

It only gets better - and better

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[0 : 00] Now the substance of this third chapter in 2 Corinthians is really in a nutshell a contrast that Paul is trying to get across to the Corinthians.

A contrast between the old message of, if you like, for want of a better expression, the Old Testament, you know, the law and the prophets, all of which was good as far as it went with the sacrifices and with the preparation for the coming of Christ, as contrasted with the fullness that had come now, which fullness he was himself an apostle of, he was declaring.

And that is the message of this chapter, to contrast that which is merely of the letter as these, we might say, false apostles or those who had intruded amongst the Corinthians and by whom they were so wowed and impressed and their letters of commendation seemed so great that Paul says, look, we don't need these.

Written letters with him. You are our letter. You are the proof of the truth of the message that we brought. You have been transformed, not by mere written letters or mere written laws, not by outward religion, but by an inward relationship with the living God.

And although, yes, we could say, well, we're not first century current things, so what's the application to us? We're not Jews. We didn't have the law and the prophets and all the oracles and the sacrifices.

[1 : 29] What's the contrast to us? The contrast and application to us is simply this. That still in our day and age, even under gospel ordinances, there is that which we may practice outwardly and which may be simply, for want of a better expression, church.

Church doing religion, the outward form, the outward rules, if you want to call it that, the commandments, the things that we seek outwardly to obey, and still be lacking in the life-changing relationship with Christ, which transforms and which changes us, as the final verse says there, from glory into glory, as by the Spirit of the Lord.

That is the contrast for us here on this present day. It is the contrast between mere outward religion and the life-changing inward relationship with Christ, which relationship, though it be within, cannot help but shine out, as we will see here.

Do we begin again to commend ourselves, or need we, as some others, epistles of commendation to you, or letters of commendation from you?

You know, chapter 10, verse 18, if we were to look ahead at it, it says, For not he that commanded himself is approved, but whom the Lord commanded. And this is almost certainly a reference to the fact that, in order to kind of limit the damage of false teachers going from place to place, and those who might be bringing in heresy or damaging teaching into the fledgling church, and there were those in the apostolic times who went about from place to place saying, Oh, they came with new authority, and they came with the authority of the apostles, and they taught this, and they taught that, and misled the people, and led them astray.

[3 : 24] And some of them were just doing it for what they could get out of it, hoping that they would maybe be given a collection, or be given hospitality, and they could milk all they wanted from one place, and then move on to the next one.

Some people made a racketeering, if not profit, certainly a very nice living, out of doing that. And this is one reason why, even as early as the apostolic church, letters of commendation were often required by people, and it became a ruling of the church centuries later, that nobody was to go from place to place in the empire, and to minister in different churches, or different cities, or whatever, without such a letter of authority or commendation from his own bishop, or from his own situation. If we think of Acts 18, at the end of the chapter, they're talking about Apollos. It says, When he, that is Apollos, was disposed to pass into Achaia, after he had been with Priscilla and Aquila, who took

him unto them and expanded unto him the way of God more perfectly, when he was disposed to pass into Achaia, that's southern Greece, where Corinth is, the brethren wrote, exhorting the disciples to receive him, who, when he was come, helped them much, which had believed through grace.

For he mightily convinced the Jews, and that publicly, shown by the scriptures that Jesus was Christ. And Apollos, whom they so admired, had had such letters of commendation.

And Paul says, Do I need letters of commendation? Do I need now a letter to you to say who I am and what I've done? You are our epistle. You Corinthians who are converted, the very fact you've been converted at all, is through the Lord using me, Paul, as the instrument of that.

[5 : 11] The very fact you are believers, is proof of who I am, and what the Lord has used me for. And there's a play on words here, that is somewhat lost in translation.

In the Greek, the words for known, and read, are very similar. And the play words is to reinforce, by similarity of words, this point.

And the word known is, I don't know if I can get it right, ginos komeni, ginos komeni, kai anaginos komeni. And so known, it's ginos komeni, and anaginos komeni.

