

2 Corinthians 3:16

Authorized King James Version (KJV)

Nevertheless when it shall turn to the Lord, the veil shall be taken away.

Analysis

Nevertheless when it shall turn to the Lord, the veil shall be taken away.

Paul offers hope: the veil is not permanent. **When it shall turn** (Greek *hēnika epistrepsē*, ήνίκα ἐπιστρέψῃ) uses the verb *epistrephō* (ἐπιστρέφω), meaning "to turn," "return," or "convert"—biblical language for repentance and conversion. The subject **it** is ambiguous in Greek (no pronoun), possibly referring to Israel collectively, an individual heart, or even Moses symbolically. The ambiguity is intentional: whenever anyone (Jew or Gentile) turns **to the Lord** (Greek *pros Kyrion*, πρὸς Κύριον), **the veil shall be taken away** (Greek *periaireitai to kalymma*, περιαἱρεῖται τὸ κάλυμμα).

Paul alludes to Exodus 34:34: "But when Moses went in before the LORD to speak with him, he took the veil off." Just as Moses removed the veil to enter God's presence, so any person who turns to the Lord (Christ) in repentance has the veil removed, enabling them to perceive spiritual truth. The passive voice **shall be taken away** indicates divine action—God removes the veil through the Spirit's work. Human turning is met with divine unveiling.

Historical Context

Paul's emphasis on turning "to the Lord" deliberately evokes the Shema (Deuteronomy 6:4-5), Israel's central confession, while identifying "the Lord" as Christ (see verse 17). This was central to early Christian apologetics: Jesus is Yahweh incarnate, the God of Israel. Romans 10:9-13 makes this explicit:

confessing "Jesus is Lord" fulfills Joel's prophecy that "whosoever shall call upon the name of the LORD shall be saved" (Joel 2:32). Turning to Christ is turning to Yahweh, and this turning results in the veil's removal—spiritual sight, understanding, transformation.

Related Passages

Hebrews 11:1 — Definition of faith

James 2:17 — Faith and works

Study Questions

1. Have you experienced a moment of "turning to the Lord" when spiritual truth suddenly became clear after being obscure?
2. What does it mean practically for you to "turn to the Lord" in areas of your life where you still feel spiritually blind?
3. How can you help others experience the veil-removing power of turning to Christ in repentance and faith?

Interlinear Text

ἡνίκα	δ'	ἄν	ἐπιστρέψῃ	πρὸς	κύριον	περιαιρεῖται
when	Nevertheless	it	shall turn	to	the Lord	shall be taken away
G2259	G1161	G302	G1994	G4314	G2962	G4014

τὸ κάλυμμα

G3588 the veil
 G2571

Additional Cross-References

Exodus 34:34 (References Lord): But when Moses went in before the LORD to speak with him, he took the veil off, until he came out. And he came out, and spake unto the children of Israel that which he was commanded.

Isaiah 25:7 (Parallel theme): And he will destroy in this mountain the face of the covering cast over all people, and the vail that is spread over all nations.

Isaiah 29:18 (Parallel theme): And in that day shall the deaf hear the words of the book, and the eyes of the blind shall see out of obscurity, and out of darkness.

Jeremiah 31:34 (References Lord): And they shall teach no more every man his neighbour, and every man his brother, saying, Know the LORD: for they shall all know me, from the least of them unto the greatest of them, saith the LORD: for I will forgive their iniquity, and I will remember their sin no more.

Romans 11:23 (Parallel theme): And they also, if they abide not still in unbelief, shall be graffed in: for God is able to graff them in again.

Lamentations 3:40 (References Lord): Let us search and try our ways, and turn again to the LORD.

Isaiah 54:13 (References Lord): And all thy children shall be taught of the LORD; and great shall be the peace of thy children.

Deuteronomy 30:10 (References Lord): If thou shalt hearken unto the voice of the LORD thy God, to keep his commandments and his statutes which are written in this book of the law, and if thou turn unto the LORD thy God with all thine heart, and with all thy soul.

Deuteronomy 4:30 (References Lord): When thou art in tribulation, and all these things are come upon thee, even in the latter days, if thou turn to the LORD thy God, and shalt be obedient unto his voice;