

# Am I Living Life Wearing Blindfolds?

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[ 0 : 00 ]     Father, we all are very good at seeing the blindfolds that other people wear, and we are blindfolded to the blindfolds that we wear and that we clutch to our eyes.

Father, we ask that your Holy Spirit would do a gentle but wonderful and deep work in our lives today as we read your word. We ask, Father, that you do not help us to see the blindfolds that others wear, but that you help us to see the blindfolds that we keep putting on or that we hold on.

We ask, Father, that you would do this work, that we would see our blindfolds. Father, all this we ask in the name of Jesus, your Son and our Savior. Amen. Please be seated.

Just recently in the same week, I had two remarkable conversations in different coffee shops. I won't keep advertising the coffee shops that they both were. Those of you who are regulars know what they probably were.

The first one happened just a few weeks ago. I was talking to a young man, and the conversation, I've had lots of conversations with him, and the conversation took a very sudden and surprising turn.

[ 1 : 14 ]     He said to me, George, you know, I've been puzzled about this. I have been raised by very, very secular parents who wanted nothing to do with religion or spirituality.

As I was growing up as a child and as a teenager and as a young adult when I still lived in my house, my parents once never took me to a church or a mosque or a synagogue or a temple.

Never once. I've had a completely and utterly secular education where I wasn't taught anything about God at school, but I was taught ethics. Yet as far back as I can remember, I have prayed.

And I pray virtually every day right now. And I don't really understand why. Isn't that a remarkable conversation? I mean, just brothers and sisters, those of you who are here are Christians, one of the great mistakes that we make when we talk to our non-Christian friends is to presume that they never pray.

In fact, it might very well be that one of the things that will shock us is that many Christians live prayerless lives. And we might discover, if we actually had an honest conversation, that our non-Christian friends pray more than we do.

[ 2 : 28 ]     And so, the text that we're going to look at in a moment actually talks a little bit about how I tried to answer the question. It's a very important text, actually, to help us to understand this phenomenon as to why it would be that somebody in a completely secular environment in a very, very secular culture would pray every day and have a basic belief that there must be a God that does exist.

This particular person also actually lives without hope, which is a very, very interesting mixture of things. Shortly after this conversation, in the same week, I had a conversation with a young woman that went in a very different way.

Those of you who've taken the bulletins, every week in the bulletin I have a blog. It's in the bulletin and then it's online on Monday. And the opening quote, I mean, it might look a bit shocking.

I realize I should have put a question mark after it afterwards. But this is pretty almost exactly word for word an assertion that came to me in a different conversation later in the week with a different person.

And she said this repeatedly. And this is what she said to me. Christianity believes it is exceptional. But every religion believes it is exceptional. There have been at least 10,000 religions and 100,000 gods.

[ 3 : 45 ] There were religions that existed before Christianity that do not exist today. In 4,000 years' time, Christianity will not exist. And there will be other religions. These are just facts that you have to accept.

And you can look at the blog. The scripture text touches on this as well, by the way, just slightly. You can look at the blog yourself later on at your leisure where if my sermon gets very boring, you can look at it yourself and see how I sort of responded to that.

But two very, very different conversations. The second one would be a person who clearly identifies themselves as an atheist. The first one is, I don't know how he would identify himself.

The scripture text addresses both of these issues, but the first one in particular. So it would be a great help to me if you open your Bibles and turn to the text that Anya read just a few moments ago, 2 Corinthians 3, verse 7.

2 Corinthians 3, verse 7. And actually, I'm just going to read the very last sentence of verse 6 because it's sort of, it's part of the argument.

[ 4 : 53 ] Actually, one of the things, another bit of a time out here. For those of you who call this your church home, one of the things you can, I really, really, really, really, desperately need your prayers every week.

One of the hard parts about trying to preach through 2 Corinthians, the first seven chapters, is it's a very, very subtle but sustained argument where things keep looping back.

And it's hard to know. A lot of what it's talked about here is talked about in chapter 4 and 5 and 6. It's just really hard to somehow figure out how to preach it. I really, really value your prayers that as I'm listening to the Bible, I know how to sort of bring you into the argument without having to listen to all of the seven chapters.

So please pray for me. Anyway, if we just, we're going to look at, so remember, so this young man, and why is it that I've prayed, and I still pray, I've prayed today, and I never had any religious background or upbringing.

