

# Looking and Observing the Master

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[ 0 : 00 ] In 2 Corinthians chapter 3, we look at this final verse in the chapter, verse 18. But we all, with open face, beholding as 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.

In other words, we become what we behold. That which we focus upon, that which becomes the object of our obsession, if you like, the object of our desire, which we immerse ourselves in, which we look unto, we become what we behold.

And the context here, in this final verse, is that there is a contrast with what has been described in the previous chapters. There, thinking about, the apostle is talking about, referencing Exodus 34, where Moses comes down from the mountain, having been speaking with the Lord, and receiving the second load of the Ten Commandments, engraved in the tables of stone.

And such has been his experience with the Lord, that his face positively shines. Exodus 34, 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.

And Moses called unto them, and Aaron and all the elders of the congregation returned unto them, and Moses talked with them. And afterward, all the children of Israel came nigh, and he gave them in commandment all that the Lord had spoken with them in Mount Sinai.

[ 1 : 35 ] But when, until Moses had done speaking with them, he put a veil on his face. And when Moses went in before the Lord to speak with them, he took the veil off, until he came out.

And he came out and spake unto the children of Israel that which was commanded. And the children of Israel saw the face of Moses, that the skin of Moses' face shone. And Moses put the veil upon his face again, until he went in to speak with them.

Now, the veil is intended to enable Moses to talk with the children of Israel, and not to be blinded by the light that is coming out of his face, and the way in which he is reflecting the glory of God and his presence, which he has been spending time in.

But, as the Apostle says, he is not just that Moses puts a veil on his face, but rather there is a veil covering the glory of God that stops the unconverted amongst the Jewish people from recognizing their Messiah, from recognizing the fulfillment of the Lord.

And, as the Lord says, if that dispensation, if the giving of the law, which was simply, well, death, you know, because the law simply convicts us of wrongdoing, it doesn't point us the way to glory.

[ 2 : 49 ] If that was glorious, how much more glorious is the true glory of God? And, when it says, we all with open face, that means with a face that is not veiled, not shielded, shielded, beholding as in a glass the glory of the Lord, like in a mirror.

Although, of course, they didn't have mirrors as we do now, the kind of mirrors in those days. But, they would have glass, darkened glass in particular. If you think about, you know, if you're looking at your computer screen when it's switched off, then it reflects darkly back.

You know, you see your own reflection and the reflection of the room in it when it's switched off, because the dark screen reflects back out the light that shines onto it. Likewise, if you had a dark glass or a dark bottle, you might see a bit of reflection in it.

So, a glass that is dark, as in 1 Corinthians 13, now we see through a glass darkly, but then face to face. It gives a reflection, but an imperfect reflection of what is around it.

But, we all with open face, we're not veiled, we're not obscured from looking into the glory of the Lord, beholding us in a glass of glory, not of the law, not of Moses now, but the glory of the Lord himself, are changed into the same image, from glory to glory, even as by the Spirit of the Lord.

[ 4 : 13 ] We become what we behold, as we look deeply unto the Lord. The more we immerse ourselves in the Lord, the more we look to him, and anyone can look.

You know, it's the first stage of any kind of learning. If you want to, for example, learn how to cook something, maybe you're not a brilliant cook, maybe you've got great aptitude, but you might go online and look at a wee video of somebody doing it, or you might watch somebody on TV, or open a cookery book, and you look to see how they do it.

If you were in a cookery class, you'd see the expert doing all the, mixing all the ingredients, the chef, or doing what he or she did, and breaking in the eggs, and mixing in the flour, and you'd watch, you'd watch what they did.

And then after you've seen it a few times, you might try to do it yourself, and maybe you might not be brilliant at it, but give you a bit more practice, and then you look again, and then you try it again yourself.

The first stage before we're even able to put into practice is the looking. The looking and observing and watching the master, or the maestro, or whatever it may be.

