

Confidence In God

2 Corinthians 3

Introduction

- Last week's baseball game against #1 team
 - We are 6th out of 9
 - Only a couple of games where we got blown out
 - Consistency and depth (pitching and hitting)
 - Encourage the kids: "You have to swing to be a hitter!"
 - Game turned out to be one of the best games
 - Both teams had big hits but also great defense and good pitching
 - We would get the bases loaded but couldn't bring runners home
 - On defense we would make an error and put runners in scoring position but then pitching would come through and get us out of the inning
 - By the last inning the score was tied 1-1 and we had last at bat
 - Single to get a man on first
 - Next batter says in the dug out, "I'm going to smack this ball!"
 - Drives the ball through the air into right field
 - We send the runners
 - Close play at home, our runner from first scores
 - We win the game!
 - Exciting finish to a great game that worked out in our favor
 - The kids are excited that they won, but we as coaches are trying to reinforce the message that we have been trying to tell them all year- be confident when you step up to the plate and play hard
 - You just beat the #1 team, you guys can beat any team
 - It is a win that could mean a lot for our team moving forward
 - I'm not sure that any of the kids really grasped the meaning of what happened in the game
 - They were just excited that they won
 - It takes confidence and mental discipline to consistently play at a high level

- The true test for our team will come next week during the playoffs
- Translating to today's sermon
 - I wonder if God looks at us in the same way we do with our kids?
 - We see a potential in our kids that they are too young and immature to see in themselves
 - At some point each of us has to search within ourselves to find God's potential in our lives
 - It is not so much of what we are capable of, as it is what God is capable of doing through the work of His Spirit in us.
 - In the Old Testament, this potential was difficult to see because of sin (which to some degree is still a struggle for us today simply because we can judge ourselves by our failures)
 - BUT, the New Testament enables us to see our full potential through what Jesus had done on the cross.
- Continue our sermon series *Seeking God*
 - When we seek God we should grow in confidence because we can see the potential of what God can do in us and through us
 - **2 Corinthians 3**
 - The Apostle Paul's ministry is called into question
 - He offers a message that not only legitimizes his ministry, but the faith of the Corinthians
 - **2 Corinthians 3:4-5 (ESV), "Such is the confidence that we have through Christ toward God. Not that we are sufficient in ourselves to claim anything as coming from us, but our sufficiency is from God."**
 - **2 Corinthians 3:18 (ESV), "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."**
 - Challenge to not end a prayer where we began
 - When we enter the presence of God through prayer, the glory of God should fill our lives such that we are being transformed more and more into the Holiness of God.
 - This isn't something that we earn simply by dutifully praying, but instead is what God offers to us through His grace as we faithfully seek Him.

- It is from faithfully seeking God that we can find our potential

Finding the Legitimacy of God's Work

- 2 Corinthians 3:1-3
 - Resume
 - Show Credentials- education
 - Past Experience that shows that you can handle the job
 - New Testament
 - Apostles
 - Immediately qualified if they had been with Jesus
 - Apostle Paul
 - Persecuted Christians as part of his position with the Pharisees
 - Road to Damascus encountered the Risen Lord
 - Became a Christian- but many questioned the validity of his calling due to past experience
 - Apostle Paul's visit with Corinthians
 - Has visited them in the past
 - Wishes to visit them again
 - But God has closed the door
 - Question: Do I need to come to legitimize my ministry to you?
 - Pause: What does this have to do with us seeking God?
 - How legitimate are our prayers? What confidence do we have that our prayers are more than just religious exercises?
 - The Wisdom of Prayer- more than just an exercise, but offers substance to our lives
 - The substance Paul says is evidence of God's Work within us
 - What made Paul's ministry to the Corinthians legitimate?
 - It was the evidence of God's Work within those who believed in the message that Paul shared
 - More than a letter of recommendation wrote on a stone tablet, but the letter of recommendation found from a transformed heart.

- 1 Corinthians 6:11 (ESV), “And such were some of you. But you were washed, you were sanctified, you were justified in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ and by the Spirit of our God.”
- The changed heart of the Corinthians is the evidence that legitimizes their faith and Paul’s ministry.
- Back to Baseball Illustration
 - The #1 team is #1 because of their record- their record of wins legitimizes how good they are.
 - Our team doesn’t have as good of a resume, but as coaches who have worked with our players and witnessed their potential can see something that maybe their record doesn’t reveal.
 - Our job as coaches is to help the players see the potential they have within themselves and continue to work with them to improve and play at their full potential
- You don’t have to have a perfect record in order to be a legitimate player on God’s team
 - We find our legitimacy when we seek God
 - God sanctifies us and justifies us
 - Through a transformed heart we can see the evidence of God’s work in our lives
 - And the more that we seek him the more we find him
 - Find the legitimacy of your faith by seeking God.

What Has God Wrote On Your Heart?

- 2 Corinthians 3:4-6
 - Confidence is not in what we have done
 - The confidence comes from what God has done in us
- Things coaches say
 - To the pitcher- “Throw the ball to the glove”- What else would they be trying to do?
 - To the hitter- “Hit the ball!”- What else would they be trying to hit? No kid goes up to bat in hopes that they strike out!
 - Trying to offer encouragement, but what are we really enforcing?
- Slump in Faith (just like hitters or pitchers go through)
 - “If I just try harder”

- “I’ll never be that good”
- When Paul writes, “For the letter of the law kills” he is essentially saying that the O.T. law sets us up to fail, to enter a spiritual slump. It only shows our failures.
- Yet, “the Spirit gives life”- This is the transforming work that comes through God’s Spirit releasing the potential of what is possible when we allow God to work within us.
- The Corinthians bear witness to the Spirit’s potential
 - They aren’t perfect, but there is evidence that their lives have changed
 - They reflect more of the God they serve
 - Their faith is legitimate
 - The law is transformed from a stone tablet to what God has wrote on their heart
- What does it mean for God to write on the tablet of our heart?
 - It is the evidence that our faith is guiding our decisions, our life
 - If there is evidence of God’s work in your life, then your faith is legitimate
 - While Jesus’ work on the cross is complete, His work in your life is not
 - If we find our legitimacy in seeking God, then we continue to grow in our faith as we consider what God has wrote on our heart
- What has God wrote on your heart?
 - In other words, where can you say that you have depended on God and His Word and found evidence for that dependence to take root in your life?
 - Continue to depend on God and continue to foster God’s Word in your life so that your faith will continue to grow.