So we'll begin at just the last sentence of verse 6. For the letter kills, but the Spirit gives life. And then it goes on. Now if the ministry of death, carved in letters on stone, came with such glory that the Israelites could not gaze at Moses' face because of its glory, which was being brought to an end.

[ 6 : 11 ] Will not the ministry of the Spirit have even more glory? For if there was glory in the ministry of condemnation, the ministry of righteousness must far exceed it in glory.

Indeed, in this case, what once had glory has come to have no glory at all because of the glory that surpasses it. For if what was being brought to an end came with glory, much more will what is permanent have glory.

It's a big chunk of scripture. It's, you know, said 7 to 11, so that's five verses. But here's the big idea with this text. It's Paul using a different set of images to try to communicate a very fundamental Christian truth.

It's in virtually all of his letters. It's what Jesus was trying to communicate. It's a constant New Testament lesson. It's a lesson that goes right back to what we call the Old Testament and our Jewish friends call the Tanakh.

And it's this. And I'm sorry I don't have this point up on a slide, but this is it. If all I have are rules and rituals to follow, I will die a failure.

[ 7 : 21 ] If all I have are rules and rituals to follow, I will die a failure. If all I have are rules and rituals to follow, I will die a failure.

One of the points I was going to try to make, and you can see it in my blog, to the woman who said that there's 10,000 religions, 100,000 gods, is I tried to communicate that it might be that they're not all the same.

And I would suggest that there are several very, very distinctive things about the Christian way and about what Jesus taught. That in a sense, if there are 10,000, I don't know if there have been 10,000, but 9,999 share one common feature.

And that common feature is that whether it's come from a seer, from a prophetic vision, whether they believe it's come directly from the mind or mouth of God or word of God, they all teach that there's rules and rituals to follow.

And if you're successful at following the rules and the rituals, you will be accepted by God. Now, granted, the 9,999, they all disagree on lots of things.

[ 8 : 36 ] You know, the rules and the rituals that you have to follow if you follow Muhammad are going to be very different than the rules and the rituals you have to follow if you're listening to Buddha or to Krishna.

And the consequence for failing to follow the rules and the rituals are going to be very different if you're following Muhammad than if you're following Buddha or Krishna. With Buddha and Krishna, you get another kick at the can, so to speak.

You come back and you keep doing it. But it's all a very, very common teaching that there are rules, there are rituals. Some of it might involve going to a temple in Paul's time in Corinth.

You know, the men would have said, so long, dear, I'm going to the temple to worship and it would have meant that they were going to have sex with a temple prostitute. You know, now it might be yoga. In other places, it might be killing an animal or a sacrifice.

It might be learning how to say a certain type of prayer or following a practice. But it's a very, very common thing I would suggest for all 9,999 religions and spiritualities and systems of thought that there are rules and there are rituals.

[ 9 : 41 ] You follow them and God accepts you. And the message of Jesus and the New Testament message is the message of Jesus is that no human being will ever follow the rules and the rituals sufficiently.

And if your hope is following the rules and the rituals, you will die. In fact, if you go back and you read Romans, the book of Romans, and just, most scholars think that the letter that Paul wrote after this was the book of Romans.

And if you go back and you read chapter 2 of Romans, one of the things that Paul does in an argument is to say in a sense that God is completely and utterly fair. Even if you don't believe or know in his rules and rituals that he's revealed in the Tanakh, if you make your own, just pick your own rules and rituals.

You can pick whatever rules or rituals you want and then just measure your life by your own rules or rituals. You won't even keep them. Very, very common thing in movies. You know, I have these rules and I'm going to break them or they break them and things happen.

And so, what Paul is saying here in verses 7 to 11 is that if all I have are rules and rituals to follow, I will die a failure. In this particular context, he's saying, he's referring to a story that goes in Exodus chapter 32, 33, and 34.

[ 10 : 59 ] where God appears to Moses. Moses goes up in a mountain. God appears to Moses. Of course, Moses can't see him directly, but Moses is in God's presence and God himself writes on tablets of stone what we now know of as the Ten Commandments, the Ten Instructions, the Ten Words that are to be the basis about how you live.

