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Reformation  
& Revival



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Newness is centrally important to the New Testament. That is why the New Testament is called the “new testament” or “covenant” (Gk. *kaine diatheke*). This radical newness is the reason why the teaching of Jesus has been rejected (even though it is new) by so many and why many wish to diminish that newness.

*Carl B. Hoch, Jr.*

We are sometimes in danger of treating God’s Word as if it were a collection of loose, unclassified gems. The Bible then becomes a mere sourcebook of “precious thoughts.” When it is handled in this way, many important things are lost to view: the historical development of God’s redemptive purposes; his people’s increased theological understanding as he progressively reveals himself and his ways; the literary structure which binds together a book or a discourse into coherent themes and sub-themes. On the other hand, when these historical, theological, and literary themes are properly considered, they contribute in important ways to our understanding of each part of the Bible.

*Donald A. Carson*

## The Superior Covenant

Stephen Kring

It would be an understatement to acknowledge that Paul’s Second Epistle to the Corinthians is not the easiest of his epistles to understand. And the third chapter is surely not the easiest chapter in the letter. Commentator/scholar Carol Stockhausen quotes the famous A. T. Hanson as saying that 2 Corinthians 3:18 is “the Mount Everest of Pauline texts as far as difficulty is concerned.”<sup>1</sup> She later adds that “Paul is not in a mess in 2 Corinthians 3, although an exegete easily might be.”<sup>2</sup> But, although cautioned and humbled by these reminders, it is with glad anticipation that we approach a passage that our God, with good reason, has graciously given to us, His children.

### Context

Second Corinthians reveals to us the heart of the apostle Paul.<sup>3</sup> His Christian character,<sup>4</sup> his apostleship<sup>5</sup> and his weaknesses<sup>6</sup> have been the subjects of attack by satanically inspired “super-apostles” in ancient Corinth. Paul’s children there have begun to listen to these opponents. His aim is to regain their lost love and esteem in the Lord.<sup>7</sup>

It is crucial for the church that this be accomplished, not simply because Paul would feel hurt otherwise, but because of the apostolic ministry Paul was called by God to exercise in the church of Christ. His ministry was one of foundation-laying. The church is “built on the foundation of the apostles and prophets, Jesus Christ Himself being the corner stone” (Eph. 2:20). In the early church “they [i.e., the growing believers] were continually devoting themselves to the apostles’ teaching” (Acts 2:42). Paul writes elsewhere that “According to the grace of God which was given to me, as a wise master builder I laid a foundation” (1 Cor. 3:10a).

If the Corinthian believers turned their backs on Paul, they would be departing from the only solid foundation that a true church can have. Paul had the “mind of Christ.”

He spoke “God’s wisdom in a mystery, the hidden wisdom, which God predestined before the ages to our glory” (1 Cor. 2:7,16). Therefore, being well aware of the importance of his own calling and apostolic gifts, Paul writes 2 Corinthians.

Second Corinthians 3 is part of a larger section of the letter, beginning at 2:14 and extending through 7:4. If this section were not so long, we might call it a parenthesis, since 2:14 speaks of hoping to hear news from Corinth via Titus, and 7:5ff. resumes this train of thought by describing Paul’s great rejoicing at the good news Titus brought to him in Macedonia.<sup>8</sup> It may be that, as Paul thinks back on the joy that he experienced upon the reception of this good news, his soul overflows with gratitude at the ministry God has given him (cf. 2:14). This overflow of gratitude results in this extended passage (2:14-7:4) which describes the nature and purpose of Paul’s ministry.<sup>9</sup>

### **Theme and Outline of Chapter 3**

Paul’s overall emphasis in 2 Corinthians 3 is that the ministry he has been given by the Spirit is *superior* to that of Moses. It is a ministry *that fulfills the prophetic Scriptures* (vv. 1-6) as well as one whose *glory of necessity must be greater than that of Moses* (vv. 7-11). And it is a ministry *characterized by a wondrous openness of revelation of the glory of God* (vv. 12-18). In this chapter, J. Munck profoundly observes that “The greatest man in the history of Israel is put beneath the traveling tent-maker.”<sup>10</sup>

### **Exposition of 3:1-6**

A preliminary observation might be helpful before we consider the text more particularly. There has been considerable discussion regarding who Paul is referring to in 2 Corinthians by the pronoun “we.” Is he speaking of himself and his fellow-workers (perhaps Timothy [1:1])? Does he mean all apostles? Or all believers? Or perhaps (and this

view I strongly lean toward) this is an “authorial” plural, referring quite simply to Paul himself?<sup>11</sup> Quite obviously, there could be several ways in which Paul uses the first person pronoun in 2 Corinthians, but what seems clear is that it is Paul who is personally under attack, and thus many passages in this epistle become much easier to understand when we mentally insert “I” instead of “we.” Try this approach as you read chapter three.

