

**Do you wear a veil?**  
**A word of vital importance to all believers.**  
**pp. 217 - 219**

The first item in the equipment necessary for the interpretation of Scripture is surely the belief that it is absolutely true. The second is revealed in II Tim. ii. 15, and is called “rightly dividing the Word of truth”.

In this paper we desire to draw attention to the necessity of this right division by referring to the teaching of the apostle Paul in II Cor. iii. and iv., where he shews the distinction between law and gospel, and between old and new covenants. He speaks also of the activity of Satan, who does not scruple to bandage the eyes of believers with truth that belongs to another dispensation, if he may so prevent them from seeing the light of the glory of Christ.

Scripture abounds with figures drawn from ordinary life, but we must never lose sight of the fact that all the manners and customs that are referred to on almost every page of Scripture are the manners and customs of the East.

When seeking to show the distinction that exists between the old covenant and the new, the apostle in II Cor. iii. and iv. makes continual reference to the veil. Those who know anything of Jewish customs will know that the orthodox Jew covers his head with the *talith* (or veil) during prayer. Whether this custom is derived from the action of Moses recorded in Exod. xxxiv. 33, we will not here debate; it is sufficient that the apostle mentions them together. In II Cor. iii. 13 he reminds his readers that Moses “put a veil over his face”, and that Israel’s “thoughts” are to this day “blinded”, for until this day the same veil remains untaken away in the reading of the old covenant.

In this third chapter the apostle draws some severe distinctions between the old and new covenants. The old covenant was engraven in stone; the new was written in the fleshy tables of the heart (II Cor. iii. 3 and 7). The old is the letter that killeth; the new the spirit that giveth life (II Cor. iii. 6). The one is the ministration of death and condemnation; the other the ministration of the spirit and righteousness (II Cor. iii. 7-9). The glory of the one was transient; the glory of the other was abiding and excelling (II Cor. iii. 7, 10, 11, 13). Moses, the minister of the old covenant, veiled his face; Paul, the minister of the new, used great boldness of speech, not as Moses who put a veil over his face (II Cor. iii. 12, 13). The glory that shone from the face of Moses transfigured no man; the glory that shines from the face of Jesus Christ changes those who behold it from glory to glory (II Cor. iii. 18 and iv. 6).

The A.V. robs the reader of the point of II Cor. iii. 18 by the translation “open face”, but it is restored by the R.V. which reads “unveiled face”:-

“We all, with unveiled face beholding as in a mirror the glory of the Lord, are transfigured into the same image from glory to glory, even as from the Lord, the Spirit.”

The contrast between veiled Israel under the law and the unveiled believer under grace is carried over into the opening words of II Cor. iv. concerning the ministry of Paul himself:--

“Therefore seeing we have this ministry, as we have received mercy, we faint not, but have renounced the hidden things of dishonesty, not walking in craftiness, nor handling the Word of God deceitfully: but by manifestation of the truth commending ourselves to every man’s conscience in the sight of God” (II Cor. iv. 1, 2).

Here we have a parallel with the “great boldness of speech” which the apostle placed in contrast with the veiling of the face of Moses, “And not as Moses” (II Cor. iii. 12, 13).

If we have in II Cor. iv. 1, 2 a parallel with the “great boldness of speech”, where have we in this chapter the parallel with the veil over the face of Moses and over the hearts of Israel? All can see that we have it in verses 3-6. But once again the force of the passage is veiled by the A.V. The words of the third verse, which read, “But if our gospel be *hid*, it is *hid* to them that are lost”, should be read as in the R.V., “If our gospel be *veiled*”. So far as Paul was concerned the gospel was preached without reserve. If there was a veil over that gospel it was made by another, and the inference from the first verse is that such would be largely the result of “handling the Word of God deceitfully”.

Before we go further, we must draw attention to the very strong language used by the apostle in describing the transient character of the old covenant and its glory. He says that it is to be “done away” and “abolished” (iii. 7, 11 and 13). That the language is strong, the following passages testify:--

“Who hath ABOLISHED death” (II Tim. i. 10).  
“That the body of sin might be DESTROYED” (Rom. vi. 6).  
“Make the promise of NONE EFFECT” (Gal. iii. 17).

Speaking of these two covenants in Hebrews he says:--

“For if the first covenant had been faultless, then should no place have been sought for the second, for finding fault with them, He saith, etc.” (Heb. viii. 7, 8).  
“He taketh away the first, that He may establish the second” (Heb. x. 9).

Referring to the backward drift of the Galatians from grace to law, from faith to works, for spirit to flesh, and from liberty to bondage, Paul says:--

“But now, after that ye have known God, or rather are known of God, how turn ye back to the weak and beggarly elements, whereunto ye desire again to be in bondage” (Gal. iv. 9).

These references we desire to bring to bear upon the words of II Cor. iv. 3, where, instead of speaking of the unsaved by the words, “them that are lost”, the apostle is referring to the old covenant that had been abolished. In effect, he says that the god of this age, by deceitful handling of the Word of God, had fabricated a veil out of truth that belonged to a past dispensation, and had so bandaged the eyes of the people with the

letter that killeth, that they could not see the glory that excelleth. Taking these facts into consideration, the translation which we have been compelled to accept is as follows:--

“But if our gospel be vailed, it is vailed by those things that are perishing (i.e., the things of the old covenant that had been abolished, as, for example, circumcision, which now severs from Christ and from grace, Gal. v. 2-4), by which the god of this age blinded the thought (*see* Gal. iii. 14) of them that believe not, that the light of the gospel of the glory of Christ, Who is the image of God, should dawn upon them” (II Cor. iv. 3, 4).

Satan would have us occupied rather with the transient glory of Moses, than the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ. In all this we do not intend to suggest that the law of Moses is untrue, or that any part of the O.T. is less inspired than the N.T.; what we seek to show is, that by allowing oneself to be occupied with the truth that belongs to a dispensation past and gone, we allow the god of this age, by the deceitful handling of the Word of God, to “blind our thoughts” and hide the “gospel of the glory of Christ”. It will be seen, therefore, that the principle of rightly dividing the Word of truth is of supreme importance to all believers, for its neglect may veil the glory of the ascended Lord.