

We all, with unveiled face, beholding the glory of the Lord, are being transformed into the same image from one degree of glory to another. 2 Corinthians 3:18

Heavenly Father, we bless you this morning in that you are the most supreme being in all the universe, and that you sovereignly rule and reign over everyone and everything on earth. In light of the glory of your worthiness we confess our rebellion - and our inherent and our absolute and total desperate need for your love and your mercy and your grace and your forgiveness – and your empowerment to think or to say or to do anything that is even minutely worthy of you. O, God we ask this morning that you would open our eyes and our ears and our hearts and our souls to the truth of your Word – and that by the power and presence and preeminence of your Holy Spirit you would mold us and shape us more and more into the image of Jesus Christ, our crucified and risen Lord and Savior. During this time, I pray we would truly deny ourselves, take up our crosses and follow you. In Jesus name we pray, Amen.

Well, the prayer I just prayed this morning is the fourth prayer we have offered to God in the first 25 minutes of our morning together. We usually pray at about eight times during a Sunday morning service at Arrowsmith. We pray that much because prayer is the means by which we communicate with God. In another sense, we do the same with the Word of God. We usually read the Bible, the Word of God - in different ways – at least four times during a Sunday morning service - because reading God’s Word is the means by which God communicates with us. God has divinely ordained that the Word of God is the means by which God speaks us to us and prayer is the means by which we speak to God.

God has also ordained that both of these can be expressed in different ways. We hear God speak to us through the Word of God by reading, studying, memorizing and listening to the Bible. And we speak to God through intercessory prayer, simple prayer, contemplative prayer, meditative prayer, spiritual-warfare prayer; prayers of blessing, prayers of praise, prayers of petition, prayers of adoration, prayers of contrition, and prayers of thanksgiving. Now, I would hedge a bet that there a number of us here today who do read, study, memorize and listen to the Bible. But I would also hedge a bet that there are not as many of us who actively practice all of the avenues of prayer that has God’s ordained for us. I say that for two reasons. 1) Just take a look at what’s going on in the world today. And 2) - It’s also clear in that the moral climate of society and *spiritual character of the church* are clearly headed downward.

Now in terms of history, that’s not new news. This has happened before. But problem today is that the church, the body of Christ is not responding very well - because God’s people are being so constantly distracted secondary issues and so continually preoccupied with personal differences – that they have lost their calling to be a people of God who pray. In Mark 11:17: Jesus said: *“Is it not written, ‘My house shall be called a house of prayer for all the nations’?”* In 2 Chronicles 7:14 God proclaimed: *“If my people who are called by my name humble themselves, and pray and seek my face and turn from their wicked ways, then I will hear from heaven and will forgive their sin and heal their land.”* This is Gods call for the church; yet our world, our country, our providence, our community, our society and our culture continue to go downward -unhindered by the presence of the church, in desperate need of prayers to be salt and light.

I would venture to say most of us struggle to truly feel satisfied with our prayer lives. And for those who are satisfied, I pray the message God gave me this morning would cause you raise the bar. The truth is, many of us maintain a misguided focus in our prayers - and in doing so, we are missing the prayer life God intended for us. The reality is, some of us view prayer as our last resort instead of our first resolve. Some of us see prayer as our spiritual email sent to God, with instructions as to how He should manage the affairs of our life each day. Others of us have fallen into the habit ignoring our spiritual blind spots in an attempt to use prayer to get our will done in heaven rather than His will done on earth. It’s not hard at all for any of us to fall into a presumptuous mindset that ceases to hear the Spirit’s call to pray.

On the last Sunday of August, I ended my sermon on Psalm 25 by telling you that “the older I get the more I realize how desperately dependent I am on God. And I am finding that the more I trust God the more He continues to guide me into His “*paths*” and His “*ways*.” I have been wanting and waiting to walk on those paths and those ways for a long time, but I never could get there on my own.” One of those “paths” and “ways” has been the path and way of spiritual renewal in my walk with God in following Jesus. And of course in order to that to happen, I need to open up my heart to renewal in the way interact with God in His Word and renewal in the way that I pray to God. And so as I’ve been seeking God in these things, God providentially led me to two books by great men of God, which have given me a great deal of insight in leading me on the path and way of a renewed heart for God.

