

SECOND CORINTHIANS

Chapter 3

Ministers of the New Covenant

Are we beginning to commend ourselves again? Or do we need, as some do, letters of recommendation to you, or from you? 2 You yourselves are our letter of recommendation, written on our hearts, to be known and read by all. 3 And you show that you are a letter from Christ delivered by us, written not with ink but with the Spirit of the living God, not on tablets of stone but on tablets of human hearts. 4 Such is the confidence that we have through Christ toward God. 5 Not that we are sufficient in ourselves to claim anything as coming from us, but our sufficiency is from God, 6 who has made us sufficient to be ministers of a new covenant, not of the letter but of the Spirit. For the letter kills, but the Spirit gives life. 7 Now if the ministry of death, carved in letters on stone, came with such glory that the Israelites could not gaze at Moses' face because of its glory, which was being brought to an end, 8 will not the ministry of the Spirit have even more glory? 9 For if there was glory in the ministry of condemnation, the ministry of righteousness must far exceed it in glory. 10 Indeed, in this case, what once had glory has come to have no glory at all, because of the glory that surpasses it. 11 For if what was being brought to an end came with glory, much more will what is permanent have glory. 12 Since we have such a hope, we are very bold, 13 not like Moses, who would put a veil over his face so that the Israelites might not gaze at the outcome of what was being brought to an end. 14 But their minds were hardened. For to this day, when they read the old covenant, that same veil remains unlifted, because only through Christ is it taken away. 15 Yes, to this day whenever Moses is read a veil lies over their hearts. 16 But when one turns to the Lord, the veil is removed. 17 Now the Lord is the Spirit, and where the Spirit of the Lord is, there is freedom. 18 And we all, with unveiled face, beholding the glory of the Lord, are being transformed into the same image from one degree of glory to another. For this comes from the Lord who is the Spirit.

3:1 *Are we beginning to commend ourselves again?* Paul is sensitive to the fact that virtually everything he wrote or said was liable to be twisted and used in a hostile manner by the false teachers in Corinth. (CSB)

Paul has no need to establish his credibility with the Corinthians. His authority comes from Christ's commission (Ac 9:1–15). (TLSB)

letters of recommendation. The appearance of vagrant impostors, who claimed to be teachers of apostolic truth, led to the need for letters of recommendation. Paul needed no such confirmation; but others, including the Corinthian intruders, did need authentication and, being themselves false, often resorted to unscrupulous methods for obtaining or forging letters of recommendation. (CSB)

Businessmen or officials often sent authorizing letters on behalf of their messengers. The Corinthians knew Paul intimately (cf Ac 18:1–17); he needed no affirmation of his authority, just as Christ's message needs no human authority (Mt 28:18–20). The super-apostles (chs 11–13) may have used such letters. (TLSB)

3:2 *known and read by all.* Because of the power of the gospel demonstrated by their transformed lives. (CSB)

Rather than debate the issue of his ministry's authorization, Paul declared that the Corinthians are his ministry's proof. As believers in Christ—living in faith—they were the greatest earthly commendation for the integrity and sincerity of Paul's work. (TLSB)

3:3 *letter from Christ.* Paul is no more than the instrument in the hands of the Master. (CSB)

The Corinthians mutually encourage one another and witness to the whole of Corinth as a result of Paul's ministry among them (cf Jn 13:35). (TLSB)

written not with ink. As a parchment or papyrus document would be. (CSB)

Paul's ministry to them was first and foremost a work of the Holy Spirit. There is confidence and enduring assurance in this Letter written by the eternal Spirit.(TLSB)

with the Spirit of the living God. As though the Spirit were a substitute for ink! Ink fades and may easily be deleted or blocked out since it is no more than an inanimate fluid. But the Spirit of the living God is himself life and therefore life-giving (v. 6), and the life he gives is eternal and without defect. (CSB)

A reference to the Father. (TLSB)

not on tablets of stone. As at Sinai. (CSB)