[ 5 : 23 ] And as we look at Jesus, as we look to the Lord, we see how it is that we are to be. And so as we put that into practice, and keep going back, and keep looking, and keep learning, we become more and more like him.

We all, with open face, not with a veil, not with something obscuring the view, and behold, as in a glass the glory of the Lord are changed into the same image.

Now, sometimes, of course, a wee bit of darkening, or a veil of some kind, can be a benefit. But you might think, well, how can it ever be a benefit? How can it help you see better? Well, most of you drive, no doubt.

We've all got visors in our cars, so that if the sun is blinding you, if you're coming back from Starway, just as you're passing the, oh, we're coming over the creed, and oh, we're the hell, and then the sun is really low in the sky, and it's a winter sun, it's blind.

You have to put your visor down. And what does that mean? It means you can see the road in front of you better without the sun blinding your eyes. A wee bit of shielding can actually help.

[ 6 : 32 ] And likewise, the reason you put on sunglasses is because if the light is so bright, then you're squinting against it. You know, you can't see clearly. A wee bit of shading, a wee bit of obscuring of the light, can actually help you see more clearly.

And that was the case for the Israelites with Moses, because his face shone so much it was almost dazzling them. It was a wee bit frightening, so it was veiled.

A veiling can be of help. But it's only of help if the light is itself so bright. If we're looking into the glass to behold the glory of the Lord, looking for that reflection, then the problem is not that we need it darkened.

We want to absorb as much as we can of the Lord's light. So, as James tells us in chapter 1, verse 25, first of all, what he says, Be doers of the word, and not merely hearers.

If any be a hearer of the word, and not a doer, he is like unto a man beholding his natural face in a glass. Looks into a mirror. For he beholdeth himself, and goeth his way, and straightly forgetteth what manner of man he was.

[ 7 : 47 ] He forgets what his own reflection looks like. But whoso looketh into the perfect law of liberty, and continueth therein, he'll look into the law of God's grace, of his liberty, of the freedom that there is in Christ.

Remember, it says, the Lord is that spirit, and where the spirit of the Lord is, there is liberty. He looks into the law of liberty. He, being not a forgetful hearer, but a doer of the word, this man shall be blessed in his deed.

Keep looking at what the Lord does. Keep looking at the Lord's grace. Because as you watch the Master, and then you have the strength to have a goal, begin to practice, to become a doer of the word.

Like your little cookery lesson or whatever. You look at what the chef does, and then you try and do it for yourself. You look at how the Master does it, and you try and follow him.

But it's not just a case of copying. It's a case of becoming more like him. In Hebrews 12, we read the first to it, we have to be looking unto Jesus, the author, that is the initiator, and the finisher, the completer of our faith.

[ 8 : 59 ] In other words, what he begins, he will bring to completion. Who for the joy that was set before him, endured the cross, despised and ashamed, and is set down at the right hand of the throne of God.

That's who we have to look to. We have to be focused upon Christ. And the more we look, the more we absorb. And the more we absorb, the more we become like him.

See, we are told in 1 John, in chapter 3, he says, 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.

And every man that hath this hope in himself purified himself, even as he is pure. So in other words, the preparation for his coming is an ongoing preparation.

If we look into, as it were, look into the glass and see something of the glory of the Lord, we look to Jesus. And we're not just to be like James says, somebody who looks once and then walks away.

[ 10 : 08 ] No, we're to be looking long, gazing, as it were, at the Lord, drinking in the presence of his truth, and his word, and his teaching, and to become more and more like him, immersed, as it were, in the Lord.

Because it is by this looking that not only do we become like him, but we gain the strength, the protection, the grace that the Lord alone can give.

In Psalm 34, verses 5 and 6, they looked unto him and were lightened, and their faces were not ashamed. This poor man cried, and the Lord heard him, and saved him out of all his troubles.

You probably know it better. In the medical verse, you know, they looked to him and lightened, were not ashamed and were their faces. This poor man cried, God heard, and saved him from all his distresses.