Remove the Veil, Receive Full Exposure of God’s Glory

- Paul’s Illustration of Moses and the Veil
 - Maybe difficult to understand
 - Let’s read it first [2 Corinthians 3:12-16](#)
- Illustration of pale skin and sunburn without tanning
 - It’s pretty obvious that I have pale skin
 - If you didn’t know me, you would think that all I do is spend my time indoors
 - Not True at all!

- However, you know if I've been outside in the hot sun because if I don't wear sunscreen I become beat red
- Once I burn I don't tan- so I don't even get any benefit from a sunburn
- The evidence that Moses had been with God was the glow on his face, which was so bright that he had to wear a veil over his face.
- Paul's reference is to [Exodus 33-34](#)
 - Moses went to the top of Mt. Sinai to meet with God
 - While there, God gave the Ten Commandments to Moses
 - The Israelites could not wait for Moses to return so they built an idol to worship (referenced this last week)
 - When Moses returned from meeting with God, he smashed the tablet in anger
 - God was ready to completely dismiss the Israelites for their sin
 - Moses interceded on behalf of the people
 - God forgave and Moses again met with God and received a new tablet
 - When he returned from meeting with God his face was beaming so bright that he put a veil to cover his face
 - The significance of the veil is that only Moses was able to meet God
 - The Israelites were not- hardened heart and lack of repentance
 - Each time that Moses would go to meet with God he would removed the veil but then put it back on when he returned to the people
 - The veil represented the separation between God and the people- it was Moses' exposure to God that required a veil before the people
- The Israelites needed Moses as an intercessor, however when Paul talks to the Corinthians he challenges the need for a letter of recommendation
 - They don't need Paul to intercede for them
 - Paul's ministry, the preaching of the Gospel, has already been received by the Corinthians.
 - The evidence of the Spirit's work in their life makes their faith legitimate as well as Paul's ministry to them.
 - The veil has been removed. They can approach the Lord boldly because
 - Their faith is legitimate

- God has wrote on the tablet of their heart
- So the challenge for us to seek God through prayer
 - The legitimacy of our faith gives us the confidence to seek God through prayer
 - God has wrote on our hearts his Word of grace
 - Remove the veil that keeps us from seeking God
- The Veils that cover our faith (keep us from truly seeking God)
 - Don't seek God beyond Sunday morning
 - Quit growing in our faith
 - Inadequacy or Complacency
 - Veils don't allow God's glory to shine throughout our lives- they don't allow for God's full potential to work in our lives!
- The heart of this illustration is that access to God was limited in the Old Testament
 - Prophet
 - Priest
 - Chosen One
 - Intercessor who was not perfect
 - The veil is not necessary anymore!
- Not only do we place a veil between us and God, but we can also restrict other people from coming close to God
 - We hold people to our expectation without offering grace
 - Yes they need to grow, but how can we help them grow?
 - How can we work beyond their limitations to help them reach their potential in Christ?
- Personal story
 - Come to realize that my story is unique
 - Grew up in church from the time I was born
 - Parents remained together
 - Undergrad at private school
 - Master's and Doctorate Degree
 - I've been privileged to have the opportunities I've been given in my life.

- I can't hold everyone accountable to my story
- The moment that I hold people to the same expectation, I begin to restrict people's access to God
- But because of my story, God holds me accountable to the opportunities that he has given me to use those opportunities for His glory.
- Recognize the veil that you put before God and before others
- Then, remove the veil so that you and others can receive full exposure to God's glory

Permanent Glory

- Like a sunburn that fades with time, so did the radiance from Moses' face
- Yet, Paul encourages us that with Jesus as our intercessor when we seek God in prayer the veil can be removed, we can expose ourselves to the full radiance of God's glory
- And this time, the glory, the glow is permanent!
- **2 Corinthians 3:17-18**
 - The glory of the Lord is the light that shines before the rest of the world
 - The light is not a veil that is supposed to keep people from God, but to draw the world to God
 - Part of what should draw people to God, or the legitimacy of our witness should be the evidence of how God is working in our own lives
 - God continues to work in our lives as we seek Him
 - As verse 18 says, as we behold the glory of God, we are being transformed into His image.
- N.T. Wright, "He (Paul) is challenging them to look for the real glory even though at the moment they can't see it; to listen for the hidden power of the gospel music, even though at the moment their heads are filled with the transient power of what their culture gives them. It is a challenge the church needs to hear again and again."¹

Conclusion

- You can't experience the full potential of your faith without turning to God and removing the veil.

¹ N.T. Wright. *Paul for Everyone: 2 Corinthians*. Louisville: Westminster John Knox Press. 2004. pg. 34.

- If you have received Jesus as your Lord and Savior- the legitimacy of your faith is found in the evidence of how God has transformed your heart
- Seek God and fully exposure yourself to God's glory
 - Allow God to continue to transform you
 - And, allow the radiance of God's glory to be seen by the rest of the world!