And when Moses comes down from the mountain, because he's been in the presence of God, his face is bright, like the brightest spotlight, and the people of Israel can't bear to look at it, so they, his face, so he puts a cover on it so it doesn't frighten them.

And that's the background. But if you understand that it's, that if you follow, if you believe that following rules and rituals will make you right with God, if that's what your religion is, you should know that you will die of failure.

If you keep that perspective, listen again to verses 7, verses 7 to 11. Now if the ministry of death carved in letters on stone, see that's what it is.

They're words carved in letters of stone, but it ends up just bringing you death because you can't keep them. I can't keep them. I'm not just saying you. Ha ha ha, you can't keep them, I do. No, no, no. I have three fingers pointing back.

[ 12 : 21 ] I'm more than you. I'm probably worse at keeping the rules than many of you who are here. If the ministry of death, that's what it ends up being if you just have rules and rituals, carved in letters on stone, came with such glory that the Israelites could not gaze at Moses' face because of its glory, which was being brought to an end.

Will not the ministry of the Spirit have even more glory? Listen again to this. For if there was glory in the ministry of condemnation, because you see, if in fact God reveals perfect rules and we can't keep the rules, then that actually is a word against us.

It's a type of condemnation of us. The ministry of righteousness must far exceed it in glory. And just so you know, every time you see the word righteousness, or most of the times you see the word righteousness, understand that it means right standing, making it right.

What makes you right with God? Right? The image is, I don't know, maybe you work in a Starbucks or something like that and a customer's complaining and they're complaining that the, you know, I don't know, that the coffee's not right, the bill's wrong, et cetera, et cetera.

What is it that they do, whether it's them or the manager, they come to make it right? Right. They come to make it right. And they want to make it right so that there's a sense of satisfaction, that there's a sense of restoration of justice and wholeness.

[ 13 : 41 ] and it usually means making it right is that the restaurant pays. They say, here, we'll give it exactly the way you want, we'll take it all back, in fact, we'll make it free for you.

We'll make it free because why? We want to make it right. And that image of making it right is what the word righteousness in English, that's, it's an English translation of a Greek word, that's what it's trying to communicate, that there's going to be a ministry from God that makes it right with him.

Go back to verse 10. In this case, what once had glory has come to have no glory at all because of the glory that surpasses it. For if what was being brought to an end came with glory, much more will that which is permanent have glory.

I'll talk about that in a moment. But here we can see that there's this basic idea that if all I have are rules and rituals to follow, I will die a failure and we just cannot literally keep the rules.

In fact, in the same conversation with the young man who was telling me about prayer, I knew that he liked watching movies. So I said to him, because I was trying to explain how Christians understand this issue, why it is that Christians would understand or should understand that people pray naturally.

[ 14 : 52 ] And I said, if you saw a movie, science fiction or a fantasy movie, but if you saw a movie and in the movie you come to a place where everything is perfect, the people are perfect, they follow all of the rules, everything is perfect, wouldn't you know that as the movie progresses that there's evil behind it, that it's an illusion?

And he said, yes. That's always what it means in Hollywood where you see something perfect. It always means there's evil and that there's control. I said, one of the, and this would be another thing to the woman about the 10,000 religions, the second thing which is very distinctive in the Christian faith is the doctrine of the fall.

that the idea that God created all things good and that the creator who created all things good created human beings in a very special place to tend the garden, to in a sense be a sub-creator under God and to manage God's creation, almost like a type of priest and priestess where we care for the earth and we at the same time in a sense offer the earth up to God under his direction.

and human beings alone out of all the created order are made in the image of God. The Greek word translating is icon, E-I-K-O-N and human beings alone are made in the icon of God and when human beings in Genesis 3 decided that they did not want to be sub-creators but wanted to be equal with God or superior to God what happened is that something within us was bent and twisted and because you can never leave yourself to fix yourself that which is now bent and twisted can't be unbent and untwisted because it'd be a bent and twisted being trying to unbend and untwist a twisted being and we only bend and twist it more and so when we rebelled against God because we wanted to be like God ourselves it isn't that God erased the image and likeness in us and removed it it stays in us but we're now bent we're now twisted and and that's why it is that every day if we woke up on Monday and the newspaper said there's been no wars no robberies nothing bad happened in the entire world we know we wouldn't believe it nobody in the city would believe it even the hardened atheist even the most unbelievably optimistic