Engraved public monuments. (TLSB)

on tablets of human hearts. See Jer 31:33; Eze 11:19; 36:26. Paul explains the significance of this contrast between the old and the new covenants in vv. 7–18. (CSB)

Living monuments (cf 1Pt 2:5). (TLSB)

3:5 *our sufficiency is from God.* Answers the question in 2:16: “And who is equal to such a task?” (CSB)

The Gospel was not only the proclamation of His ministry but its power as well (cf 4:7; 1Co 1:18; Col 1:10–14). “Since the natural powers of mankind cannot do anything or help toward it (1 Corinthians 2:14; 2 Corinthians 3:5), God, out of His infinite goodness and mercy, comes first to us. He causes His Holy Gospel to be preached. The Holy Spirit desires to work and accomplish this conversion and renewal in us. Through preaching and meditation on His Word God kindles faith and other godly virtues in us. They are the Holy Spirit's gifts and works alone” (FC SD II 71). (TLSB)

3:6 *ministers of.* Those who serve the cause of (see Ro 15:16; Col 1:7; 4:7; 1Ti 4:6). Paul will return to the theme of “this ministry” in 4:1. (CSB)

new covenant. Here Paul takes up the theme suggested by the mention of “tablets of human hearts” (v. 3). See Heb 8–10 and note on Heb 7:22. Paul's reference to ministers of a new covenant in contrast to the “ministry that brought death” (v. 7) may have been occasioned by his opponents in Corinth who were Judaizers, perhaps those who claimed to be associated with Peter (1Co 1:12) and who are referred to as Hebrews in 11:22 (see note there). (CSB)

The work of Jesus Christ, who is the fulfillment of both the Law and the promises of the OT (cf Gn 17; Ex 19–20; Jer 31:34). (TLSB)

the letter. The “tablets of stone” on which the letter of the law was originally written (see Ex 24:12; 31:18; 32:15–16). (CSB)

The “letter of the Law,” holy and powerful, puts the sinner to death (cf Rm 3:20; 7; Gal 3:19–24). “The Law ... is a ministry that kills through the letter and preaches condemnation” (FC SD V 22). (TLSB)

the Spirit. The writing of the law “with the Spirit of the living God ... on tablets of human hearts,” which was the promise of the new covenant as foretold by the prophets (see Jer 31:31–34; 32:39–40; Eze 11:19; 36:26). (CSB)

the letter kills, but the Spirit gives life. Does not mean that the external, literal sense of Scripture is deadly or unprofitable while the inner, spiritual (mystical or mythical) sense is vital. “The letter” is synonymous with the law as an external standard before which all people, because they are lawbreakers, stand guilty and condemned to death. Therefore it is described as the “ministry that brought death” and the “ministry that condemns” (vv. 7–8). On the other hand, the Spirit who gives life is the “Spirit of the living God” who, in fulfillment of the promise of the new covenant, writes that same law inwardly “on tablets of human hearts” (v. 3). He thus provides the believer with love for God’s law, which previously he had hated, and with power to keep it, which previously he had not possessed. (CSB)

God works in our hearts, through the promises of the Gospel of Jesus, to bring life and salvation (1:22; Jn 14:26; 15:26; 16:13–16). (TLSB)

3:7–18 Paul is defending his “ministry” of the new covenant in Christ (cf. v. 6; 4:1) and here compares the experiences of Moses, who mediated the old covenant of Sinai, and his own as a minister of the new covenant. But he now applies the word “ministry” to the law that was “engraved in letters on stone” and to the Spirit, who writes “on tablets of human hearts” (v. 3). The point of comparison is the fading glory that shone on Moses’ face and the “ever-increasing glory” reflected in the faces of those who minister the new covenant. This contrast in regard to glory serves to highlight the temporary and inadequate character of the old covenant and the permanent and effective character of the new covenant. (CSB)