So there are two Greek words, I don't expect you to understand the word in all of it, but you can hear that they sound very similar. Known and read, ginos komeni, and anaginos komeni.

It's a play on words, to reinforce the point. In the same way as we might use an alliteration, for example, words that begin with the same letter, or words that sound the same, as you say them out, in order to reinforce a point.

[6 : 15] So that's what Paul is doing here in verse two. Known and read of all men. And what he means by known and read, is not only do people know that, theoretically, you're Christians, but they will see in your lives, they will read in your lives, the witness, the change that has come about in you.

That is the epistle they will read. They will not go to the manuscripts that you've got in your church meetings and say, well, let's read what Paul said. Oh, let's see what the prophets did say. They're not going to bother themselves with that.

They will not, unless the Lord leads them into that place and converts their heart, they won't get to that stage. But what they will see is the way in which those whom they have known as their colleagues, or their friends, or members of their family, have been changed.

Ways in which perhaps language that they use, they no longer use. If it is foul language or profanity. Bad habits they may have had, they no longer have had. Violence in their temperament, or their behaviour, is now replaced perhaps by quietness or gentleness.

That perhaps days that were lost through sloth or laziness or drunkenness are now replaced by sober hard work. And money that is earned goes back into the family instead of into the tavern, or whatever the case may be.

[7 : 34] They will see lives that are changed. And they will read that epistle. And they will at the very least think, well, whatever it is that's changed them, it must be powerful, it must be real, it can't be fake, because these are real lives in the real world which have been changed.

These people have been born again. This is the power of the Spirit. It is not mere obedience to a letter. It is not mere obedience to outward forms and commands.

It is the power, the life-changing power of the Spirit of Christ. You must be born again, as Jesus said to Nicodemus. For as much as ye, verse 3, are manifestly declared to be the epistle of Christ, ministered by us, you know, who did you hear the gospel from?

You Corinthians. Who did you get it from? But me. Maybe Timotheus, or Silas, or whoever else as well. But, you know, you are an epistle, ministered by us, written not with ink, which fades.

You know, other people bring letters of commendation, they're written on parchment, they're written with ink. Ink fades. Sparrowing, parchment falls to bits. You know, this lasts, not with ink, but with the Spirit of the living God.

[8 : 46] Not in tables of stone, but in fleshy. Now, notice the distinction here in verse 3. He doesn't say fleshy. Fleshy means sort of carnal, sinful, indulging the flesh, but rather the flesh, the tables of flesh, of the heart.

And the contrast, again, is with that which is dead, stone, and hard, and that which is living, the fleshy tables of the heart. This isn't just that which is written in stone, albeit with the finger of God, as the Ten Commandments were, inscribed, graven by the finger of God in stone.

But these were the old commands, the rules, the obligations, the statutes of the Lord that had to be obeyed. This is a life-changing relationship written in the fleshy tables of the heart.

And such trust have we through Christ to God where we are confident of trust in you because of Christ to God, not that we are sufficient of ourselves to think anything as of ourselves, but our sufficiency is of God.

Now, again, just to stress here, and we'll come to this a wee bit further down as well, that when we're contrasting the old, for want of a better word, the Old Testament, the laws and commands with the new relationship in Christ, it is not dispensing with the one chucking it overboard because now we've got this new way, we've got liberty, we can do what we like.

[10:11] It is rather the fulfilling of it. If you are somebody who drives, then you know that prior to passing your driving test, you have to immerse yourself in the highway code.

But the reason you immerse yourself in the highway code is so you know all the details and the rules and all the answers, like if you turn this way, you give this signal, if you come to this sign, this is what it means and so on.

And you have to learn this because you don't know what the examiner is going to ask you. And he or she may ask you any one of these questions and you've got to have the answer just like that. But the contrast here, the reason you learn the highway code is in order to prepare yourself for the driving.