Rousseau following sorry bit of an academic reference person who teaches in the education faculty that somehow often teaches that human beings are inherently good nobody would believe it right nothing bad happened like nothing at all and even if we thought that nothing bad happened we'd know in our thoughts that bad things were going on in our thoughts why because human beings are bent they're twisted we're made in the image of God we were made in a sense in the image of a creator but we are bent and we are twisted it's another thing which is unique to what Jesus taught what the Bible teaches so human beings are made in God's image and we're bent and we're twisted it explains two things it explains why when I say and when Paul is saying here that if God gives us perfect laws we won't keep them all it will do is give us reason to understand that God has a very valid reason to not allow us into his heaven in the new heaven and the new earth at the same time the fact that every human being is made in God's image it talks it explains very powerfully why it is that there have been 10,000 religions

[ 18 : 36 ] I mean I didn't put it in my blog but one of the things I would have said to my Dawkins loving friend with the 10,000 religion quote is you know atheism has to account for why there's 10,000 religions and you know what Freud's explanation doesn't work Freudbox explanation doesn't work Marx's explanation doesn't work you know they don't work and you have to account for that but you know for us as Christians if in fact every human being has been made in the image and the icon of God and we have a creator there is something in every human being because we're made in the image of God that cries out and longs for and desires that creator in whom whose in whose image we have been made and the fact that we can never stop being creatures as much as we might think that we're gods and our technology and our techniques can make us like God and our politics can make us like God if we just follow Marxism if we just follow some utopia that we will be like gods we will manage the means of production we will manage the created order we will be perfect that none of those things work but the creation itself we're creatures in a created order that regularly reminds us that there's a creator even if we suppress it and there is something in every human being that longs to once again be aligned with that with whom we are made and whom we are made in his image the true and living God the creator and sustainer of all things so the question is okay George whoa whoa whoa okay

George does that mean if I'm just reading this all right does this mean that God did something on purpose to condemn us does this mean that God did something that failed like how does that fit George how would it fit that this if God does all these things and it just condemns us and it like like in fact actually this I explained some of these things to the to the young man who first asked me this question about prayer and his response was because he acknowledged that if we saw a movie with utopia we'd know there was evil behind it and he'd say there's no hope then and given that in fact he has always struggled with the fact that there's no hope he said now I know there's no hope I'm really good at cheering people up and then I said but that's why we need grace that's why we need grace I'm going to read verses 7 to 11 again but take in mind a different type of image it wasn't as if

God said well I'm going to try this plan with Moses I sure hope it works and then after a period of time God went oh dang it didn't work what on earth am I going to do now it wasn't like that at all if any of you have some if any of you have watched any of the of the moon shots any of the of the you know on YouTube or maybe some of us watch it on TV back when it actually happened and they sent those Saturn rockets up to send people on to be on the moon you'll know that the rockets were in several stages it was glorious wasn't it watching it I could just imagine what it must have been like to actually have physically been there and you probably would have actually not only seen the rocket you would have probably felt it and it would have been in your body like a throbbing in your body and in your ears it would have been very overwhelming very glorious but you know how long the first stage of the rocket had to last for and had to do its work I only know this because I looked it up I find it on the internet it has to be true if you find it on the internet right two minutes and 42 seconds this huge the biggest part of the whole rocket only has to last for two minutes and 42 seconds and then if it's doing its job right at the end of two minutes and 42 seconds the rocket turns off and the next rocket keeps going and all of the language here in the text and it's a bit more subtle in English it's very obvious in the original language is that God was doing a mighty work through Moses and at every stage throughout that he always knew that it was leading to the next stage this isn't replacement theology or anything like that this is part of God's bigger plan he always only has one people but it was always every