The two books are “Life in the Presence of God: Practices for Living in Light of Eternity” by Ken Boa and “Transforming Prayer: How Everything Changes When You Seek God's Face” by Daniel Henderson. Both men are highly-regarded seasoned, ministry professionals in spiritual renewal. Nancy and I were privileged to sit under Pastor Henderson and today we will be looking the biblical concepts and principles he presented to us, which dramatically opened our hearts and eyes regarding prayer. I’ve been preaching about prayer and teaching about prayer and leading prayer gatherings/summits for years, but I was blessed to have someone help me *unlearn* and newly learn what it means to pray in a way that renews – *transforms* - your heart and life. We begin with looking at the biblical principles.

The infamous pastor/doctor Martyn Lloyd-Jones once said: “*Man is at his greatest and highest when upon his knees he comes face to face with God.*” God’s Word affirms that truth in the greatness and highness of Moses’ life. In Exodus 33:11 we read that, “*the Lord used to speak to Moses face to face, as a man speaks to his friend.*” And in Exodus 34:29 we read of the transforming effect of that spiritual intimacy on Moses in that, “*the skin of his face shone because he had been talking with God.*” The apostle Paul cites this experience of Moses, in speaking about the relationship with God we now have with Jesus Christ.

Since we have such a hope, we are very bold, not like Moses, who would put a veil over his face so that the Israelites might not gaze at the outcome of what was being brought to an end. But their minds were hardened. For to this day, when they read the old covenant, that same veil remains unlifted, because only through Christ is it taken away. Yes, to this day whenever Moses is read a veil lies over their hearts. But when one turns to the Lord, the veil is removed. 2 Corinthians 3:12-16

Moses had been in God’s presence, and His glory was reflected on Moses’ face. But Moses knew the glory would fade, so he wore a veil over his face whenever talking to the people, lest they see the fading glory fade lose confidence in his anointing. But God never meant for the glory of the Old Covenant Law to remain; it was to fade away in the light of the abounding glory of the gospel of Jesus Christ. Paul makes a spiritual application of Moses’ veil. He states that there is still a veil over the hearts of the Jews when they read the Old Testament, and this veil keeps them from seeing Christ. The Word of God will always be a veiled book to the heart that is not open to Jesus. Christ removed that veil when he died on the cross - yet the veil remains on those who refuse recognize that the Law was temporary. Jesus has risen! His Spirit has come! God’s grace is at work! “*When one turns to the Lord, the veil is removed!*”

Now the Lord is the Spirit, and where the Spirit of the Lord is, there is freedom. And we all, with unveiled face, beholding the glory of the Lord, are being transformed into the same image from one degree of glory to another. For this comes from the Lord who is the Spirit. 2 Corinthians 3:17-18

There is freedom of the Spirit through Jesus Christ. This is not the freedom as we know freedom. This is not the freedom to say and do what we want. This is not the freedom of rights and entitlements in the country we live in. This is the freedom of knowing God's sovereign rule in our lives as the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit work together towards the same purpose of giving us an unveiled life of freedom from our bondage to sin and the freedom to fully live our lives for God and the freedom of life over death.

“And we all, with unveiled face, beholding the glory of the Lord, are being transformed into the same image from one degree of glory to another.” Paul tells us here that the freedom of the Spirit does not happen to us all at once but rather in an ever-increasing glory. As we surrender more and more of ourselves to God, the vision of our faith grows and sharpens because the object is Jesus himself! When the veils are stripped away, we see the face of Jesus in his wonder, his beauty, his power, his grace, his sovereignty, his truth, his love, his joy, his glory. When we are no longer look at Jesus through our veils of self-defense, self-justification or self-rationalization - we see then see Jesus face clearly, and the effect is dramatic. We are changed into his likeness and the character of his image is reflected in us. We become more like Jesus as God removes one veil at a time through a drastic but gentle, gradual process.

The word translated *“transformed”* here is the same word translated *“transfigured”* in the accounts of our Lord’s transfiguration (Matt. 17; Mark 9). It describes a change on the outside that comes from the inside. Our English word *“metamorphosis”* is a transliteration of this Greek word which describes the process that changes an insect from a larva into a pupa and then into a mature creature. The changes come from within. This is how the Spirit transforms us so that we will look like Jesus inside and out.

