

LET'S TALK ABOUT ME 2 CORINTHIANS 2:12-3:18

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with Ra McLaughlin

Paul began to discuss more details of his ministry experiences, then turned aside to talk about how wonderfully God had provided for him. Praising God led the apostle into a lengthy explanation that he was not promoting himself, but the grace of God in Christ.

CONTINUING THE EXPLANATION (2:12-13)

Paul had already touched on several events in his ministry (1:8-9,15-16,23). He had also expressed his heartfelt concern for the Corinthians and answered questions about himself. Here he returned to describing recent events so that the Corinthians could appreciate his circumstances.

2:12. In autobiographical style, Paul began with his commitment to preaching the **gospel** of Christ had compelled him to go to **Troas** (compare Acts 16:9-10; Rom. 1:15; 15:19-20; 2 Cor. 10:14-16), a city in Asia Minor (modern Turkey) about ten miles south of Troy. Paul had been there on his second missionary journey (Acts 16:8), and from there determined to go to Macedonia where he began churches in Philippi (Acts 16:15,40), Thessalonica (Acts 17:4), Berea (Acts 17:11-12), and perhaps Athens (Acts 17:34). Therefore, on his third missionary journey, Paul's preaching was well received in the already existing churches he had previously established in Macedonia (compare Acts 20:2). This why he said that **the Lord had opened a door** for him. Later, Paul spent time in Troas yet again (Acts 20:6).

An **open door** does not mean (as it often does in modern parlance) an open opportunity. Rather, the metaphor indicates that God blessed the legitimate efforts of his people with remarkable success (compare Acts 14:27; 1 Cor. 16:9; Col. 4:3).

2:13. Despite his success in Troas, Paul **had no peace of mind** because his **brother Titus** had not met him there. Paul was as close as a **brother** to Titus, he even sent this particular letter to the Corinthians through Titus (8:16-17). But Paul's love for Titus was not the cause of his concern. He was concerned about his relationship with the Corinthians. Titus had gone to Corinth to organize the collection for poverty-stricken Jerusalem (8:6), and was to have reported, among other things, the Corinthians feelings toward Paul. Not knowing how the Corinthians felt about him, Paul bypassed Corinth and waited for Titus in **Macedonia**.

PAUL'S MINISTRY OF TRIUMPH (2:14-17)

At this point, Paul entered a long digression extending from 2:14 to 7:4. He did not continue the story he had begun in 2:12-13 until he had concluded this digression. In this portion of the digression, he reflected on God's goodness in his ministry despite the disappointment that took place in Troas (2:13).

2:14a. Paul had been disappointed in Troas and Macedonia, but through it all God had been good to him. He began this acknowledgment of divine goodness with a thanksgiving: "**But thanks be to God.**" Paul commonly broke from his main topics to give thanks to God (Rom. 6:17; 7:25; 1 Cor. 15:57; 2 Cor 8:16; 9:15).

2:14b-16a. Paul delighted in God's care for him, and expressed this joy with the metaphor of a victory parade. Looking at his ministry, Paul was convinced that God **always leads believers in triumphal procession in Christ.** Here Paul drew upon the triumphal parades that were known throughout the Roman world. Prisoners of war were marched through the streets as fragrant perfumes filled the air. At the end of each parade, many prisoners were executed. For this reason, the smells of the parade were sweet to the victors, but were the **smell of death** (2:16) to the defeated.

Paul saw several points of comparison between these victory parades and his own ministry.

1. He and those with him were members of the victorious army led by **Christ**, as were the rest of the apostles.
2. Their gospel preaching **spread everywhere . . . the knowledge** or acknowledgment (compare 1 Sam. 17:46; 1 Kgs. 20:28; Isa. 60:16; Jer. 10:25; Ezek. 13:9; 20:48; 23:49; 24:24; 28:22,24,26; 29:16; 36:23; 39:22,28; Hos. 4:1,6) **of God** as the victor. Similarly, Roman victory parades spread knowledge about victories and caused people to acknowledge the victors.
3. By metonymy Paul said that he and the apostles were like the perfumes of the victory parades. They became **to** (the honor of) **God** like **the aroma of Christ**, or more specifically, like **the aroma** accompanying Christ's victory. Both the victors of this spiritual gospel war (**those who are being saved**) and the defeated (**those who are perishing**) smelled their **aroma**.
4. This **aroma of Christ**, however, affected each group differently. To Christ's enemies Paul and those with him were **the smell of death**, but to those following Christ they were **the fragrance of life**.

