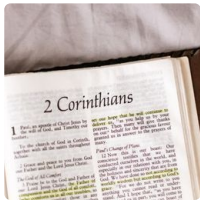


OpenTheo

2 Corinthians 3



2 Corinthians - Steve Gregg

In this talk, Steve Gregg explores the theme of glory and contrasts the external, written covenant of the Old Testament with the internal, spiritual covenant of the New Testament. He emphasizes the importance of the Holy Spirit in guiding believers towards a life that is pleasing to God, and encourages listeners to turn to the Lord and embrace the sacrificial nature of Christianity. Through his analysis of various biblical passages, Gregg highlights the transformative power of Christ and the ultimate purpose of seeking God's glory.

Transcript

2 Corinthians 3 As I mentioned in our previous classes, 2 Corinthians is a very personal epistle. And because it is personal, it is considerably more informal than a lot of the epistles of Paul are. In most of Paul's epistles, there is some organization, some moving from one thought to the next logical thought, in a progression through the epistle.

Very typically in his epistles, we have a section at the beginning that's more theological in its treatment, and then the latter part of the book will be practical application. This is true in Romans, it's true in Ephesians and in Colossians, and it's sort of a style that Paul has in Thessalonians, and even Galatians. But 2 Corinthians isn't like that.

He was obviously more emotional at the time he wrote 2 Corinthians than he was when he wrote Romans, for example. And he has things that he wants to say, but he intermixes some of the same thoughts in various places, and he doesn't follow an outline that is very obvious. I mean, in the broad view of the book of 2 Corinthians, you can see it can be divided into some sections, but within those sections, there's not necessarily a flow of thought that is consistent.

There's a lot of going back, there's a lot of intermixing of personal incidents that Paul refers back to, and he's largely trying to defend himself without being too defensive, is what it really gets down to. Sometimes he gets quite embarrassed defending himself. Later on, in the later chapters where he gets very defensive, he says, I speak as a fool.

He keeps interrupting himself saying, I speak as a fool, meaning he feels like a fool in

defending himself. It's not his style, it's not his disposition normally to speak defensively of himself, but in many cases with the Corinthians, he has been forced to, lest his whole ministry in the gospel he preached be discredited by lack of a defender. Paul later tells the Corinthians they should have defended him, he should have had to defend himself, but since they didn't, he had to speak up.

Now, he's been speaking of himself in the end of chapter two, and he says in chapter three, verse one, do we begin again to commend ourselves? Now, obviously the question suggests either that someone had accused him of commending himself, or else he begins to feel in the way he's speaking that he's being a little too defensive, a little bit too self-commending. And so he's bringing himself up short and saying, well, you know, it's not so much that I need to defend myself or commend myself. I certainly don't need to commend myself the way others do.

Certainly not among the Corinthians, since they were his own converts. He says, do we need, as some others, epistles of commendation to you, or letters of commendation from you? Apparently there were people who, when they came to Corinth, they came on the strength of letters of commendation from some other churches, possibly the Jerusalem church, and that was their claim to authority, was that someone in Jerusalem commended them. Likewise, when they left Corinth, they wanted Corinth to write letters of commendation from Corinth, which could be used in establishing these people in their new location in another town.

I mentioned in a previous class that Paul is not opposed to letters of commendation per se. In Romans 16.1, Paul begins to commend a lady who was leaving the church in Corinth and going to the church of Rome, and he sends a few sentences of a letter of commendation for her. Her name is Phoebe.

And we also know that when Apollos came to Ephesus and encountered Priscilla and Aquila, before he moved on and went to Corinth, they gave him a letter of commendation. It says in Acts chapter 18 that Priscilla and Aquila and the church there gave letters to the church of Corinth for Apollos to carry, commending him to them. So, these were Paul's companions.

There was certainly nothing immoral or unethical or that Paul would innately disapprove of in the policy of using letters of commendation. It was simply not Paul's practice to carry them himself. He didn't need them.

The miracles in his ministry, the converts, the fruit of his life was commendation enough. And so he asks rhetorically, do we need as some others epistles of commendation to you or letters of commendation from you? He says, you are our epistle, written in our hearts, known and read by all men. You are manifestly an epistle of Christ, ministered by us, written not with ink, but by the spirit of the living God, not on tablets of stone, but on tablets of flesh, that is, of the heart.

Now, he's saying, I don't need to carry letters with me written in ink because I have letters of commendation through the spirit. The Holy Spirit is my endorser. He is the one who confirms what I have to say.

I say things and the Holy Spirit confirms it through signs following and through bringing about conversion and changed lives. The changed lives and the work of the Holy Spirit through my ministry, he says, is my commendation and it speaks much more loudly and more infallibly than any letters written with ink and pen could possibly do. And he says that you yourselves are part of that letter.

My work throughout the world and the work of the spirit through my ministry is my letter of commendation. He says, and you are among those that I would appeal to as proof of who I am and what I'm called to do and of God's approval in my work so that I don't need to rely on commendations from men. Now, I'm not sure how easy it would have been for Paul to receive letters of commendation from men other than, of course, men of his own churches that he had established.

But to receive letters of commendation that were written by your own converts might not be considered to be that authoritative if you were to come to another place where you're a stranger. As far as the church of Jerusalem, there was a basic approval of Paul's ministry, perhaps a grudging approval of it. We know from Galatians chapter two that Paul, on one of his early visits to Jerusalem, meeting with the apostles, received the right hand of fellowship from them.

And they acknowledged that he was an apostle to the Gentiles, just as Peter and the others were apostles to the Jews. And the right hand of fellowship was a sign and a token of partnership and of recognition. In a sense, Paul receives a letter of commendation from Peter in second Peter chapter three, but that was probably written after Paul was dead.

So, it wasn't so much that Paul needed this kind of a letter as an entry to a new region. Paul didn't usually do a lot of ministry in churches that he hadn't established himself. For him to bring a letter of commendation from Peter, for example, if he could get one, into a new territory that hadn't been evangelized yet, well, who would he show the letter to? Who cares? There's no Christians there who would recognize Peter's authority.

Paul would go into virgin territory, a pristine region that had not yet been evangelized at all. That was his policy. He said that in the end of Romans in chapter 15, that his policy has been to go not where Christ has been preached, but where Christ has not been preached.

And, therefore, he doesn't need such letters. Once he's been to a town, he's left his mark on it, and that is his letter. And if he revisits it, he doesn't need a letter from somewhere else telling these people who he is.

He's been there, done that, and they are the proof of who he is. So, he's not dependent, as some others are, on letters of commendation. It's possible that his critics in Corinth were.

It's possible that they had come in with letters from somewhere, like Jerusalem or some Jewish church, which may have been tolerant of their Judaizing tendencies. And Paul was, of course, not agreeable with that at all. Now, he makes a strange shift in his thinking here.

Moving from the idea of a letter of commendation, that is, a letter written with ink, and contrasting that with letters written on the hearts of people by the Holy Spirit, he shifts that to contrasting letters written on the heart with letters written in stone. Now, the thing that pivots him here is that, in speaking of all the letters he needs of commendation, is the letters written by the Holy Spirit on the hearts of his converts, he is no doubt, by that very comment, reminded of Jeremiah, chapter 31, which says, in the New Covenant, God would write his laws and his words on their hearts. And this is in contrast, of course, to the Old Covenant, which was written on stone.

And having made reference to the Holy Spirit writing on the hearts of these converts, and that bringing to Paul's mind, in all likelihood, this image of the law written on the hearts, he now begins to make the contrast between what has happened in their hearts as a result of their participation in the New Covenant, with what the Old Covenant taught, and how it was defective. Now, the fact that Paul goes into this as he does, suggests strongly that his opponents were Judaizers, because he spends almost the rest of this chapter making the contrast between the glory of the New Covenant and the glory of the Old Covenant, the kind of argument you would expect to find in the book of Hebrews, where the author is trying to convince Jewish Christians not to go back to Judaism because Christianity is so much superior to Judaism. Well, that's basically how the rest of Paul's argument goes.