Consider what this means when it comes to *prayer*. When we seek God’s face in prayer, we are seeking to look God in the face and worship Him – knowing that He will deeply and dramatically transform you inside and out. The truth is, when we pray this way we will never forget the times we see the face of God and experience the power of transforming spiritual intimacy. I’ve experienced this *“from one degree to another”* at times over the past few months in a way that that’s hard to describe. Whether it be in my early morning time with God praying, reading and memorizing scripture or going for a long walk, holding hands with Nancy or glancing at my notes and looking at your faces while I am preaching – I am often struck with a sense of my desperate need for God, and in my yearning I open my heart to God, and I sense His presence and I feel His grace washing over me and I treasure Jesus as I never before.

Daniel Henderson writes of this: *“I am convinced that true believers carry an unquenchable appetite for legitimate life change. We hunger for worship encounters with His holy presence that mark us and make us more like Jesus. Deep within we know there is another dimension of Christian living beyond a cultural faith that simply checks in with God at church or in times of crisis. We are tired of feeling bored, inept, confused, frustrated, or weary, in any sense, with the idea of prayer. We envision the power of the living Christ and His gospel inflaming our hearts to serve as agents of real transformation in this society. We yearn for real change but know that somehow it must begin within us.”* This hunger and yearning for transformational life change are rooted in our rebellious separation from God when we rejected His authority. We were created in the image of God and yearn to be restored back to Him.

O God, you are my God; earnestly I seek you; my soul thirsts for you; my flesh faints for you, as in a dry and weary land where there is no water. So I have looked upon you in the sanctuary, beholding your power and glory. Because your steadfast love is better than life, my lips will praise you. So I will bless you as long as I live; in your name I will lift up my hands. My soul will be satisfied as with fat and rich food, and my mouth will praise you with joyful lips, when I remember you upon my bed, and meditate on you in the watches of the night; for you have been my help, and in the shadow of your wings I will sing for joy. My soul clings to you; your right hand upholds me. Psalm 63:1-8

In this psalm of prayer, we hear the hunger and yearning of King David’s heart to see God and be changed by Him – all expressed in the context of *worshipping God*. Worship-based prayer ignites a desire for spiritual intimacy and personal transformation – which empowers and enlightens us to pray about issues and needs in a whole new way. It’s here we see that prayer is not so much an issue of fine-tuning the regimens of life but of enjoying our relationship with God. It is not so much about fixing all the peripheral issues of our lives through prayer but allowing God to change us through our prayers. As in the words of W. Bingham Hunter: *“Prayer is a means God uses to give us what He wants.”*

Worship-based prayer empowers us to pray according to God's will because worship-based prayer begins with worshipping God before we ask Him for anything. *Worship-based prayer seeks the face of God before the hand of God.* God's face is the essence of who He is; God's hand is the blessing of what He does. God's face represents His person and presence; God's hand expresses His provision for needs in our lives. If we seek God's hand before we seek His face, we will miss His face. But if we seek God's face and worship Him, He will open His hand of grace and draw us to Himself and transform us so He will be the deepest desires of our hearts. Ultimately, this is the means by which God designed for the gospel to dramatically change our lives. We see that when Paul tells us that unbelievers will come to know Jesus as Lord and Savior when they see worship-based transformation in us. In the context of us *"being transformed into the same image from one degree of glory to another"* Paul then writes:

If our gospel is veiled, it is veiled to those who are perishing. 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. For what we proclaim is not ourselves, but Jesus Christ as Lord, with ourselves as your servants for Jesus' sake. For God, who said, "Let light shine out of darkness," has shone in our hearts to give the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ. But we have this treasure in jars of clay, to show that the surpassing power belongs to God and not to us. 2 Corinthians 4:3-7

What is the importance of the *"face of God"* or the *"face of Jesus Christ"*? Well, the idea of *God's face* is one of the most powerful, life-changing themes in the Bible. In terms of *"seeking"* the *"face of God"* it means seeking the refreshment our human souls so desperately need. Seeing God's face, Henderson writes, is like: *"temperature, pulse, and blood pressure tests we encounter when we visit the doctor; face time tells us how we are really doing."* The meaning of the word *"face"* here is the representation of the real essence and character of a person. It is the unique identifying characteristic of an individual. It is also the key to really getting to know someone. In prayer, it also speaks of those who have communed with Almighty God face-to-face. God's Word calls us to an intimate encounter with God face-to-face.

"God's face" also refers to His holy, intimate presence manifested to humans on earth. In the ultimate sense, we cannot experience God's full, unrestrained face-to-face presence and still live. Yet God reveals himself to us *"from one degree of glory to another"* to the degree that we have the capacity – because He wants us to know Him and experience Him and live with Him and live for Him. When you've been away from someone you love for an extended period, you know the elation of seeing that person again. While you may notice clothes or hair - your real joy is to look again into their eyes and gaze on their face. This image of a joyful eye-to-eye reunion reminds us again of the spiritual longings of our heart toward God.