This metaphor strikingly contrasted Christian and non-Christian reactions to evangelists. To Christians, Paul and his company presented reminders of the wonders

of salvation. For non-Christians, they raised the terror of divine judgment. No one could ignore them because their fragrance was spreading throughout the world.

2:16b. As Paul contemplated his analogy between Roman victory parades and his gospel ministry, he was overwhelmed and exclaimed, "**Who is equal to such a task?**" The answer he implied was that no one was worthy of playing such an important role in human history and in the kingdom of God. It was astounding that God appointed mere men to this role.

2:17. Being overwhelmed with astonishment at his own apostolic ministry, Paul wanted the Corinthians to know that he did not view his ministry as an ordinary job. He did not **peddle the word of God for profit**. Here he distinguished himself and those who worked with him from **so many** others who had reduced their ministries to mere occupations. Unlike the gospel peddlers (**on the contrary**), Paul and his company spoke **before God with sincerity**. Paul still lingered on the accusation of insincerity and duplicity he had addressed in the preceding section (1:12). He could not have been insincere because he looked upon his ministry so highly. Instead, he served as one **sent from God**, considering his task a sacred privilege. The fact that he did not accept payment (**profit**) for his preaching further demonstrated his sincerity (compare 1 Cor. 9:4-15; 2 Cor. 12:13-14).

CONFIDENCE FROM A NEW COVENANT (3:1-6)

Having just cast his ministry in terms of a Roman victory parade, Paul anticipated that his opponents might accuse him of arrogance. To circumvent this accusation, Paul asserted that he had no need to commend himself. Christ had already honored him beyond measure by making him a minister of the New Covenant.

3:1a. Paul began his response to this anticipated objection with two questions to which he expected negative responses. Was he **beginning to commend himself again**? These words may indicate that Paul's opponents had already accused him of self-aggrandizement in his earlier visits. These people would see his joy in the ministry of the gospel as yet another example of his arrogance. In the verses that follow, Paul argued strongly against this accusation.

3:1b. He also asked if his credibility were so low that he and those with him needed, **like some people**, to present **letters of recommendation** to the Corinthians. Unknown Christians in the early church commonly carried letters of recommendation to congregations that did not know them. These letters introduced newcomers and acknowledged their status in the church (Acts 18:27; 1 Cor. 16:3). Paul's letter to Philemon is to some degree such a letter. Paul wondered sarcastically if he needed to present such letters as well.

3:2. In response to his own question, Paul asserted that he actually had letters of recommendation: the Corinthian Christians themselves. Their new lives in Christ proved the effectiveness and divine approval of Paul's ministry. Paul described the Corinthians as letters "**written on our hearts.**" This phrase has been the subject of controversy from early times. In fact, some ancient texts read "your hearts" ("written on your hearts" RSV). This alternate reading makes more sense with the context. If it is correct, then Paul was saying that the changes that had taken place in the hearts of the Corinthians were his letters of recommendation. These changes were **on** [their?] **hearts**, but they were not hidden. **Everybody** was able to see these heart changes displayed in their changed lives.

3:3. Consequently, the Corinthian believers showed **the result of Paul's ministry** (compare 1 Cor. 3:5-6) especially by the gifts of the **Spirit** in their lives (see 3:17; compare 1 Cor. 1:6-7; 2:4,7-15; 9:2,11; 12:11-13). Their new lives became a **letter from Christ** validating Paul's ministry.

Paul elaborated on this **letter from Christ** in a way that captivated his thoughts for the rest of this chapter. Their letter had been **written**, but it was not written in the normal way by men **with ink**, or **on tablets of stone**, but **by the Spirit of the Living God**, and **on tablets of human hearts**. In the verses that follow, Paul used this contrast between **ink/stone** and **Spirit/hearts** to point out an important difference between the old covenant and the new covenant (3:6-8).