And in transport terms, the one is the rule book and the other is the living it out. And if you're going to do the driving, you have to have the highway code. But you can't drive along with your nose in the book because then you're going to crash.

You've got to have it in your head and in your heart so that as you're driving, you know what decisions you're going to make, you know what signals you're going to make, you know what you're not allowed to speed, you know what this sign means and that sign means.

[11:12] It's going to be in here. It's going to be in the head and in the heart and you're going to know it. And what that means when you pass your test is that you are now free to drive within the law, of course.

And it's all that you have learned is that which you are taken as having known. And so it's there in you. The objective, the highway code is just the means to the end. The objective is movement, transport, being able to drive.

But all that we learn before that, that's just the preparation for it. You can't do the one without the other, but nor do you as soon as you pass and just, oh, that's my getting chuck the room, we go, ah, I can do what I want.

You won't get very far. As far as the police are concerned, at least if that's how you continue to live and drive, you have to have the one on board as you do the other.

And so it is with the laws and commandments of God. Jesus does not say, oh, well, now I'm here. You've got liberty. You can chuck out all the Old Testament laws. He says, think not that I am come to destroy the law and the prophets.

[12:15] I have not come to destroy, but to fulfill. And when he talks about, for example, not committing murder, he doesn't say, it's okay to commit murder in that voice because I'm here. The gospel takes care of all your sins.

You do what you like. And he doesn't say, oh, it's okay to commit adultery. Now, what he says is, you're, never mind murder. If you're even angry with your brother without a cause, then you're guilty of murdering him in your heart.

If you even look at somebody with lust and adultery in your heart, you've committed adultery already in the heart. Maybe not outwardly, but inwardly. Now, what's he doing there? Is he saying, ah, forget about the law.

No, he's saying, the law goes far deeper than you ever imagined. You thought it was just an outward set of physical rules to keep. It is actually that which should penetrate the heart and bring you to walk with the Lord in such a way as he requires.

Jesus doesn't dispense with the law. He comes to fulfill the law. The law, as Paul makes out here in this chapter, is glorious, but the fulfillment in Christ is even more glorious and that's what he goes on to.

[13:23] Now, let's trust we have to God where not that we're sufficient of ourselves to think anything of ourselves, but our sufficiency of God who has made us able ministers of the New Testament.

Now, when he says able doesn't mean, hey, aren't we good? Aren't we clever? Rather, he means suitable, appropriate in the sense of if you've got a thing you need to screw into the wall. If it's got a single line, you know you need an ordinary screwdriver. If it's got a square in it, you know you need a Phillips screwdriver. So, it's like matching up the screwdriver to the screw, matching up the particular nail to the particular requirement in joining work or whatever, matching up the instrument to the task.

That's what he means here. He says we're able ministers. It means that we are the right, appropriate instrument, tool, in the hands of the Lord to do the task that he requires. We're the right screwdriver for the right screw. We're the right peg for the right size of hole. We're the right hammer for the right task and so on. We are the instruments able in that sense because the Lord has chosen us for that particular task of the New Testament.

[14:32] The New Testament, as you all know, the Bible is divided into these two, Old Testament and the New Testament. What does Testament mean? Where a Testament is, there must also necessarily be the death of the testator, as Hebrews tells us.

We write a last will and testament, a testament which comes into force when we are dead. Now, you may have a previous will or testament and as your circumstances change, you update that will or testament.

Let's say, for example, that you choose to leave all your worldly goods, say, to a cousin or something and then late in life, maybe later in life you get married, you have children. So now instead of leaving all your worldly goods to a cousin, you need to update your will and leave it to your children because they're more immediate kin in that sense.

So you have a new testament in that sense. So it is an updating, a fulfilling of what has gone before. It's not that the Old Testament in the case of Christ is somehow, you know, forgotten about.

It is that it is more full, it is more complete now under the New Testament. Jesus says when he sits down with the disciples at the last services, this cup is the New Testament in my blood.