The Bible tells us that God has revealed Himself to us through Jesus Christ. 2 Corinthians 4: 6: *"For God, who said, 'Let light shine out of darkness,' has shone in our hearts to give the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ."* In Colossians Paul says that Jesus: *"is the image of the invisible God"* (Colossians 1:15) - the full revelation of God's person and God's heart; the fullness of God revealed to humanity to bring reconciliation and peace; that we might know God (vs 15-22). God's face speaks of His intimate, indwelling, manifest presence. God, in Jesus, is present everywhere!

The Word of God speaks of *how we will respond* to the transformation of *truly* seeking the face of Jesus Christ. Paul spoke of his desire not just to be a Christian, but also his deep desire to know Jesus more intimately (Philippians 3:10). He prayed for this kind of intimacy for the Ephesian, church asking that they would have a *"spirit of wisdom and revelation"* in order to know Christ more and to experience the *"exceeding greatness of His power"* (Ephesians 1:17–20). Paul prayed likewise for the Christians in Colossae, that they would be ever *"increasing in the knowledge of God"* and grow in their experience of His power (Colossians 1:10–11). 2 Peter 3:18 calls us to *"grow in the grace and knowledge of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ."* These are some of the fruits we would bear when we seek the face of Jesus. This concept and theme and meaning of *"God's face"* runs all throughout the New Testament scriptures.

The “*face of God*” is also a prominent theme throughout the Old Testament. We could spend weeks preaching and teaching and learning all of the aspects of “*God’s face*.” But today we are focused on the transforming prayer of seeking God’s face – and the Scriptures are clear that God desires that His people know Him and worship Him and enjoy Him and pray to Him - and that He is ready to respond and restore His people, *if they will seek His face*. We see that in 2 Chronicles 7:14 when God declared: “*If my people who are called by my name humble will themselves, and pray and seek my face and turn from their wicked ways, then I will hear from heaven and will forgive their sin and heal their land.*” God wants His children to know the blessing of seeking His face along with the intimacy and favor that comes with it: “*Seek the Lord and His strength; seek His face evermore!*” (1 Chronicles 16:11; Psalm 105:4).

And so - in regards to worshipped-based prayer - who starts conversation? The truth is, when our prayers start off in the wrong direction, they will fall short of our satisfaction and expectations - and they have little effect on the kingdom. Prayers, like a bullet from a gun, get more off-target the further they go. When we get into a routine of simply praying our own ideas and thoughts, our prayers are increasingly misguided. The longer we do this, the further we travel from God’s design for prayer. Of this, Daniel Henderson writes: “In a sense, prayer is a continual conversation between our hearts and God’s. Nevertheless, when we stop to spend time in focused prayer, it is important to know who should start the conversation. If prayer is simply the discharge of my own will and thoughts, in the hope that I can help God run the universe, then I should start the prayer conversation. On the other hand, if prayer is about my heart becoming intimate and aligned with the heart of the Savior, then I should let Him start the conversation. This is the reality of abiding in Him and *letting His words abide in us.*”

In John 15:7-8 Jesus said: “*If you abide in me, and my words abide in you, ask whatever you wish, and it will be done for you. By this my Father is glorified, that you bear much fruit and so prove to be my disciples.*” Andrew Murray affirmed this when he said: “The entrance His words find in me will be the measure of the power of my words with Him. What God’s words are to me, is the test of what He Himself is to me, and so of the uprightness of my desire after Him in prayer. . . . In His words His will is revealed. As the words abide in me, His will rules me; my will becomes the empty vessel which His will fills, the willing instrument which His will wields; He fills my inner being.” To this, Henderson responds: “Imagine what a difference it would make if we went straight to the Word of God to hear from Him and then based our prayer time in His wisdom, not ours. Consider what insight and direction we would receive if we asked, in the context of prayer, “Lord, what is on your heart? What truth does the Holy Spirit want us to pray about?” Yes, many of the same needs would surface, but from a different perspective—God’s, not ours. The way we pray about our needs would change. With the faith that comes from the Word of God, and the passion that comes from the indwelling Christ, we would pray differently.” John Stott affirmed this also when he said: “It is only when Christ’s words abide in us that our prayers will be answered. Then we can ask what we will and it shall be done, because *we shall will only what He wills.*”

