

## CHAPTER 3

### INTRODUCTION TO SECOND CORINTHIANS 3

In this chapter the apostle clears himself from the charge of arrogance and self-commendation, and ascribes both the virtue and efficacy of his ministry, and his qualifications for it, to the Lord; and forms a comparison between the ministration of the Gospel, and the ministration of the law, showing the preferableness of the one to the other; and consequently how much more happy and comfortable the state and condition of the saints under the Gospel dispensation is, than under the legal one: on account of what the apostle had said in the latter part of the preceding chapter, concerning the excellency, usefulness, and success of the Gospel ministry, he foresaw an objection would arise; that he and his fellow ministers were proud and arrogant, and commended themselves, which was unseemly, and not agreeably to the character they bore; which objection he obviates, (~~ART~~ 2 Corinthians 3:1), by putting some questions, signifying that they were not guilty of vain boasting; nor did they need any commendations of their own, or others, nor any letters to recommend them, either from Corinth to other places, or thither: a practice which, he suggests, the false teachers made use of; and in (~~ART~~ 2 Corinthians 3:2) he gives the reason why they did not stand in need of such letters, because the members of the church at Corinth were their epistle or letter, declaring to all men the efficacy and success of their ministry among men; but lest he should be charged with arrogating to himself and others, he declares, (~~ART~~ 2 Corinthians 3:3) that though the Corinthians were their epistle, yet not so much theirs as Christ's; Christ was the author and subject, they only were instruments; the writing was not human, but the writing of the Spirit of God; and that not upon outward tables, such as the law was written upon, but upon the tables of men's hearts, which only God can reach; however, that they had been useful, successful, and instrumental in the conversion of souls, through the ministry of the word, that he was confident of, (~~ART~~ 2 Corinthians 3:4) though the sufficiency and ability to think, study, and preach, were not of themselves, and still less to make the word effectual for conversion and comfort, but of God, (~~ART~~ 2 Corinthians 3:5) wherefore he ascribes all fitness, worthiness, and ability to preach the Gospel, to the

grace and power of God, by which they were made ministers of it; and hence he takes occasion to commend the excellency of the Gospel ministry above that of the law, which he does by observing their different names and effects; the Gospel is the New Testament or covenant, or an exhibition of the covenant of grace in a new form; the law is the Old Testament, or covenant, which is vanished away; which, though not expressed here, is in (2 Corinthians 3:14) the Gospel is spirit, the law the letter; the one gives life, and the other kills, (2 Corinthians 3:6) wherefore the apostle argues from the one to the other, that if there was a glory in the one which was only a ministration of death, as the law was, (2 Corinthians 3:7) then the Gospel, which was a ministration of spiritual things, and of the Spirit of God himself, must be more glorious, (2 Corinthians 3:8) and if that was glorious which was a ministration of condemnation, as the law was to guilty sinners; much more glorious must be the Gospel, which is a ministration of the righteousness of Christ, for the justification of them, (2 Corinthians 3:9) yea, such is the surpassing glory of the Gospel to the law, that even the glory of the law is quite lost in that of the Gospel, and appears to have none in comparison of that, (2 Corinthians 3:10) to which he adds another argument, taken from the abolition of the one, and the continuance of the other; that if there was a glory in that which is abolished, there must be a greater in that which continues, (2 Corinthians 3:11) and from hence the apostle proceeds to take notice of another difference between the law and the Gospel, the clearness of the one, and the obscurity of the other; the former is signified by the plainness of speech used by the preachers of it, (2 Corinthians 3:12) and the latter by the veil which was over Moses's face, when he delivered the law to the children of Israel; the end of which they could not look to, and which is a further proof of the obscurity of it, (2 Corinthians 3:13) as well as of the darkness of their minds; which still continues with the Jews in reading the law, and will do until it is taken away by Christ, (2 Corinthians 3:14) and that there is such a veil of darkness upon the hearts of the Jews, when reading the law of Moses; and that this continues to this day, is again asserted, (2 Corinthians 3:15) and an intimation given that there will be a conversion of them to the Lord, and then it will be removed from them, (2 Corinthians 3:16) and who that Lord is to whom they shall be turned, and by whom they shall have freedom from darkness and bondage, is declared, (2 Corinthians 3:17) and the happy condition of the saints under the Gospel dispensation, through the bright and clear light of it, is observed, (2 Corinthians 3:18) in which the Gospel is compared to a

glass; the saints are represented as without a veil looking into it; through which an object is beheld, the glory of the Lord; the effect of which is a transformation of them into the same image by degrees; the author of which grace is the Spirit of the Lord.