[15:44] It symbolizes my death. It comes into force because of my death. If you stand to inherit a vast fortune in somebody's will, then you don't actually have it until they die.

It comes into force when they are dead. And all that we inherit through Christ comes into force with the death of our Saviour upon the cross.

It is because of his death that we now stand to inherit able ministers of the New Testament. Not of the letter, but of the Spirit.

For the letter killeth, but the Spirit giveth life. What does he mean by that the letter killeth? It doesn't mean as some people might suggest, oh well, you stop being the laws and command. That really gets you, your life's really just dead in the state.

It's all doom and gloom. That's not what it means. But rather, as we have pointed out in the past, the purpose of the law, the commandment, the letter, is to keep you from evil.

[16:46] If, to take the driving analogy again, you drive all your life within the speed limit and carefully within the law, and then one time you're going 70 miles an hour in the 40 mile per hour limit, and there's a police car waiting, and you can see the blue light flashing in your mirror, and they pull you in, and they book you.

They're not going to say, well, you know, this is the 753rd time you've driven down the street in your entire career as a driver, and you know, this is the first time you've actually been speeding, so you know, we're going to add these two together, 753 against one, I'm going to light you off.

They're going to say, well, that's fine, you may have done that, it doesn't matter a thing, this is the time you broke the law, this is the time you're going to get booked for. And that's what the law is like, it doesn't give you any credit for all the time you do good or you keep it, it just means you stay out of trouble by doing that.

But rather for the time you break it, that's the time you'll get punishment, that's the time you will have to pay the penalty for, that's what the law is like. It points us to where we go wrong, it shows us our sin, it catches us and shows us how far short we fall.

This is why Galatians tells us the law is our schoolmaster to bring us to Christ. Now most of us, it would have had school masters or mistresses that at some point we were a bit afraid of.

[18:10] We might have been afraid of their temper, if you have a certain generation, mine or older, you might be afraid of the belt that they might give you if you misbehave at any rate, you might be afraid of them.

giving you a severe run. But the teachers that sometimes you were most afraid of were often those from whom you learned the most. And those who were easy-ozy in the class could do whatever they liked, you didn't necessarily learn much from them.

Because you could just do what you liked, you never were afraid of anything. The letter killeth, but the spirit giveth life. The law was our schoolmaster to bring us to Christ, to bring us to the fullness of knowledge in Jesus.

The letter killer, the law's purpose is to point out our sin. But the spirit, the fulfillment of the law giveth life. It's just like you can read your highway code as much as you like, but that doesn't mean you can drive the car.

And there'll be times where perhaps you can drive a bit with supervision, with somebody who's already passed, with somebody who really takes responsibility for it. You know, like the law, the prophets are still there, Moses there.

[19 : 19] They can move, they can drive, their sacrifices get them so far. You've got the L plates, you've got so much else there, but you don't have that fullness, that freedom, that liberty, with the highway code in your mind and in your heart, that you do once you pass.

And so it is that these things are there. It's not that you're, I remember being 17 and being delighted when I got my L plates. Yeah, I can drive a bit, come out with mom, with dad, read my highway code and slug it all up.

I was excited about it. I was excited to be behind the wheel of the car. I was excited to be learning these things and taking driving lessons. I felt so grown up and so big. But the day came when I didn't want to be doing that anymore.

I wanted to get past. I wanted to get through. It was glorious. It was exciting. It was good. At that stage, then you want to be through. You want more.

You want the freedom and the liberty and the fullness. that it's a training for. And this is it with the letter. This is it with the law. The contrast between that which is glorious as far as it goes.

[20 : 27] And that which is glorious for what it's designed. The fulfillment. Now, something we need to understand here is that verse 6, when you come to the end of verse 6, the letter killeth, but the spirit giveth life.

Not of the letter, but of the spirit. Letter killeth, spirit giveth life. And then, what you've effectively got is a parenthesis. A big, long section of what we might call brackets.