He's found a convenient turning point from discussing letters of commendation versus letters written on the heart, and that letters on the heart propels him over to the concept of Jeremiah 31, where God's covenant in the New Covenant is written on the heart, whereas the Old Covenant was written merely on stone tablets. And it's in verse 3 here that he makes the transition from one thought to the other. He says, You are manifestly an epistle of Christ, ministered by us, written not with ink, but by the Spirit of the living God.

Now, that's sort of the finishing off of his thought in verses 1 and 2. And now he adds, before the sentence is over, something that propels him in this other direction. Not on tablets of stone, but on tablets of flesh, that is, of the heart. Now, when he says, Not on tablets of stone, but on tablets of flesh, that is, the heart, the language here not only is called for by Jeremiah 31, but it also has an echo, I believe, and deliberately, of Ezekiel's

parallel passage to that Jeremiah passage.

I say parallel only because it's on the same subject. It's not parallel in any sense that passages say in the Gospels are parallel to one another. But in Ezekiel chapter 36, verse 25 through 26, Ezekiel 36, 25 and 26, God says, Then I will sprinkle clean water on you, and you shall be clean.

I will cleanse you from all your filthiness and from all your idols. I will give you a new heart and put a new spirit within you. I will take the heart of stone out of your flesh and give you a heart of flesh.

Now, this imagery, though different from that in Jeremiah 31, is really making the same kind of prediction that Jeremiah 31 makes, that God will put his laws on the heart. Here the imagery is different. He's just going to take the old heart out and put in a new heart.

The result is the same. Whether you have God retool the old heart and reprogram it with new data, write his laws on it instead of the sinful patterns that were written on before, or whether he just takes out the old one and puts a new one in, the result is the same. You have a new heart, and that new heart is differently disposed than the old heart was.

That's why regeneration is necessary, because the old heart is disposed toward selfishness and pride and sin and rebellion and self-will. The new heart is disposed differently. It's not hard against God like a heart of stone.

It's soft like a heart of flesh toward God. Softness toward God means disposed toward submission to God. God's laws are written on the heart in the sense that that's what comes forth from the heart.

What is written in a book is what comes out of the book when you read it. What is written on software is what comes out of the computer when you run it. What's written in the heart is what comes out of the heart when the heart is doing what it does.

We're talking about the spiritual heart, not the physical heart here. We're talking about the metaphorical heart. The heart there is that from which spring all the issues of life, according to Proverbs.

Guard your heart with all diligence, for out of it are the issues of life. To have your heart changed means that what comes out of you changes, because Jesus himself also said, out of the heart proceed. And then he lists a bunch of bad things that come out of an evil heart.

Blasphemies and adulteries and idolatries and other things like that. It's what comes out of the heart that is seen in the life. So what Paul is saying is their lives are different because their hearts have been made different.

And this engraving on their hearts of a new code, of a new data content, of a new orientation, has been done by the Spirit of God through Paul's agency. And that's why he takes credit in some degree that it's the credentials of his ministry. But it's not him, it's the Holy Spirit who's done it.

And he brings that out in the next few verses. Because he says in 2 Corinthians 3, 4, We have such trust through Christ toward God, not that we are sufficient of ourselves, to think of anything as being from ourselves, but our sufficiency is from God, who also made us sufficient as ministers of the new covenant, not of the letter, but of the Spirit. For the letter kills, but the Spirit gives life.

Now, the reason Paul says this is that he's just referred to the work of the Holy Spirit in the lives of the Corinthian believers as a proof of his credentials. In a sense, he is basically taking a bit of credit. Or it may at least appear that he is because he's saying, well, these are my credentials.

Well, your credentials are basically that which you take credit for. And he says, these are my credentials. My letter of commendation is what was wrought in your hearts.

Now, he acknowledges even earlier than these verses that this is done by the Spirit of God, not by man. Yet, the fact that he's pointing to this work of the Spirit as credentials of his ministry personally may give people the impression that he's trying to take credit for that which is the work of God. And so he tries to make it clear that's not what he's thinking.

We're not sufficient of ourselves to do anything. This ministry that we have is a ministry that has the result of God making us sufficient. It is God working in us that does it.

It is the work of the Holy Spirit, but it is nonetheless the case that he did it through us. We are not sufficient of ourselves to bring such changes in people. That's something that we need to realize, any of us who hope to change lives, whether in evangelism or in discipling people, that you'll become very frustrated if you go into full-time ministry, and if you think that by simply telling people what they need to know, you'll change them.

Or that by putting them in a good program, you'll change them. Or that by any other human means, you'll change them. The best preaching in the world doesn't change people in itself.

Paul may have been a wonderful preacher, but he realized that in himself, the preaching he did couldn't work miracles in people's lives. That is something the Holy Spirit has to work with the preacher, has to make the preaching anointed. He has to give it a spiritual power that cannot be brought into it by mere personality power.

There are many preachers who can manipulate emotions by their eloquence. There are many preachers who know how to dramatically present things so that it thrills the

audience. But none of this is the same thing as having the anointing of the Holy Spirit, who, whether he thrills the audience or not, changes the audience.

The words of an anointed preacher make an impact and change the way a person lives permanently, or at least long term, let's put it that way. Paul did not credit the success he had in changing the lives of these people. You might say, well, he had trouble with these people.

What's to boast about? These people may not have lives that are very well changed. What's to boast about here? The Corinthian church was full of problems, wasn't it? Well, it was full of problems, but it was not full of as many problems as it had before, as it would have had if they had not been converted. Let me remind you what kind of people the Corinthians were before they were converted.

Just real quickly, in 1 Corinthians 6, beginning with verse 9, Paul said, Do you not know that the unrighteous will not inherit the kingdom of God? Do not be deceived, neither fornicators, nor idolaters, nor adulterers, nor homosexuals, nor sodomites, nor thieves, nor covetous, nor drunkards, nor revilers, nor extortioners will inherit the kingdom of God, and such were some of you. But you were washed, but you were sanctified, but you were justified by the name of the Lord Jesus and by the Spirit of our God. So some of these people were in all of these categories, fornicators, idolaters, adulterers, homosexuals, sodomites, thieves, covetous, drunkards, revilers, extortioners.

This is the kind of people that populated the Corinthian church. Now, Paul still had ongoing problems with these people. Their immaturity and their carnality had to be addressed many times, but they were no longer sodomites, they were no longer thieves, they were no longer drunkards.

These things, they had been well established in sinful behaviors that man's power alone cannot change. But through the power of God, they had been cleansed and sanctified. And Paul recognizes that this is not really his doing.

He says, we are not sufficient of ourselves to think anything has been from ourselves, but our sufficiency is from God who has made us sufficient as ministers of the new covenant. Now, when he says, as ministers of the new covenant, in verse 6, he amplifies on that new covenant, as opposed to the old covenant, with this phrase, not of the letter, but of the spirit, for the letter kills, but the spirit gives life. It is unfortunate, I think, that many persons today, especially of charismatic or Pentecostal sort, have quoted this verse without understanding its meaning, because they quote it to their own detriment a great deal.

There are people who are so charismatic that if you point out to them from Scripture that what they are doing is wrong, they will quote a verse like this and say, well, that's the letter, you know, the Scripture, that's the letter. We're concerned only with what the

spirit is leading us to do. The spirit gives life, it's better, and the letter kills.

And there is an immunity to correction in many cases among people of a certain mindset, and they are not rare. If you haven't met them yet, you simply expose yourself as one not having been in circulation very much, in charismatic circles. You don't have to look far for them.

They are there. They disdain biblical authority. And they are fascinated with any purported word from the spirit.