3:7 *ministry of death.* The Law of Moses is defined by its function in the lives of sinful people. God’s holiness exposes our sinfulness. It damns any notion of self-sufficiency outside of God’s grace. “The doctrines of the Law and the Gospel may not be mixed and confused with each other. What belongs to the one may not be applied to the other. When that happens Christ’s merit and benefits are easily hidden and the Gospel is again turned into a doctrine of the Law, as happened in the papacy” (FC SD V 27). (TLSB)

came with glory. The law of the old covenant given at Sinai was in no way bad or evil; on the contrary, Paul describes it elsewhere as holy, righteous, good and spiritual (Ro 7:12, 14). The evil is in the hearts and deeds of people who, as lawbreakers, bring upon themselves the condemnation of the law and the penalty of death—and the law engraved on stone could not purge away that evil. (CSB)

such glory. The glory of God surrounded the giving of the law and was reflected on the face of Moses when he descended from the mountain (see Ex 34:29–30). (CSB)

Moses’ face literally reflected God’s glory, having been in God’s presence to receive the Law. (TLSB)

end. Rabbinic writers held that Moses' face shined brilliantly like the sun or moon. The old covenant (as it was understood by Judaism) ultimately exposed sinners as those condemned to death. It gave way to the fulfillment of the Law and the promises of God by the ministry of Jesus Christ in the power of the Spirit. (TLSB)

3:8–9 *ministry of the Spirit.* † Giving life instead of death. “Righteousness” is here both justification and sanctification. (CSB)

The ministry of death (v 7) was the Spirit's first work but not His ultimate work (cf Ezk 33:11; Gal 3:5–9). “[God] will work through the Word in the people He calls, so that they may be enlightened, converted, and saved. For the Word, by which we are called, is a ministry of the Spirit, which gives the Spirit, or by which the Spirit is given” (FC SD XI 29). (TLSB)

3:9 *ministry of condemnation.* God serves us by spiritually exposing the futility and destructiveness of human self-righteousness, which brings condemnation. (TLSB)

ministry of righteousness. Jesus serves us by fulfilling the Law (Mt 5:17), taking upon Himself the curse of the world's sin (5:21; Gal 3:13), and giving His righteousness for the salvation of the world (cf 1Co 1:30). (TLSB)

3:10 *no glory at all.* The OT's glory is fulfilled in the NT. In this sense, the OT glory has passed away. (TLSB)

surpasses. The ministry of Jesus in the power of the Spirit abundantly fulfills the expectations of the OT. (TLSB)

3:11 *what is permanent.* Paul here applies the fading to the old covenant of Sinai, which was not to endure forever. In due course it was superseded by the unfading and much more glorious radiance belonging to the new covenant. (CSB)

3:12-4:12 Paul is in the midst of speaking of the glory of the new covenant as compared to the old one. The comparison is from the lesser to the greater. “If the ministry that condemns men (the Old Covenant Law) is glorious (as shown by Moses' face, upon which the Israelites could not look), how much more glorious is the ministry that brings righteousness (Paul's ministry of the Gospel)!...And if what was fading away came with glory, how much greater is the glory of that which lasts!” As Paul defends the new covenant, he is also defending his own ministry of that new covenant, which appears to be rather inglorious (cf. 3:1-3; 4:7-12). (Concordia Pulpit Resources – Volume 7, Part 1)

3:12-4:2 Note the large number of times the pronoun “we” occurs. Paul is reminding us that the transformation experience is no longer limited to Moses as recorded in Exodus, nor to Moses and Elijah along with Peter, James and John in the transfiguration (Matt 17:1–9; Mark 9:2–9; Luke 9:28–36), nor to Paul and the other apostles. It is something that every believer experiences as he or she is transformed into the glory of God through the continuation of this same glorious ministry that Paul and the apostles were privileged to perform. (Concordia Pulpit Resources - Volume 1, Part 1)

The preceding passage 2 Cor 3:7–11 sharply contrasts the former glory of the law which brought death with the new glory of the ministry that brings righteousness. This is the basis for the word *therefore* in v 12. (Concordia Pulpit Resources - Volume 1, Part 1)

3:12 *have such a hope* – This is the lasting glory that we have in the Gospel. – It stresses that this hope is a present reality; we have it now. Hope affects what we do and how we live at the present time. As Heb.

