

The Glorious Gospel

Week 29: July 16-22 – 2 Corinthians 3-9

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Helpful Resources

Map of Paul's Missionary Journeys

Making Sense of It All

- The Big Picture

A big part of Paul's second letter to the Corinthians was spent defending his ministry and message against the false apostles and teachers. Repeatedly, he contrasted their destructive and despairing false doctrines with the glorious truths of the gospel. The word *glory* is derived from the Latin word *gloria*, which means brightness, splendor, or magnificence. Glory can also mean honor or praise.

Throughout *2 Corinthians*, Paul separated the glory of the gospel of Christ from the inglorious message of the world. Even Judaizers (Jews), who promoted the old covenant, were peddling darkness, especially compared to the bright and splendid revelations of the good news of salvation in Jesus. In this review, we will reconsider the good and gracious difference that the glorious gospel makes in the lives of God's people.

- Glory vs. Gloom

What the world has to offer pales in the light of the glorious gospel of Christ.

1. **Always Adequate** (2 Cor. 3:4, 5): On our own, we are inadequate to save ourselves or earn salvation by following laws (works). As followers of Christ, we can have confidence to stand before God. Our adequacy comes from what He's done for us.
2. **Spirit of Life** (2 Cor. 3:6): The letter of the Law (of Moses) could not and did not save anyone. Rather it exposed sin and condemned people to judgment and death. But the gospel of Christ frees us from the Law and gives us life everlasting.
3. **Unveiled Hope and Confidence** (2 Cor. 3:7-18): Since the Old Covenant could not and did not save anyone, we could not place our hope or confidence in it. Moses, for example, covered his face because its glory was "fading away." To this day, the Jews have no confidence before God because of the Law (v.15). But "when someone turns to the Lord, the veil is lifted. Where the Spirit of the Lord is, there is liberty" (v.16, 17).
4. **Lights in Lumps of Clay** (2 Cor. 4:6-5:8): Paul described our bodies as "earthen vessels," temporary, fragile, weak lumps of clay that will not last long. However, we carry in us the wonderful treasure of the gospel so that others might see the light in us. One day, "our earthly tent will be replaced with a heavenly house, not made with hands."
5. **Eternal Weight of Glory** (2 Cor. 4:17, 18): Though we will experience problems and persecution on earth, our "momentary, light affliction is producing an eternal weight of glory far beyond all comparison..." The life we'll have in heaven will far outweigh any suffering we experience on earth.

6. **New Creatures** (2 Cor. 5:9-17, 21): Because of the gospel of Christ, our old sinful self is replaced with a new person, pure, forgiven, reconciled to God, and pleasing to Him. What we once were, we are no longer. "Behold, new things have come."
 7. **Royal Ambassadors** (2 Cor. 5:17-20): Because of the gospel, Christ has redeemed us, restored us, and reconciled us to God. We now have a new mission and purpose in life — to represent Him to others, as envoys and messengers who help reconcile others to God. Rather than offering what the world offers (gloom and doom), we share the gift of eternal life and hope.
 8. **Unyoked** (2 Cor. 6:14-7:1): Because the gospel is so much different than what the world has to offer, the two are incompatible, clean versus unclean, going in opposite directions. Therefore, the glorious gospel should not be bound together or associate with the world, except to be an example, a light in a dark world, to point others to the Savior.
 9. **Godly Sorrow** (7:9-12): The gospel leads us to conviction, to repentance or change. Whereas worldly sorrow (guilt) leads to condemnation, resentment, and depression. Godly sorrow leads to salvation, while worldly sorrow leads to death.
 10. **Money and Ministry** (8:1-9:15): As the gospel has freed us from temptation and sin, it has also freed us from greed. We recognize what the Lord has freely given us, so we now desire to give freely to others, especially to those "of the household of God."
- The Great Exchange

Paul captured the glorious gospel in one sentence, when he wrote, "He made Him who knew no sin to be sin on our behalf, so that we might become the righteousness of God in Him" (2 Cor. 5:21). Our holy God and Father sent His sinless Son to take our sin upon Himself. He exchanged His holiness (the righteousness of God) for our sinfulness and gave Himself as a sacrifice for us on the cross.

God imputed our sin to Christ, and He imputed the righteousness of Christ to us. To impute means to charge to the account of or to attribute or ascribe. In other words, God exchanged our sinfulness with Jesus' righteousness. Now, in Him, we are new creatures. Our old selves are gone. We are sinless in the Father's eyes because of Christ and the great exchange.

The Bottom Line

The message of the glorious gospel stands apart from the dark and hopeless message of the world.

Questions to Consider

1. Do you ever feel inadequate? How does the gospel make up for what you lack?
2. "When someone turns to Christ, the veil is lifted, and where the Spirit of the Lord, there is liberty" (2 Cor. 3:16, 17). How have you witnessed or experienced "the lifting veil" and "spirit of liberty" in your life?
3. We are earthen vessels that carry a great treasure. How has this truth impacted your life?
4. Compare your new life in Christ with your old life before Christ. What is different?
5. As an Ambassador for Christ, what are some characteristics we should exhibit?
6. In what ways have you been unwisely yoked to the world? What were the consequences?
7. How has salvation changed your view and use of money?
8. What is your favorite aspect of the glorious gospel? Explain why.