It can be a false prophecy, it doesn't make any difference to them. Anything that is spiritual appeals to them, or anything that appears to be spiritual. And you cannot judge prophecy by the Bible, in their opinion.

Because prophecy is the work of the spirit, and the Bible is the letter, and the letter is a dead letter. And the letter kills, and you simply cannot be a follower of the letter unless you want to be spiritually dead. You have to go on from there, and leave behind your bondage to biblical authority, and go on to the things, the new things that the spirit is saying, and doing.

This is how many people actually do think. And they think that Paul thought that way, because he said, We are ministers of the new covenant, not of the letter, but of the spirit. For the letter kills, but the spirit gives life.

Now first of all, let's ask ourselves whether this possible meaning, whether this meaning that many people take it to mean, could have been Paul's meaning. Was Paul saying that he was not interested in teaching the scriptures, or enforcing the authority of the scriptures? When he said, We are ministers of the new covenant, we're not ministers of the letter, but of the spirit. Is he saying therefore that he doesn't teach the scripture? Does not command obedience to scripture? Does not use scripture as the final authority for all points? Well he couldn't be saying that unless he had not paid attention to his own ministry very well.

Because Paul was continually quoting scripture and using it as the basis for his instructions. His letters, in many cases, are simply expansions and expositions on what the scripture said. And he points that out by saying, every once in a while he says, As it is written.

And he quotes some scripture which shows that what he's saying is entirely according to what the Bible says. In other words, what he is saying is merely an application or an exposition on some biblical truth of the Old Testament. By the way, Jesus did that too.

And rightly so, because both Jesus and Paul and the other apostles believed that the scriptures were the word of God and authoritative. And yet, of course, Jesus and Paul also operated in the miraculous, also operated under tremendous spiritual anointing.

Now there's different ways to understand what Paul is saying here.

Many people believe, and they may be right, that when he says, Not the letter, but the Spirit, that he's just using those as a contrast between the Old Covenant and the New. That the Old Covenant is a covenant merely of letter. It's merely written.

But there is no giving of the Holy Spirit in the Old Covenant to enable people to perform what was written. And so Paul sees it as the covenant of the letter, the written covenant. The covenant that was externally written.

Whereas the New Covenant is internally written by the Spirit. And that the Spirit of God in the New Covenant enables us to walk a life pleasing to God in a way that a written letter never did. So that when he says, Not of the letter, but of the Spirit, he's not trying to say that letters are bad.

What he's saying is, the letter is simply his way of speaking of the covenant that was merely written. The Old Covenant, in other words. As opposed to the New Covenant, which is the covenant of the Spirit.

Paul has a sort of similar language to this in Romans. I'm trying to remember where it was. I think it was Romans 7. I was looking to see if there was a cross-reference in my margin.

There isn't. I don't think there's a cross-reference for Romans 7. But I believe that's nonetheless where it is. It is.

In fact, Romans 7, verse 6 says, But now we have been delivered from the law, having died to what we were held by, so that we should serve in the newness of the Spirit and not in the oldness of the letter. Notice that we were under the law, but not anymore. So we no longer serve in the oldness of the letter.

That is, the Old Covenant. The Letter Covenant. But we serve in the newness of the New Covenant, the Spirit.

There's the newness of the Spirit, the oldness of the letter. The letter refers to the Old Covenant, the Spirit refers to the New Covenant. Now, this does not mean that there are no letters and no writings relevant to the New Covenant.

If there were not, we would not be studying this epistle right now, because the letter we're studying, 2 Corinthians, is a letter. And it is a letter of the New Covenant. When Paul says, not of the letter, but of the Spirit, there's two ways to look at it, possibly correctly.

One is that the letter is just his shorthand way of saying the Old Covenant, which is merely a written set of laws, versus the letter, which is just his shorthand way of saying

the New Covenant, which is not a written set of laws. Or he might be using it in the sense that we've often observed in Scripture, of what we call a limited negative, where it says, not this, but that, but literally means, not only this, but also that. That we don't only minister in the letter, but also in the Spirit.

That is a possible meaning as well. The letter by itself is dead, but the letter with the Spirit is alive and life-giving. Certainly Paul is not saying that he has no use for the letter, or for written authority.

Paul wouldn't say that about the Old Testament, and he certainly wouldn't say that about his own epistles. His own epistles carried authority. In fact, he told the same audience, back in chapter 14 of 1 Corinthians, writing to the same Corinthians, in 1 Corinthians chapter 14, he says in verse 37, If anyone thinks himself a prophet or spiritual, let him acknowledge that the things which I write to you are the commandments of the Lord.

Now, someone says, well, I'm only interested in the Spirit, not in the letter. Well, Paul said, the things I write to you, that's the letters he wrote, they are the commandments of the Lord. And by the way, if anyone thinks he's spiritual, he'd better acknowledge that.

Paul is saying, anyone who does not acknowledge that is neither a prophet nor is he spiritual. That's 1 Corinthians 14, verse 37. So, it would be absurd to take Paul's statement about the letter and the Spirit the way that some charismatics like to do, which simply is their way of saying, I like to do whatever I feel like doing, I'll call that what the Holy Spirit is leading me to do, and I don't very much like to be restricted by the strictures of biblical guidelines, because that's just the deadness of the letter.

And people who get into that, and by the way, there have been many, many, many who have. Many of them are the beginners of cults, eventually. And once you, of course, decide that it's the Spirit that matters and not what's written, then you are in serious trouble.

Who do you think inspired the writings that we're talking about? It was the Spirit. And therefore, they are no less spiritual than what the Spirit may say to you subjectively or privately. The writings, what the Spirit said to the prophets, what the Spirit said to Moses, what the Spirit said to David, what the Spirit said to the apostles, and which happened to be written down by the inspiration of the Spirit, that is not less spiritual to follow than to follow the vague urges that you feel in your heart that you think are the Holy Spirit.

Being led by the Spirit is as truly done when you are led by Scripture as when you're led by a dream or a vision or a prophecy, because Scripture is prophetic. Scripture is vision. Scripture is inspired.

And I'm not trying to say that since we have the Scripture, we don't need any visions and

dreams and prophecies anymore. Some people go that far. I don't.

I think both are valuable. But I believe that the Scriptures are not to be disdained, and some people who do disdain them because they don't like the restrictions in their lives and their beliefs that the Scriptures put on them, and they say, well, I'll just follow the Spirit, don't bother me with this letter stuff. They like to quote Paul as if he meant that, and he certainly did not mean that.

Now, it is fairly clear that when he said, not the letter but the Spirit, he means that as a shorthand way of saying not the Old Covenant but the New Covenant. And that is clarified in many ways. First of all, because he says the letter kills, but the Spirit gives life.

What he means is the Old Covenant results in condemnation and death. The Old Covenant places demands upon people without giving them the spiritual resources to perform what is required, and therefore the net result is condemnation and death. That's the net result of living under the law.

But living under the rule of the Spirit and under grace, the Spirit is a life-giving dynamic person of the Godhead. And when the Spirit comes, he gives life. Later on in this chapter, he says he's going to give liberty too.

In verse 17, it says, where the Lord is that Spirit, and where the Spirit of the Lord is, there is liberty. So the Spirit gives life, and the Spirit gives liberty. From what? Life from the spiritual death of condemnation, and liberty from the bondage of the law.

Now, throughout the remainder of this chapter, Paul is going to make contrast between the Old Covenant and the New Covenant. Just as he does in the last line of verse 6. You know, the letter kills, but the Spirit gives life. That's a contrast between the Old Covenant and the New Covenant.

It's not a contrast between Bible and mystical revelation. It's the two systems that he's talking about. And in the rest of the discussion, he refers to the Old Covenant in terms like, verse 7, he calls it the ministry of death.

In verse 9, he calls it the ministry of condemnation. In verse 11, he calls it what is passing away. But he speaks of the New Covenant, in verse 8, as the ministry of the Spirit.

