

**The Surpassing Effects of Paul's Ministry as a  
Servant of the New Covenant  
2 Corinthians 3:12-18  
Part 1**

If we have experienced something that can help another person live a better life and we have the opportunity to share that experience with them should we do so? The answer is simple. How could we not do so?

Certainly this is true in respect to Christians who have so much to offer. And what do we have to offer? We have the gospel of Christ.

The greatest message ever told. And what is that message? The message is simple: Jesus is the Christ the Son of the living God who loved us and gave up his life for us in order to pay the debt of our sin, in order that through faith in Him we might receive His righteousness making it possible for us to enter into a personal relationship with the God of this universe.

This gospel message is able to deliver people from their sin and all of its consequences, from its penalty, from its power and one day from its very presence.

No one has more to offer this world and the people in this world than us. We are in Christ, amazingly wealthy, and we need to get about the business of spreading that wealth that has been entrusted to us without fear.

This brings us back to our text. Paul, in defending himself against an anticipated attack by opponents told his readers how Christ through the Spirit of God had written on their hearts in **2 Corinthians 3:1-3**. This reference to Christ writing on their hearts through the Spirit, in effect made Paul and his companions ministers of the new covenant, a covenant that God had promised through the prophet Jeremiah in **Jeremiah 31:31-33**, that indicated to the nation of Israel that they would have their hard hearts replaced through the ministry of the Holy Spirit.

What was alluded to in **2 Corinthians 3:1-3** was then clearly stated by Paul in **2 Corinthians 3:4-6** when he called himself and his companions servants of the new covenant, having been made fully adequate for such a task by God Himself. Paul then went on to contrast his ministry as a servant of the new covenant with his opponents ministry as servants of the old covenant in **2 Corinthians 3:7-11**. He did this in order to highlight for his readers and for us the surpassing glory of the new covenant over and against the old covenant.

Now having done this Paul will drive home his point even further by focusing on the surpassing effects of the new covenant over and against the old covenant in **2 Corinthians 3:12-18**. And this thought leads us to the question that we will be seeking to answer over the next several weeks. And what is that question? It is this:

What were the surpassing **effects** of Paul's ministry as a servant of the new covenant according to 2 Corinthians 3:12-18? This morning we will only be able to consider the very first effect. So what was it?

So what is my hope for this message? My hope is that as we continue to understand and appreciate the blessings that we have received through the new covenant that was ratified by the blood of Christ and has been appropriated through faith in Him, that we will like Paul and his companions not be fearful or timid concerning the message of the gospel of Christ but bold, courageous and confident. So what was the first effect of Paul's ministry as a servant of the new covenant? The first effect should not be surprising to us at all ...

The first surpassing effect of Paul's ministry as a servant of the new covenant was **boldness** (2 Corinthians 3:12-13). Let me now read for you **2 Corinthians 3:12-13** and see if this is not so. And what does it say? It says this, **"Therefore having such a hope, we use great boldness in our speech, (13) and are not like Moses, who used to put a veil over his face so that the sons of Israel would not look intently at the end of what was fading away."** So clearly, based on these two verses the very first thing that Paul lists in order to highlight for his readers and for us the surpassing effect of his ministry was **"boldness."**

So now let us look at these verses a little bit more closely. And hopefully as we do, these two verses will speak to our hearts and will be used by God's Spirit to effect a change in us that will not only minister to ourselves and our families but to every person that comes in meaningful contact with us as we enthusiastically strive with even greater determination to boldly proclaim the Gospel of Christ, which is the message of the new covenant.

So how does **verse 12** begin? It begins with the word **"therefore."** Clearly, based on this word, what Paul has said about the surpassing glory of the new covenant, is tied to what he is about to say concerning boldness.

And how does Paul transition from what he has said about the surpassing glory of the new covenant in **2 Corinthians 3:7-11** to what he is about to say about its surpassing effect or more specifically about **"boldness"** in **2 Corinthians 3:12,13**? Paul does this by referring to **"a hope"** that he and his companions possessed.

Let us go back and once again read **verse 12** and see if this is not so. And what does it say? It says this, **“Therefore having such a hope, we use great boldness in our speech.”**

So what exactly is this hope that they possessed? The hope that Paul and his companions possessed was their unshakeable **confidence** in the transcendent glory of the new covenant in comparison to the lesser glory of the old covenant.

