

2 Corinthians - Commentaries by Frederick George Patterson

Words of Truth: Volume 6, Way We Now Know Christ, The (5:16)

In 2 Cor. 5:16, we have a very clear statement of the way in which we now know Christ. We read, "Wherefore, henceforth know we no man after the flesh; yea, though we have known Christ after the flesh, yet now henceforth know we him no more." That is, Christ had been known as a Man in flesh down here; but now that was ended. He had gone into heaven, and henceforth He was to be known as a living Messiah no more. Yet not unknown, but living in a more wonderful way than before. His death was the closing of man's history in responsibility; but as risen from the dead He is Head of the new creation, as well as Head of His body the church.

In that relationship we know Him now. Christ the Head is in glory, unseen and unknown by man in the flesh; we, the members of His body, are on earth, and the Spirit of God has been sent down, and He unites us to the Head in glory, giving us the consciousness of our relationship. What a wondrous place is ours; but how feebly it is apprehended by us.

To know Christ after the flesh, is a Jewish position. We have an illustration of it in Thomas (John 20). Jesus (e. 29) says, "Because thou hast seen me, thou hast believed: blessed are they that have not seen, and yet have believed." This points to a much more blessed way of knowing Christ; "Whom having not seen ye love, in whom, though now ye see him not, yet believing, ye rejoice with joy unspeakable and full of glory" (1 Peter 1:8). It is interesting to mark how the Lord prepared His disciples for this change. In John 14, He tells them that He is going away. All their hopes were centered in Him as Messiah on earth. His death would crush all these, and, lest these might think that all had been a mistake and a delusion, He says, "Let not your heart be troubled; ye believe in God, believe also in me." Then He tells of the Comforter who would be given consequent on His going away. That His disciples understood little of this is apparent; still, Jesus places them morally in the position which they were to occupy afterward: in the world, their hopes connected with an absent Christ, and the Comforter sent down to dwell in them and with them forever. In keeping with this, when He rises from the dead, He says to Mary, "Touch me not." Mysterious change, one would say, in the One who never discouraged the advances of a single true heart. But He was gently teaching Mary the truth that she was to know Him no more after the flesh; she had known Him thus.

It is very touching to see how that, even after He had risen from the dead, the disciples still clung to Him as an earthly deliverer, their thoughts never rising beyond earthly position. The two disciples going to Emmaus, speaking of their disappointed hopes, say, "We trusted that it had been he which should have redeemed Israel" (Luke 24:21); and at the very last, the disciples say, "Lord, will thou at this time restore again the kingdom to Israel?" (Acts 1:6.)

But there was to be something far higher and more wonderful than this—they were to be witnesses for an absent Christ whom the world had cast out. He was going up into heaven, and they were to know Him no more after the flesh. The Holy Ghost was to be sent down to dwell in them, the power for the testimony committed to them, and, as we find elsewhere, to connect them with Him in glory and give them the knowledge of Himself there. This could never be while He was on earth. In His life, and in His death, He was emphatically and absolutely alone, but as risen from the dead and gone on high, we are associated with Him by the power of the Holy Ghost sent down. Hence Jesus says, "It is expedient for you that I away; because if I go not away the Comforter will not come." Expedient, because they would know Him in a far closer way, and as brought into union with Himself.

Let us look for a moment at the practical effect of this. We get an illustration of it in Peter. With his eye on Christ he could walk over the stormy billows. Stephen, "looked steadfastly up into heaven," sees Jesus there, and forgetting his own troubles, he thinks of his enemies: "Lord, lay not this sin to their charge." What a beautiful manifestation of the Spirit of Christ. The manner of this conformity is doctrinally stated in 2 Cor. 3:18, "We all with open face beholding the glory of the Lord, are changed into the same image from glory to glory as by the Spirit of the Lord." We thus see that there is transforming power in the knowledge of Christ in glory, and we do not get this by looking at His lowly path on earth, but at what He is now.

It is our place to know Him where He is we can know Him nowhere else, just as a friend is known in the place where he is for the time being. What wondrous thing is this intimacy with the Lord Jesus. How little we know of it, yet it is the secret of power. See the effect it had on Paul: "Yea, doubtless, and I count all things loss for the excellency of the knowledge of Christ Jesus my Lord," and as if he were just commencing to sound the depths that are in Himself, he goes on, "That I may know him."