Moses has all of these promises and prophecies of a greater prophet of a all of the sacrifices are pointing to a greater sacrifice all of these things it's always pointing to something more and that's this language that it's not a failure part of it was to help to communicate to us that we can't follow rules and rituals but that it always had an end it always had a purpose it always had a next stage it always had the next thing in mind and that's why if you listen to it again listen to it within that perspective thinking of the Saturn rocket and when they built the Saturn rocket they built it so the first stage they had a plan that it would stop and that there'd be these other stages that would eventually take human beings to walk on the moon now if the ministry of death verse 7 carved in letters on stone came with such glory that the Israelites could not gaze at Moses' face because of its glory which was being brought to an end will not the ministry of the Holy Spirit have even more glory for if there was glory in the ministry of condemnation the ministry of righteousness a ministry that's going to make us right with God make it right must far exceed in its glory indeed in this case what once had glory has come to have no glory at all because of the glory that surpasses it who looks at the final stage when you can be looking at the people on the moon

I mean who looks at the first stage when you can be looking at the people on the moon because of the glory that surpasses it for if what was being brought to an end came with glory much more will that which is permanent have glory since we have such a hope we are very bold or we are very open the word bold can also mean completely and utterly open not like Moses who would put a veil over his face so that the Israelites might not gaze at the outcome of what was being brought to an end you see God looks down from heaven at you and me and he knows that we cannot keep rules and rituals and that if all we think if we are part of those 9,999 religions that believe it's just some rule or some ritual and if these ones don't work if Islam's not working out maybe we should try Buddhism and if Buddhism isn't working out there's thousands of different types of Hinduism maybe one of those work out and if those don't work out well maybe we can make our own little bit of Hinduism bit of Buddhism bit of Judaism bit of Islam and put it all together and he knows that they're all just not going to work they're just not going to work they're just not going to work they're just not going to work he knows that he loves us and so he's going to do something about it he's going to do something about it now in many ways this is just a two point sermon the first one about the rules and the second point is going to culminate in verse 18 and those of you who have been here other weeks

[ 26 : 12 ] I think book of 2nd Corinthians has more verses to memorize than just about any verse in the Bible could you put it up on the stage could you read this out with me we're going to say this quite a few times I really encourage you if you have never memorized scripture to start memorizing scripture and this is a great verse to memorize we're going to read it up I just want to read it first this is the conclusion of this whole section we're going to get to it but could you read it out loud with me and we all with unveiled face beholding the glory of the Lord are being transformed into the same image from one degree of glory to another for this comes from the Lord who is the spirit and Paul begins with this very powerful presentation of in a sense the bad news and then he's going to switch to a different image he sort of is like a comedian he takes this image of the veil and he's going to now all of a sudden turn this into something very powerful and it's a very human experience to help us explain how it is see what God wants he wants us to come to the point where we say in a sense that first person the young man that I talked to who said that there was no hope that acknowledged that he could never keep the rules and the rituals that he could never that there would always be things that he would do is wrong in a sense what God wants is to come to the point to say which I tried to share with him

God unless you do something real and effective I have no hope I need you to do something because I can't do it I need you to show real and effective and powerful mercy and grace I need mercy and grace I need mercy and grace and Paul continues to deepen this by developing the image of the blindfold it's a very very human problem right human beings have multiple blindfolds the surprising thing is that for most of us it's very interesting I mean do we have blindfolds what is it that supporters of Hillary Clinton say those of you who are here who like Clinton what do you say about people who if you find out that somebody after a drink coffee that somebody here might vote for Trump you'd think to yourself can't they see are they blind like how can they look at that guy they're not looking if they were looking they wouldn't vote for him you Trump supporters you quiet ones you know who you are what are you saying about people who are going to vote for Clinton he's saying are they blind can't they see who on earth could possibly vote for her

I could do this with just about anything climate change deniers and climate change supporters what do both of them say about the other can't they see are they wearing blindfolds what do often some of you say in relationships you know you have your girlfriend or whatever and she starts to be interested in a particular guy and you say to your girlfriends somebody has to speak to her can't she see who that guy is he's such a loser like is she what's she's blind right we say this all the time no no Clinton supporter thinks that they might be blind no Trump supporter thinks that they might be blind but the surprising thing is that in the world how do we deal with blindfolds we think that if we can just take off our blindfolds and take off our blindfolds and take off our blindfolds and maybe we'll take off the blindfolds enough blindfolds that we can see God the Bible says you got it all wrong what we're going to see in the Bible here is that the Bible is going to tell us that the root blindfold that we wear is a blindfold that keeps us blind to God and so one of the images of salvation is that one of the ways that