Worship-based prayer always starts from the Word of God. Colossians 3:16 tells us: “*Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly in all wisdom, teaching and admonishing one another in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing with grace in your hearts to the Lord.*” Prayer is not a casual presentation of whatever pains and problems pop into our minds on any given occasion. It is the overflow of a heart focused on the conscious presence of Christ, clinging to Him and His Word as the source and scope of our lives. God’s Spirit takes God’s Word and ignites our heart with truth, wisdom, direction, focus, and passion in our prayers. Worshipped-based prayer begins with an open heart and an open Bible. We read the biblical text, looking for great truths about God. These truths fuel our worship as we engage in prayer and song, in reverence for God’s name, character, and works. Our meditation and application of these truths becomes powerful as we open our hearts and souls to leading and teaching and freedom in the Holy Spirit, as he transforms us. “*Now the Lord is the Spirit, and where the Spirit of the Lord is, there is freedom. And we all, with unveiled face, beholding the glory of the Lord, are being transformed into the same image from one degree of glory to another. For this comes from the Lord who is the Spirit.*”

How can we pray worshipped-based prayers? In Matthew 6:9–13 Jesus delivered the all-time final word on *how not to pray*—and *how we are to pray*. As multitudes flocked to hear Him on the hillside, His words we now know as the Lord’s Prayer resonated with unparalleled authority and practical application. In his Sermon on the Mount Jesus exposed the superficial religious activities of the day. He told them *what not to do* in their giving, praying, and fasting. His words about giving and fasting are limited and primarily focused on what they should stop doing. His instruction on prayer balanced the negative and the positive, with the bulk dedicated to a positive model that applies to every generation.

Jesus precisely dismantled the flawed views of prayer common in His day. At their core, these errors still haunt us today. He first told them they should not pray with the motive of trying to impress people with their public prayers; then he told them they should not pray using the vain method of trying to persuade God to answer their requests with long wandering prayers. After telling them what not to do, Jesus told them how to pray, by giving them the *pattern* for worshipped-based prayer in verses 9-15.

1) “Our Father in heaven, hallowed be your name” (Matthew 6:9). The first step is *Reverence*. Here we pray asking the question: *Who Is God?* As our Father, God is caring and intimate. He is in heaven, He is transcendent, holy, and separate. Jesus teaches us to here to draw near to God with assurance and awe, in heartfelt intimacy, holy imagination, and Abba adoration. This first prayer calls for us to think about God, and in particular, His Name. Our sentence prayers are to be overflowing with praise and large thoughts about God. We are to praise the character and the attributes of God. If our prayers are not focused on God, we are guilty of idolatry, as we are putting someone (or something) else in God’s place.

2) “Your kingdom come, your will be done, on earth as it is in heaven” (Matthew 6:10). The next step is *Response*. Here we pray asking the question: *How Should I Respond to Who God is?* This response to God’s character in prayer involves yielding to the control of the Holy Spirit and recommitting ourselves to God’s kingdom purposes. How do we want God’s kingdom to come and His will to be done in our lives in response to how we have just worshipped Him? Here we should confess areas of our lives that require fresh surrender to His will and submit specific dimensions of our lives to His authority. This is a time of surrender and humility, reflecting on our desperate need for God, seeking the grace of His face.

3) “Give us this day our daily bread, and forgive us our debts, as we also have forgiven our debtors.” (Matthew 6:11-12). The next step is *Requests*. Here we pray asking the question: *What Should I Pray About?* In prayer, we are now ready to express trust in God for the needs of our lives by way of our requests. The Holy Spirit used our worship-based prayers to expose our needs and direct our prayers requests accordingly. Our time of bringing requests to the Lord is now energized by the faith we gained through worship and reflection of our desperate need for God and for God’s abundant grace. It’s at this time we can fully put our trust God for the resources and relationships of our lives – and a time of also bringing our struggles, needs, decisions, challenges and longings before His throne or mercy and grace. It is here we seek the wisdom and guidance Spirit in regard to God’s will, purposes and Kingdom.