11:1 says, “Now faith is being sure of what we hope for and certain of what we do not see.” (Concordia Pulpit Resources – Volume 7, Part 1)

The present participle *echontes*, “having,” in v 12 stresses that this hope is a present reality; we have it now. Hope affects what we do and how we live at the present time. As Heb 11:1 says, “Now faith is being sure of what we hope for and certain of what we do not see.” (Concordia Pulpit Resources - Volume 1, Part 1)

we are – Means “let us make use of”; thus “let us use great boldness.” Our sure hope in the Gospel gives us great courage and freedom to carry out our mission and calling as Christians. (Concordia Pulpit Resources – Volume 7, Part 1)

bold – This literally means “speaking openly” and here means “boldness, courage, great freedom.” – We make use of much confidence. (Concordia Pulpit Resources – Volume 4, Part 1)

Although the apostle did not actually describe the consummation of all Christian hope, but showed only the manner of its accomplishment, yet the final bliss was implied. And therefore he continues: Having therefore such hope, we make use of much boldness of speech. The hope which the ministers of the New Testament have extends forward to the future glorification of Christ and the believers in the mansions of heaven, when the spiritual gifts of the Gospel, righteousness and life, will be revealed before the whole world. And therefore the servants of the Word make use of great openness, much boldness of speech. Because Paul had before his mind’s eye the definite fulfillment of the certain promises of the Gospel, he could speak with all frank and unreserved confidence. There was nothing to conceal, nothing to suppress, with the utmost plainness he could preach the message of Christ and of the fullness of salvation contained in Him. Just as he did not hesitate to let the thunder of Sinai roll over the head of the unrepentant sinner, so he withheld not a syllable of the saving truth to the poor sinner, whose self-righteousness and pride had been taken away by such frank preaching. (Kretzmann)

3:13 *Moses, who would put a veil over his face.* See Ex 34:33–35. The purpose of the veil was to prevent the Israelites from seeing the fading of the glory. (CSB)

Moses saw God’s glory (Ex 33:18) and reflected that glory in his face to the Israelites. He veiled his face to prevent the Israelites from sensing the transient nature of that reflection, calling them to continually trust in his leadership before God and before them. The glory of the old covenant was fleeting compared to Jesus. (TLSB)

The veil (*kalumma*, which occurs 4 times in this section) refers to the headcovering Moses wore because of the supernatural radiance of the skin of his face (Exod 34:33–35). He took off this mask only when he stood before Yahweh or spoke to his people.¹ Paul uses the account of Moses to illustrate the superiority of the apostolic proclamation over that of the OT. While the original purpose of the veil was to prevent the people from seeing Moses’ face fade, Paul also uses it metaphorically to refer to the blindness of the Jewish people who fail to see the Christological message of the OT. The veil is on their hearts. Yet this changes when they are converted; the veil is removed. The removal of the veil is the hope that Paul speaks about. (Concordia Pulpit Resources - Volume 1, Part 1)

The passage immediately following our text describes the dreadful consequence of not having this veil lifted: “And even if our gospel is veiled, it is veiled to those who are perishing. The god of this age has blinded the minds of unbelievers, so that they cannot see the light of the gospel of the glory of Christ, who is the image of God” (2 Cor 4:3, 4). (Concordia Pulpit Resources - Volume 1, Part 1)