Ah, if we only knew a little more of Him, how the world would lose its attractions—how self and the flesh would be denied—how we should surmount trials and difficulties. In short, the deeper our knowledge of Christ the more power there will be for worship, for service, and for walk. Have we not to mourn over weakness and failure and poverty of soul? The cause of it is here,—we are not sufficiently occupied with Christ on high. Do we often mourn the low tone of our worship? It is because Christ is not fully engaging our hearts; for just in proportion as we know Him there, shall we delight to think of Him as He was down here. As we gather around the symbols of His broken body and shed blood, the deeper our practical knowledge of Himself in glory, the more true and real will be our remembrance of Him in the times of His suffering and death.

Another practical effect is that we prove this world to be "a dry and thirsty land, where no water is," because the only One that satisfies our affections is absent, and is disowned and cast out. Thus the blessed hope of His return is kept clear and bright. We long to see Him. The two things are connected. We remember Him till He come, but the measure in which we do so depends on our knowledge of Himself where He is now.

Let us judge ourselves as to these things. I believe there never was a time when a growing personal knowledge of Christ was more needed. The tide of indifferentism has set in, and mere intelligence will not give us power to stand against it. Christ, as the known and loved object of our hearts, will alone preserve us. What an instance of intelligence without faith we find in Matt. 3-6. The Chief Priests and Scribes had a perfectly correct knowledge of the prophecy concerning the birth of Jesus, yet so far as we know, it never took them out of the Court of Herod. The Wise Men from the East were left to seek out the Child.

May the Lord have the supreme place in our hearts, so that we may be kept true to Him. C.

Collected Writings, Judgment Seat of Christ, The (5:10)

"A. B." — "C." ask: Does the Scripture —2 Corinthians 5:10 contemplate believers and unbelievers? Will the sins of believers, previous to their conversion, be manifested at the judgment seat of Christ? Will this manifestation be to the praise of divine grace? Will it be only the service of Christians which will then be brought out? If the sins of believers, as well as the deeds which God can accept of, be manifested there, how does this agree with, "their sins and iniquities will I remember no more?" (Heb. 10). Is not judgment past for the believer?

A. 2 Corinthians 5:10 is a broad general principle, which is applicable to all mankind, irrespective of what grace has accomplished in, and for, those who believe. It is however to be remarked, that when the apostle has before his mind both saints and sinners, he does not speak of persons being judged, but of their receiving for things done in the body — retribution is his thought. Because, for the saint, judgment is past — Christ has borne it for him: he does not come into judgment (John 5:24). "Condemnation" there is incorrect. All must be manifested before the judgment seat of Christ, that every one may receive of the things done in the body, whether they be good or bad. The thought is, the perfect manifestation of all that a person is, and has been, before a throne characterized by judgment, yet without the judgment of the person being in question. It does not say "judged," for then even the saints would be condemned. Yet, when the wicked "receive the things done in the body," they must be condemned (Rev. 20).

The apostle has no sort of anxiety for himself as to this solemn thought of a judgment seat; instead of that, it has a sanctifying and practical effect upon him, as one now manifested to God (2 Cor. 5:11). While, when he thinks of the wicked, and knows that for such it is the "terror of the Lord," it is an incentive to him to "persuade men."

God, who has wrought us for the glory and assimilation to Christ, works morally in our souls, preparing the vessel by a moral dealing thus for glory. When man fell he came to know good and evil for the first time. Good which he had no power to practice — evil that he had no power to avoid. God works in the sinner, convincing him of, and cleansing him from the guilt — whether of nature or practice, according to His knowledge of it, and through the work of Christ. He reveals Christ as one in whom was perfect good, outside and above the evil, as the light by which the Christian thus purged may judge all within Himself. Without the knowledge of grace, the soul fears the light. With it — it rejoices to have a perfect standard whereby to judge all in itself that is inconsistent with the light. God works by His Spirit in the conscience which He has purged, to produce this entire and unsparing judgment of self; those who have benefited by His working thus in them, will have gained. If they have not, and that the fruits which God would have produced in them, have been turned aside, they will bear the consequences of the neglect, and lose what they might have gained; and which, if gained, although produced by Him, is counted in grace to them.

When manifested before the judgment seat of Christ they will then be enabled fully to judge according to God's judgment, as being then, divested of the flesh that hindered, all their past career. On one side will be seen all God's gracious care and painstaking wisdom, with which He deigned to deal with them all through their course; on the other, all their own frowardness and willfulness — how here they lost by not hearkening to Him; and there they gained and grew in stature by profiting by His ways. Here, capacity, which they might there have had, was stunted to the measure they will have then attained. There, the soul, exercised by His workings, had grown in a capacity for enjoying heaven and Christ, which it never then can recover or regain.