If you remember from school, the thing about brackets is that a sentence has to make sense, even if the bit with the brackets wasn't there. So, if you took the bit of the brackets out, the sentence would still run completely.

Now, sometimes that's a bit difficult or confusing to remember. If you think of verses 7 to 16 as one great big parenthesis, in brackets, as it were, explaining, going off on a tangent, what he's saying at verse 6.

And then at verse 17, he comes back again to what he was talking about at verse 6. So, if we were to run verse 6 into verse 17, taking out the brackets, it would be, who also have made us able ministers of the New Testament, not of the letter, but of the spirit.

[21 : 35] For the letter killeth, but the spirit giveth life. Now, the Lord is that spirit. And where the spirit of the Lord is, there is liberty. Now, if you don't recognize that this is a parenthesis, then verse 17 suddenly sounds strange, because he's talking about Moses and the veil, and the veil that's up on their heart, and then the Lord will take the veil away.

Now, the Lord is that spirit. What spirit? Well, he's telling me to get the spirit from, and it's going back to verse 6. Because verse 7 to verse 16 is an explanation, a parenthesis, brackets, if you like. The letter killeth, but the spirit giveth life. Verse 17. Now the Lord is that spirit. And explaining that it is God himself who is the fulfilment of it all there.

So, if we go into the parenthesis briefly. The ministration of death, written and engraven in stones, the tables of stone, was glorious. Nobody's saying it wasn't.

Something to be excited about. Something that was good, as far as it went. The children of Israel could not steadfastly behold the face of Moses, for the glory of his countenance. Which glory was to be done away?

[22 : 44] We see that in Exodus 34. When Moses comes down from the mountain from seeing the Lord, and he did neither eat bread nor drink water, he wrote upon the tables the words of the covenant, the ten commandments, came to pass when Moses came down from Mount Sinai with the two tables of testimony in Moses' hand, when he came down from the mountain, Moses wist not

that the skin of his face shone while he talked with them.

And when Aaron and all the children of Israel saw Moses, behold, the skin of his face shone. And they were afraid to come nigh him. They were afraid to come too close. He was glowing, shining with the glory of what he had been exposed to.

Now Moses is up there with the Lord. He's experiencing the Lord in this relationship face to face. The Lord gives him the rules, the commandments, he brings them down to the people. They look, wow, James, he's really glowing, he's shining with this.

This is scary stuff. Just give us the rules. Just give us the commandments. We'll obey these. But wow, don't make us look on even the reflected glory of the Lord.

Now the most that Moses has there is the glory as of the moon. The reflection of the light of the sun. Now the moon can be pretty bright sometimes. You get a full moon, it can be really radiant, light up the whole landscape almost in a nighttime context.

[24 : 06] But you can get a moonlight that is so, so bright. But it is at the end of the day nothing but a great big sphere of lunar dust and rock.

It reflects the light of the sun. And Moses is nothing but a man. He reflects the glory of God back down to earth.

And this for the Israelites, wow, it's difficult to look at. But it's glorious. But in due course, of course, that gloriousness, it would fade the longer he was away from the top of the mountain and the tabernacle presence and so on.

And when he went and talked to the Lord, he came back and he put the veil on his face and so on. And he couldn't look at him. And that glory was to be done away. Not only does his face, you know, return to normal again, but also that which he is giving, the law, the prophets and so on.

This is to be exceeded. It is to be fulfilled. It's like the outplates. They are to be done away. Not because we cease to remember what we have had to learn, but because now we have moved on to the fullness rather than the provisional.

[25 : 17] So, if that was so glorious, how shall not the ministration of the Spirit of God himself be rather glorious? For if the ministration of condemnation, the law which catches out our sins, be glory, much more that the ministration of righteousness excel, exceed in glory.

Romans 10, verse 4, we read that Christ is the end of the law, the fulfillment of the law for righteousness to everyone that believeth. This is what we have.

He's the fulfillment. He's the objective of the law. Not only so, chapter 6, verse 11 of Romans tells us, but we join God through our Lord Jesus Christ from whom we have now received the atonement.