Ex. 34:29-35 records Moses' descent from Mount Sinai after his 40-day visit with God. The text says that his skin shone because he had been talking with God, and though this frightened the people, he addressed them nevertheless, placing a veil over his face after he delivered God's message to them. Furthermore, whenever Moses spoke with God, he would remove the veil and his face would shine. Paul puts a unique interpretation upon this event, saying that the veil was there so that the people might not witness the radiance fading, as it was doomed to do, because the old covenant was a fading dispensation. From the moment the Sinai law was given, it was doomed to be replaced by something greater, Paul argued (2 Cor 3:7-11). (Concordia Pulpit Resources – Volume 4, Part 1)

In this respect he and the other teachers differed from Moses, who, although vested with the full official authority of a servant of God, yet placed a veil upon his face, and this for the purpose that the children of Israel should not look steadily on the end of that which was passing away. It was not only that the sight of the divine radiance on the face of Moses was withheld from the children of Israel because their previous conduct had made them unworthy of such a favor and rendered them unable to endure the splendor of such sinless reflection, but that the glory on the face of Moses, was fading away even while he was speaking with the people. Moses was aware of this transitoriness of the phenomenon; he realized that this fact symbolized the preparatory nature of the Old Testament ministry, and his action was in agreement with the will of God. A continued enjoyment of the divine reflection was denied the children of Israel on account of their refusal to accept the words of the prophet. In this way Moses was handicapped in his work and could not bring out the Gospel-news as it is now proclaimed by the ministers of the New Testament. (Kretzmann)

3:14 *minds were hardened* – The verb means “to harden, to make insensitive, to cover with thick skin,” implying unbelief and unfaithfulness. Just as the Lord hardened Pharaoh's unbelieving heart (Ex. 8:15), so he made the minds of the unfaithful Israelites dull and hard as they rejected the preaching of his prophets (Is. 6:9-10). This is not double predestination – God's prior decision to harden them – but rather is the consequence of their refusal to heed God's call to repentance and faith. (Concordia Pulpit Resources – Volume 7, Part 1)

Both their minds and their hearts were blinded without faith in Christ (v. 15). “They do not learn from the Law to see their sins correctly. They either become bold hypocrites (who swell with the opinion of their own righteousness) like the Pharisees (Matthew 23), or they despair like Judas (Matt. 27:3-5)”
Formula of Concord – (TLSB)

to this day...the same veil remains. The veil that prevented them from seeing the fading of the glory on Moses' face is still with them, preventing them from recognizing the temporary and inadequate character of the old covenant—a “veil” that is removed only in Christ. Only those who have received the new covenant in Christ have the power to see how the new covenant has transcended and replaced the old covenant—because of its greater glory. (CSB)

hardened. By unfaithfulness and rebellion. (TLSB)

read – This refers to the public “out loud” reading of the Scriptures. The whole sentence illustrates the deep tragedy of followers of Judaism. They hold the Law high and read it in their worship, but they do not see that it is very document that testifies to Jesus, the promised Messiah. Just as Moses' face was veiled so that the people couldn't see it, so the Old Covenant remains veiled to nonbelievers so that they cannot see its true nature. They see it merely as a set of rules for good living. They do not understand that it is temporary; nor do they understand to whom the covenant ultimately points – Christ. (Concordia Pulpit Resources – Volume 7, Part 1)

In our text Moses is equated with the law, since “the law was given through Moses” (John 1:17). Lenski states: “The glory on Moses’ face was the glory of the divine law and the judgment that was reflected by God’s minister of law.”³ Stephen described the hardness of the hearts of the Jews who refused to believe: “But our fathers refused to obey him. Instead, they rejected him and in their hearts turned back to Egypt. You stiff-necked people, with uncircumcised hearts and ears! You are just like your fathers: You always resist the Holy Spirit!” (Acts 7:39, 51). Yet “Christ is the end of the law [*telos gar nomou Christos*] so that there may be righteousness for everyone who believes” (Rom 10:4). The veil on Moses’ face indicates the end of the glory of the law which condemns the sinner. The glory soon disappeared from Moses’ face, and he discarded the veil. The abiding glory of righteousness surpasses the glory of the judgment that condemned (2 Cor 3:9). (Concordia Pulpit Resources - Volume 1, Part 1)