And in verse 9, as the ministry of righteousness. And in verse 11, as what remains. So, the Old Covenant is the ministry of death, whereas the New Covenant is the ministry of the Spirit.

That is clear, and that of course helps to explain verse 6, where he said the letter kills. What's the letter? The Old Covenant. It's the ministry of death.

But the New Covenant, the Spirit gives life, well that's the ministry of the Spirit. In verse 8. So, we see here this is a contrast of two covenantal systems of religion. And not a contrast between following what is written on one hand in the Bible, and following the vague and ambiguous urgings of what we perceive to be the Spirit of our lives on the other.

As if one is superior to the other. If one is, my vote would go the other way. But, you see verse 9 says, if the ministry of condemnation, that's the Old Covenant, then it says the ministry of righteousness, that's the New Covenant.

In verse 11, for if what is passing away was glorious, then what remains is much more glorious. The Old Covenant is passing away, the New Covenant remains. Now, let's look at this section.

In verses 7 and following, to make his contrast with the Old and New Covenants, he wants to talk about glory. This passage is all about glory. And glory is a word that we all know, but most of us don't know what it means.

Or it may be that we know part of what it means, because glory means more than one thing. And I imagine if I asked you to give me a definition of glory, you could probably give me a definition that would probably not be inaccurate, but it might not be complete. Depending on the sense in which you think of the word glory, you might think of something like honor, or recognition, or fame.

If somebody is a glory hog, you know, if somebody wants all the glory, it means they want the recognition, they want all the congratulations, they want all the credit, they want to be honored. Well, glory does mean that. That is a meaning of glory.

Another use of the word glory in Scripture is in the simple sense of radiance or brilliance. Paul says in 1 Corinthians chapter 15, there is one glory of the sun, and another glory of the moon. And the stars differ from one another in glory.

That has to do with radiance. The glory that shone on Moses' face was simply a glow, a radiance from his face. And that is a sense in which the word glory is used in Scripture.

Like the glory of a bright light is its simple radiance. And then, in fact, even that is used of the glory of God in Christ. In Hebrews chapter 1, in verse 3, speaking of Christ, it says, He is the brightness of His glory.

Jesus is the brightness of God's glory. He is the radiance, the brightness of the radiance of God. The idea of brightness, shining, radiance, is often associated with glory in the Scripture.

So, it can mean something like honor or recognition or fame on one hand. It can mean simply radiance or light or shining or brightness in other situations. When Jesus was

glorified on the Mount of Transfiguration, His face shone like the sun.

Now, there is also another sense in which the word glory is used. And this is a much more difficult to define sense. It has to do with the glory of God, which may include the previous definitions.

God getting all the honor and the credit on one hand, and God being brilliantly bright on the other. Paul told Timothy that God dwells in a light unapproachable. But when we speak of the glory of God, we're speaking of more than that.

And this is a much more difficult to define aspect of what the Bible means by glory. But it is, as I take it, essentially the excellency and perfection of God Himself, which radiates from Him and for which all credit is due Him. But it is His innate excellence and His innate marvelousness, His innate character.

Now, when the Bible speaks of the glory of Christ, I think it's using it in that sense too. Christ's innate character and excellence. Now, Paul is going to be talking about the glory associated with the Old Covenant and the glory associated with the New Covenant in chapter 3 of 2 Corinthians.

He gives it an extended discussion and particularly a contrast between the degree of glory associated with the Old Covenant and the degree of glory associated with the New. And His use of glory here, I think, speaks of innate excellence. And that there was excellence in the Old Covenant.

As Paul put it in Romans chapter 7, the law is holy, just, and good. Or as the psalmist said, the law of the Lord is perfect, converting the soul. And there are many wonderful things said about the law of the Lord and the Old Covenant in the book of Psalms.

You read Psalm 119 and you'll find seemingly no end to the praises of the glories of the law. And there was a glory in it. There was a majesty in it.

Because it was a partial revelation of God's own excellence and of God's own virtue. In giving the law, God was exposing Himself to man. The moral law in particular is simply a description of God's own excellency, of God's own purity and goodness.

When God said, Thou shalt not do such and such, He is describing what He Himself does not do. He's telling man how to imitate God, how to be like God, how to be as moral and good and pure as God is. And there's a certain glory of God manifested in that.

But it's limited. And there's a story in the Old Testament that Paul alludes to here. He alludes to it in 2 Corinthians in the discussion.

That story, of course, you may remember it. It's found in Exodus. And... Let me find it here.

I think it's Exodus 33. I think it moves over to more than one chapter. It actually begins in chapter 32, I believe.

Let me see if I've got it. No, no. It begins chapter 33.

There's sort of an extended interview between God and Moses in this section of Exodus. And at the end of chapter 33, and then it crosses over into chapter 34, Moses says in chapter 33, 12, Then Moses said to the Lord, See, you say to me, bring up this people, but you have not let me know whom you will send with me. Yet you have said, I know you by name, and you have found grace in my sight.

Now, therefore, I pray, if I have found grace in your sight, show me now your way that I may know you, and that I may find grace in your sight, and consider this nation as your people. And God said, My presence will go with you, and I will give you rest. Moses said to him, If your presence does not go with us, do not bring us up from here.

For how then will it be known that your people and I have found grace in your sight, except you go with us? So we shall separate your people and I from all the people who are on the face of the earth. Or be separate. Verse 17.

Then the Lord said to Moses, I will do this thing that you have spoken, for you have found grace in my sight, and I know you by name. And Moses said, Please show me your glory. Then God said, I will make all my goodness pass before you, and I will proclaim the name of the Lord before you.

I will be gracious to whom I will be gracious, and I will have compassion on whom I will have compassion. But he said, You cannot see my face, for no man can see me and live. And the Lord said, Here is a place by me.

You shall stand on the rock. So it shall be, while my glory passes by, that I will put you in the cleft of the rock, and will cover you by my hand while I pass by. And then I will take away my hand, and you shall see my back, but my face shall not be seen.

Now Moses said, Show me your glory. And God said, You can't see my face and live. To see God's glory full-faced would be too brilliant, too hot, too consuming, apparently, to allow any mortal man to endure it.

Well, God says, I'll tell you what, I will declare my goodness to you, and my grace to you. And he does so. He does so a little later on in the next chapter.

And let me see if I can pinpoint very quickly the specific verses where he's doing this. Verse 6 and 7, perhaps. Yeah, and the Lord passed by before him and proclaimed, The Lord, the Lord God, merciful and gracious, long-suffering and abounding in goodness and truth, keeping mercy for thousands, forgiving iniquity and transgression and sin, and by no means clearing the guilty, visiting the iniquity of the fathers to the children, to the

third and fourth generation.

Now, that is God's fulfillment of his promise to Moses, that he would declare his name to him. And this, because Moses wanted to see the glory of God. God said, I can't show it to you full-on.

I'll just show you, as it were, a backside. I'll just show you a filtered version. I'll just declare to you my name.

And as you can see, his name is his character. Merciful and gracious and long-suffering, abounding in goodness and truth. This is God's character.

This is God's name. This is his way of declaring his glory, as it were, to Moses. Though Moses was not aware of it, we are told that the skin of his face was shining after he saw this little glimpse of God's character and excellence.

It was infectious, as it were, and Moses' own face shone as the result. It says in verse 29 of chapter 34 of Exodus, Now, it was so when Moses came down from Mount Sinai, and the two tablets of the testimony in Moses' hand when he came down from the mountain, that Moses did not know that the skin of his face shone while he talked with him. And so eventually, the children of Israel came near and they were afraid.

Well, I'll just read on. It says, So when Aaron and all the children of Israel saw Moses, behold, the skin of his face shone, and they were afraid to come near him. Then Moses called to them and Aaron and all the rulers of the congregation returned to him, and Moses talked to them.