Now, I think, well, how can it be? If it's so glorious, why doesn't it stay glorious? Well, it does stay glorious. It's just that it is exceeded now. You know, in your parents' or grandparents' days, having a black and white TV might be considered great.

People gather round it to watch our Queen's coronation, a whole neighbour's living, gather round one sort of flickering black and white set. But if that's what somebody feels in your home today, says, look what I've got for you.

[26 : 31] My grandparents all gather round it to say, 1953, look how fantastic it is. He'd say, well, you know, actually, I've got this flat screen sort of liquid crystal display, you know, multi-surround same thing, full colour.

Why do I want this? Because good as it was then, it has been exceeded. It has been bypassed. You know, when Saul and David, after the slaughter of Goliath, in chapter 1 Samuel 18, came to pass as it came, when David was returned from the slaughter of the first time, the women came out of all the cities of all Israel, singing and dancing, to meet King Saul with tablets and joy and instruments of music.

And the women answered one another as they played and said, Saul hath slain his thousands. Great, fantastic. And David his ten thousands. And Saul was very wrath. And the saying displeased him.

He said, they have a scribe of the David ten thousands. And the media have a scribe of thousands. And what can he have more but the kingdom? And he interpreted that outshining of himself in a negative way and as a threat.

And to some extent, that is what the unconverted Jews also did. That which was made glorious had no glory in this respect, by reason of the glory that excelleth.

[27 : 44] But that which was done away was glorious, much more than that which remained disglorious. Seeing that we have such hope, we use great plainness of speech. There's no point beating around the bush here. This is fantastic.

It is glorious. It is exceeding anything that you have in this world. Anything that even the Bible and church and religion can give you. That's good as far as it goes.

It introduces you to Christ and to the Lord of what he is like. But this personal, life-changing relationship with Christ breaks through all of that, bursts it asunder, and exceeds it as glorious. It's far more glorious than anything here. Seeing then that we have such hope. We use great plainness of speech. You see, the unconverted Jewish nation, and praise God there are more converted Jews now who recognise Jesus of Nazareth as the Messiah than there have ever been before.

But, you know, the unconverted section of the Jewish people, it's like, they, like Saul, you know, they think, oh well, what we had was good. And now they've come and they've, they've said that what they've got is better.

[28 : 50] You know, we had the law, we had Abraham, we had the prophets, we had the Old Testament, we had circumcision, we had sacrifices, we had the temple, we were the people. And now they're saying, well, yeah, you know, people do, but everybody else now is gathered into this special relationship with the Lord.

No, we don't like that. We don't want to be, you know, just one amongst many. And pass up the fact that God has such respect to his people according to the flesh, that he himself has stipulated that it is to be to the Jew first, and only to the Gentile afterwards.

You know, they are the natural vine, we are the wild olive tree grafted into their inheritance. But some, in their unconverted state, would rather hold on to the L plates, rather hold on to the letter, and the stone tablets, and that which is in itself dead, and meant to be a preparation, rather than have the fullness, and the glory, which is intended to bring them into the relationship with the Lord. Not as Moses, which put a veil over his face, that the children of Israel could not steadfastly look to the end of that which is abolished, but their minds were blinded.

But until this day, we made it the same veil untaken away in the reading of the Old Testament. Interestingly, and that verse there, verse 14, that's the only time when the words Old Testament are actually used in the Bible.

[30 : 21] It's just there. It's just that little fun fact on the side. It's not important. Well, that's where it's mentioned. The same veil is untaken away in the reading of the Old Testament, which veil is done away in Christ.

You see, if they don't accept Christ, it isn't going to be God's fault, even on to this day when Moses is read, the veil is upon their hearts. When Moses put the veil on his face, that was to help them. That was so that they could still talk to Moses face to face, and weren't blinded by the glow, that the light, the radiance that was coming off it, that was only a reflected radiance.