old covenant. Broadly embodying the Law and the promises of God expressed throughout the Books of Moses, the covenant called for Israel to trust in Yahweh as the Lord of salvation and redemption. (TLSB)

only through Christ is it taken away – Only Christ reveals the true nature and purpose of the Old Covenant. In Christ we are able to see the true meaning of the Scriptures. In him the Bible is not a Book of Law, but a Book of Life. “These things are written that you may believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God, and that by believing you may have life in his name” (Jn. 20:31). Only in Christ do we “get it.” Only in Christ are the veiled mysteries of salvation revealed. Christ is the key to the Scriptures (cf. Jn 5:39; Acts 10:43). The “glory” of the Old Covenant was the glory of the Law, which burned on Moses’ face under the veil. Thus, to say that the veil remains for the Jews and other non-Christians is to say that the judgment of the Law still remains on them. However, for those who have been brought to faith in Christ, the veil has been taken away; for there is no more burning judgment of the Law remaining for them. The veil is no longer necessary to protect them from brilliant condemnation of the Law, for Christ has done away with it. This is reminiscent of the veil in the temple being torn in two at the death of Jesus. We can now enter into God’s presence through Christ without fear. (Concordia Pulpit Resources – Volume 7, Part 1)

That the people of Israel were the guilty ones, and not Moses, appears from the next words: But blinded were their minds; their power of thinking had become callous, hardened. It was impossible for them to gain a clear knowledge of the important matters which they should have known for their salvation. The entire history of the journey through the wilderness is an account of wonderful, patient mercy on the part of God and of stubborn resistance on the part of the children of Israel. And therefore, in a way, the sentence of hardening was carried out in its beginnings even in the wilderness. And that is not all: For to the present day the same veil remains unlifted at their reading of the Old Testament, for it is only done away in Christ. The apostle says of the Jews of his time what has remained practically unchanged to this day: there is still a veil upon the hearts of the children of Israel, which prevents their seeing the evanescence of the Old Testament. They will not acknowledge that the age before Christ was one of preparation, of type and prophecy only. They will not turn to the Lord to be granted an open vision, to recognize Christ as the Savior of the world. To this very day, whenever Moses is read in their synagogues, the veil lies upon their hearts. And get it remains true, and should be remembered in all the missionary work upon the children of Abraham according to the flesh, that at whatever time Israel shall turn to the Lord, the veil will be taken away. If they will but turn to Christ in true conversion and accept Him as the promised Messiah, then they will be given the open vision to understand the entire Old Testament in the light of the New, prophecy in the light of fulfillment. The apostle is not speaking of a single event, as if all the Jews would at one time turn to the true Lord and their Savior Jesus Christ, but of the individual instances, no matter how often they occur in the time of the, New Covenant, Rom. 11, 26, when God takes away the veil from the heart of some member of the Jewish race, when He takes away the pride of false understanding and of self-righteousness and brings about the right knowledge of sin,

thus leading the way to Christ the Savior. “Paul teaches 2 Cor. 3, 15 f. the veil that covered the face of Moses cannot be removed except by faith in Christ, by which the Holy Ghost is received.” 13) Note that the writings of Moses and the entire Old Testament are here referred to as a well-known collection, as a single book. (Kretzmann)

Christ, the object of our faith, fulfills the glory of the old covenant (e.g., the veil [curtain] torn in two at Jesus’ death, Mt 27:51). (TLSB)

3:15 *Moses is read.* The Books of Moses were read publicly in the synagogues. (TLSB)

3:16–17 Jesus Christ is both the hope of the old covenant and the key to understanding it as the proclamation of what was yet to come (cf 1:19–20). (TLSB)

3:16 *turns to the Lord.* Believes in Jesus. (TLSB)