What is clear is that from verse 1 the setting of this chapter is not one of a classroom in theology where Paul is calmly holding forth on the superiority of the new covenant over the old. This setting is, if nothing else, very polemical. Paul is denying the need for self-commendation or for specific letters of commendation to validate his ministry. The false apostles apparently possessed such letters and demanded Paul produce the same.

In verse 2 Paul indicates his ministry is supported by a far superior letter of recommendation—the Corinthian believers themselves, with their transformed lives. This kind of living letter is what Paul highly treasured. Like the names of the tribes on the breastplate of Aaron, the Corinthians are engraved on Paul’s heart.<sup>12</sup> In addition, unlike the secretiveness that must characterize Paul’s crafty opponents (cf. 4:2), everyone can know and read<sup>13</sup> Paul’s letter. He has nothing to hide. But while the Corinthian saints are his letter and the fruit of his ministry, Paul hastens to add in verse 3 that all glory for this wondrous transformation belongs to the triune God. Note the unforced, natural reference to the Trinity. The believers *are* an epistle of *Christ*. They are written by the *Spirit* of the living *God*. Clearly, an indestructible letter of validation written by God Himself makes any fading, ink-written letter quite insignificant.

At the end of verse 3 Paul tells us where God does this writing which is now carried out through Paul’s ministry.

God writes on the hearts of men, on soft tablets of flesh, on human hearts changed and made receptive by the Spirit. Paul contrasts this writing, not to papyrus or parchment on which you write with ink, but to tablets of stone. There is no doubt here that he is clearly referring to God's writing of the law on stone at Mount Sinai. At this point we see that Paul's train of thought is clearly influenced by something more than what naturally comes to mind in comparing papyrus letters with the hearts of people.

Verse 3 is the product of a careful and prayerful examination of a complex of Old Testament passages which Paul is declaring to be fulfilled through his ministry.<sup>14</sup> The following texts are relevant in this regard:

"Behold, days are coming," declares the Lord, "when I will make a new covenant with the house of Israel and with the house of Judah, not like the covenant which I made with their fathers in the day I took them by the hand to bring them out of the land of Egypt, My covenant which they broke, although I was a husband to them," declares the Lord. "But this is the covenant which I will make with the house of Israel after those days," declares the Lord, "I will put My law within them, and on their heart I will write it; and I will be their God, and they shall be My people. And they shall not teach again, each man his neighbor and each man his brother, saying, 'Know the Lord,' for they shall all know Me, from the least of them to the greatest of them," declares the Lord, "for I will forgive their iniquity, and their sin I will remember no more" (Jer. 31:31-34).

And I shall give them one heart, and shall put a new spirit within them. And I shall take the heart of stone out of their flesh and give them a heart of flesh, that they may walk in My statutes and keep My ordinances, and do them. Then they will be My people, and I shall be their God (Ezek. 11:19-20).

Moreover, I will give you a new heart and put a new spirit within you; and I will remove the heart of stone from your flesh and give you a heart of flesh. And I will put My Spirit within you and cause you to walk in My statutes, and you will be careful to observe My ordinances. And you will live in the land that I gave to your forefathers; so you will be My people, and I will be your God (Ezek. 36:26-28).

And they shall be My people, and I will be their God; and I will give them one heart and one way, that they may fear Me always, for their own good, and for the good of their children after them. And I will make an everlasting covenant with them that I will not turn away from them, to do them good; and I will put the fear of Me in their hearts so that they will not turn away from Me (Jer. 32:38-40).

Paul, then, is very bold in saying that the changed lives of the Corinthians, with their fear of God, their knowledge of Him, and their love for His will is clear evidence that the Spirit of God is at work in such a way that all should be able to see that the promised new covenant is here! The old has been *superseded*. He, Paul, is a minister not of the old, but of that new covenant.