So to help them, he put this veil on his face. To help them, he diminished something of the glory that he himself was enjoying with the Lord. But instead, they turned that veil into a virtue in itself. Oh, no, we've got to have a veil. We've got to have the separation. We've got to have that which is cloaked. Nevertheless, when it, that is Israel, shall turn to the Lord, the veil shall be taken away.

[31 : 23] And of course, we read in Mark 15, verse 38, the veil of the temple was rent in twain from the top to the bottom. It's not the same as the veil that was on Moses' face, but it symbolizes the same thing, separation between God and man.

And that veil is rent in twain from the top to the bottom, because the Lord is saying, there's access now to me through Jesus Christ. This is the glory that is laid up for those who trust and believe in him.

If that veil stays on their faces, it is not God's doing. It is the hardness of their heart. Now, remember verse 17. We're going back out of the parentheses, out of the brackets, following on exactly from verse 6.

The Lord is that spirit. The spirit that gives life is God himself. The Lord, Jesus Christ, is that spirit. And where the spirit of the Lord is, there is liberty. There is freedom. You have more liberty under the gospel than you did under the law. You have more liberty as a fully licensed rider than you did with elplates.

[32 : 34] You have more liberty as the steward of the Lord, who has all his master's goods at his disposal. Remember how Eliezer, Abraham's steward, when he took the 10 camels to go and get Rebecca, he didn't have to say, Abraham is it okay if I take 7, 8 camels, maybe 9, maybe even 10, and I'll take this gold and these spices.

Is that okay? Can you sign for it, please? No. He had complete liberty to take whatever he needed to get his master's will done. And so, likewise, we have liberty under Christ.

Yes, we are expected to walk with the Lord and the spirit of his law as well as in the outward observance of it. But there is liberty because the Lord is that spirit and it is God himself who gives us that liberty and that strength.

This is what Hosea is meaning when he says, you know, that he would have mercy and not sacrifice when he says, then shall we know, chapter 6, verse 3 of Hosea, then shall we know if we follow on to know the Lord, his going forth is prepared as the morning and he shall come to us as the latter and former rain unto the earth.

If we go on to know the Lord, you can have all the preparation in the world, you can have all the Bible teaching and the Catechism recited, you can have been in church every week and it can all still just be the letter.

[34 : 05] Not saying it automatically will be, but it can be. If that, if we do not have the fullness in Christ, if we are not changed thus by Christ, because we are with open face beholding as in a glass, not with a veil, that one, but beholding as in a glass, as reflected in a mirror, the glory of the Lord, and the Lord is that spirit, are ourselves changed into the same image from glory to glory, even as by the spirit of the Lord.

You see, the glory we have here if we belong to Christ in the visible church here in this world, that is good, that is glorious. It is fantastic to be in Christ in this world as opposed to lost in this world without it.

That's good, that's great. But when we behold the Lord Jesus, we are changed gradually, ripened for glory, and made more and more like him.

Remember what Romans says in chapter 8, whom he did foreknow, he also did predestinate to be conformed to the image of the Son, that he might be the firstborn among many brethren.

Moreover, whom he did predestinate, then he also called, and whom he called, then he also justified, and whom he justified, then he also glorified.

[35 : 27] What shall we then see to these things? If God be for us, who can be against us? It is part of God's purpose to change us from glory to glory, to be made more like him.

1 John 3, verse 2, Beloved, now are we the sons of God, and it does not yet appear what we shall be, but we know that when he shall appear, we shall be like him, for we shall see him as he is. Thus we all, with open face, beholding us in a glass, the glory of the Lord, are changed into the same image, from glory to glory, even as by the Spirit of the Lord, not by the law, not by the commandments, not by the letter, not by the testimony, not by all the religion in all the world, but by the Lord himself, and the Lord is that Spirit, and where the Spirit of the Lord is, there is liberty, and we are changed from our old selves into the new self, and the fulfillment, and the glory that is in him, and in him alone.