4) “And lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil” (Matthew 6:13). The next step is *Readiness*. Here we pray asking the question: *Where Do I Go from Here?* It’s here that we recognize our inability to overcome the temptations and struggles and snares of daily life. And we enter the end of our prayer time, thoughts tend to move toward the hours, days, or weeks that are before us. The “where?” question simply prompts us to think about the mission and purpose of our lives for God and the warfare we can anticipate. This is also the time we can pray for God’s protection against not only the dark and evil forces in the world, but also against the dark and evil within our own hearts. And it’s also here that we can pray for ourselves and others regarding our relationships with God and each other. The verses that follow remind us of how deadly serious God regarding our relationships with others in the Kingdom of God: “For if you forgive others their trespasses, your heavenly Father will also forgive you, but if you do not forgive others their trespasses, neither will your Father forgive your trespasses” (Matthew 6: 14:15).

Ephesians 6:12 tells us that, “*we do not wrestle against flesh and blood, but against the rulers, against the authorities, against the cosmic powers over this present darkness, against the spiritual forces of evil in the heavenly places.*” The enemy of our souls will rise up against us when we pray worshipped-base prayers. Its been said that when we become important to God, we will also become important to the satan. Daniel Henderson writes: “We are called to be praying menaces to the devil. Prayer is *not* an escape from the battles of life but a great equipping to fight them in supernatural power. The very fact that we are seeking God’s face and engaging in life-giving prayer alerts the enemy to our increased threat to his dominion. When we pray, we pick a fight with the devil at a completely new level. . . . Prayer is not an escape from the battles of life but a great equipping to fight them Just as Jesus used the memorized Word to defeat Satan, look for a promise or truth that you can pray over the temptations, toils, and snares that await you beyond the door of your prayer room.” The Word and prayer are our weapons!

5) “For thine is the Kingdom, and the power, and the glory, forever and ever. Amen!” The last step is Reverence once again. Here again we pray asking the question: *Who Is God?* The traditional version of the Lord’s Prayer proclaims the sovereign greatness of God over sin, evil and death through Jesus’ death on a cross in our place for our sins, so we might be forgiven and redeemed and restored and empowered to follow Jesus and live for God and fight the good fight of faith. When we seek God’s face through worshipped-based prayer, the devil’s efforts to defeat, discourage, distract or destroy us are met with the reality of our Christ-centered, Gospel-driven, Holy Spirit empowered prayers of praise!

Calvin Miller once wrote: “Too often, we go into God’s presence with a list of pleas, trying to talk God into granting our desire. But this kind of praying makes us ‘one big mouth’ and God ‘one grand ear.’ But when we pray the Scriptures, it makes God the voice and leaves us as the ear. In short, God gets His turn at getting a word in edgewise.” Jesus said: “*Seek first the kingdom of God and his righteousness, and all these things will be added to you*” (Matthew 6:33). God is looking for hungry hearts that seeks after Him in passionate praise, humble gratitude, and loving surrender, with a readiness to pray, think, and live like Jesus as the expression and overflow of intimacy with him. A worship-based approach fixes our heart first on the majesty of God, the person of Christ, the purity of His Word – and excites within us an appetite for Him. Our very motives for prayer are changed and elevated beyond anything merely earthly and our hearts are then renewed with a greater longing for His glory. Worshipped-based prayer is the reality that we are our greatest and highest when we kneel and pray before God face to face.

Now the Lord is the Spirit, and where the Spirit of the Lord is, there is freedom. And we all, with unveiled face, beholding the glory of the Lord, are being transformed into the same image from one degree of glory to another. For this comes from the Lord who is the Spirit. Therefore, having this ministry by the mercy of God, we do not lose heart. But we have renounced disgraceful, underhanded ways. We refuse to practice cunning or to tamper with God's word, but by the open statement of the truth we would commend ourselves to everyone's conscience in the sight of God. And even if our gospel is veiled, it is veiled to those who are perishing. 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. For what we proclaim is not ourselves, but Jesus Christ as Lord, with ourselves as your servants for Jesus' sake. For God, who said, “Let light shine out of darkness,” has shone in our hearts to give the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ. But we have this treasure in jars of clay, to show that the surpassing power belongs to God and not to us. We are afflicted in every way, but not crushed; perplexed, but not driven to despair; persecuted, but not forsaken; struck down, but not destroyed; always carrying in the body the death of Jesus, so that the life of Jesus may also be manifested in our bodies. For we who live are always being given over to death for Jesus' sake, so that the life of Jesus also may be manifested in our mortal flesh. 2 Cor 3:17-4:11

The Lord bless you and keep you; The Lord make His face shine upon you, and be gracious to you; The Lord lift up His countenance upon you, and give you peace. Numbers 6:24-26

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