In verse 4 Paul simply and humbly states his confidence that he is indeed a minister of such a glorious covenant. However, his competence, his sufficiency for such a task is not innate. In this respect he is like Moses of old, the minister of the old covenant, who protested that he was not up to the task to which God had called him (Ex. 4:10). Here the Septuagint has "I am not *worthy*."<sup>15</sup> This is the same word that Paul uses in 2 Corinthians 2:16b, twice in 3:5, and again in 3:6.<sup>16</sup> Paul, like Moses centuries before, was overwhelmed when he realized the role God had called him to in the fulfillment of His covenant promises. But, while Paul knew that by himself he was not up to this ministry, he

understood that God had made him competent (v. 5), even from the very beginning with his call and commission on the Damascus Road.<sup>17</sup>

Unlike Moses, however, Paul is privileged to be the minister of a covenant that has the power to impart life to dead sinners. "For the letter kills, but the Spirit gives life" (3:6b). The old covenant commanded, and what it commanded was good, but because it was weak through the flesh (Rom. 8:3), "the sinful passions, which were aroused by the law, were at work in the members of our body to bear fruit for death" (Rom. 7:5). The will of God was never written on hearts as a feature of the old covenant. It could result only in condemnation and death (cf. Rom. 3:19-20; 4:15; 6:20; Gal. 3:10).

But, "the Spirit gives life!"<sup>18</sup> The promised Holy Spirit makes all the difference. Following Ezekiel's promise of the Spirit in chapter 36 are interpretive statements in Ezekiel 37:6, 10, and 14 concerning the Valley of Dry Bones. In verse 14 God says to the prophet, "I will put My Spirit in you, and you will come to life and I will place you on your own land." Yes, there is a *physical* returning to the land after the Babylonian captivity, but this is the minor point in the prophecy compared with the *great restoration* to life for sinners under the new covenant. And this is exactly what has happened in the Corinthian believers' lives, as Paul reminds them here. Romans 8:1-11 is now their experience. Paul has been their minister *to this end*. In 1 Corinthians 3:1-6 Paul is pointing this truth out, as a competent minister of the new covenant. He is amazed, and yet confident in his declaration, that he has been chosen of God to be involved in the fulfillment of the prophetic Scriptures with regard to the new covenant. This surely should give the Corinthians "occasion to be proud of us" on Paul's behalf (5:12).

### Exposition of 3:7-11

The main point of these verses is also very clear. The old covenant had a definite glory. The new covenant is superior and therefore the glory of the new covenant is *greater* than that of the old. Therefore Paul's ministry, being a new covenant ministry, is indeed a glorious one, in spite of what his opponents are saying about him.

No one questioned the fact that the old covenant came with glory.<sup>19</sup> As evidence of that glory, Paul refers to the shining of Moses' face after coming from the presence of God, having received the tablets of the covenant. This is a clear reference to Exodus 34:29-35. Since this will also be Paul's point of reference in verses 12-18, we include it in its entirety:

And it came about that Moses was coming down from Mount Sinai (and the two tablets of the testimony were in Moses' hands as he was coming down from the mountain), that Moses did not know that the skin of his face shone because of his speaking with Him. So when Aaron and all the sons 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 in the congregation returned to him; and Moses spoke to them. And afterward all the sons of Israel came near, and he commanded them to do everything that the Lord had spoken to him on Mount Sinai. When Moses had finished speaking with them, he put a veil over his face. But whenever Moses went in before the Lord to speak with Him, he would take off the veil until he came out; and whenever he came out and spoke to the sons of Israel what he had been commanded, the sons of Israel would see the face of Moses, that the skin of Moses' face shone. So Moses would replace the veil over his face until he went in to speak with Him (Ex. 34:29-35).

The old covenant, because it came from the hand of God Himself, was therefore glorious. In fact, it was so glorious that the Israelites could not continue to look at that glory as it was reflected in the face of Moses.

Paul now proceeds to present a series of three arguments from the lesser to the greater (vv. 7-8, 9-10, 11). If the old covenant ministry had glory, then the new covenant *must* exceed it in glory. First, (vv. 7-8), the old covenant was a ministry of death, since the law was only externally written. Further, although the radiance on Moses' face symbolized the glory of the old covenant, it was plainly a fading, transient radiance. (Paul asserts this in spite of Jewish rabbinical tradition which claimed that "the glory continued to shine unabated from Moses' face up till the day of his death and ever after death in his tomb").<sup>20</sup> How much more glorious, then, must the ministry of the Spirit be?