When the sense of this tribunal is kept in the soul, which has been established in grace (for without it none could for one instant bear the thought of receiving of the things done in the body), it has a present sanctifying effect upon the Christian. He rejoices to judge himself, in the thought that one day he will be able to do so perfectly, in the full blaze of God's presence in the light. What he failed to do now, he will be enabled to do perfectly then. He thus keeps his conscience in the light; maintaining its rights and authority against all the subtle encroachments of the flesh. Holiness due to God governs his heart. The inward energy of holy grace which separates from all the evil within, connects the soul with God — binds the heart to Him, and rejects everything which is contrary to Him. When manifested before the judgment seat of Christ, the full sense of the divine grace, but imperfectly learned here below at best, will then be seen. Grace as immeasurable and as perfect as the God Himself whom it reveals. It will be to the praise of divine grace in the believer indeed.

The statement, "their sins and iniquities will I remember no more," has reference only to condemnation. Christ having done a work which purges the conscience (Heb. 10:2), and has perfected the believer forever, God righteously remits his sins; He calls them to mind no more forever. Divine working in the soul enables us to call them to mind, and produces that moral judgment of ourselves about them, which deepens as we know Him the more. This work of manifestation is true now, as far as we have realized the light. Having learned divine grace, cannot I look back upon my whole course now, in perfect peace with God; and wonder and adore my God? Cannot I look back at what I was before my conversion, and, while abhorring myself, adore His grace to me? Cannot I look back at my failures since my conversion — be humbled about them — and worship Him, as to how I have learned Him in His patient grace with me; convicting, rebuking, chastening, and restoring my soul; and thus permitting me to grow in the knowledge of Himself and His ways? God be thanked for the grace that enables us to do so in unhindered liberty, and in the unsparing scrutiny and judgment of self I do not suppose that a period of time is the thought of this judgment seat. Certainly not an indiscriminate huddling together of righteous and wicked; than which no thought is more foreign to Scripture.¹ It is, as I have said, a broad general principle applicable to saints of all times and dispensations to the end; and embracing sinners as well.

I trust, beloved friends, that what I have said, may lead into some apprehension of its great principles, and have a present sanctifying effect upon the lives of my readers. While, also, that it may prove a spur to the energies of those who know the true grace of God in which they stand, to persuade men — the thought, that for sinners, it is the terror of the Lord, weighing upon the heart; and the deep, deep love of Christ constraining us to make known Him who died in grace for all!

There is no doubt but that ministerial service will be the subject of divine scrutiny. You have this distinctly taught in 1 Corinthians 3:8-15. The subject there is “work” — (ministerial labor); not “works.” The subject of 2 Corinthians 5 is “things done in the body”; and thus far more general.

God be thanked we go there in the likeness of Him who sits upon that judgment seat. He has come there and received us to Himself as He has said (John). He has changed our vile bodies, and fashioned them like His own glorious body (Phil. 3). He who sits there is the righteousness of those (believers) who are manifested before Him (2 Cor. 5:21).

Words of Truth 2:217-220.

Words of Truth: Volume N2, Earthen Vessel, the Treasure, the Power, The (4:5)

The apostle, beloved brethren, speaks here of the ministry that he had received. He was one who in a wonderful manner lived with God so as to carry out this ministry; still what he ministered was received, only he was a vessel filled in a more than ordinary degree. This ministry especially regards the testimony, whatever the sphere, and therefore the thing that he ministered is ours, so that thus we are vessels, each one in our own little sphere, of that with which he was filled.

The ministry of the Spirit, contrasted with that of the Old Testament prophets, shows that the things must be possessed for ourselves, before they can be ministered to others. Now this is not characteristic of the prophetic ministry. There are three steps in 1 Peter 1:10-13 as to this. The Spirit of Christ which was in the prophets, testified beforehand of the sufferings of Christ, and of the glories that should follow. These things are now reported unto us by the Holy Ghost sent down from heaven—that is after Christ was glorified. Then we are to have girded loins, and “hope to the end for the grace that is to be brought unto us at the revelation of Jesus Christ.” We stand between the two last, the Holy Ghost sent down and the revelation of Jesus Christ; and So our loins are to be girded while here.