When Paul spoke of the Holy Spirit as **the Spirit of the Living God** he drew upon Old Testament traditions (Deut. 5:26; Josh. 3:10; 1 Sam. 17:26,36; 2 Kgs. 19:4,16; Pss. 42:2; 84:2; Isa. 37:4,17; Jer. 10:10; 26:36; Dan. 6:20,26; Hos. 1:10). Yahweh is called the "living God" in the Old Testament in contrast with inanimate idols. They are powerless to do anything (1 Chr. 16:25-26; Pss. 31:6; 96:4-5; 115:4-7; 135:15-17; Isa. 2:8,20; 31:7; 42:17; 57:13; Jer. 10:14-15; Jer. 14:22; 51:17; Hos. 8:4-6; 13:2-4; Jon. 2:8-9; Hab. 2:18-19). But the living God can move in history and in peoples' lives. The Holy Spirit had done mighty things in the Corinthian church (1 Cor. 1:5,7; 2:4,10,12-15; 3:6; 6:9-11; 12:3-13; 14:26-31) — The living God had been among them because of Paul's ministry.

3:4. Paul summarized 3:1-3. He had **confidence such as this** about the commendation of his ministry. This confidence had come to him **through Christ**, that is, through salvation that comes in Christ, and through Christ's special call to Paul as an apostle. Moreover, this **confidence** was **before God**. Even though some people did not acknowledge Paul's authority, he was convinced that God did (compare 2 Cor. 10:8; 13:10; Gal. 1:1,11-12,15-16; 2:9; 1 Thess. 2:6; 4:2).

3:5. To make his viewpoint clear, he quickly qualified his confidence. He was **not competent in himself**, and could not **claim anything for himself**. His **competence** was **from God**. Paul's apostolic task was too great for mere human ability (compare 2:16). Yet, Paul was confident in his leadership because God confirmed his efforts.

3:6. With the basis of his confidence established, Paul boldly announced the nature of his ministry. God had **made** him **competent** in a remarkable way: he was a minister **of a new covenant**. The expression **new covenant** appears in the New Testament as a designation for the arrangements established between God and his people on the basis of Christ's death and resurrection (Luke 22:20; 1 Cor. 11:25; Heb. 8:1-13; 9:15; 12:24). The church derives the expression "New Testament" from this phraseology, which has its roots in Jeremiah 31:31 where the prophet described the restoration period after Israel's exile as the time of "the new covenant." The term "new" did not mean "brand new" or "entirely new." Instead, it connoted "renewed" or "made anew." God promised to renew his people to fresh and sincere covenant life after the exile. Both Ezekiel and Isaiah called this post-exilic covenant a "covenant of peace" (Isa. 54:10; Ezek. 34:25; 37:26), indicating that it was based on renewed peace between God and his people.

This allusion to Jeremiah 31:31 is especially poignant because Jeremiah said that God would renew his people's hearts: "'The time is coming,' declares the Lord, 'when I will make a new covenant with the house of Israel and with the house of Judah. . . . I will put my law in their minds and write it on their hearts'" (Jer. 31:31,33b). Paul had already alluded to the idea that the Corinthians had been changed in their hearts. Following Jeremiah's imagery, he had even spoken of God writing on the heart (3:2-3).

Next, Paul distinguished between the old and the new in a different but closely related way. He declared that he did not minister a covenant **of the letter**. Instead, he proclaimed a covenant **of the Spirit**. He insisted on this distinction because **the letter kills, but the Spirit gives life**.

This contrast between the **letter** and the **Spirit** is easily misunderstood. Several considerations must be kept in mind.

1. Paul knew that the Holy Spirit was active in the days before Christ (Gal. 4:29; Eph. 6:17).
2. He believed that the letters of Moses' Law were holy and right (Rom. 7:12-16).
3. He knew that the change of heart predicted by Jeremiah 31:31 and fulfilled in Christ was an ideal even in the days of Moses (Deut. 6:4-6; 30:6).
4. Finally, Paul believed that even in this New Testament age written Scripture is still very important (Rom. 15:4; Eph. 6:17; 1 Tim. 3:16). Paul did not present an absolute contrast between bare written instructions and mere leading by the Holy Spirit. God designed both the old and new covenants to affirm a vital role for both letters and the Spirit.

We find a clue to Paul's meaning in his expression **the letter kills**. The death brought by Moses' Law resulted from human abuse of the Law. The Law of Moses was

never intended to be a way of salvation. When anyone tried to gain eternal life by obedience to the Law, it brought him or her under a sentence of death (Rom. 7:5-11). Unfortunately, the early church faced false teachers who insisted that the Law of Moses was designed to provide eternal life. Paul opposed these false teachers (Rom. 3:20,28; Gal. 2:16). They failed to realize that seeking righteousness by the Law was a sure way to find eternal death.