Because they truly believed that the old covenant was a **“ministry of death”** but the new covenant was a **“ministry of the Spirit”** and therefore of life, because they truly believed that the old covenant was **“a ministry of condemnation”** but the new covenant was **“a ministry of righteousness,”** because they truly believed that the old covenant was not permanent but that the new covenant was permanent and ever present. Paul and His companions possessed hope or in other words an unshakeable confidence in the transcendent glory of the new covenant over and against the old.

And what was the effect of this unshakeable confidence that Paul and his companions had in the transcendent glory of the new covenant? It was **“boldness.”** Let us go back and read **2 Corinthians 3:12**, and what does it say? It says this, **“Therefore having such a hope, we use great boldness in our speech.”**

Paul’s reference to “Boldness” (PARRESIA) describes his and his companion’s courageous, confident, and outspoken proclamation of the **gospel**.

Paul and his companions because of their hope; their unshakeable confidence in the surpassing glory of the new covenant, proclaimed the gospel of Christ courageously and confidently. They had no problem telling people why they were lost and what they needed to do in order to be saved. This was their life. It may have been difficult but it is what they did.

So let me ask you this question. If we have this same hope as Paul and his companions, or in other words the same unshakeable confidence in the transcendent glory of the new covenant, in comparison to the lesser glory of the old covenant, would we experience the same boldness? Absolutely!

How could we not? If that is what is on our mind, the surpassing glory of the new covenant and its ability to rescue men and women from their sin and all the consequences of their sin, in this life as well as in the life to come, how could we not be continually looking for opportunities to share the message of the new covenant, which is the Gospel of Christ, with those who are in such desperate need of it and to do so with boldness.

If our lives, as professing followers of Christ and servants of the new covenant are not characterized by boldness it will be because of one of the following reasons.

If our lives as professing followers of Christ and servants of the new covenant are not characterized by boldness it could be because we have allowed sin into our lives. We are no longer choosing to live for Him who loved us and gave Himself for us but rather for ourselves, in other words for the lust of the flesh, and for the lust of the eyes and for the pride of life. If this is the case then what do we need to do? We need to confess our sin and to once again bow ourselves before the Lord and to acknowledge his right to rule over all aspects of our lives. But this is not the only reason why our life as a follower of Christ might not be characterized by boldness.

It could also be that our life as a professing follower of Christ and a servant of the new covenant is not characterized by boldness simply because we are immature in our faith and have not yet grown to appreciate the surpassing glory of the new covenant. But hopefully over time this will be corrected through our prayerful reflection on the message of the new covenant or in other words on our prayerful reflection on the gospel of Christ.

In light of this hope I would encourage you strongly if you believe that you might be one of these true and committed but immature believers that you would become involved in our “Evangelism Explosion” training program as well as our “Go” ministry. Why should you do this? You need to do this because apart from understanding and appreciating the message of the new covenant, which I believe will be enhanced by both of these experiences, you will find it extremely difficult if not impossible to be characterized by boldness.

But there is still another possibility. It could also be that if our life as a professing follower of Christ and a servant of the new covenant is not characterized by boldness it is simply because our profession is simply lip-service and we have never truly, by faith, committed ourselves to Christ.

Should boldness characterize the life of a professing follower of Christ? Absolutely! And I believe that every true disciple of Christ will agree with this statement and would desire that their lives would be characterized by it even as Paul’s life and his companions lives were characterized by it as we have seen in **2 Corinthians 3:12**.

Paul will now illustrate the bold character of his ministry and that of his companions by comparing their ministry to the ministry of Moses in **2 Corinthians 3:13**. So now let us go back to our text and see if this is not so.

But let us read both **verses 12 & 13**. So what do these verses say? They say this, **“Therefore having such a hope (or in other words the unshakeable confidence in the surpassing glory of the new covenant in contrast to the lesser glory of the old covenant), we use great boldness in our speech (or in other words we are proclaiming courageously and confidently the message of the new covenant, which of course we know is the gospel of Christ. And now having said this Paul goes on in verse 13 to say...) (13) and are not like Moses, who used to put a veil over his face so that the sons of Israel would not look intently at the end of what was fading away.”**

So clearly in **verse 13** we see Paul illustrating the bold character of his ministry and that of his companions by comparing their courageous outspokenness as servants of the new covenant to that of Moses who continually veiled his face as a servant of the old covenant thus highlighting for us the boldness Paul and his companions new covenant ministry with Moses lack of boldness in his old covenant ministry. So let us now look more closely at **verse 13** and at this comparison that Paul is seeking to make.