The apostle then shows how the testimony is carried out; it has “shined in our hearts for the giving forth of the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ.” Paul had had a revelation of Christ in him, “When it pleased God... to reveal his Son in me.” This revelation of Christ in him was that by which he might preach Him, and it was not only to him but in him, and this latter, of course, in a remarkable way in his case; but in every one of us according to our measure.

In the previous chapter he had spoken of what his ministry was—commonly called “the gospel of the glory;” Christ is speaking from heaven only “once more;” the earth is to be shaken so that now we have the last things. It is the glory that He is speaking of in contrast with Moses, who covered his face. His ministry was of death and condemnation, and even that reflection of glory man could not look at because it came as a demand or exaction from God. If the legal claims had come alone, man might have thought he could have stood it; but accompanied by the glory it was impossible. Man must either hide himself from God, or hide God from himself. The glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ is not a little bit coming down with Moses, but it is in a Man in heaven, and a Man who was on the Cross. Sin, death, and the power of Satan, are all dealt with together, and now He who has done it has gone far above all heavens. It is not requiring from men what they ought to be, but it is God giving to man. The only part we had in the Cross of Christ was the sins that He bore, and the hatred He met with. There sin has reached its climax in antagonism to that blessed One, and there I see God putting away sin, and from the glory where He has been received comes the testimony that sin is gone, the work is accomplished, and I get the witness of it—the glory of God. That is the thing that is ministered by the gospel of the glory. The Man who has borne our sins, who was made sin, against whom Satan did his worst, is in glory, and of this we have the full testimony in the face of Jesus Christ.

This gives a very distinct character to the position we are in. We are brought by Him to believe in God; God has wrought a work by Him so effectual that He who did it is at God’s right hand, and now I can see the glory, and delight in it. “We all, with open face, beholding the glory of the Lord are changed.” Oh, let me see that! My sin-bearer is in glory! Of course I delight in that. The Holy Ghost comes down because of it and I am sealed! The Christian stands and looks back at the sufferings as the accomplished work of God, and forward to the glory. He knows the accomplishment of the work, and what it leads to, because Christ is in it as a Man when He revealed Himself to Paul. He treated every Christian as Himself. “Why persecutest thou ME?” If Christ owns me as Himself what am I waiting for? I am waiting for Him to come and take me there, to get the thing that is mine, for the Holy Ghost is sent down to tell me that it is mine.

In the early part of chapter 5 he speaks of the power of life which has come into the place of death, so that he can say, I do not want to die—to be unclothed. I see a power come in, and I can be changed into the glory without dying at all. Of course he did die, but it is a present living power, so he says we shall not all sleep; the power of death is broken. If I die, he says here, it is all gain, because I am present with the Lord, my spirit will be with Him, and I shall be raised when the time comes. It is very striking the way in which the Lord speaks to Paul in Acts 26 “Delivering thee from the people (Jews), and from the Gentiles, unto whom now send thee.” He belonged to Christ in glory, so do we. Of course, we have not had a vision, but what he testified of, we receive. The Holy Ghost is sent down as the seal of our persona, and the one thing we wait for is to have this Christ. “To them that look for him, will he appear the second time without sin unto salvation.” He came to put away sin the first time. Those who neglect this die in their sins, but to those who look for Him, of course He has nothing to say as to sin; it is a resurrection of life. If I cared for a person very much who was coming to me, I should go and meet him; so Christ comes Himself for us, and, in what condition are we there? We are glorified already when we come to the judgment seat of Christ. Did you ever think of that! Nothing can be simpler. There we shall learn the unceasing grace that cared for us all the way through. Of course in looking back now I see it in measure. The fullness of the redemption that has taken us up is, that we are “raised in glory.” I am like Him when I appear before Him. Then what need have I to fear judgment? What do I fear when I come before Him the second time of His coming? Why that my sins were put away when He

came first, and the second time I am perfectly like Him? Christ then sees the fruit of the travail of His soul; because He has made us perfectly happy and satisfied.

We stand between the finishing of the sufferings and the coming in of the glory. The hope of the coming was the first thing lost— “If that evil servant say in his heart, My Lord delayeth, his coming,” (he was that servant still). When the end of the world comes, heaven and earth flee from before His face; that is not His coming! That which He sends to awaken them from sleep (for people wonder that godly men do not see it, though the wise were just as much asleep as the foolish) is the cry, “Behold the bridegroom.” I have a positive revelation that the thing that wakes them up is the testimony that the Lord is coming. The wise though having the oil in their vessels had settled into some comfortable place, and the Lord comes and wakes them up, “Go ye out.” Do you think that if the Lord were to come tonight you would have bright, well-trimmed lamps?

