

“Now You See Him...”
2 Cor.3:7-18 * May 27, 2007

“Oh that you would rend the heavens and come down, that the mountains would tremble before you!” ~ Isaiah 64:1

I. *The Wiccan, the Mormon, the Jihadist, the Baptist – what do they all have in common?*

They are each searching for an experience of God. When Isaiah cried out in 64:1 – “Oh that you would rend the heavens and come down, that the mountains would tremble before you!” he was speaking for all seekers and worshippers over the ages who have looked up to the skies and felt a yearning for their Maker.

II. *Why do we need to have at least some experience of God in this life?*

Proverbs 13:12– “Hope deferred makes the heart sick, but a longing fulfilled is a tree of life.”

A. *What happens if you’re always in a state of expectancy – and no fulfillment ever comes?*

Imagine always being engaged, but never getting to the wedding day. Imagine always being in school, but never getting to graduation. Imagine always working, but never getting to vacation. You just can’t always be in a state of expectancy – at some point your heart will get sick and tired of it all.

III. *A Case Study in Experiencing God – the Corinthian church*

A. *What things do we know about the founding of this church?*

And with them, the Holy Spirit manifested himself with the giving of what the Bible calls “spiritual gifts”- manifestations such as prophecy and tongues and healing and knowledge and wisdom and faith. ‘You have been enriched in every way,’ Paul says to them – the Holy Spirit of God came upon this church in a very real and powerful way at its founding.

B. *Was this an unusual occurrence back then? Which other churches experienced God’s supernatural power?*

The Galatian church was birthed in the supernatural movement of God. Galatians 3:5 – “God [gave] you his Spirit and [worked] miracles among you.” The Thessalonian church experienced God’s power at its founding. 1 Thessalonians 1:4 – “...our gospel came to you not simply with words, but also with power, with the Holy Spirit and with deep conviction.” The Ephesians saw the power of God unleashed. Acts 19:11 – “God did extraordinary miracles through Paul, so that even handkerchiefs and aprons that had touched him were taken to the sick, and their illnesses were cured and evil spirits left them.”

C. *What is Paul’s main point in 2 Cor.3:7-18?*

What God did in the Old Testament, under the Old Covenant of the Law, is **nothing** compared to what God is doing now, under the New Covenant of the **Spirit**.

D. *What happened in the days of Moses?*

God was flexing his muscles all over the place. It took ten plagues to break Pharaoh down to the point where he let the slaves go. And it took the opening up of a path through an inland sea to get Pharaoh off their backs once and for all. From there, they were led by a pillar of fire by night, and a cloud by day into the desert to Mount Sinai. Each morning they woke up they could look out their tent to see if God were still there. “God still there?” “Yup. Pass the coffee and manna flakes.” And then at Mount Sinai, their experience of God was so intense, that they said to Moses, “It’s too much!” (Deuteronomy 5).

E. *Key Question If You Want To Know How To Experience God Today – in what way does the New Covenant blow the Old Covenant out of the water?*

1. *Is Paul saying that his miracles blow away Moses’? Nope – it’s kind of hard to top the parting of the Red Sea.*

2. *Is Paul saying that Christians can expect to experience more miracles in their lives than the OT Jews?
Is following Christ just one experience after another?*

No, for why does he turn around two chapters later, 5:7 and say, “We live by faith, not by sight.” Clearly Paul is not saying that a Christian’s life is just one miracle after another, one experience of God’s power after another. In fact, this is one of Paul’s reasons for writing these letters. To calm them down. To throw some water in their face.

- F. *So how is the ministry of the Spirit more glorious than the ministry of the Law? What do we get to experience that the Old Testament Jew did not?*

What the Christian now experiences is not the mere outward glory of God’s power but the **inward** glory of having God’s own Spirit dwell within his being, to turn his heart of sin and stone into a heart of righteousness. We get to enjoy and experience a very real **relationship** with the God who made us.

- G. *So what comes with this relationship?*

1. **Fellowship & communication.** John 14:23 “If anyone loves me, he will obey my teaching. My Father will love him, and we will come to him and make our home with him.” With this fellowship, you’re going to learn how to hear God’s voice. He’s going to speak to you through Scripture. Unbelievers can’t have that experience. The unbelieving Jews, Paul says, read their Bibles, and get nothing out of it. It’s like a veil is over their minds.

2. **Freedom,** Paul says. Jesus comes and offers you and me freedom. “He whom the Son sets free is free indeed,” Jesus promised.

3. **Fruitfulness** of a changed and changing life, being transformed into the likeness of Christ.