Second, (vv. 9-10), the old covenant was a ministry which, because of man's weak and sinful nature, resulted in condemnation. If it still possessed glory, then how much more will the new covenant, which brings justification, excel in glory? In fact, if you compare the glory of the new covenant with that of the old, the new so far outshines it that the old ends up with no glory at all, relatively speaking. It's like holding a penlight up to the sun itself.

Third, (v. 11), Paul refers again to the temporary duration of the old covenant. As he states in Gal. 3:19, "It was added . . . until the seed should come." But the new covenant remains. It is permanent. As we saw above in Jeremiah 32:40, God promises, "And I will make an everlasting covenant with them that I will not turn away from them, to do them good." Hebrews 13:20 speaks of "the blood of the *eternal* covenant." The conclusion is again inevitable. If the old, temporary covenant had glory, how much more the new permanent one!

None of Paul's opponents would have questioned the

glory of Moses' ministry. But in verses 7-11 Paul has clearly shown that his ministry is far more glorious than Moses' could ever be, because of the superiority of the covenant he administers. This is true even though no outward glow radiates from Paul's face.

### Exposition of 3:12-18

Paul now draws a striking contrast between his ministry and that of Moses, showing that his new covenant ministry is characterized by a wondrous openness of revelation of the glory of God. This theme is developed by expounding the significance of the veiling of Moses' face.

Verse 12 is transitional. Since Paul was certain that he was the minister of a glorious new covenant, and that this new covenant would never pass away like the old, he knew he could speak the truth openly, with great boldness, without fear, holding nothing back.

Moses' ministry could not be characterized by this kind of openness. He had to hide the glory of God reflected in his face from the children of Israel. They could glimpse only a bit of the glory for a short time, then Moses would put on the veil. (The Authorized Version is misleading in Exodus 34:33 where it reads, "and *till* Moses had done speaking with them, he put a veil on his face." It should read, "And *when*. . .") Israel could look on the glory, but not continuously, not *eis to telos*, not "right on to the end" of even a fading glory (v. 13).<sup>21</sup>

This raises the question of why this was so. Why couldn't Israel look continuously on this glory? Exodus 32 provides the answer. Even as Moses descended from Mount Sinai with the tablets of the covenant, the Israelites were breaking that covenant. God's laws were never written on their minds and hearts. They were a rebellious nation whose eyes could not behold the glory of God as could Moses. The veil speaks loudly of Israel's lost opportunities

and lost glory. It is “an eloquent commentary upon the history of Israel in the Old Testament.”<sup>22</sup> Second Corinthians 3:14 begins, “But their minds were hardened. . . .” Even in Isaiah’s day, while he was allowed to see something of God’s glory, he was told, “Render the hearts of this people insensitive, their ears dull, and their eyes dim; lest they see with their eyes, hear with their ears, understand with their hearts, and return and be healed” (Isa. 6:10). John brings this prophecy up to date in John 12:37-41 when he says concerning Jesus in verses 37-38, “But though He had performed so many signs before them, yet they were not believing in Him, that the word of Isaiah the prophet might be fulfilled.” Jesus goes on to quote Isaiah 6:10. Paul surely has this in mind. He knows that Moses’ veil is a symbol of the ongoing judicial hardening of Israel even in his day. They read Moses in their synagogues, but they still cannot see the glory of God, because the glory of God is seen “in the face of Christ” (2 Cor. 4:6), whom they deny. As Jesus so clearly states, “You search the Scriptures, because you think that in them you have eternal life; and it is these that bear witness of Me; and you are unwilling to come to Me, that you may have life. . . . For if you believed Moses, you would believe Me; for he wrote of Me” (John 5:39-40, 46). The veil, once literally on Moses’ face, now lies on the hearts of the old covenant people when they read Moses. They still cannot see in Paul’s day (v. 15).

But there is hope! Verse 16 takes us back again to Exodus 34:34. “But whenever Moses went in before the Lord to speak with Him, he would take off the veil.” Likewise, Paul says, today, whenever anyone turns to the Lord, in the sense of being converted, then they too can see the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ. The veil is removed from their Satan-blinded eyes (4:3-4).

In verse 17, Paul looks back to verse 16 and the allusion made to Moses’ turning to the Lord and interprets it for us.