Instead, the empowerment of the **Spirit** so richly poured out in the new covenant was the only way to eternal life (Rom. 8:2,6,9-11,13,23; Gal. 6:8; Tit. 3:5-7). The outpouring of the Spirit in the New Testament exceeded any previous display of God's saving grace. As Paul proclaimed Christ and the gospel, he announced salvation through Christ and the power of the Spirit, not through letters of the Law

THE NEW COVENANT CONTRASTED WITH THE OLD COVENANT (3:7-18)

Paul elaborated on the contrast he saw between the old and new covenants, and on the ways those contrasts affected his ministry.

3:7-11. For the sake of convenience, we may summarize Paul's contrasts.

Old Covenant	New Covenant
<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Brought death and condemnation (3:7,9) 2. Engraved on stone (3:7) 3. Fading glory (3:8,11) 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Brings righteousness (3:9) 2. Of the Spirit, written on hearts (3:3,8) 3. More, surpassing, lasting glory (3:8,10,11)

Paul noted that Moses' covenant brought **death** and condemnation while the covenant in Christ brought **righteousness**. This contrast should not be taken as a straightforward distinction. In Paul's perspective the Moses' covenant failed because of human sin (Rom. 7:9-13). Just as Jeremiah wrote, the new covenant is not like "the covenant [God] made with [Israel's] forefathers" which "they broke" (Jer. 31:31). Moses' covenant was a guide for living in a relationship with God based on grace and faith (Ps. 78:1-72, especially 37-38; Rom. 4:16). The Israelites, however, turned away from God, flagrantly violating the Law, and were exiled (2 Kgs. 17:6-23; 18:9-12; 1 Chr. 5:25-26; 9:1; 2 Chr. 36:11-21; Jer. 31:8,11,15-20,28-29). Jesus came to fulfill the promise of Moses and the Old Testament prophets that after the exile a renewal would take place in which God would mercifully grant righteousness to his people (Deut. 4:25-31; 31:1-10; Jer. 16:14-15; 29:10-14; 30:3; Ezek. 39:25-29; Joel 3:1; Amos 9:11-15; Zeph. 2:6-7; 3:14-20; Zech. 10:1-12).

Second, the Old Testament Law was originally given to guide Israel through God's grace (Exod. 34:6-7; Num. 6:22-27; 2 Kgs. 13:23; 2 Chr. 30:9,18-20; Neh. 9:16-31; Pss. 25:4-18; 78:1-72; 119:25-40,58; Joel 2:12-13). Unfortunately, Israel turned from God's grace and reduced Moses' covenant to a system of works righteousness. Except for a faithful remnant, Israel reduced the Law to an external written code. By contrast, Christ and his apostles reasserted the inward, spiritual nature of obedience as Moses had originally intended (Deut. 30:1-20).

Third, Moses' covenant was glorious, but fading in that it was always intended to be preliminary to a much greater covenant. Moses himself spoke of a golden age after Israel returned from exile (Deut. 30:1-10). The prophets also affirmed this perspective (Isa. 2:2-4; Jer. 31:1-14; Ezek. 34:11-31; 36:1-12,22-38; 37:15-28; Joel 2:18-29; Mic. 4:1-8; Zeph. 3:14-20). Moses' covenant was not evil or a mistake. God designed it to point beyond itself to a greater day. [Even where Hebrews records that there was something "wrong" with the Mosaic covenant (Heb. 8:7), it attributes the fault to the people, not to the covenant (Heb. 8:8).] Christ and his apostles represented that greater day, the time of the new covenant whose **glory** was superior and never-ending (Matt. 26:28; Mark 14:24; Luke 1:33,72; 22:20; John 12:34; Acts 3:25-26; 1 Cor. 11:25; Gal. 3:16-29; Heb. 7:22; 8:6-13; 9:1-28; 10:1-22,29; 12:24; 13:20).

These basic contrasts between the old and new covenants made it possible for Paul to contrast the **ministry** of one with the other (3:8-9). By "**ministry**" Paul meant the service of those who mediated the covenants to God's people. To be sure, Moses had so much **glory** as a minister of the old covenant that **the Israelites could not look steadily at his face** (3:7; compare Exod. 34:29-30). Moses' **ministry was glorious** (3:9). If this had been true of a **ministry that condemn[ed] men** (3:9), the **ministry that brings righteousness** was certainly even more glorious (3:10-11).

Through this contrast, Paul demonstrated his earlier assertion that his **competence** as a minister had come **from God** and not from his self-aggrandizement (3:5-6). He was a minister of the new covenant and this made his service to God's people even more glorious than Moses' ministry.