I must warn you that— “in the last days perilous times shall come,” though they are blessed times for all that. It is of great moment to see now that when in 2 Tim. 3, the apostle speaks of these perilous times, the Scriptures are the resource, and knowing too of whom they are learned. If I go and learn of Paul, then it is all right, but if you say the church teaches, then how am I to know? For you all know how the word of God is called in question now. To the word of God there is no handle, it is sharper than a two-edged sword all over, it cuts every way, and if men meddle with it they find no handle. If a man comes to me and talks about readings, and I say to him—How do you like a book that told you all that ever you did? It deals with his conscience. That is the way the word of God is known. Look at that poor woman of Samaria. The Lord had been talking about all sorts of things, till at last He says, “Go, call thy husband.” Then she tells the truth to hide the truth. The instant the conscience is reached there is intelligence of the word of God. Faith’s roots are in the conscience. If I am to have to say to God, there must be faith in it; so when I am in the presence of God, my conscience is there. The place where the word of God gets, is never in the intellect, always in the conscience: when God comes with His sword and reaches the conscience, I know very well that it has a point. When the devil comes to tempt our Lord, what is a sufficient weapon for Him? He quotes a text from the Old Testament, the book that men think so little of.

In 1 Corinthians 2:9-14, I find three things. The Holy Ghost reveals the things—then by words given of the Spirit we communicate the things, and by the Holy Ghost they are received. It is such a comfort, beloved friends, that what we have is directly from God. You see the character of those who walk correctly—you see the blessed testimony we get of it in the Church of Philadelphia. “Thou hast kept my word.” In the time of all going away to evil, He could say this, the name of Christ has its value in the soul, and the word of God its authority for heart and conscience; just as the word was the thing they kept through grace; remark how strong that is in connection with what I was saying.

In Phil. 2, when speaking of subjection, the apostle says, “Of things in heaven, and things in earth, and things under the earth,” but when of reconciliation, he only says (Colossians 1:20), “things in earth, and things in heaven.” We are like Eve—she was the spouse of the one who was Lord over creation and all things; she was the help-meet, the one who was associated with him who was Lord. “He hath given him to be head over all things.” What I desire for your souls is, that in the accomplished work you should see that you are saved, and that the Holy Ghost comes and puts us in association with it. If I wait for the glory I know that He is waiting for it too.

Now, we are passing through the world and we have the treasure in earthen vessels. How are we to walk according to the power of the grace He has put us into? Then we come to the walk, meanwhile grace has brought me salvation, and I am looking to the glory to put me into the full result. “We are troubled,” that is the vessel, “but not distressed,” because God is there, perplexed, but “not in despair,” because God is there. All the treasure is put in a poor, earthen vessel that feels all the difficulties and trials of the way, but has the grace of Christ. I have the sentence of death in myself. I reckon myself dead with Christ, so what is bringing death to a dead man? Paul held himself to be dead to sin and everything; he was not insensible to the trial. God was there in the trial as he had given Him the glory. And he learned that the treasure is not here, but there, and that there is no possessed power, but a possessed treasure in a dependent man. If I am alive as to the flesh, and let it act, it spoils the treasure. If the lantern is not clean, the light does not shine out. I have the Christ revealed in my soul, but if flesh comes in, that spoils the testimony. If I reckon myself dead, and a man comes and asks me to amuse myself, I say, I am dead. Supposing persecution comes and my flesh is not dead, I am afraid, and all sorts of things. Paul takes up death in Christ practically, and says, “always bearing about in the body the dying of the Lord Jesus,”—he realizes his place—and I must reduce it to practice, and know that my flesh is flesh and must not stir, and, if I am full of Christ, it will not. If I let the flesh come in it is like letting the glass of the lantern be dirty. The Lord says to Paul, “I see you are in earnest, so I will bring you within an ace of death, that you may realize it.” If there is any tendency in the flesh to spring up, put the red-hot iron on it. Death so wrought in Paul that only the life of Christ wrought from him to the Corinthians. Now, that is testimony. Now you find the blessings we go on into. The man is entirely superior to circumstances. Of the death that God allowed to come so close to him, he can say, “God which raiseth the dead.” Stephen is the copy of Christ in the midst of death—completely superior to circumstances.

