

## 2 Corinthians 3:12-4:2

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 prevent the Israelites from seeing the end of what was passing 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 all, who with unveiled faces contemplate the Lord's glory, are being transformed into his image with ever-increasing glory, which comes from the Lord, who is the Spirit.

4:1 Therefore, since through God's mercy we have this ministry, we do not lose heart. 2 Rather, we have renounced secret and shameful ways; we do not use deception, nor do we distort the word of God. On the contrary, by setting forth the truth plainly we commend ourselves to everyone's conscience in the sight of God.

## Luke 9:28-36

28 About eight days after Jesus said this, he took Peter, John and James with him and went up onto a mountain to pray. 29 As he was praying, the appearance of his face changed, and his clothes became as bright as a flash of lightning. 30 Two men, Moses and Elijah, appeared in glorious splendour, talking with Jesus. 31 They spoke about his departure, which he was about to bring to fulfilment at Jerusalem. 32 Peter and his companions were very sleepy, but when they became fully awake, they saw his glory and the two men standing with him. 33 As the men were leaving Jesus, Peter said to him, 'Master, it is good for us to be here. Let us put up three shelters – one for you, one for Moses and one for Elijah.' (He did not know what he was saying.) 34 While he was speaking, a cloud appeared and covered them, and they were afraid as they entered the cloud. 35 A voice came from the cloud, saying, 'This is my Son, whom I have chosen; listen to him.' 36 When the voice had spoken, they found that Jesus was alone. The disciples kept this to themselves and did not tell anyone at that time what they had seen.

## Unveiled faces

### 2 Corinthians 3:12-4:2

St Paul here has been talking about glory. The reading is not helpful starting at verse 12, *since we have such a hope*, because you wonder what hope he's talking about. Well it's the hope of glory, or the hope of heaven, of knowing God. And he was talking about Moses coming down Mount Sinai with the Ten Commandments and, to quote Exodus 34: *when all the sons of Israel saw Moses, the skin of his face shone, and they were afraid to approach him*. So Moses answer to this was that he put a veil over his face, a face covering if you like! so that he could actually communicate with them without scaring them off. What this tells us is that God's actual presence is just awesome. That's the real meaning of awesome, meaning that we wouldn't be able to cope with it, and would have to look away.

But Paul here is using the face mask, the veil, to symbolise our inability to understand or see God at all without the gift of the Holy Spirit, who Jesus sends to help us if we believe in Him. Paul explains that Moses lived under the old covenant, many centuries before Jesus, and what that meant was that his understanding of God was pretty much limited to his own ability to figure it out. And to try and keep the commandments, which he sometimes did and sometimes didn't. What we have now is the actual presence *in us* as Christians, of the Holy Spirit of God.

Who reveals God to us and gives us understanding of Him.  
We have a *new covenant*, a new deal if you like, which because Jesus was one of us means we can understand much more.  
We're given understanding almost without noticing, gradually over time to the point where we realise our minds are much more peaceful and calm and we feel free.

Paul's explanation is this

*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.*

Not that we don't have to use our minds, it's a two way thing, we actually have to want to understand more, and if we pursue God and ask him for understanding, the Holy Spirit answers. This is what Paul means by *whenever anyone turns to the Lord, the veil is taken away*. It's a feeling as though we were blind but now we see. He says it here: *The Lord is the Spirit, and where the Spirit of the Lord is, there is freedom*.

That's really the message of Jesus, that if we want to be set free from the stress and confusion of not knowing who we are or what our purpose in life is we just need to believe in Him, and to ask for forgiveness for the mess we have made of things, to turn back and start again, and we'll be released and forgiven and able to be in a real relationship with a living God, which is infinitely better than just following a set of rules.

The 10 commandments just tell us what's right and wrong. But we can never keep them all. So that's not the solution.

What Jesus does is give us His Spirit to live in each one of us and help us to know that we're loved by God. To know that in order to live as we were intended to live, as we were created by God to live, to be whole and healed as people, all the 10 commandments are summed up by just two, as Jesus said. That we must love God and love others. That is what following Jesus means, it's not about all the things we mustn't do, that are forbidden, but what we actually do in response to God, which is to love Him and love others. That's the only way to life.  
Here's Paul's explanation to finish, in a modern translation  
*Whenever we turn to face God as Moses did, God removes the veil and there we are—face-to-face! We suddenly recognize that God is a living, personal presence, not a piece of chiselled stone. And when God is personally present, a living Spirit, then the old, constricting rules are recognized as obsolete. We're free of it! All of us! Nothing between us and God, our faces shining with the brightness of his face. And so we are become like Jesus, our lives gradually becoming brighter and better as God enters our lives and we become like him. (Message)*