

2 Corinthians 3:12-18 (NIV)

12 Therefore, since we have such a hope, we are very bold.

13 We 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.

14 But 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.

15 Even to this day when Moses is read, a veil covers their hearts.

16 But whenever anyone turns to the Lord, the veil is taken away.

17 Now the Lord is the Spirit, and where the Spirit of the Lord is, there is freedom.

18 And 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.

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2 Cor 3:12-18

The Holy Spirit wants to blow our cover!

INTRODUCTION:

–America's traditional concept of *freedom* is **philosophically** grounded in valuing people as individuals; **psychologically** grounded in seeing ourselves as free moral agents; and **morally** grounded in making it our duty to uphold justice. [**Army motto**: "Be all you can be!"] seems rooted in those 3 ideas of *political freedom*. Our goal for **spiritual freedom** can be captured in a similar motto: "be all God created you to be!"

–Today's **text** refers to the story of Moses veiling his face. This world says: "Hide your thinking under many hats. Cover your true self with many masks." But **HOM.idea**. True freedom is being who we really are, and God empowers us for that freedom. **So, let's first look into...**

I. The Problem of Veils

A. Veils obscure our vision of reality, so that*

1. *We don't see this life clearly [**Mr. Magoo**: poor vision is *dangerous* living] (The Holy Spirit heals our vision of life with new eyes that come to us through "the mind [or attitude] of Christ.")
2. *We don't see God's ways clearly (They're *higher than ours*– **Isa 55:9**, "As the heavens are higher than the earth, so are my ways higher than your ways and my thoughts than your thoughts." [As the **Hubble telescope** sends us clear images taken far above our dusty atmosphere, SO the Holy Spirit gives us a clear vision of spiritual life as He indwells our hearts.]

B. Veils obscure our vision of ourselves (our *self-concept*):

1. A veil of fear says, "Don't let the world know who you are!"
2. Veils can define us [**Muslim women** forced to wear veils eventually see themselves as *protected sex objects* rather than as *personal individuals*.]
3. God's glory in us is to shine, not to be veiled– **Mat 5:14-15**, You are the light of the world. A city on a hill cannot be hidden. Neither do people light a lamp and put it under a bowl. Instead they put it on its stand, and it gives light to everyone in the house.

TRANS: [**Dirty glasses** make *difficult* reading, *dangerous* walking, and sometimes *deadly* driving.] The Holy Spirit sanctify our sight by clearing our vision. But to do so, He often has to **blow our cover**. So now, **let's look at...**

II. The Person of the Holy Spirit

- A. Who is the Spirit? (not what)— v.17a “the Lord is the Spirit”
- B. What is the Spirit’s will?
1. He wants us to be holy as He is *holy* [“separate” from sin].
 2. Because we were created to image a morally holy God, the Holy Spirit wants to free us to experience the moral holiness we were created for— v.17b, “where the Spirit of the Lord is, there is freedom.”
- C. How does the Holy Spirit bring this freedom?
1. He offers enlightenment [Some American immigrants left places where their only choices were *persecution* and *poverty*. In the NY harbor they saw Lady Liberty’s torch, lighting the way to freedom.] (God’s light provides freedom by exposing what’s false and revealing what’s true.)
 2. When the Holy Spirit enlightens us, we have the opportunity to make a choice: “Will I go closer to the light, or try to hide from it?”

TRANS: Having free will is a risk: it brings the potential for suffering. Yet without it, there can be no true creativity, no real joy, no authentic love. So, freedom brings responsibility. My decisions affect others; one citizen’s wrong choice hurts the nation. But the Holy Spirit empowers us with freedom AND with guidance—helping us make morally right choices for the life of holiness we were created for. **This brings us to...**

III. The Potential for Transformation— v.18 (NLB), *So all of us who have had that veil removed can see and reflect the glory of the Lord. And the Lord—who is the Spirit—makes us more and more like him as we are changed into his glorious image.*

- A. What the Bible can’t do is transform us— James 1:23-24. Anyone who listens to the word but does not do what it says is like a man who looks at his face in a mirror and, after looking at himself, goes away and immediately forgets what he looks like.
1. In fact, some minds are veiled even while reading the Bible:
 - a. The Jewish legalists had this veil— v.14a (NLT), *But the people’s minds were hardened, and to this day whenever the old covenant is being read, the same veil covers their minds so they cannot understand the truth.*
 - b. All unbelievers have this veil— 2 Cor 4:4 (ESV), *In their case the god of this world has blinded the minds of the unbelievers, to keep them from seeing the light of the gospel of the glory of Christ, who is the image of God.*
 2. What the Bible can do is show us our spiritual state: who we are without God — Rom 3:23 (NKJV), *for all have sinned and fall short of the*

glory of God (The Spirit uses the *written Word* to reveal *where we fall short of our true potential of being “all we can be”*)

- B. If the Bible has no power to transform us, then where is hope?— v.14b (NLT), *this veil can be removed only by believing in Christ.* (Jesus Himself tells us this in— John 5:39 (NLT), “You search the Scriptures because you think they give you eternal life. But the Scriptures point to me!”)
1. Transformational freedom—where our mental veil is lifted— begins with repentance [a “change of mind”; a “turning from darkness to light”]— v.16, *But whenever anyone turns to the Lord, the veil is taken away.*
 2. Jesus alone, the Living Word, reveals “all we can be”— and **the Holy Spirit wants to blow our cover**, if we are*
 - a. *veiled from Him under false patterns of thinking— John 8:32 “Then you will know the truth, and the truth will set you free.”— OR
 - b. *veiled from Him under false ways of living— Gal 5:13, *You, my brothers, were called to be free. But do not use your freedom to indulge the sinful nature; rather, serve one another in love. (Jesus won’t leave us to our pet sins; He wants us free to be all we were created to be.)*

CONCLUSION:

- The Holy Spirit came at Pentecost for many reasons, but one reason was to empower us for freedom. He does this by “**blowing our cover,**” by unveiling our hearts. How does that translate practically?
- For those whose hearts are veiled by unbelief or by a trust in good works for salvation, it means repentance, a turning away from sin and self-righteousness to trust in Jesus as Savior and Lord.
 - For believers who are wearing hats to impress people or living behind masks to hide our true selves, the Holy Spirit wants to blow your cover. He wants us to discover and live out our true identity in Christ, so that we can be all we can be for God.

Let’s pray for both those situations....