But this is the essence of it. They looked to the Lord. As we look to the Lord, we see the protection, the grace, that he gives. Psalm 1, 2, 3. That's an easy number to remember.

[ 11 : 11 ] Unto thee lift I up my eyes, O thou that dwellest in the heavens. Behold, as the eyes of servants look unto the hand of their masters, and as the eyes of a maiden unto the hand of her mistress, so our eyes wait upon the Lord our God, until that he have mercy upon us.

Now, this isn't just, when we're looking at handmaids and servants and so on, it's not just a case of, oh, looking, gazing at the master, so just idly.

No, a servant is watching his master. It's like if you're waiting on a table and your master or the head of the family is eating away and they've finished their course and you wait for them to sort of raise their finger or to call you over.

You're watching, you're waiting the whole time. When do they need the plates cleared away? When do they need the next course? When do they need their glass refilled? When do they need a fresh napkin? You're watching, you're waiting the whole time.

This is the eyes of the servant looking to his master, trying to anticipate what he or she might want, desiring to serve. And part of that serving is the waiting, is the watchfulness.

[ 12 : 24 ] You know, unto thee I lift up mine eyes, O thou that dwellest in the heavens. Behold, as the eyes of servants look unto the hand of their masters, as the eyes of a maiden unto the hand of her mistress, so our eyes wait upon the Lord our God until that he have mercy upon us.

We are watching, waiting, seeking to serve by looking to the Lord. Isaiah tells us, chapter 45, verse 22, Look unto me, and be ye saved all the ends of the earth.

For I am God, and there is none else. There isn't any other way of being saved except through the Lord. How will we know what we are to do with the Lord unless we look?

You know, we're always told, you know, when we're young and also, even when we're old, you know, watch where you're going. Let's say you're carrying something, you know, and you can't see your feet in front of someone, you might say, watch where you're going, and they may say, look down at your feet, watch for any obstacles.

Once, many years ago, and it sounds comical, as opposed to saying, I was walking along the street in the airport I grew up, and I happened to be looking across the street, whether it was shops across the street, and cars parked and things happening, and I was looking as I was walking, and I walked slap-banging to the side of a little post at the side that was saying, you know, telling the parking limit times, and it wasn't actually a lamppost, but it was a little square post, and I was looking sideways and walked slap-banging to it, and you might think, ah, well, that's not too bad.

[ 13 : 58 ] Walking isn't that, you know, not that fast, it's not like a car crash or something, but you don't know the momentum that walking actually has until you slap-bang into something at walking space, when you've got no, no hands up to protect, no kind of awareness before, and you don't see it, you're just looking, and then you want to slap-bang into the side of your head, because you're not looking, and that was certainly a lesson to me all those years ago, you have to look at where you're going.

Now, if we are seeking to follow Christ, then we have to be looking where we are going. We have to be looking ahead to our destination, looking to the one who's to be our guide and our pilot, and also looking at the road in front of us, looking and recognizing that there are obstacles in the way, there are problems along the path, and there are hazards as we go along, dangers along the way, which, if we happen to walk slap-bang into them, will do us an injury, serious injury perhaps.

So, it sounds funny when it's somebody else describing it, I can assure you, it's not funny when it happens to you, and you walk slap-bang into a post at full walking speed, you don't realize how much momentum there is just walking, just going.

So, we have to look where we're going. If we're looking to Jesus, then we are looking where we're going. We are looking to the one who is to guide us, looking unto Jesus, the author and finishing of our faith.

We are, with open face, beholding, as in a glass, the glory of the Lord, not now just of the law, that the law is simply a means to direct us, as Galatians says, a schoolmaster to point us to Christ.

[ 16 : 00 ] Now, let's say your schoolmaster is trying to teach you mathematics, or whatever, and you learn from him, and you get the gist of all the algebra, and geometry, and trigonometry, and all the rest of it, and all your arithmetic, and your game, and you're going to do an adventure, you progress to the stage where the schoolmaster has nothing else to teach you, because you're going on from there, perhaps you're going on to specialize at university, or then to do something by way of research, or really use the maths that you've learned.