3:12. Paul concluded (**therefore**) that the contrasts between the old and new covenants gave him **hope** and made him **very bold**. The **hope** Paul had in mind was that Christ's covenant and its glory would last for all time and accomplish the salvation for which it was designed (3:11; see Col. 1:27).

The terminology **very bold** is somewhat ambiguous. It may refer to the boldness with which Paul had just commended his own ministry (3:1-11). If so, Paul justified his confidence on the basis of the nature of the new covenant. It is more likely, however, that Paul introduced the theme of 3:12-18 with the word **bold**: the message of Christ is fully unveiled and freely proclaimed.

3:13. To explain his boldness, Paul asserted that he and the other apostles were **not like Moses**. Exodus 34:29-35 explains that after speaking with God, Moses' face shone with God's reflected glory. Moses left his face uncovered whenever he spoke the word of God to Israel, but otherwise covered his face with a **veil**. Although the Old Testament does not explain it this way, Paul understood that one reason for Moses' veil was that **the radiance was fading away**. Apparently, Moses' face shone brightly for a while but then returned to normal until the next time he spoke with God. Some interpreters have suggested that Moses veiled his face to hide from the Israelites the fact that his glory faded.

3:14-15. Paul stated metaphorically that **the same veil remain[ed] when the old covenant was read**. When Jews in Paul's day read from the Torah, they saw glimpses of God's glory, but no more than glimpses. **Only in Christ** is the veil that obscured the glory of God on Moses' face **taken away**. Christ is the revelation of the glory of God in a much greater way than Moses ever was (Matt. 17:3-5; Mark 9:4-7; Luke 9:30-35; John 1:17-18; 6:32-35; 13:39; Heb. 1:1-2; 3:5-6; 8:1-13; 9:1-28; 10:1-29; 11:24-26; 12:21-25). Yet, because unbelieving Jews in Paul's day rejected Christ, **when Moses was read, a veil cover[ed] their heart**. They saw only a very small bit of God's glory because the **veil over their hearts** also made **their minds . . . dull**, hiding the full truth from them.

3:16. By contrast, **whenever anyone turns to the Lord** in repentance and faith, his or her condition changes. Paul alluded to Exodus 34:34, which spoke of Moses removing his veil, but shifted the language toward Christ. Those in Christ see the glory clearly because **the veil** that dulls their minds **is taken away**. Christians possess renewed hearts and minds, enabling them to see the revelation of God much more fully than those under the old covenant had seen it. Many things still remain hidden (Rom. 11:33-34; 1 Cor. 8:2; Eph. 3:8; Col. 2:2-3; 1 John 3:2), but compared to its visibility under the old covenant, the glory of God is now highly visible in Christ.

3:17. Continuing to draw attention to the change that had taken place in Christ, Paul stated, "**Now the Lord is the Spirit**." This sentence is difficult to interpret because it appears to assert an ontological identity between Christ and the Holy Spirit. Such identification would contradict the orthodox doctrine of the Trinity, which states that God is one substance, but three persons. The persons of the trinity are not identical to each other.

The context indicates that Paul used the term **Lord** here and in 3:16 to refer to Christ, and spoke figuratively about the relationship between Christ and the Holy Spirit. He did not intend to describe an ontological identity between Christ and the Holy Spirit. As the immediate context makes clear, Paul did not always speak literally. In the preceding three verses (3:14-16), he had described the closely related realities of Moses' veil and contemporary Jewish dullness by identifying one with the other. Thus, it is likely that when he identified Christ with **the Spirit**, he used a figure of speech (compare Phil 1:21). The fact that he really meant something like "the Lord is the one

who sent the Spirit” or “the Spirit is of the Lord” is evident from 3:17b which refers to **“the Spirit of the Lord.”** This second half of the verse assumes that the first half does not equate the Lord with the Spirit, but asserts a close connection between them. Paul had already drawn this connection between Christ and the Spirit a number of times in this context (3:3,6,8).