“The Lord” of Exodus 34:34 “is” for us “the Spirit.” What ought to come flooding into our minds are all those references to the new covenant and the importance of the work of the Holy Spirit in taking the things of Christ and revealing them to us, in regenerating us, in freeing us from the law of sin and death, in helping us to put to death the deeds of the body and therefore live, in enabling us to cry “Abba, Father.” Israel may have been free from Egyptian bondage, but as a nation they remained slaves of sin. The one who truly is free is the one who has, by the Spirit, heard and believed the message of the new covenant, promised in the old, the gospel of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ.

Now for the finale. Under the ministration of death in Exodus 34, only Moses entered into God’s presence. Only he had no veil between himself and God’s glory. But under the ministry of the Spirit, all who are in the new covenant are privileged to continuously behold<sup>23</sup> the glory of the Lord! Their veil has been taken away permanently.<sup>24</sup>

But, what does “beholding *as in a mirror*” mean? There are many suggestions. Some say it refers to how clearly we can see, just like looking in a mirror. Others think it is a reminder that we do not yet see God’s glory perfectly. Metal mirrors did not produce perfect reflections. Still others would try to tell us what the mirror represents. Is it Christ? Is it the Word of God? Is it the gospel? A fourth approach is to translate it as “reflecting” rather than “beholding.” My view, without being dogmatic, is that Paul is saying that a new covenant believer looks at the glory of God like a person looks at himself in a mirror. Exactly how do people look at themselves? In ancient custom, when mirrors were a luxury item, you would take full advantage of the opportunity and take a good, long look. It would not be a brief glance. You would look very carefully, from this angle and from the other. So also the believer, who takes a good long look! Now, we all can, with unveiled face, gaze intently and uninter-

ruptedly at our great and glorious God as He reveals Himself to us by the Spirit in His Son Jesus Christ.

What happens when we do this? The Spirit of God transforms us into the image of the Christ whom we behold. We go from one degree of glory to a higher degree of glory. Like Moses, we reflect in our lives the glory of the one whom we are beholding. Then, as John reminds us, "It has not appeared as yet what we shall be. We know that when He appears, we shall be like Him, because we shall see Him just as He is" (1 John 3:2). Praise God!

Therefore Paul is very bold in revealing to the Corinthians the whole counsel of God. Wright sums up Paul's attitude this way:

The reason we have boldness is this: you, unlike the Israelites before whom the glory (even of the O.C.) had to be veiled, possess the Spirit because you are within the N.C., and you are therefore able to bear the bold, direct revelation of God's glory<sup>25</sup>

"Things which eye has not seen and ear has not heard, and which have not entered the heart of man, all that God has prepared for those who love Him," yet "to us God revealed them through the Spirit; for the Spirit searches all things, even the depths of God" (1 Cor. 2: 9-10). Paul holds nothing back. What he hears in secret he preaches on the housetops, for this is the ministry of the new covenant.

### Summary

Paul has certainly given the Corinthians reason to glory in their apostle. His ministry is greater than that of Moses. It is a fulfillment of Old Testament prophecy. Because of the superior nature of the covenant he administers, Paul's ministry has a glory that makes the glory of the old covenant fade into insignificance. He, unlike Moses, does not need to

veil anything from the true Israel of God. They can all continuously gaze upon the full revelation of God's glory. Paul, therefore, can use great boldness of speech.

Paul himself is greatly encouraged by all of these thoughts, and he certainly hopes his children at Corinth are as well. As he states in 4:1, "Therefore since we have this ministry, as we have received mercy, we do not lose heart."

### Some Points for Reflection

Having spent some time considering the exegesis of 2 Corinthians 3, what are the areas of truth this passage puts before us? What contributions does this particular text make to our living, by the Spirit, under the new covenant?

In the field of pastoral theology, verses 1-3 remind us of how important the changed lives of our people really are. We must earnestly pray that through our labors God will produce living letters. As Paul states, "For who is our hope or joy or crown of exultation? Is it not even you, in the presence of our Lord Jesus at His coming? For you are our glory and joy" (1 Thess. 2:19-20). Is God writing on the hearts of saints and sinners through your ministry?