And afterward, all the children of Israel came near, and he gave them as commandments all that the Lord had spoken with him on the mountain Sinai. And when Moses had finished speaking with them, he put a veil on his face. But whenever Moses went in before the Lord to speak with him, he would take the veil off until he came out, and he would come out and speak with the children of Israel whenever he had been commanded.

And whenever the children of Israel saw the face of Moses, that the skin of Moses' face shone, then Moses would put a veil on his face again until he went in to speak with him. Now, you probably already know this story, but I wanted to read all of those different portions because Paul gathers from the material we just read in Exodus and uses this as an illustration of the surpassing glory of the new covenant as opposed to the degree of glory associated with the old covenant. The excellency and majesty and perfection of God was in measure displayed in the old covenant, represented by the fact that Moses didn't see God's face, but he did see his back, and that's something.

He saw something of God's glory. He had declared to him some portion of the character and excellence of God. And his face even was affected by this so that his face shone

because of it.

But note that he covered his face and therefore those who were ministered to by Moses did not get to see the full glory, even as much as Moses had seen, because it was veiled. They didn't feel comfortable seeing it, for one thing, and therefore he covered his face, and that veil prevented them from seeing the full glory even of the old covenant. Now, Paul is going to use those facts as illustrative of the way the Jews never have yet been able to see, apart from turning to Christ, the glory of God fully.

They don't understand the glory of the gospel of God. They don't understand the glory of the grace of God. They don't understand the glory of God's own character and excellence because these things are revealed in Christ.

And until one turns to Christ, whatever glory may be had in the old covenant is a veiled, filtered glory that is inadequate in terms of changing our lives. Now, at the end of this whole discussion, Paul is going to point out in chapter 4, actually, in verse 6, 2 Corinthians 4, 6, he says, It is God who commanded light to shine out of darkness, who is shown in our hearts to give the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ. The Jews couldn't look on Moses' face because it was veiled, but we look on Jesus' face, and there we see the light of the knowledge of the glory of God, that which Moses was not really able to see, and the people looking at Moses were not able to see because his face was veiled.

But we have an unveiled face, he says in chapter 3 in verse 18, But we all with unveiled face, beholding as in a mirror the glory of the Lord, are being transformed into the same image from glory to glory, just as by the Spirit of the Lord. Now, this is going to be something that Paul talks about for a couple chapters at least, and that is that the glory of the old covenant was impressive, certainly no one, Paul doesn't want to belittle the glory of God seen in the wonders and the marvels of his law, and what he revealed in the old covenant. But one thing is clear, that glory was temporary.

The old covenant was a temporary arrangement to be replaced by its superior. When Jesus would come, that would replace the old covenant, which means the glory of the old covenant, whatever may be said in his favor, was a passing glory. It was not the permanent display of God's glory, and Paul finds in the glow on Moses' face a symbol of this.

Just like the glow on Moses, who is himself the representative of the whole old covenant, the man who gave it, there was a glory on his face, but that glory faded. That glory was not permanent. He didn't have that glory for the rest of his life on there.

Eventually, over a period of days or weeks, it vanished. And so Paul is going to point out that just like the glory of the man who gave the old covenant, the glory on the face of Moses was a fading glory, so the very glory of that covenant itself is a fading glory. It's a

covenant that is not any more permanent than the glow on Moses' face was permanent.

However, the new covenant is not only permanent, but continually expanding, continually increasing in glory. So that unlike Moses, who veiled his face while the glory faded, we unveil our faces, look at the face of Jesus, see the glory of God, and are changed from glory to glory in that same image. The glory of the new covenant is ever increasing, and it's infectious too.

Just as when Moses saw the hindered part of God, it infected him, as it were, with a bit of glory on him, but it faded. Yet when we look at Jesus, the glory that that infects us with or transmits to us is not a fading glory, but an increasing glory from glory to glory into that same image. And so these are some of the, I would have to say, slightly mystical aspects of the glory of God that are hardly ever, if ever, really explained or described in Scripture, but seem to be underlined, Paul's use of the language.

And so we come to this passage in 2 Corinthians 3, where he is using this story of Moses and the glory on his face as a picture of how the old covenant glory is not equal to, in any respect, the glory of the new covenant. And his whole reason for giving this discussion certainly must be that he felt the Corinthians were being influenced somehow by those who would bring them under the bondage of the old covenant. And so he wants to point out how that his ministry was not a ministry of death and of the letter of the old covenant.

His ministry was a ministry of the new covenant and of life, and there was the principal contrast he wanted to make between himself and those teachers who were opposing him there. So verse 7, he says, But if the ministry of death, written and engraved on stones, was glorious, so that the children of Israel could not look steadily on the face of Moses because of the glory of his countenance, which glory was passing away? How will the ministry of the Spirit not be more glorious? So the point here is that there was a glory, a significant glory. There was an impressive glory in the old covenant, impressive enough that the glow on Moses' face was unnerving.

It was scary to the people of Israel. They couldn't stand to look at it. Yet, however glorious that was, it was passing away.

It was a glory that was not permanent. He says, That being so, how much more would we expect the ministry of the Spirit to be more glorious? And especially in the way he talked about the Old Testament's ministry of death. That certainly puts a negative spin on that, as opposed to the ministry of the Spirit, which, as he said in verse 6, gives life.

Verse 9, he says, For if the ministry of condemnation, again, meaning the old covenant, had glory, the ministry of the righteousness, which is the new covenant, exceeds much more in glory. Now, the reason the old covenant is called the ministry of condemnation, as I said earlier, is because it could only tell people what they must do, and that they

would be condemned if they don't. It could not help them to do it, or make them do it, and therefore its net result in the life of people who look to it alone for righteousness was that they had to end up condemned by its demands that they could not keep.

Yet, the New Testament, the new covenant, is a ministry of righteousness, because through the new covenant, righteousness is imputed to us, and imparted to us, by the Spirit of God, and by Christ. And so, it is, of course, more favorably discussed than the old covenant in that particular feature. But again, he makes the same point, whether it's in verses 7 and 8, on the one hand, or verse 9 on the other.

In both cases, he essentially says, if the old covenant was glorious, the new covenant is more glorious. He just exchanges words for them in the different ways of saying it. In verse 10, he says, But for even what was made glorious, and I believe he's referring there to Moses' face, which became shining when he saw the high departure of God.

Even what was made glorious had no glory in this respect, because of the glory that excels. Now, that's a strange statement, but I think what he's saying is that even the glory, or even Moses' face, which became glorious, really had no glory by comparison to the glory that's in Jesus' face. Now, he might be speaking even literally, because in the Mount of Transfiguration, Jesus' face shone like the sun.

And we don't know to what degree Moses' face shone. His face shone in a supernatural way, but it may not have been anywhere near as brilliantly as Jesus' face shone. And he might even be saying, Moses' face that became glorious had no glory by comparison to that which exceeds it in glory, which would be Jesus' face, which he mentions later on specifically.

And in pointing that out, of course, he's saying it more for symbolic reasons than for any other. I mean, the degree of brightness on the face of Jesus or on the face of Moses would hardly in themselves be worth mentioning, unless it is meant as a metaphor or as an illustration of the covenant of Moses and the covenant of Jesus. One certainly has greater glory than the other.

For if what is passing away, verse 11 says, was glorious, again, that's reference to the old covenant, what remains, in the new covenant, is much more glorious. Therefore, since we have such hope, we use great boldness of speech. Unlike Moses, who put a veil over his face so that the children of Israel could not look steadily at the end of what was passing away.

Now, I have heard some preachers saying that this verse is telling us that Moses wore the veil because he didn't want the children of Israel to notice that the glory on his face was passing away, that somehow that was some kind of an ego trip for him, that he had this shining face and it proved that he'd been with God and showed that he was everybody's spiritual superior, and he kind of reveled in that, and that the reason he put

on the veil was he saw that it was fading away, and he didn't want them to see that it was fading away. He didn't want to lose that recognition as being a spiritual man inside of the people. I don't know where preachers get this.