Now, beloved friends, this is for you, all things are for your sakes. Paul was for your sakes—do you believe that? The object of God’s delight, the gift, the glory—all is for your sakes. Oh if we only saw that we should get out of the little, narrow path of circumstances we are in. We are made to feel the powerlessness of our wretched flesh as men. “For which cause we faint not; but though our outward man perish, yet the inward man is renewed day by day.” If God puts you through the circumstance; He makes everything work together for good, and remember, “He withdraweth not his eyes from the righteous,” no, not for a moment. It is only the outward man that is perishing; why, the children of Israel’s clothes did not wax old though they were evil and naughty! But the children of Israel would not go up into the land, so God says, ‘You must turn back into the wilderness, and He turned back with them.’ “He withdraweth not his eyes from the righteous.” I never can spend one instant without the power of God being exercised to lead me through the trial and everything: if we only could remember it!

“For our light affliction, which is but for a moment, worketh for us a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory,” the glory that had been put into the lantern; it had been dealt with by death, and now he has the eternal weight of glory. He is breaking down the vessel, and soon he will have the glory, and then there will be no vessel seen at all. Now, there is the Christian!

Now, as referring to the old ministry, there are three things. It does not give life, or strength, or an object, but when I have Christ, I say, Well, I have life; but I am a poor, weak creature, well, I have strength, and I have also an object in view. A grace sufficient for me, a strength needed, and He will help me on the way to death, and more, I shall be like Him in glory. He is learning to reckon himself dead every day by

having an earthen vessel, if the earthen vessel meddles with it, it mars the testimony. I must get to know the thing: it is not insincerity, but flesh and blood cannot understand it. It does not follow because this blessed revelation is there that the flesh is broken down. The flesh does not like the cross. I got the blessed treasure in the earthen vessel, and if it is only a vessel it is all right; if not, there comes the dealing, the application of the cross practically to the flesh, delivering us to death for Jesus' sake. If the vessel begins to stir it spoils the manifestation.

Now let me ask you, Can you say that you so see the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ that salvation is settled for you? Is that what the glory of the Man who is in glory does for you? Can you say that you are waiting for the Man who has got the victory to come and take you to the glory Himself? The furniture is all sent on before, as it were, and you are only waiting to go to the house, nothing detains you in the old one. Have you seen what the flesh is? If I look at my place and standing, I say, I am not a child of Adam, I am a child of God, and if the vessel stirs. it spoils the whole thing. The Man who is in glory has become my Saviour; there is no uncertainty, about it. I stand with the only full hope that this blessed Jesus, at a time known to God, will come, and then I shall be like Him and where He is; and through faith we know it now, and the word of God has told us so.

The Lord give you that the flesh in you may be so broken down that you may see and understand the wisdom of God, and see Him, who is the wisdom of God, and who, when He comes again, will see of the travail of His soul, in seeing us in the same glory as Himself, and now to bear about the dying of the Lord Jesus, that nothing but the life of Jesus may be manifest in these mortal bodies!

Collected Writings, 2 Corinthians 3:12, 13 (3:12-13)

Q. What is the precise meaning of 2 Corinthians 3:12-13; with particular reference to the latter part of verse 13? "Seeing then that we have such hope, we use great plainness of speech and not as Moses, which put a vail over his face, that the children of Israel could not steadfastly look to the end of that which is abolished."

A. The Apostle having now the key to all God's ways then with Israel, in Christ, he can tell it all out with full freedom of speech, as one who had no vail on his face as Moses. All was now open and unveiled; all ambiguity was gone — the vail was off, and the whole truth out; while the vail was on the heart of the Jew.

They "could not steadfastly look to the end of that which is abolished." For, when Moses came down from the mountain the second time, the skin of his face shone, reflecting the glory of the Lord, who had just revealed himself in long-suffering, mercy, and grace. But this had not removed the law with its exaction, and matters were thus made worse. For it was bad enough to have broken the pure law of God; but when its claim still remained, and the Lord had thus revealed Himself — the law's claims alongside the perfect goodness of the Lord made matters worse if it was broken; because it was now broken in the face of this revelation of goodness in Him who claimed it. Thus it was the law brought down the second time by Moses, whose face then shone with the goodness of the Lord, which is termed by Paul the "ministration of condemnation."

This glory the children of Israel shrank from, and could not look at; for they did not apprehend the mind of the Spirit in what was coming by Christ, and thus could not see to the end of that which is abolished, that is, the whole Jewish system. "He taketh away the first that he may establish the second" (Heb. 10:9).

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