But the point is, is the using of the maths. The schoolmaster is simply the one who conveys it. He is not an end in himself. And so, likewise, the law is not an end in itself, it's pointing us to Christ.

So, the equivalent would be, if somebody was sitting in their maths class, focusing solely on the teacher. Whatever the teacher says, that's what they do. And if whatever word comes out of his mouth, that's what they write down.

But the subject is not him. He is trying to teach you the subject. He is trying to convey the mathematics to you. And the law is trying to convey the knowledge of God, the knowledge of Christ, to you.

What to avoid, the pitfalls along the way, how to find the way of truth. The law is our schoolmaster to bring us to Christ.

[ 17 : 28 ] But Christ is the objective. Christ is the fulfillment. Christ is the subject matter. We all with open face, beholding as in a glass like in a mirror, the glory of the Lord, are changed into the same image from glory to glory even as by the Spirit of the Lord.

Now, we mention how in 1 John it says that whoever we're seeking to be like him and anybody that has this hope purifies himself even as he is pure.

That is not the work of a day. Just as you don't look in the glass and that's it and you forget about it. You don't just look at the cookery lesson once and say, right, now I'm a master chef. You have to look and keep looking and practice and look and practice and keep it going.

It has to be put into practice and it has to be constantly watched and renewed. In other words, it has to be a ripening process. Now, where there is a ripening process, there is, if you like, layers of growth.

Layers of growth that happen imperceptibly from within. If you're looking at a piece of fruit, if you were to watch it with a speeded up camera and the fruit doesn't get bigger and ripe and juicier, but as somebody coming along in the middle of the night and slapping a few extra layers on it and then going away, it grows from within.

[ 18 : 55 ] And so the outer skin of fruit expands as more is grown from within, as it draws the nutrients and the sap and everything from within the boughs and branches of the trees and it increases from within because of what the strength that it draws from its source, layer upon layer.

If you cut yourself, then how does the skin heal? We say, well you put on a plaster and that's yet, but the plaster doesn't heal. The plaster just keeps it in place so that as the skin begins to renew itself from underneath, the old cut dead skin gradually rises higher up the surface, the old dead particles of skin eventually come off or are peeled off or fall off or whatever and what's underneath is the new fresh yield skin.

It's coming up from within, layer upon layer, imperceptibly, tiny, microscopic, thin layers but growing and increasing the whole time just like the ripening of the fruit.

So we have in John's account of the gospel in chapter 1, these verses 16 and 17 we read, of his fullness have all we received and grace for grace for the law was given by Moses but grace and truth came by Jesus Christ.

Now when it says grace for grace that might make it sound like there's a swap going on, an exchange. You give me grace and I'll give you grace back, you know grace for grace. That's not a brilliant translation in the sense here.

[ 20 : 30 ] What it means is grace upon grace. More grace and then more grace coming again. Grace for grace. Layer upon layer is what it means there.

More grace layer upon layer being added. As in the sense of from glory to glory. Grace upon grace. Layer upon layer.

We, we as beholding as in a glass the glory of the Lord are changed into the same image from glory to glory. Grace for grace.

Layer upon layer. Glory to glory. As, even as by the Spirit of the Lord. It is layer by layer. Day by day.

Imperceptibly that the changes take place. This is one reason why although I imagine most people would quite like to have or have had Damascus Road as their conversion experience.

[ 21 : 31 ] That is great as far as it goes. But Paul didn't just end with this Damascus Road experience. That Damascus Road experience then became the first step on a lifetime of going on and growing and serving with the Lord.

And however dramatic may be the first step that we take, what matters is that that step whether it be dramatic like Damascus Road or whether it be quiet and almost imperceptible and something that happens within the heart, that that be followed with step upon step, layer upon layer, day upon day, that progress continued to be made.