There may be something about the wording of this verse in some translation that may have encouraged them to think this way, but that's not what he's saying. He's not saying any such thing, and we certainly don't get that in Exodus. In Exodus, Moses put a veil on his face, not because he wanted to conceal the fact that the glory was fading, but because the people simply didn't want to look at it.

They were unnerved by it. It was too bizarre, and they were scared and intimidated, so to accommodate them, he put a veil on his face. And this is not saying anything other than that.

Moses put a veil on his face so that the children of Israel could not look steadily at the end of what was passing away. Now, I guess it's because at the end of what was passing away, Moses didn't want the people to see this thing coming to an end. But that's not necessarily, that's not at all what Paul is saying.

Paul is just saying that the people couldn't stand to look at it. It was that bright, although even though it was that bright, it was still something that was coming to an end. It was still something that was going to pass away.

Now, what Paul is trying to do is preserve the dignity of the old covenant in his illustrations as much as possible, but also point out that whatever their dignity might be, the laws of the old covenant were a passing phenomenon. And therefore, that covenant's glory or whatever it taught us about God was not the permanent lesson that God wanted to give us about himself. It was not the final exposure that we would have to the glory of God.

It was just a temporary exposure. And he says in verse 14, But their minds were hardened. For until this day, the same veil remains unlifted in the reading of the Old Testament, because the veil is taken away in Christ.

But even to this day, when Moses is read, a veil lies on their heart. Nevertheless, when one turns to the Lord, the veil is taken away. Now, the Lord is that spirit, and where the spirit of the Lord is, there is liberty.

Now, Paul says essentially that the Jews of his day are very much like the Jews of Moses' day in this respect. The Jews of Moses' day didn't really want to see the full glory of God. And so they were deprived of it.

Moses put a veil over his face, and they were deprived of such a view. And it's the same way for the Jews, Paul says, of his own day. And we could possibly say of our own day as well.

Because they don't fully turn to the Lord, God's glory is an uncomfortable thing for them, and therefore their minds are veiled. Even when Moses is read, they can't see anything below the surface. Now, Paul could, and the apostles could, partly because Jesus opened their understanding that they might understand the Old Testament Scriptures.

And also, Paul said in 1 Corinthians 2 that eye has not seen, nor ear heard, nor has entered in the heart of man the things that God has prepared for those who love him, but God has revealed it to us by His Spirit. Paul means that the apostles had received revelation through the Spirit about things that could not be seen by the natural eye and could not be recognized by the natural mind. The law had its mysterious secrets about it.

Later on in this chapter, or not in this chapter, but in this book, Paul will give examples of the spiritual things that he sees in the law since his eyes have been opened by Christ. But he's saying that the Jew, even today, although the modern Jew doesn't see Moses' face like the Jew in Moses' day did, the Jew is exposed to Moses through his writings. But the glory of God is as obscured to the modern Jew as they read the writings of Moses, as it was obscured to the Jew of Moses' day as they looked upon his face.

Because there is a veil interposed between the glory of God, which is in the law, and the viewer who has not turned to Christ yet. But he says, nevertheless, when one turns to the Lord, that veil is taken away. Now, that statement is very possibly Paul's way of spiritualizing an actual statement in the story we just read.

In Exodus chapter 34, which we were reading a moment ago, it tells of Moses veiling his face when he talked to the people. But it says in Exodus 34, whenever Moses went in before the Lord to speak with him, he would take the veil off. He wore a veil when he spoke to people, but when he spoke to the Lord, when he turned to the Lord, he took off the veil.

But when Paul says, when anyone turns to the Lord, the veil is taken away. He may be just kind of giving a spiritual sort of almost mystical application of the literal fact that Moses took his veil off when he faced the Lord. Now, this suggests the possibility that the veil that is over their heart that Paul speaks of is self-imposed by them.

If a person turns to the Lord, they have to take the veil off. They have to stop refusing to see what's really there. They have to be open.

Now, Paul is a Jew who in fact had a veil over his heart at one time, but the veil had been taken away. We could say God removed it because we know that Jesus gloriously and brilliantly in bright light appeared to Paul blindingly as he got a glimpse of the glory of Christ on the road to Damascus. The veil was taken away.

There's also perhaps that aspect that Paul had to allow the veil to be taken away to a certain extent. Now, of course, Calvinists would disagree with me on that point, but a

man, I think, can see truth and still turn from truth if he is stubborn enough to do so. I think he has to be willing to say, oops, I was wrong.

I mean, think how much embarrassment Paul would face as he saw Jesus and realized, hey, I've just made a public reputation throughout the Jewish world. Everyone knows me as the persecutor of Christianity, and now I'm being asked to become a Christian. This is going to be really embarrassing.

You know? It's like if Hal Lindsey, having sold 24 million copies of his great planet Earth, decided to become an amillennialist. You make your whole reputation on one theological standpoint that you've become the main champion of, and then you decide after years of this, you were wrong. And the thing you were against is what you now have to support.

Now, I'm not saying a person can't do an about-face like that. Paul did. But a lot of people wouldn't.

Dr. Spock did just before he died. That's right. In his famous books that ruined several generations of people, he said that spanking was not good for children.

By the time he got old and was on his deathbed, he said, well, I changed my mind. I think it is good for kids. A little late for two generations of people that were raised badly by his advice.

Yeah, I mean, occasionally someone will turn around. And it takes humility or you just have to hope that the people you're confessing to are people who never read your earlier books and you're talking to a later generation or something. But a lot of people would not do that.

A lot of people would not change because they have too much ego invested. They have too much of their reputation. They've built their career on their adherence to a certain position.

And with many Jews, very difficult to change. There's a Jewish man, I won't mention his name, but he's a talk show host, a conservative. In fact, I could be talking about one of two guys.

I can think of two men who fit this description. Conservative, moral, Jewish, radio talk show host. And whenever they talk about evangelical Christians, they speak with the highest respect.

They say they believe that Christianity is the best friend that Israel ever had. I mean, whenever someone calls up to blast the religious right, which is usually, of course, Christian, these Jewish guys come to their defense and say, no, these, what you're calling the religious extremists, or whatever, the right-wing extremists, I call them the much overdue forces of decency coming in. I mean, it's always amazing when I hear

them.

I think, why doesn't this guy become a Christian? Here's a Jewish person. He admires Christians. He doesn't think badly of them like most Jews in Paul's day did, and most Jews throughout history have thought badly of Christians.

But these are Jewish men whose morals and whose general outlook on many things in life would be very agreeable with Christianity. And they themselves speak positively about Christianity, but they make no indication that they ever intend to move in the direction of becoming Christian themselves. And I think, why? Why would they not? And would they not at least consider it? And I feel that the answer is, I have, of course, without talking to them, I don't know, but I've tried to figure this out because I thought about talking to these men about the Lord, and I thought, well, I'm sure someone has already.

Why haven't they made the move? I mean, they're not setting themselves against Christianity publicly. And I think it's probably this. These men are Jews.

And when a Jew becomes a Christian, he's considered to be a traitor by his Jewish community. I mean, he's got Jewish parents, he's got Jewish cousins, Jewish brothers and sisters, fellow Jews at his synagogue. Although he associates with Gentiles as well, he's been identified as a Jew for decades.

He's an older man. His main social contacts are probably Jews or people who at least view him in his Jewish identity and so forth. And for him to say, I'm not a Jew, I'm a Christian, would be viewed as a very severe betrayal and turnaround.

And many Jewish people simply can't do that. Now, there have been times and places in history where Jewish parents would hold a funeral for their child if they became a Christian. They say, you're dead to us.

Very symbolic and very profound form of rejection of their child if they become a Christian. And this has not been uncommon throughout history when Jewish people become Christians. They get totally rejected.

