



Links Players

ALL WE HAVE GAINED 2: UNDERSTANDING

Only Christ can get rid of the veil so they can see for themselves that there's nothing there. (2 Corinthians 3:14, MSG)

BY NOW WE ARE ALL AS TIRED OF FACE COVERINGS as we are of a temporary green months into its use on one of our favorite holes. That little painted circle on some closely mowed fairway just doesn't cut it—nor does the hindrance of not seeing a friend's smiling face in that moment of close connection.

This is no diatribe about mask-wearing. You can't rightly argue against what you don't intend to obey. But it is a lament, a sadness over a condition that has us pinned down for the present. And it's a metaphor for what we see in Scripture when it comes to understanding the fullness of God's design for our salvation.

In his paraphrase of Paul's second letter to the Corinthians, Eugene Peterson set forth four governments: the Government of Death, the Government of Living Spirit, the Government of Condemnation, and the Government of Affirmation. It should be evident that these four governments fall into two categories, one that gives life and one that does not. Evident to us, that is. But not evident, Paul explained, to the law-loving Jewish stalwarts who saw righteousness as something accomplished rather than something received.

To depict the difference between these two categories, Paul pointed to Moses' face covering, the veil he wore to cut the glare of God's glory on his face after the prophet descended from Mount Sinai with the commandments of God. Behind that veil, the glory slowly faded; but because of the veil, the people didn't know. In the same way, the "glory" of those commandments (the Old Testament law) was fleeting. They were not intended to qualify us but to expose us, to make us aware of our sin. The religious adherents, to their eternal detriment, did not understand the difference. For this reason, Paul agonized: "Even today when the proclamations of that old, bankrupt government are read out, they can't see through it."

But Paul never left his readers without the solution. The veil could be lifted. The veil *had* been lifted. The way of Christ is the way of grace not grit. You can't prove yourself to God by your righteousness, because you have already proven yourself to him by your sin (Genesis 6:11-12, John 2:24-25). It is the way of Jesus that causes us to understand this. It is *his* righteousness, *his* love, *his* atoning sacrifice that open the door to heaven for those who believe. Through Christ we gain the understanding that gives us life eternal.

Opening questions Which of golf's maintenance inconveniences bug you most (frost delays, aerated greens, temporary tees or greens, etc.)? How do you adjust to these things in your mind?

READING 1 Corinthians 1:18-25, 2 Corinthians 3:4-18

Our wisdom and God's (1 Corinthians 1)

What are the two ways people may view the cross of Christ? What causes this difference in one's perspective?

How far apart is our wisdom from God's? How do we prevent falling into intellectual laziness when it comes to understanding God (see Acts 17:11-12)? How can proper knowledge encourage and sustain belief?

Veils and openness (2 Corinthians 3)

The veil of self-righteousness shrouded the hearts of the law-lovers. What "veils" can prevent us from seeing God in our lives today? What causes the veil to be lifted (v. 16)? How do you see Christ newly as a believer?

Written by Jeff Hopper ©2021 Links Players International. A video introduction for this study may be found here: <https://youtu.be/mQnQgTsd9rg>.