God makes us right with himself is that he does it all by Jesus dying upon the cross later on in 2 Corinthians it's going to say God made him who knew no sin to be sin for us so that in him we might become the righteousness of God and explain that when we get to it in a couple of weeks it's just one of the most powerful compact almost creedal statements of what Jesus does for us on the cross it's going to come up in a couple of weeks the end of 2 Corinthians God made him who knew no sin to be sin for us so that in him we might become the righteousness of God and part of that whole process is that God takes the blindfold off that the root blindfold that undergirds the blindfolds we have about politics and the blindfolds that we have about relationships that the root blindfold is the one that we wear in regard to eternal destiny and a relationship with the creator listen to verses 12 through 18 since we have such a hope that is that there's God has some greater thing that he's going to do since we have such a hope we are very bold or very open not like

Moses who would put a veil over his face so that the Israelites might not gaze at the outcome of what was being brought to an end but their minds were hardened he's just going to say that briefly but he's going to get right back to this issue of a hardening in the blindfold or the veil is the same thing but their minds were hardened for to this day when they read the old covenant the same veil remains unlifted that is because we continue time and time and time and time again Einstein said that insanity is trying to do the same thing over and over and over expecting different results and the very very heart of the religious spirit is to think that we can keep changing the rules and eventually we'll get the rules that will allow us to succeed but the problem is that we can't keep the rules so say that again verse 14 but their minds were hardened for this day when the old covenant when they read the old covenant that same veil remains unlifted because only through Christ it is taken away is it taken away yes to this day whenever Moses is read whenever the rules and the rituals are read a veil lies over their hearts but when one turns to the

[ 32 : 58 ] Lord the veil is removed but when one turns to the Lord notice that it doesn't say when one takes off the veil it's saying I can't follow the rules I can't look at your glory I can't keep the rituals I'm bent and I'm twisted and I can't fix it and I still pray but really God you're an unknown God I don't really know you but I sense there must be a God there's something within me which is calling out and in the Greek tenses of this original text it's a very interesting ambiguity it's on one hand that God has put the blindfold and the other hand it is that I have put the blindfold and I can't use my hands father and then you turn to the Lord you call out and say father God I don't know everything there is to know about you

I only know a little bit about you and I don't even all I know father is if you do not do something that I cannot do if you do not show me mercy if you don't do what I cannot do I have no hope dear God do what I cannot do I trust and hope that you have mercy when you turn to the Lord even though our hands want to cling to the blindfold on our eyes the Lord takes the blindfolds away because only God can do it that's what the text is saying verse 16 again but when one turns to the Lord the veil is removed now the Lord is the spirit and where the spirit of the Lord is there is freedom God made us for himself and our hearts are restless and our hearts are burdened until our hearts rest in him and we all could you say this verse with me if it's still up on the screen say it with me and we all with unveiled face beholding the glory of the

Lord are being transformed into the same image from one degree of glory to another for this comes from the act upon the cross is what is right with him and as part of this wonderful act it's not just when we're made right with God it's an act of God by his grace and his mercy if we were to become more like Jesus in our daily life it's an act of God and his mercy and grace and if we are glorified in the new heaven and new earth the new created order that is all a work of grace and it's all a work of mercy it's all grace it's all mercy it's all from God we just are called to cooperate with it and all of the language of transformation here maybe you haven't seen this in a while but sometimes we own this Steinway piano and sometimes we bring it out here as part of the service and you these big strong guys and they can push this heavy

Steinway piano down here around the corner up the thing and in the wall and in through the door and there's always a couple of two or three year olds who want to help and they have to cooperate with that piano to get in the way it's trouble right and they come and they love to help you say come on Benjamin come on help out and they put their little hands on it but it's Andrew and Patrick pushing that big Steinway piano up that slot you have to cooperate with all of the language in verse 18 is passive God's doing it it's fundamentally God we cooperate we're sub creators right goes back to Genesis 1 and 2 we're sub creators under him we cooperate with him we're led by him we allow him to lead say verse 18 with me again please and we all with unveiled face beholding the glory of the