They won't be spoken to by their relatives and friends anymore. And there's some Jews who just wouldn't even consider doing that. Just like if Hal Lindsay became an Amillenius, all his friends at Dallas Theological Seminary would probably not speak to him anymore.

I'm not sure that's true, but I mean, he probably imagines that it's true. I mean, how could I ever face these people if I would turn and become a Christian? And Jews are particularly... What, did I say something funny? Oh, yeah? Oh, Christians. No, I was thinking of Jews.

No, no, no, no. No, I'm not saying Hal Lindsay's not a Christian. I'm saying if the average

Jew... I mean, the Jews see themselves more than most religions do as opposed to Christianity.

And for that reason, there is a veil there that the person who's reading Moses and who could see if he would allow himself, he could see Christ in the Old Testament, but he won't. It's too painful. It's too costly.

It would involve too much sacrifice. And so there has to be a willingness to remove the veil on the part of the person too. There is a veil there.

It's possible that for the most part, it's a veil imposed by God because they have not been willing to recognize Christ. But it is their lack of willingness that would cause God to impose such a veil. We read of something like this in Romans chapter 11.

Paul is speaking of the state of the Jewish people in Romans chapter 11. And he says in verse 7, What then? Israel has not obtained what it seeks, but the elect have obtained it, and the rest were hardened or blinded. And that hardening or blinding is a work of God.

We know that because he says in verse 8, Just as it is written, God has given them a spirit of stupor, eyes that they should not see, ears that they should not hear, to this very day. So, the Jewish people, some of them at least, have been hardened. God has given them eyes that cannot see and ears that cannot hear, hearts that cannot understand.

But I do not believe that this is something that God has done unilaterally without any reference to what they themselves have chosen. I believe that there are Jews who have allowed themselves to embrace Christianity, though it greatly humiliates them, it greatly ostracizes them, there is a great cost and sacrifice to them to do it. There are others who simply won't even consider making such a sacrifice.

They just won't allow themselves to even think of that as an option. It's too painful, and therefore they get blinded as a judgment. And so this veil that is over the face, I think is partly self-imposed and partly judicially imposed by God.

But when a person turns to the Lord, the veil is taken away. Now, see, that makes it clear that God has not just unilaterally imposed a veil. If that were true, a person couldn't turn to the Lord.

They couldn't see it, because God has veiled it from them. But if someone changes their heart and turns it in the direction of God, suddenly God removes the veil, and they can see all kinds of things they couldn't before, and Paul would be a great example of that. Throughout his epistles, he quotes from the Old Testament, probably verses he knew well when he was a Pharisee, but didn't understand at all.

Certainly he wouldn't understand them as a Pharisee in the manner that he understood

them after he became a Christian. The veil is taken away, and he's liberated from that old covenant. There's a new covenant that replaces it.

Now, the Lord is the Spirit. He says in verse 17, where the Spirit of the Lord is, there is liberty. Now, the statement, the Lord is the Spirit, is perhaps one of the verses that is often used by modalists or by Jesus-only people who are called oneness in their theology in contrast to traditional Trinitarianism.

They point out that the Spirit of God is the same as Jesus. The Lord is the Spirit. Jesus is the Lord, and the Holy Spirit is the Holy Spirit.

And to say the Lord is the Spirit is the same thing as saying Jesus is the Holy Spirit. And they would point out that Jesus is also called the Father in Isaiah 9, 6, where it says His name, meaning the Messiah's name, should be called Wonderful Counselor, the Mighty God, the Everlasting Father. So they say that Jesus is the Father, and Jesus is the Spirit.

Therefore, there's only Jesus. That's why they're Jesus-only. The Father and the Spirit are just different modes of Jesus.

And this verse is used to prove that point. I would see it a little differently than that, being myself more of a Trinitarian bent. I think when it says the Lord is the Spirit, that He has just said when they turn to the Lord, the veil is taken away.

Now, the Lord is the Spirit. They have to turn to the Spirit. Now, there is, of course, a very vital link between the identity of Jesus and that of the Holy Spirit, so much so that when Jesus said He would send the comfort of them, He could say, I will not leave you comfortless.

I will come to you. In John 14. And the coming of the Holy Spirit is, in fact, the coming of Christ to you.

Christ dwells in your hearts, not personally, but by His Spirit. Jesus Christ is at the right hand of God the Father, and the Bible makes it plain, He's not leaving there until He comes back here for us all. So who's in my heart? The Spirit of Christ is in my heart.

If any man has not the Spirit of Christ, he has none of His. And if Christ is in you, or if the Spirit of God is in you, you are in the Spirit. And if Christ is in you, Paul says all these things are synonymous.

You have the Spirit of Christ. You have the Holy Spirit. The Holy Spirit is in you.

Christ is in you. There is definitely, definitely a linkage between Christ and the Holy Spirit. That linkage is not complete identity, however, because Jesus did refer to the Holy Spirit as another comforter, not the same one.

Jesus was their comforter. Jesus was their paraclete. He said, I'm going to send you

another paraclete, which literally means another of the same kind.

Not the same one, though. There is a difference between Jesus and the Holy Spirit, but there is an identity there, too. This has, of course, always been a part of the mystery of what we call the Trinity.

Anyway, I guess what I'm saying is the wording does not require a so-called oneness or Jesus-only kind of theology in order to make sense of this verse, but making sense of it is very difficult. All we can say is there's a very close link intended. Turning to the Lord is turning to the Spirit who opens the eyes and gives liberty from the bondage of the law.

Now, Paul says in chapter 3, verse 18, But we all, with unveiled face, beholding as in a mirror the glory of the Lord, are being transformed into the same image from glory to glory, just as by the Spirit of the Lord. Now, the unveiled face, we have an unveiled face. Why? Because we turn to the Lord.

Remember, Moses took off the veil whenever he came before the Lord. But we live our lives turning to the Lord. We have turned to the Lord.

We don't have the veil. The veil is removed when one turns to the Lord, and that's who we are. We're those who have turned to the Lord.

Therefore, we have an unveiled face, and we are beholding the glory of the Lord, but he says, as in a mirror. Our beholding of the glory of the Lord is as in a mirror. Now, remember, a mirror in Paul's day was not made of glass.

They didn't have glass mirrors back then. They had polished brass plates from which they could get some kind of reflection which served as a mirror. When the Bible talks about a mirror, you have to remember, culturally, we think of a mirror as one thing, and they talk about something else as a mirror, just a finely polished plate of brass was the best they could do to get a glimpse of themselves.

And yet, the imperfections in the surface of the brass, such as they couldn't improve the image as much as we can using quicksilver on glass today, but the image they got back was somewhat hazy. They could see themselves. They could tell if their hair was basically in place or the makeup was on right or whatever, but they couldn't really... It wasn't as clear a picture.

As you get from one of our modern mirrors. When Paul said in 1 Corinthians 13, for now we see through a mirror dimly, but then face to face, he was making this point that we are beholding the Lord now, but it's like through a mirror, or it's like the image of a mirror, which is not all that clear. When he comes, we'll see him face to face, but today we only see him in this somewhat slightly blurred vision.

And that is simply because we don't see Jesus. He's not here right now. The disciples saw

him, but we, the Corinthians and Christians who have been converted since Jesus' ascension, we've never seen him directly in that way.

And so our view of the glory of God is a bit hazy compared to what it will be later. Nonetheless, even if that is so, we still are beholding the glory of God. It may be a bit hazier than it will be when we see him face to face, but it's still there.

We are looking to Jesus. And Jesus is not altogether invisible to us. We no doubt have some defects in our perception of Jesus.

Each of you has a mental image of what Jesus was like, not only of what he looked like, but of what he acted like. Whenever you think of Jesus, and you think of what would Jesus do, or when you think of what kind of person is Jesus, every Christian thinks about that, and every Christian calls to mind some kind of image. I'm not talking necessarily about a physical image of his physical appearance.