Paul explained how those who turned to Christ had the veil removed (3:16) by declaring that **where the Spirit of the Lord is, there is freedom.** Paul had not yet touched on the theme of **freedom** in this context, but elsewhere in his epistles this idea is clear enough. Those who seek salvation through obedience to the Law of Moses (as many Jews did in Paul’s day) are in bondage or spiritual slavery to the Law and death (Rom. 6:6-22; 7:1-25; 8:1-4,15; Gal. 2:4; 4:3,24-25; 5:1; compare John 8:33-36; Heb. 2:15). In Christ, however, are free from the dominion of sin and death (Rom. 6:4-7; 7:6). In Christ believers are set free from sin’s guilt and overpowering influence. Believers are no longer slaves to sin, incapable of resisting its influence over their behavior, but become free to withstand sin and to do good instead of evil only. **Freedom** therefore stood as one of those words (compare: adoption, righteousness/justification, in Christ, life) that Paul used to encapsulate the entire experience of salvation in Christ.

Paul did not mean that believers were free from all obligations to obey God. Rather, for Paul **freedom** in Christ was only freedom from sin — it was not also freedom from righteousness. In fact, freedom from sin was slavery to righteousness (Rom. 6:18), and only this slavery to righteousness enabled one to serve **“in the new way of the Spirit, and not in the old way of the written code”** (Rom. 7:6; compare 2 Cor. 3:6). It is easier to understand Paul’s perspective and vocabulary when one considers that he probably drew the image of **freedom** not from slaves and freemen in the Roman Empire, but from Israel’s freedom from their slavery in Egypt. Thus, he did not contrast slavery to another’s control with freedom to be autonomous (a la Roman slavery). Instead, he contrasted slavery to a sinful power that prevented proper worship (Exod. 5:1-4; 7:16; 8:1,8,20; 9:1,13; 10:3,7) with the freedom to be ruled by God, to obey him, and to worship him.

3:18. Paul closed this section with a description of the new life of freedom that all believers enjoy in Christ. He declared that, **“we . . . with unveiled faces all reflect the Lord’s glory.”** By **“we”** Paul specifically identified him and those who ministered the new covenant with him, just as Moses ministered the old covenant. Of course, the same is also true for every minister of the new covenant. Ministers of the gospel of Christ **all reflect the Lord’s glory.** By this Paul did not detract from his statement that all believers (not just ministers) have the veils removed from their hearts. He simply returned to his main issue: defending his own ministry and actions.

With the phrase, **“reflect the Lord’s glory,”** the NIV translation becomes problematic. This phrase may also be translated “beholding as in a mirror the glory of the Lord” (NASB, NKJV; compare NRSV). Both translations fit because they both conform to the analogy set up between Moses and the ministers of the new covenant.

Moses both beheld and reflected the glory of God. Like Moses, the ministers of Christ are **being transformed into his likeness** as they are sanctified by the Spirit of God (Rom. 8:29; Eph. 4:13,15). But the transformation that takes place in followers of Christ has **ever-increasing glory**, unlike Moses' fading glory. This expanding glory **comes from the Lord, that is the Spirit**.

Once again, the language describing the connection between the **Lord** and the **Spirit** is difficult to interpret (see 3:17). Literally, the Greek text reads elliptically, "the Lord Spirit." Various translations have taken different approaches to this statement, such as "the Lord, the Spirit" (NASB, NRSV) and "the Spirit of the Lord" (NKJV). Grammatically, all of these options are viable. However, their meanings are ultimately the same. In the NIV, NASB, or NRSV, Paul's meaning should still be understood in terms of his figure of speech to mean "the Spirit of the Lord" (see commentary on 3:17). Thus, whether figuratively or literally, Paul referred to the Spirit of the Lord. We receive glory from Christ who has sent us his Spirit.

DIGGING DEEPER

A. New (3:6)

Kainos, here translated "new," must be clearly distinguished from *neos*, the New Testament's other most common word for "new." *Neos* denotes that which is brand new, that which is temporally new. *Kainos*, on the other hand, indicates newness or distinctiveness in comparison with other things. It refers to nature rather than to temporality, so that it may also be translated with words like "different, unusual, impressive, better, improved, superior, or renewed." Paul probably intended several of these meanings in 3:6, including "better, superior" and "renewed" (compare Matt. 26:29; Mark 14:25; 2 Cor. 5:17; Eph. 4:24; Rev. 21:5). The new covenant is "better" because it brings righteousness (3:9) and is of surpassing, lasting glory (3:10-11). It is "renewed" because it does not supplant the glory of the old covenant, but simply removes the veil so that that glory may be seen more clearly (3:14-16).