Lord are being transformed into the same image from one degree of glory to another for this comes from the Lord who is the spirit you see it tells us that the Lord takes this you know here's this powerful thing you sisters why is it that we have these other lesser veils why is it that we can be blind to our own political biases our scientific biases our intellectual biases our relational biases and we can see it in others and human beings in general have a sense that human health is being unveiled and it's grounded here this is the ground for us when we're grounded in the gospel when we're gripped by the gospel when we understand that God saw us with perfect clarity and still his son came and died for us that when we see that the fundamental act of God in making us justified and right with him is that he would remove the veil there is a courage for us and an impetus for us to remove the veils by which we live the smaller veils by which we live that blind us to who we are and what we're doing to other people there's this incentive in the gospel a grounding in the gospel a push and a pull from the gospel courage to look at the blindfolds by which we live and call out to

[ 38 : 29 ] God and say God I know there's blindfolds in this way take my blindfolds away you've taken the big blindfold away in terms of my relationship with you you want me to look at the world unveiled help help me Lord to have that freedom of having an unveiled look that's what it says here can you say verse 18 with me again and we all with unveiled face beholding the glory of the Lord are being transformed into the same image from one degree of glory to another for this comes from the Lord who is the spirit and you might notice that there's different words for beholding in your different translations that's because in the original language there's this wonderful ambiguity around the word that's used and in English you can only use either the word beholding or the word reflecting but in the original language the same word can mean both and it's such a powerful grace filled image because both images are completely and utterly true there is nothing in me that shines

I am not a source of light but I am made in the image of God and by grace as I am gripped by the gospel the glory of God that some of that beauty of holiness and salvation and grace reflects off of me and reflects off of you and at the same time it's also that I'm gripped that I not looking to rules I'm not looking to rituals as the primary source of my identity and my hope and my comfort but my hope and my comfort my identity is gripped by the glory how do they put it here the glory of the Lord what is the glory of the Lord it's not a mystical experience read John's gospel this is very reminiscent of John's gospel which is filled with the images of glory and if you read and you go right to the end the glory of God is supremely made evident to human beings when we see

Jesus dying upon the cross the Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world almost at the beginning of John's gospel John the Baptist says to his disciples as he sees Jesus walking behold the Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world the lesson of Genesis and of Exodus and Leviticus and Numbers and Deuteronomy of the sacrifice of the paschal sacrifice of the peace sacrifices the offerings all of these types of things all of the different aspects and images of what it means to be human and the sacrifices that are made and the rituals and the sacrifices that are made to be right with God and John the Baptist under prophetic inspiration summarizes them all up when he looks at Jesus and says behold the Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world and then John the Apostle who is the writer of the Gospel who has listened to Jesus is teaching and understands that the glory of God is to be revealed and the glory of God is revealed most supremely as Jesus dies upon the cross not for his own sins but for you and me not not because he's surprised by human beings but because he knows every human being deeply that no rule or ritual will ever make us right with him it will only lead to condemnation and death and what we need is real powerful historical actual mercy and grace that can transform us and that we can be restored to

God's intention to make a new heaven and a new earth where his creatures will live fully and restoredly bearing the image of God and God in his mercy desires that as we walk with him we will be changed from glory to glory and it begins with grace it continues with grace and it ends with grace and brothers and sisters who have been gripped by the gospel that is your destiny that is your identity and that is what the Bible says don't believe me believe the Bible please stand you say this verse with me one more time and then I'll pray and we all with unveiled face beholding the glory of the Lord are being transformed into the same image from one degree of glory to another for this comes from the Lord who is the Spirit Father we ask that you would if there's anyone here who has never given their life to Jesus that you would now meet with them in a very powerful way and help them to call out to Jesus for mercy and Father we thank you that you hear that call that you always receive it that you do not weigh their merits or our merits but you pardon their offenses we thank you that

Jesus is that power that comes from you that makes us right with you and Father for all of us make us disciples of Jesus who are gripped by the gospel who by being gripped who gaze upon Father the glory of what you have done for us in the person of Jesus and his mighty work upon the cross and descent into death and hell and sin and burying our sin and rising triumphant over it all in his mighty resurrection who will come again in glory who will bring in not just a new heaven but a new heaven and a new earth Father where we are once again Father the caretakers for this your created order Father Father please in your mercy make us disciples of Jesus who are gripped by the gospel and as we're gripped by the gospel that we are being convicted of our blindfolds and tearing them off as we live for your glory to boast in you and not to boast in ourselves and this we ask in Jesus name Amen