I'm talking about some concept, some perception of what Jesus was like, what Jesus would do in this situation. And yet we cannot be sure that we're always 100% correct in what we perceive. Because we have been affected by a number of things that affect our perception of Christ.

One might be even pictures of Christ we've seen. We live in an age where we've even seen movies about Christ, and boy, do they differ from one another. You go and see Jesus of Nazareth, you'll get this idea of a Catholic kind of a Jesus.

You go and see the Jesus movie, based on Luke, you've got a much more winsome kind of a Jesus, still relatively serious. And you go see that new movie based on the Gospel of Matthew, and Jesus is laughing all the time. And the humorous Jesus, the Toronto Jesus, I guess.

And I'm not saying that there isn't something. I'm not saying there isn't something of Jesus visible in all of these actors' depictions, but we've been somewhat biased, perhaps, more than we know. But the images of Jesus that come to our mind come from, to a certain degree, pictures and perhaps movies we've seen.

But more than that, and of course in days before there were pictures of Jesus and movies about Him where people were trying to depict Him that way, there's always been a coloring of our perception of Jesus by what role models in the Christian church we have, what our pastor is like, or what the person who led us to the Lord is like, or what our Christian heroes are like. We tend to think of the people we admire most in the Christian life as being a lot like Jesus. And sometimes our perception of Jesus begins to be colored by our understanding and knowledge of certain people that we consider to be a lot like Him.

And of course there's probably just a lot of imagination, too, that colors our image of

Jesus. We do look unto Jesus, but we don't see Him clearly yet. We see through a glass darkly.

We see as in a mirror, a dim, slightly blurred image. Not because He is not the brightness of the glory of God, but because we don't see Him directly until He comes back. But we do have some glimpse of Him.

We are not totally without knowledge of Him. Even what little we know just from reading about Jesus in the Gospels is a more glorious picture of the glory of God, a purer revelation of God's glory and excellence than the whole law gave. Even if we only have the Gospels to tell us what Jesus was like, even with all the missing parts that they don't tell us about things... We never read of Jesus laughing in the Gospels, but we're quite sure He must have laughed sometimes.

There's many things about Jesus that we can't see in the Gospels just because it doesn't tell us everything He did and every way He reacted to everything. But what we do have, maybe like seeing Him through a glass darkly, through a mirror image, not of ourselves, but in the case of mirrors in those days, an image that is not 100% unblurred. Yet it is enough to transform us.

It is in fact beholding the glory of the Lord in the Gospel, in Jesus. And of course, as we pointed out earlier, in 2 Corinthians 4, 6, He says that God has shown us the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ. Now I haven't actually seen His literal face, but I have, in a sense, in seeing Jesus, what little I have seen of Him so far in the lives of people who bear His image and in the Gospel records and in whatever I believe the Holy Spirit has revealed to my own heart about what Jesus is like.

In these various ways, some of them a bit vague, others more trustworthy, I have a perception of Jesus and of the glory of God in Jesus. That perception will be refined and honed and perfected when I see Him face to face. It says in 1 John 3, Beloved, now we are the sons of God and it does not yet appear what we shall be, but we know that when we see Him, we shall be like Him for we shall see Him as He is.

That's 1 John 3, verses 2 and 3. But the point is, whatever may be the deficiencies in our current perception of Jesus, we are not entirely without a perception of Jesus. We're not left entirely without the glory of God that was manifested in Him. We have descriptions of it from people who saw Him and we have seen it in others in measure and we have seen some of it even by revelation of the Holy Spirit in our own hearts.

And as we keep that veil off, we keep any obstruction that would obstruct our willingness to see Jesus as He is, we keep that veil off our face. And this I take to be our total transparency, our total sincerity, our total love for truth, that we're willing to let the truth shine to us, even if in the brilliant light of the truth, our own defects are made more apparent. Yet we welcome the light.

We keep the veil off and we keep looking unto Jesus. As we do this, we are being transformed into the same image from glory to glory, just as by the Spirit of the Lord. Now, I don't need to comment on that part, just as by the Spirit of the Lord.

The work of transformation is obviously and self-evidently from a statement the work of the Spirit in us. But I do want to clarify some things. What does it mean we're being transformed into the same image? The word that is here, translated transformed, is metamorpho.

Clearly, it's the root of our English word metamorphosize or metamorphosis. And metamorphosis means to change form. A metamorphosis occurs in the biological world, for example, when a caterpillar becomes a butterfly.

That is called a metamorphosis. It changes form entirely. When a pollywog becomes a frog, that change, that entire change in bodily shape is called a metamorphosis.

Now, Paul uses this word as it were metamorphosis or metamorphosize twice in his writings. And the Gospels also, it occurs twice in the Gospels. The word is found, in other words, four times in the New Testament.

Twice in the Gospels. Once in Matthew, once in Mark, and it's in parallel places. So, in essence, it's one occurrence.

It's just found in two parallel places. In Matthew 17 and in Mark 9, it is used where it says of Christ that he was transfigured before them on the Mount of Transfiguration and his face shone, and they saw the glory of Jesus on the mountain. The word that is used there, translated in the older English as transfigured, is the same word, metamorpho, that Paul uses here.

And the only remaining place in the New Testament where it is found is in Romans 12.2. Where Paul says, and do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind. The word transformed is the same word, metamorpho. So, here's the only ways in which that word is used in Scripture.

First of all, it's referred to as Jesus on the Mount of Transfiguration was changed. He was transfigured. His glory was made manifest to the eyes of the disciples looking on.

That's the one sense in which it's used. Then it's twice used of Christians. In Romans 12.2, it says that we are metamorphosized by the renewing of our minds.

No doubt speaking of the process of sanctification where as we learn the ways of God and embrace them more, and they become our own, and our values and our attitudes and our beliefs and our whatever, the way we think becomes more like Christ. It is a transformation that the Spirit works in our lives. Here, Paul uses the same word of us, that we are being metamorphosized.

Into what? If someone told a caterpillar it was going to be metamorphosized, it may not know whether it wants that or not. It depends on what I'm going to be looking like afterwards. What am I going to be changed into? If I said, hey, would you like to change? If I said, would you like to change your surroundings? Would you like to change houses? Would you like to trade in your clothes for some more? You'd probably say, well, what kind of clothes are you going to give me? What kind of house am I moving into? What kind of changes are we talking about? Do I want to be metamorphosized? Well, I'm not altogether happy with the way things are, but I'm not sure what you're offering me.

Well, Paul says, this is what we're offered. We're being transformed or metamorphosized into that same image. What image? The image of the glory of the Lord that we're beholding as in a mirror.

The image of Christ. The likeness of Christ. So that what the glory of the new covenant does is not just reveal Christ, but it infects us with Christ.

His excellency, his character, his marvelousness, his glory. We are changed into that. His character becomes ours.

And we become more like him. And Paul says, this is a change from glory to glory. That expression is very Pauline.

He uses that kind of expression from faith to faith and those kinds of things. From death to death and to life to life. And he says from glory to glory.

Many people understand this simply to mean from one level or degree of glory to another level or degree of glory. That is, I've attained a certain degree of the likeness of Christ now. That's a level of glory.

And later on I'll have a higher degree, like reaching different plateaus or different degrees of glory from one level to another, from one degree to another. That's possible. Some have thought it means the glory proceeds from God to me.

So it's from God's glory to, as it were, my glory, the glory that becomes mine in my character. Some have felt it means from, it's a leaving of the glory of the old covenant to the glory of the new covenant. It's not entirely clear how Paul means this phrase from glory to glory, but one thing is clear, that what he's describing is a transformation into the image of Christ through keeping our eyes fixed on Jesus and keeping the veil removed from between us and Christ so that we look without wincing at what he is.

And this brings change in our lives. Paul continues on this in Chapter 4, but we'll have to continue on it in the next session because we've run out of time for this session.