the days. We're not simply accumulating money or getting through life. But Lord, we are heading in this wonderful and glorious adventure of the Christian life. Heading to that celestial city, that place, oh Lord, where we shall see you as you truly are, where we shall enjoy you for all eternity.

[4 : 12] But we thank you, oh Lord, that we don't have to wait till then to enjoy you. We thank you that we don't have to wait until heaven to enjoy the blessings and the good gifts that Jesus has won for us at the cross and by his resurrection. We thank you that even today we can know that foretaste of heaven. We can know that wonderful experience of the very nearness and presence of God with us by your Holy Spirit.

And that's why we're here, Lord. We're here on this Sunday morning because we want to meet with you. We want to hear your voice. We want, oh Lord, to know you dealing with us. Yes, changing us, transforming us. We want, oh Lord, to bring you our praise, our thanksgiving. We want to truly engage with you and for you to engage with us. And so we pray, prepare our hearts, prepare our minds. Perhaps there's lots of things that have happened in the past days that still are filling our minds. Anxiety or fear, concern for tomorrow or the week ahead. Lord, we pray that all these things may be pushed out the way so that as clouds are parted for the sun, that we may see something of the glory and the brilliance of our God. And that, Lord, we may love you and delight in your love the more. So, Lord, be with us now, not just in this time, but through this day. And, oh Lord, we ask these things as we bring our praise in Jesus' name. Amen.

Amen. We're going to turn together now in God's Word and read from 2 Corinthians and chapter 3.

And quite a long reading from verse 7 of chapter 3 all the way through chapter 4. And hopefully you all understand why it's so long because the theme continues throughout. So, 2 Corinthians chapter 3, that's page 1160. Page 1160, if you've got one of the Red Church Bibles, a reading from verse 7. The NIV has got a subtitle, as it were, The Greater Glory of the New Covenant.

And Paul has been teaching and speaking about, comparing in that sense, the old covenant, which was given the law at Sinai with Moses, and the new covenant which Christ has brought in.

[6 : 40] And he picks up on one event whereby Moses has spent time with God, and he spent time with God so much so that he'd become glowing, as it were, and he'd have to wear a veil over his face. If you don't remember that story, then that's just to give you a background. So, verse 7. Now, if the ministry that brought death, which was engraved in letters on stone, came with glory so that the Israelites could not look steadily at the face of Moses because of its glory, transitory though it was, will not the ministry of the Spirit be even more glorious? If the ministry that brought condemnation was glorious, how much more glorious is the ministry that brings righteousness? For what was glorious has no glory now in comparison with the surpassing glory. And if what was transitory came with glory, how much greater is the glory of that which lasts? Therefore, since we have such a hope, we are very bold. We are not like Moses who would put a veil over his face to prevent the Israelites from seeing the end of what was passing away, but their minds were made dull. For to this day, the same veil remains when the old covenant is read. It has not been removed, because only in Christ is it taken away. Even to this day, when Moses is read, a veil covers their hearts. But when anyone, sorry, whenever anyone turns to the Lord, the veil is taken away. Now the Lord is the Spirit, and where the Spirit of the Lord is, there is freedom. And we all, who with unveiled faces contemplate the Lord's glory, are being transformed into His image with ever-increasing glory which comes from the Lord, who is the Spirit. Therefore, since we, through God's mercy, have this ministry, we do not lose heart. Rather, we have renounced secret and shameful ways. We do not use deception, nor do we distort the Word of God. On the contrary, by setting forth the truth plainly, we commend ourselves to everyone's conscience in the sight of God. And even if our gospel is veiled, it is veiled to those who are perishing. The God of this age has blinded the minds of unbelievers, so that they cannot see the light of the gospel that displays the glory of Christ, who is the image of God. For what we preach is not ourselves, but Jesus Christ as Lord, and ourselves as your servants for Jesus' sake. For God, who said, let light shine out of darkness, 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. But we have this treasure in jars of clay to show that this all-surpassing power is from God and not from us.

We are hard-pressed on every side, but not crushed, perplexed, but not in despair, persecuted, but not abandoned, struck down, but not destroyed. We always carry around in our body the death of Jesus, so that the life of Jesus may also be revealed in our body. For we who are alive are always being given over to death for Jesus' sake, so that His life may also be revealed in our mortal body.

So then, death is at work in us, but life is at work in you. It is written, I believed, therefore I have spoken. Since we have that same spirit of faith, we also believe and therefore speak, because we know that the one who raised the Lord Jesus from the dead will also raise us with Jesus and present us with you to Himself. All this is for your benefit, so that the grace that is reaching more and more people may cause thanksgiving to overflow to the glory of God. Therefore, we do not lose heart, though outwardly we are wasting away, yet inwardly we are being renewed day by day. For our light and momentary troubles are achieving for us an eternal glory that far outweighs them all. So we fix our eyes, not on what is seen, but on what is unseen, since what is seen is temporary, but what is unseen is eternal.

If the young people and children would like to go to their activities now, please. Oh Lord of their minds sustaining, hear us as we sing.

Yours the glory at the crown, the wide re-enough, eternal reign.

[11 : 43] Salvation, servant, sworn, ill-treated, with him crucified.

Death is through the cross, defeated, sin was justified. Yours the glory at the crown, the high re-enough, eternal reign.

Christ, we need him, forever, high in heaven above.

Sin and death and hell shall never sigh, the winds of love. Yours the glory at the crown, the high re-enough, eternal reign.

O our hearts and voices raising, through the ages long.

[13 : 08] Jesus, we upon you gazing, this shall be your song. Yost the glory at the crown, the high
re-enough, eternal reign.