This refers to repentance and conversion, as in John 12:40; it reflects the frequent Old Testament word “to turn, return (to faith), repent. (Concordia Pulpit Resources – Volume 7, Part 1)

The verb in v 16, *epistrephō*, “to turn,” implies conversion. It is a definite turning point in the life of an individual. It denotes repentance and faith. The person who turns to the Lord makes a 180-degree turn in life and goes in the opposite direction—away from sin and into the arms of the Savior. (Concordia Pulpit Resources - Volume 1, Part 1)

Such a turning to the Lord is a turning to the Spirit of the Lord, for both persons comprise the Godhead, and where the Spirit is there is true spiritual liberty (v 17). It is the Holy Spirit who enables us to turn to the Lord in faith. The Lord works through his Spirit to transform us (v 18). (Concordia Pulpit Resources - Volume 1, Part 1)

Just what the removing of the veil signifies the apostle explains in conclusion: But the Lord, the Jehovah of Israel, Christ, the Redeemer of mankind, is the Spirit; He is the Author of the New Covenant of mercy and grace, He is the One that is given through the Gospel with all His blessings, with the fullness of salvation. But where the Spirit of the Lord is, there is liberty, there is no longer the bondage of the Law. Every person that will heed the Gospel-call is assured of free access to God, without any intervening veil, without the fear of condemnation. The argument of the apostle has been formulated by one commentator as follows: Where the Spirit of the Lord is, there is freedom: as the Lord is the Spirit, whoever turns to the Lord has that Spirit; therefore such a one must be free, and will no more be hindered by the veil which covers and checks the action of the soul. This is the effect which is bound to be brought about in the case of the Jews and of all who, like them, have their minds blinded to the glory of the Gospel. (Kretzmann)

3:17 *the Lord is the Spirit.* This statement should be linked with what was said at the end of v. 6: “the Spirit gives life.” It is only by turning to the Lord (v. 16) that the condemnation and the sentence of death pronounced by the law on the lawbreaker are annulled and replaced by the free life-giving grace of the new covenant. There is a close relationship between the Spirit of Christ and the Holy Spirit. Both are said to dwell in the believer (Ro 8:9; Gal 2:20). In Ro 8:9–10 the Spirit, the Spirit of God, the Spirit of Christ, and Christ all seem to be used interchangeably. In Ac 16:6–7 the Holy Spirit and the Spirit of Jesus appear to be one and the same. Perhaps this is because the Holy Spirit proceeds from the Father and the Son, and the first two persons of the Trinity accomplish their purposes through the Spirit. (CSB)

The mystery and unity of the Trinity (Father, Son, Holy Spirit, yet one God!) is at work in salvation (cf Jn 14:17, 26; 15:26; 16:13, 15). The Holy Spirit works life and salvation in the person and work of Jesus. (TLSB)

freedom. Faith in Jesus removes not only the veil of the old covenant but also the guilt and bondage of sin (cf Rm 8). Such freedom allows the Christian to serve God not out of guilt, but out of joy and thanksgiving. “God’s Law is useful (1) because external discipline and decency are maintained by it against wild, disobedient people; (2) likewise, through the Law people are brought to a knowledge of their sins; and also, (3) when people have been born anew by God’s Spirit, converted to the Lord, and Moses’s veil has been lifted from them [2 Corinthians 3:13–16], they live and walk in the Law [Psalm 119:1]” (FC SD VI 1). (TLSB)

Where Christ’s Spirit is, there is freedom from the judgment of the Law. The letter kills, but the Spirit gives life. (Concordia Pulpit Resources – Volume 7, Part 1)

3:18 *with unveiled face.* In contrast to Moses. (CSB)

