

The Spirit and the Word

‘And all of us, as with unveiled face, [*because we*] continued to behold [*in the Word of God*] as in a mirror the glory of the Lord, are constantly being transfigured into His very own image in ever-increasing splendor and from one degree of glory to another; [*for this comes*] from the Lord [*Who is*] the Spirit.’
(2 Corinthians 3:18 AMP)

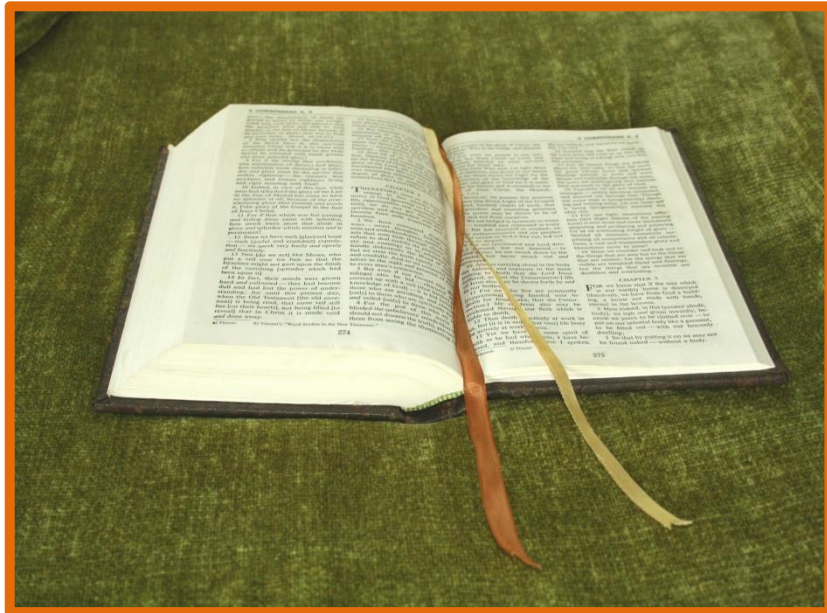
2 Corinthians 3:18 is one of the most amazing verses in the Bible. I memorised this verse, as it appears in the Amplified Bible, many years ago and it has never ceased to fascinate me. The truth it contains is so immense that it can only make you stand in awe before God. But before we start digging into the deeper meaning and richness of this verse, let us first look at the broader context in which it is presented.

In 2 Corinthians 3, Paul compares the glory of the old covenant with the glory of the new covenant. When Moses returned from Mount Sinai after receiving the Ten Commandments from God, his face shone so brightly that the Israelites could not look at it directly, so that he had to cover it with a veil (verse 7). According to verse 13, there was another important reason why Moses had to cover his face, which was to prevent the Israelites from perceiving the glory and splendour of his countenance fading and eventually disappearing. Paul argues that if the old dispensation of the Law was inaugurated with such glory and splendour that it caused Moses’ face to shine, how much more glorious must the new dispensation of the Spirit, shining on the face of Christ, be. The one is temporary, fading and veiled, and leads to death and condemnation, while the other one is permanent and unveiled, and leads to life and righteousness (verses 9-11).

In verses 13-15, Paul applies the imagery of the veil drawn from the story of Moses in Exodus 34:29-35 metaphorically to indicate that the minds of the people under the old covenant were covered by a veil, since they did not understand that the promises made under the Mosaic covenant would be fulfilled in Christ. A veil of ignorance prevented them from understanding the scriptures that pointed to Christ. However, when a person accepts Jesus Christ as his personal Lord and Saviour, the veil of ignorance is lifted from his or her face and he or she receives the Holy Spirit as an indwelling guest (verses 16-17). Just as the curtain of the temple was torn when Jesus died on the cross, the unveiling of one’s face leads to an unhindered and open relationship with God, who may now be approached directly.

When we are prayerfully studying and meditating on God’s Word under the guidance of the Holy Spirit, we are entering into God’s presence and are enabled to hear His voice. But according to 2 Corinthians 3:18, there is much more to this. As we are studying the Word of God with an unveiled face, the Word acts as a mirror that reflects the glory of Jesus Christ through the Holy Spirit, which shines forth from within us, back on to our faces, hearts and lives. The more we experience the glory of Christ by studying the Word, the more we grow spiritually and accumulate the glory of the Lord (which is reflected back with ever-increasing intensity). In this way, we are ‘being transfigured into His very own image’ so that people may see His glory on our faces and in our lives. Unlike in the old dispensation, this glory keeps growing, is unveiled and is meant to be seen – the glory of the Gospel of Jesus Christ woven into Scripture from the beginning to the end, like a golden thread. The more

we contemplate the immensity of God's love and grace, the more we have to stand in breathless awe and with shining faces before the cross at Calvary and before an empty grave. So let us live in the presence of the Lord, by His Word and by His Spirit. Let us glorify His Name with faces shining with 'ever-increasing splendor', bringing forth the fruit of the Spirit in bounty upon bounty – love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness (humility) and self-control.



François Jordaen