B. Glory, glorious (3:7-11,18)

Paul's idea of "glory" is rooted strongly in the Old Testament, as can be seen especially from his discussion of Moses and the veil. He used the word *doxa* for "glory" and "glorious." In the New Testament, which draws heavily on the Septuagint's use, *doxa*'s meaning differs significantly from its use in secular Greek where it meant "opinion" or "reputation." In the Septuagint, *doxa* predominantly translated the Hebrew *cabod*.

When used of men, *cabod* had a broad range of meaning, including things like "portable possessions, standing/status, importance, prestige, nobility," and "inner strength." It basically referred to those things which one might possess that commanded respect from others (Gen. 13:2; 31:1; 45:13; Isa. 5:14; 16:14; 17:4). The TDNT summarizes the carryover from man to God: "If in relation to man [*cabod*] denotes that which makes him impressive and demands recognition, whether in terms

of material possessions or striking *gravitas*, in relation to God it implies that which makes God impressive to man, the force of His self-manifestation” (TDNT, vol. 2, p. 238). Such self-manifestations would include theophanies such as caused Moses’ face to radiate (Exod. 34:29-30), but also God’s creative and providential acts, honor, and power.

C. The Lord is the Spirit; the Lord, who is the Spirit (3:17,18)

Paul lived prior to the historical controversies surrounding the nature of God, and prior to the church’s creedal formulation of the doctrine of the Trinity (God has one substance and three persons). This does not mean that Paul was not Trinitarian. But it does mean that he was not sensitive to the controversies in which the church was later to become embroiled. Had such controversy existed in his day, Paul certainly would have stated this verse differently.

Speak anachronistically, one may say that Paul assumed his readers were Trinitarians. He would have expected them to interpret his words consistently with the rest of Scripture’s, Jesus’, and the apostles’ teachings. He certainly did not contradict Christ who clearly distinguished himself from the Holy Spirit (Matt. 12:32; 28:19; Luke 12:10; John 14:25-26; 15:26; 16:7). Paul expected his readers to pick up on his figurative language, and to understand his meaning especially through his statement: “the Spirit of the Lord” (3:17). Paul’s own writings demonstrate that he also distinguished between the persons of Christ and the Holy Spirit (1 Cor. 12:4-6; 2 Cor. 13:14; Eph. 1:13; Tit. 3:5-6). Since he himself had established the Corinthian church, he could be even more confident that they would understand him rightly.

ISSUES FOR DISCUSSION

1. What is an “open door”? Why did Paul have no peace of mind even when God had given him an open door? Was Paul justified in leaving Troas even when he had an open door? Why or why not?
2. What, if anything, in 2:12-13 spurred Paul’s mind to digress for several chapters? As you read the letter as a whole, can you see where the digression begins and ends? How does this affect the flow of Paul’s thoughts? Is it easy to follow? Would you have written it differently? If so, how?
3. When Paul gave thanks for God’s triumph, did he mean to give thanks also for the death that he brought to some? Why or why not?
4. What does it mean to speak before God with sincerity? What does it mean to peddle the word? When you talk about the gospel, do you think you do so with sincerity, or do you sometimes peddle?
5. How were the Corinthians Paul’s letter of recommendation? To whom were they such a letter? What does this say about Paul’s ministry? What does it imply

about modern ministry?

6. Why should ministers and other Christians be confident before God? In what should they be confident?
7. How does the Spirit give life, but the letter kill? What exactly was the ministry that brought death? How did it bring death? What glory did this ministry have? Was anyone ever saved during this ministry? If so, how?
8. What is the new covenant? How does it relate to the old covenant? How does it compare to the old covenant? Why?
9. What is the “hope” that Paul had? Should we also have this hope? Why or why not?
10. How did Paul use Moses’ veil as a metaphor? What point was he trying to make? How are modern Jews like the Jews in Paul’s day in this regard? How do you think Paul felt about the Jews? What is your attitude toward the Jews?
11. What is the doctrine of the Trinity? Does Paul’s language about the Lord and the Spirit support or oppose this doctrine? How? Does your church believe and teach the doctrine of the Trinity? Do you believe the doctrine of the Trinity? Why or why not?
12. Do Christians reflect God’s glory? If so, how? Are all Christians being transformed into Christ’s likeness with ever-increasing glory, or did this only happen to Paul and other early church ministers? Explain your answer. How does this apply to the modern relevance of Paul’s teaching in this passage?
13. How does this passage relate to the material that precedes it in this letter? How does it relate to the material that follows it? Does the preceding and following material help you better understand Paul’s meaning in this passage? If so, how?