

There was no question about it. Just one look at his face, and it was obvious. Moses had been in God’s presence. He actually stood before the Almighty God and Creator of the universe, a messenger between him and his people. How could anyone stand in the presence of God and not melt or disintegrate instantly (think of *Raiders of the Lost Ark*)? You can’t say the tiny piece of cloth that covered Moses’ face actually shielded him from God’s holiness and glory. Only by the grace of God could a lowly sinner stand in his presence.

Fifteen hundred years later Peter, James and John went along with Jesus, because he needed time to pray. He had been talking as though someone were going to try to kill him, and it’s always good to know that fishermen have got your back, even sleep-deprived fishermen who seemed to have a habit of nodding off. While Jesus prayed, they must have nodded off, because their next thing they noticed was that Jesus’ face and his clothing were shining like the sun! Bright, brilliant, and blinding light! And to see Moses and Elijah talking with him – it was like a dream. Cue the cloud cover and the voice from heaven telling them to listen to Jesus. This might seem to state the obvious, but they were afraid.

In both of these instances the Scripture gives examples of God revealing a glimpse of his glory to human beings. We see the natural human reaction of shock and terror, and we begin to picture what it would be like to be in the presence of holiness and power that could only be God himself. That the Lord God Almighty would come into our world as a human being so that he could live and die for us – it would go beyond our understanding and imagination, if God had not given you faith to believe. You aren’t terrified or confused. You know his boundless love goes deeper and higher and wider than any love you’ve ever seen or felt. It’s a love that runs to you and embraces you, promising to never let you go. And you live with that love every day.

The Apostle Paul had a deep appreciation for that fact. If you remember his former way of life as a Pharisee and expert in the Jewish law, that was his whole life. They held so tightly to the Law of Moses and the various legal traditions, because for them that was the only way they could ever become acceptable enough to stand before a holy God. That was never the purpose of the Law of Moses, to earn God’s love and favor. It was always meant to point people to the reality of their own failures and shortcomings, so they would look to God’s gracious promises of the Christ who would save them from their sins. By God’s grace alone, Paul came to know and believe in the message and the ministry of the gospel. And that’s the real glory.

The glory of the law is fading. It can point you to your sins, and it can even show you what to do AFTER you get past your sins, but the law cannot take you past them. Paul explained, **“¹³We are not like Moses, who would put a veil over his face to keep the Israelites from gazing at it while the radiance was fading away. ¹⁴But 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. ¹⁵Even to this day when Moses is read, a veil covers their hearts.”** By God’s grace and through faith in Christ, the veil has been taken away. God has given you his everlasting love through the gospel, and it is glorious.

And it becomes more and more glorious like the Savior who loves us. Paul said it this way: **“¹⁸And we, who with unveiled faces all reflect the Lord’s glory, are being transformed into his likeness with ever-increasing glory, which comes from the Lord, who is the Spirit.”** We are being transformed into Jesus’ likeness, making our hearts and lives to look more like our Savior’s. And we’ll continue to grow in faith. And the more we grow in faith, the brighter and clearer it will shine in our living.

But there are those times when I’m thankful that not everyone can see how “glorious” my life is at home. I don’t mean to criticize the blessings of my family or my home. I’m saying that in the more private times of my life, where very few of you can see me, my words and actions wouldn’t exactly spell ‘glorious.’ And maybe you’re your own worst critic, too, but let’s be honest here. One of the blessings of family is the fact that you know each other so well, and yet you still accept and love each other. There’s that unspoken code of conduct that much of what happens at home stays at home, right? (Unless you have a three-year-old.) Some things are best kept between you and me and the kitchen table. Because if anyone else saw what you were like at home, they just wouldn’t understand.

Or maybe at the workplace it's hard to see how glorious the Christian life can be. Extended lunch breaks, "water-cooler" conversations that suddenly end when certain people come by for a drink, or justifying your half-hearted effort because the pay just isn't as good as you deserve. But who doesn't struggle with these things? Is work supposed to be glorious?