Just as we read here in 2 Peter 1 verse 5, beside this giving all diligence and to your faith virtue, and to virtue, knowledge, to knowledge, temperance, to temperance, patience, patience, to godliness, to godliness, brotherly kindness, to brotherly kindness, charity, for these things be in you and above.

They make you that you shall neither be barren nor unfruitful in the knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ. Now, you could read this list and you could panic and you could say, oh dear, well I've got to earn my faith virtue, I'm not very virtuous, so that's me stubborn already, oh no, no, but virtue means strength from God, the strength to follow him.

Jesus said he perceived that virtue had gone out of him when somebody touched the hem of his garment. He felt the power draining away to go on to heal the woman with the issue of blood.

[ 23 : 10 ] Now, Jesus was not any less holy, any less virtuous in that sense, but he felt the divine strength flowing out of him. So rather to add to our faith the strength that God gives day by day, literal by literal, and the strength that God gives will be increased by our knowledge, knowledge of his work.

Just like, for example, if you're one of these people who's able to read an instruction manual and to actually absorb what it tells you about how to operate this piece of machinery or whatever it is, the more you know the manual, the better you'll be able to work the machinery.

And so likewise, the more your knowledge of the content of God's word, the more God's virtue and strength will be able to work in you.

And to knowledge, temperance, restraint, self-restraint. So you've got to be wise and restrained as you exercise the knowledge you have. You see, these things all sound like, oh, tremendous things we're going to have, and tremendous achievements, oh, I don't have virtue, I don't have temperance, I don't have knowledge, and so on, but it's all about little by little, day by day, increasing our knowledge, increasing the divine strength that only God can supply, and increasing our faith with that supply, increasing our knowledge, increasing our patience and temperance, self-restraint and control, and to patience, godliness, that is, the desire to be more and more with the Lord, and to live as he would have us to, and to God in its brotherly kindness, creating for the brethren.

Why do we love the Lord's people? Because they are the Lord's people. Because if we seek to be the Lord's, we love his people, of course we do. We want to be where they are.

[ 25 : 07 ] We want to be in their company, we want to strengthen them. If they are persecuted, we feel it. If they are attacked, we feel it. If one part of the body suffers, they all suffer.

And to brotherly kindness, charity, as much as you love the brethren, you have a love for your fellow men and women as well. You don't want to see any creature suffering. You don't want to see anybody being badly treated.

So you have a love for your fellow mankind. So likewise, with faith, these layers upon layers imperceptibly grow.

Now it's not like putting on clothes, which you can put on several layers and you can do it more or less instantly. It is this gradual growth, day by day.

Now just as that which is positive is gradual and almost imperceptible, that which is harmful can also happen to us without our knowing.

[ 26 : 07 ] If we let our guard down, the devil can get in at us very easily. If we seek to do something that is good, but we do too much of it, then it can imbalance our relationship with our...

For example, we take an example from the world. It's good to have sunlight. Sunlight and sunshine gives us some of the vitamins that we need.

But if we lie out too long in hot sun, we get burnt. And you don't feel yourself getting burnt. Worst case of sunburn I ever had. I kept lying out there in the sun one time or abroad in holiday.

Look at why am I going brown yet. No, I'm not going brown yet. I'll have to lie out here a bit longer. And I was so disappointed that at the end of the afternoon, I was still as white as I had been before.

But then, afterwards, when I foolishly had a hot shower after that, I found bright red. And my skin started all peeling off. And I didn't understand why that had just been absorbing all the rays of the sun without me seeing it happen.

[ 27 : 13 ] But as soon as then it began to take its effect, it was disastrous for days, for weeks it took to recover. But you don't see it happening. And you don't see it happening when the devil gets at you until you see the effects.

And you don't see it happening as you're building up your strength in the Lord until you begin to feel its effects. It is gradual, layer upon layer like ripening fruit, like corn in the fields that grows up to its full height but it's still green.

And then imperceptibly, gradually it begins to turn yellow and gold and ripen for the hardest. Layer upon layer. Likewise, we read in Romans 5, something, and not dissimilar, where it says, you know, not only so, but we glory in tribulations also.