In the whole area of Pauline studies, we can plainly see how Paul compares himself to Moses. His ministry is greater than that of Moses. Peter R. Jones goes even further and suggests that Paul is the "second Moses to the New Covenant community."<sup>26</sup> Just as it was Moses' task to receive and establish in written form and practice the Sinaitic Covenant between Yahweh and His people, so Paul is claiming as much for himself under the new covenant.<sup>27</sup> Jones demonstrates how the Scriptures refer to "planting" and "founding" to describe (1) creation,<sup>28</sup> (2) the establishment and later restoration of Israel,<sup>29</sup> and (3) the establishment of the church, which, Jones asserts, was accomplished by Paul.<sup>30</sup> Is Jones right? Is Paul the *second* Moses? My initial assessment is that while Jones is correct in

ascribing to Paul an eschatological and foundational role, he needs to broaden the base to include the entire apostolic (and prophetic) band as Ephesians 2:20 reminds us. Jesus' words to Peter in Matthew 16:18f. must also be considered. Paul did receive an abundance of revelation. He "labored even more than all of them" (1 Cor. 15:10), but he was not alone, as was Moses. Also, while Paul does compare himself to Moses, we must never forget that it is Christ Himself who is the one greater than Moses (cf. John 1:17; Heb. 3:2-6).

In the realm of the theology of the covenants, this passage also has something to contribute. While we who are preachers of God's word will and must preach from the Old Testament Scriptures, yet we, like Paul, are very definitely ministers of the new covenant and *not* of the old covenant. It is important that we understand and carefully work out this distinction. The intention of this issue of *Reformation & Revival Journal* is to assist church leaders toward this end.

Also, we need to consider what is specifically written on the hearts of new covenant believers by the Spirit of God. The Ten Commandments were written by God on tablets of stone on Mount Sinai. Jeremiah 31:33 promises that God's law will be written on the heart under the new covenant. Philip Hughes notes, "It is most important to realize that it is the selfsame law which was graven on tables of stone at Sinai that in this age of the new covenant is graven on the tables of the human heart by the Holy Spirit."<sup>31</sup> In all honesty the exegesis of 2 Corinthians 3 compels us to ask, "But is he right?" Is this how we best understand Jeremiah's prophecy? If it is the "selfsame law," then are Seventh-day Baptists (there is a long-standing, very tiny, group for whom this is their major distinctive from other Baptist brethren) more consistent than Baptists who worship on the first day of the week? If it is the "selfsame law," then does Hughes feel that the form in which God gave His law

at Sinai was its *final form* and that Jesus contributed nothing new or deeper? Surely both the Sermon on the Mount and John 13:34 suggest otherwise.

Another related area that needs exploring is what it means that God's law is written on our hearts. Does this mean that we need no further instruction as to what God expects of us? Surely not. Otherwise there would be no need for many of the exhortations in the epistles. Or, does it mean that God gives us a deep desire to obey Him, whatever His commands may be?

Further, in this area of the covenants, we may need to clarify for many people how Israelites were saved while living under the old covenant. If this covenant killed and was a ministry of death and condemnation, then how could anyone be saved? We must show how God graciously pointed believers within Israel ahead, beyond the old covenant, to the coming seed of the woman, the seed of Abraham, the seed of David, the suffering servant, the prophet like Moses, and the priest like Melchizedek, who would redeem Israel from all their iniquities. They were not saved by being *in* the old covenant, but by being *in* it they were recipients of God's revelation concerning the new covenant, and by faith in God's promises and provisions those who believed were saved.

In the realm of sanctification, verse 18 has its own rich contribution. When are we and our people transformed? As we behold the glory of God! Our preaching must be God-centered, not man-centered. Where do we behold the glory of God? "In the face of Jesus Christ" (4: 6). Our preaching must be Christocentric. We must determine to know nothing but Jesus Christ and Him crucified. From the law of Moses and the Prophets and the Psalms, from the Gospels, the Acts, and the Epistles to the book of Revelation, we must preach Him who is the very image of the invisible God, so that unveiled new covenant believers will be trans-

formed more and more into the same likeness!

### **For Pastors Who Want the Pauline Spirit**

Can we enter into the Pauline spirit which breathes throughout 2 Corinthians 3? If we are going to, then it must begin with the humble cry to God, "Who is sufficient for these things?" If Moses felt unworthy to be the minister of God's old covenant, can we dare be brash and self-confident in grabbing hold of new covenant ministry? God forbid! We can only undertake such a high and holy ministry if our sufficiency is from God.

Then, if God has indeed gifted and chosen us for such ministry, may we never forget how glorious it is. Through us, in fulfillment of His prophetic word, God will write on sinners' hearts in such a way that they will delight in His commands, fear Him, and truly live. It is the work of Christ by the Spirit. May we ever seek Him for this blessing.

The glory of Sinai and that on Moses' face was a visible one. But we must never forget that the glory that pertains to our ministry is far greater and more lasting than any old covenant glory could ever be. We must magnify our ministry.