Or when you consider personal conversations you've had with others telling "stories" about someone else (gossip), have you always stopped them or tried help them change their heart? Did you just laugh it off and try to change the subject, like it didn't matter? Sometimes in those private conversations, we have the most powerful opportunities to show ourselves and others how glorious it is to live for Jesus and follow him, to reflect his love. But we let those moments slip by, and we realize how weak and not-so-glorious our lives must seem.

It's really quite depressing. We wonder why our lives seem so inconsistent and weak. We try to live to be more like Jesus, to think of others instead of ourselves, to have hearts and minds free of impure thoughts and desires. We've been given the greatest gift of faith in Christ. The veil of fading power and glory of the law has been replaced with the never-ending source of strength and glory – the gospel. But we still struggle. We don't live up to God's expectations. And we don't live up to our own expectations, either. Do we need to do something differently? Could there be another strategy or something more meaningful and relevant to help me live the glorious life that God wants me to live?

You're right. My life and your life don't look so glorious all the time. Not only do we struggle with the difficulties and challenges all around us, but the struggle comes from within. And we aren't able to do the good that we want to do all the time. The reality of our failures stares us right in the face, and we see how often we do the evil that we said we wouldn't do again. The guilt and shame can be so overwhelming, and I don't know if you feel the same way about yourself, but I disgust myself. As much as I get to study and learn from God's word, I figured I'd be a whole lot further along than I am now.

Paul does say that "¹⁶...**the veil is taken away,**" and that, "¹⁷... **where the Spirit of the Lord is, there is freedom.**" But how free do you feel when you seem to be stuck in the pattern of falling into temptation again and again? Are you sure that the gospel is the key to freedom and glory. Or do you wonder if maybe there's another way to bring more immediate and visible results – the kind of living that shows others what it really looks like to have God's forgiveness and salvation?

The truth is, the law can bring about more immediate results. It can show you what God expects of you and ways to show others what a Christian is supposed to look like. And sometimes it can seem to do that more effectively and powerfully than the gospel does. But that's because the law motivates by fear and guilt, which are powerful factors. The law can push and shove you to live and look like a believer. But in the long-run, it can leave people with a dim and despairing view of themselves. The truth is, we will fail to keep the law, and we will earn the consequences of God's holy wrath and punishment. The law becomes a veil that prevents us and keeps us from the glory God intends for us.

"¹⁴...**only in Christ is [the veil] taken away.**" Only Jesus gives us the confidence that makes us free to approach our holy God and to experience the beauty and strength of his undeserved love. That God himself would come to us, to take on the weakness and frailty of our human flesh; to live under the same consequences and curse of the law that he, the Lord God Almighty, had established. And through faith we see our Lord becoming like us. It may only be quick glimpses of his glory, but it's there alright. He knew that the suffering and hell he would go under and go through for us would be indescribably horrific and terrifying, and yet he grasped for the cross like a prize. With every fiber of his being, both God and man, he loved you that much, that not even death or hell would stop him from making sure you could be with him forever some day. The empty tomb gives us every reason to believe that "**we will live, even though one day we may die.**" That is the truth of God's love for you, and it is a glory that will never perish, spoil or fade.

How Can We Reflect Jesus' Glory Even More? Paul himself struggled with that one his whole life. But in the midst of persecution and those working to destroy his reputation, that his life wasn't worthy of being called a true apostle of Jesus, he knew that it wasn't about him. It was always about the gospel. And because of that everlasting love of God, we don't lose heart, either. Your life is your ministry, and the power for your ministry is God's love. The veil of the law has been removed, and God has established the true glory and freedom that the gospel brings. Cling to his promises of forgiveness, and his Spirit will equip you to reflect the glory that is yours now, and that one day will be fully revealed in your eternal home. Amen.