Why would you glory in suffering, in tribulations? Knowing that tribulation worked with patience, and patience experienced, and experienced hope, and hope maketh not ashamed because the love of God is shared abroad in our hearts by the Holy Ghost which is given unto us.

But when we were yet without strength, in due time, Christ died for the ungodly. See, Christ is the beginning and the end of all these things. It's not to ourselves that we look.

[ 28 : 40 ] When we look into this glass, into this mirror, it's not that we see ourselves and think, oh, well, we can put you off today, we'll look at it a bit better today. We look into this glass and we behold Christ.

And that is the image that we ought to be reflecting. We all with open face beholding us in a glass the glory of the Lord. Not of the law, not of Moses, not of the Old Testament now and it's what it was pointing towards, but the fulfilment has come.

Now, the glory of the Lord are changed into the same image. From glory to glory. Grace for grace, layer for layer, ripening day by day, the layers of skin being built up to the healing process, the layers of fruit and the skin expanding and turning rosy on the apple, the corn beginning to ripen in the field, layer upon layer, day upon day, the sunshine, the rain, the freshness of the wind causing the fruit and the crops to ripen.

It is an ongoing process. If it didn't take a lifetime, the Lord wouldn't give you a lifetime. The reason that each of us have been given the lives that we have and the years that we have been given is in order to utilize them for the greatest purpose for which we are created.

Man's chief end is to glorify God and enjoy him forever. Now, the glorifying of God is something we are meant to do in our lifetime.

[ 30 : 19 ] And it's something which takes a lifetime to do unto the ripening perfection. And only God decides when that ripening is complete.

Some people live their entire lives without ever giving a thought to the Lord. What a waste of a life. Some people crowd out like the parable of the sower.

It makes them crowd out the good seed of God's word when all the things of the world that take up so much of their thought and their devotion and their focus, they immerse themselves in that so much.

Yeah, they're good at it. They're great at it for a while, but there's no room for the Lord there. And they become what they behold. Whereas if we are focused upon the Lord, all these other things may be a blessing or benefit may have their place.

Nothing wrong with a little sport and leisure. Nothing wrong with enjoying the good gifts God has given. Nothing wrong with a bit of holiday, with a bit of enjoyment of the blessings, some of the riches of the good things the Lord has made in this world.

[ 31 : 25 ] Nothing wrong with these things which he has given us all things richly to enjoy. But when these become our gods, when these become our focus, when these become the things into which we pour our attention and devotion, we become what we behold.

And if all we become is the things of this world, then that is going to pass away, just as this world is going to pass away. But we all, Paul writes of those who are in Christ, we all with open face, without shield, without visor, without veiling, coming between us and the Lord, beholding us in a glass, the glory of the Lord, are changed into the same image from glory to glory as even as by the Spirit of the Lord.

That right filling process is something he does in us, day by day. And although John says, such a man purifies himself even as he is pure, it's not we who do it.

God uses us, he works in our lives, he causes us to desire the things that he gives, he enables us to do the things that he wants. When we struggle, we can ask for help.

When we fall, we can ask him to pick us up. He is always there. He is always to be looked to, he is always available. And the more we look to him, not only shall we have the more help from him, but the more we look to him, the more we shall be like him.



[ 33 : 03 ] And because he is glorious, we likewise shall be made glorious. We know, as John tells us, when he comes, we shall be like him, for we shall see him as he is.

So we are, with open face, beholding as 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.

Behold the Lord. Behold this glory, because whatsoever it is we give our time or attention or devotion to in this world, we become what we behold.

And we have been given a lifetime precisely because it takes a lifetime to be ripened for the Lord. You haven't got any time to wish, you haven't got any days to lose.

Look unto me and be ye saved, all the ends of the earth, saith the Lord, for I am God and there is none else. Behold him in his glory, that we may become what we behold.

[ 34 : 12 ] That's it. today. Thank you.