Moses could not reveal to the people all the glory he saw. Their hearts were hardened. But under the new covenant we must hold nothing back from our people, those who have soft hearts of flesh, those who all know the Lord, "from the least to the greatest of them" (Heb. 8:11). The more of Christ we can show them the better! For as they gaze on Him, they will be transformed into His image from glory unto glory. What a calling! To give ourselves to seeing the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ and with great boldness to tell all we see in faithfulness to God's revelation in His holy Word.

We cannot quit. We cannot slacken our labors. We must not allow any opponent, incited by Satan, to turn us from

our new covenant ministry. Why not? Because, when we see our ministry as Paul saw it, we will say, "Therefore, since we have this ministry, as we received mercy, we do not lose heart" (4:1).

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### **Endnotes**

- 1 Stockhausen, 32.
- 2 *Ibid.*, 35.
- 3 Cf. 6:11-13— "Our mouth has spoken freely to you, O Corinthians, our heart is opened wide. You are not restrained by us, but you are restrained in your own affections. How in like exchange—I speak as to children—open wide to us also."
- 4 Cf. 1:17— "Therefore, I was not vacillating when I intended to do this, was I? On that which I purpose, do I purpose according to the flesh, that with me there should be yes, yes and no, no at the same time?"
- 5 Cf. 12:11-12—"I have become foolish; you yourselves compelled me. Actually I should have been commended by you, for in no respect was I inferior to the most eminent apostles, even though I am a nobody. The signs of a true apostle were performed among you with all perseverance, by signs and wonders and miracles."
- 6 Cf. 12:10 —"Therefore I am well content with weaknesses, with insults, with distresses, with persecutions, with difficulties, for Christ's sake; for when I am weak, then I am strong."
- 7 Cf. 1:13b-14—"I hope you will understand until the end; just as you also partially did understand us, that we are

- your reason to be proud as you also are ours, in the day of our Lord Jesus.”
- 8 Cf. 7:6-7—“But God, who comforts the depressed, comforted us by the coming of Titus; and not only by his coming, but also by the comfort with which he was comforted in you, as he reported to us your longing, your mourning, your zeal for me; so that I rejoiced even more.”
  - 9 Carson, 261.
  - 10 Munck, as quoted by Peter Jones in *God's Inerrant Word*, 233.
  - 11 Montgomery, 237.
  - 12 The Greek participle for “written” is the same in the LXX (Ex. 36:21; Eng.—Ex. 39:14) as in 2 Corinthians 3:2 (*eggegrammena/eggegrammene*)
  - 13 Note the interesting play on words in the Greek (*ginoskomene kai anaginoskomene*).
  - 14 Stockhausen, 43ff.
  - 15 Greek: *hikanos*.
  - 16 Greek: *hikanos—hikanoi—hikanotes—hikanosen*.
  - 17 Greek aorist tense—completed action in the past—*hikanosen*.
  - 18 Origen, followed by others, misinterpreted this statement as justification for an allegorical method of interpretation and an argument against a literal interpretation of Scripture.
  - 19 Cf. Deuteronomy 4:33-36; Hebrews 12:18-21.
  - 20 Hughes, 110.
  - 21 There is much discussion concerning the meaning of *eis to telos*. Some feel it refers to the new covenant. Christ is the goal, the *telos* of the law. The Israelites could not see Him. Others suggest that Moses veiled his face to hide from the Israelites the fact that the glory of the old covenant was fading. They must not know this. This interpretation, however, suggests deception on Moses’

part, which cannot be maintained. I think the answer is much simpler. With Hughes (p. 109), I feel that all Paul is saying is that the Israelites were limited in the amount of time they could look at the glory of God reflected in Moses’ face.

- 22 Dumbrell, 109.
- 23 The Greek participle is in the present tense, indicating continuous action (*katotriz meno*).
- 24 The Greek participle is in the perfect tense, indicating completed action in the past, but with continuous results in the present (*anakekalumeno*).
- 25 Wright, 144.
- 26 Montgomery, 219.
- 27 *Ibid.*, 225.
- 28 Cf. Isaiah 51:16; Proverbs 3:19.
- 29 Cf. Exodus 15:17; Jeremiah 11:17; 24:6.
- 30 Cf. 1 Corinthians 3:6, 10. This is developed in Montgomery, 220-21.
- 31 Hughes, 90.

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