How does it begin? Paul after speaking of their great boldness as servants of the new covenant then begins **verse 13** with these words, **“and are not like Moses, who used to put a veil over his face...”**

So once again we see Paul referencing that time in Israel’s history when Moses after having received “The Law” and after having descended Mount Sinai discovered that his face had become supernaturally illuminated, which produced fear in the hearts of the people of Israel according to **Exodus 34:30**. But even though the people were fearful Moses eventually was able to convince them to approach him, at which time he then exhorted them to honor the covenant that they had entered into with God in **Exodus 24:1-8**, which we refer to as the “old covenant,” exhorting them to obey all the commandments that had been given to them by God in the Law. This is recorded for us in **Exodus 34:31-32**. And then what happened? After Moses finished speaking with them, he then placed a veil over his face according to **Exodus 34:33**.

And why did he do this? Paul told us in **2 Corinthians 3:7**. Moses did this **“so that Israel could not intently look at the face of Moses, because of the glory of his face, fading as it was.”** And in **2 Corinthians 3:13**, Paul tells us that that Moses did this **“so that the sons of Israel would not look intently at the end of what was fading away.”**

So why did Moses cover his face based on these verses? Some would have us to believe that Moses, based on these verses, covered his face so that that the nation of Israel would not see the fading glory of his face, believing that the fading glory would somehow diminish his standing before the people of Israel. But once again let me review for you why this is not so.

The word translated “fading as it was” (KATERGEO) when it was used by Paul, meant, “to make of no effect, to make powerless.” It is not referring to a fading glory! And this is what we need to keep in mind as we seek to interpret **2 Corinthians 3:7** as well as **2 Corinthians 3:13**.

Moses covered his face with a veil in 2 Corinthians 3:7 to render the glory of God that was being manifested on his face of no effect in order to **protect** the nation of Israel from destruction. And why did Moses cover his face with a veil in **2 Corinthians 3:13**?

Moses covered his face with a veil in 2 Corinthians 3:13 to render “the end” (TELOS), or in other words the **outcome** of the death-dealing judgment of God’s glory on Israel, of no effect.

Moses did not cover his face with a veil in order to hide a fading glory! Moses was protecting the people of Israel from death that certainly would have come upon them if they had been able to continue to gaze at the glory of God radiating from the face of Moses and that is why Moses veiled his face and that is the point of **2 Corinthians 3:7** as well as **2 Corinthians 3:13**.

Israel’s idolatry with the golden calf betrayed the hardened condition of the nation of Israel. It was not some minor lapse but something symptomatic of their incorrigible wickedness. The goal of the old covenant was the manifestation of the glory of God, but it had the effect of bringing death and condemnation to those with hardened hearts rather than transformation, which was clearly illustrated by Moses, repeated veiling of His face that hid the glory associated with the giving of the old covenant.

If God’s glory had continued in their midst during their hardened condition, the people would have been utterly destroyed (Exodus 33:3,5). Because of Israel’s idolatry, Moses becomes the only link between the people of Israel and God (Numbers 12:7-8). He alone experienced God’s glory and he alone mediated it to the people of Israel (Exodus 33:18). Therefore their hardened hearts made it necessary for Moses to wear a veil to compensate for the sinfulness of God’s people, the people of Israel. Wearing the veil was therefore Moses way of protecting the stiff-necked people of Israel from the “death-dealing judgment of the glory of God” against sinners that is decreed in the old covenant.

So now let me ask you a question in light of the hard-hearted state of the nation of Israel how careful did Moses have to be in mediating the glory of the old covenant to the people of Israel who under the old covenant. Extremely!

Though Moses had to be extremely careful in mediating the glory of the old covenant to those who lived under the old covenant, Paul, as a servant of the new covenant, had **no** such limitation.

In other words the glory of God manifested in the new covenant no longer needs to be veiled from those to whom we are sent since “the end” or the “outcome” of the sending, in light of the ministry of the Spirit, is not death but life.

May God, in light of the surpassing glory of the new covenant, give us the grace as servants of the new covenant to proclaim the **gospel** of Christ courageously and confidently.