This is a perfect passive participle, “having been unveiled.” It indicates the continual state of spiritual perception and enlightenment that is possible only through faith in Christ. (Concordia Pulpit Resources – Volume 7, Part 1)

with unveiled face – The Greek word means “to contemplate something, to look at something as in a mirror.” Thus, when we behold the Lord’s glory, we are beholding something of which we partake by his grace, for Christ is in us, and we are in him, and we are his body. “We know that when he appears, we shall be like him, for we shall see him as he is” (1 John 3:2). Thus, when we contemplate the transfiguration of our Lord, we are contemplating the glory that we will share with him through faith in his redemptive work. (Concordia Pulpit Resources – Volume 7, Part 1)

The believer’s focus is upon Christ alone through His Word. Jesus is the glory of God (Heb 1:3) and the gift of righteousness (1Co 1:30) available to all because of the cross and Baptism (Rm 6:3–11). (TLSB)

being transformed into the same image. Christ himself is the glory of God in the fullness of its radiance (Heb 1:3); his is the eternal and unfading glory, which he had with the Father before the world began (Jn 17:5). We who believe are made partakers of this glory by being gradually transformed into the likeness of Christ. The reference here is to the process of Christian sanctification. (CSB)

By virtue of God’s mercy, we become more and more like Him in our daily lives through the work of the Holy Spirit through the Word (cf Rm 12:1–2). (TLSB)

Describes moving from the glory of those exposed to their deadness in sin, to the glory of being declared righteous in Christ, to the glory of becoming more like Jesus day by day (cf Php 1:5–6). (TLSB)

Regarding the glory Paul describes, Lenski says: “The point is that the glory inherent in their ministry (v. 7–11) is one that brings glory upon us all, upon those who are served by this ministry as well as upon those serving in it. By showing them the true exaltation of his ministry he is showing them the true exaltation of themselves as affected by that ministry, an exaltation that goes from glory to glory and cannot be obtained by any means other than this ministry.”²(Concordia Pulpit Resources - Volume 1, Part 1)

We are being transformed into Christ's image. We are being restored through him to the image of God, which was lost in the fall. This transformation consists in giving up conformity to the world and in renewing the mind according to God's good, acceptable, and perfect will (Romans 12:2). This transformation, "from glory to glory," takes place in part in this world, as we are baptized, as we grow in the grace and knowledge of our Lord. It will take place in full on the Last Day, when we behold his glory face-to-face. (Concordia Pulpit Resources – Volume 7, Part 1)

But as for the Christians: We all, with unveiled face, reflecting the glory of the Lord as in a mirror, to that same image are changed from one glory to another, as from the Lord the Spirit. Before the face of the believers of the New Testament the veil of Moses and of the children of Israel no longer hangs; it has been removed by the mercy of God. And not only that, but they also reflect, as in a mirror and therefore somewhat imperfectly, but none the less surely, the glory of the Lord Jesus Christ; there is evidence of its power and brightness in their whole life. And so they are transformed into His image, not at once, but by gradual stages, the process of sanctification occupying the entire life. The believers are renewed in knowledge as well as in righteousness and holiness, after the image of God and of Christ, their Savior. 1 John 3, 2; Col. 3, 10; Eph. 4, 24. Thus the work of the Spirit will continue without ceasing until the perfection of the Kingdom of Grace becomes the perfection of the Kingdom of Glory, Rom. 8, 29, "that the Holy Spirit enlighten, cleanse, strengthen our hearts, that he work new light and life in the hearts, and the true evangelical, Christian perfection is that we daily increase in faith, in the fear of God, in faithful diligence in our calling and office which has been entrusted to us. (Kretzmann)

Ch 3 Paul describes the sufficiency, competency, and hope of the new covenant, which is the fulfillment of the old covenant. Our abilities and skills do not make us competent for the ministry of Jesus Christ. Our confidence and competency come from Christ, whose ministry truly gives life by the power of the Spirit. Therefore, we can be even bolder than Moses, the great prophet of the old covenant, as we proclaim Jesus, the one whom Moses yearned to see. • Dear Lord, help us to see clearly the living hope that You have given us through Your cross and resurrection. Give us also boldness to proclaim the cross to all who would listen. Amen. (TLSB)