**Ver. 1.** *Do we begin again to commend ourselves?* etc..] The apostle having asserted that he and his fellow ministers always triumphed in Christ, and made manifest the savour of his knowledge in every place; were a sweet savour of Christ to God, did not corrupt the word of God, as some did, but sincerely and faithfully preached Christ; some might insinuate from hence, that he was guilty of arrogance and vain glory; wherefore to remove such a charge, or prevent its being brought, he asks, “do we begin again to commend ourselves?” we do not; what we say, we say honestly, sincerely, in the simplicity of our hearts, without any view to our own glory and applause among men, or for any worldly profit and advantage, or to ingratiate ourselves into your affections; we have no such views: some read these words without an interrogation, “we do begin again to commend ourselves”; as we have done already, in this and the former epistles; and as it is but just and right that we should vindicate our characters, support our good name and reputation, and secure and maintain our credit, which some would maliciously deprive us of:

*though we have no need, as some others, of epistles of commendation to you, or letters of commendation from you;* our persons, characters, and usefulness are too well known, to require commendatory letters from others to you, or from you to others. The false apostles are here struck at, whose practice it was to get letters of commendation from place to place; which they carried about and made use of for their temporal advantage, having nothing truly good and excellent in them to recommend them to others. The apostle does not hereby condemn letters of recommendation, which in proper cases may be very lawfully given, and a good use be made of them; only that he and other Gospel ministers were so well known, as to stand in no need of them.

**Ver. 2.** *Ye are our epistle,* etc..] Here a reason is given why they stood in no need of letters of commendation, to or from the church at Corinth, because that church was their living epistle, and which was much preferable to any written one. The apostle calls them their epistle in the same sense, as they are said to be his “work in the Lord, and the seal of his apostleship”, (~~400~~ 1 Corinthians 9:1,2) they were so as persons regenerated by the Spirit

and grace of God, in whose conversion he was an instrument; now it was the work of conversion in them, which was the epistle said to be

*written in our hearts*; some think it should be read, “in your hearts”; and so the Ethiopic version reads it; and it looks as if it should be so read, from the following verse, and from the nature of the thing itself; for the conversion of the Corinthians was not written in the heart of the apostle, but in their own; and this was so very notorious and remarkable, that it was

*known and read of all men*; everyone could read, and was obliged to acknowledge the handwriting; it was so clear a case, what hand the apostle, as an instrument, had in the turning of these persons from idols to serve the living God; and which was so full a proof of the divinity, efficacy, truth, and sincerity of his doctrine, that he needed no letters from any to recommend him.

**Ver. 3.** *Forasmuch as ye are manifestly declared*, etc..] But lest it should be thought that the apostle attributed too much to himself, by saying that the Corinthians were our epistle; here he says, they were “manifestly declared”

*to be the epistle of Christ ministered by us*; so that the apostles and ministers of the word were only amanuenses, Christ was the author and dictator; yea, he himself is the very matter, sum, substance, and subject of the epistle; he is formed in the hearts of his people in conversion, his image is stamped, his grace is implanted, his word, his Gospel dwells richly, his laws and ordinances are written here; he also is the exemplar, believers are but copies of him, in grace and duty, in sufferings, in the likeness of his death and resurrection: and they are “manifestly declared” to be so, by the impresses of Christ's grace upon them; by the fairness of the copy; by the style and language of the epistle; by their likeness to Christ; by their having not the form only, but the power of godliness; and by their lives and conversations: now in writing these epistles, the ministers of the Gospel are only instruments, “ministered by us”. They are made use of to show the sinner the black characters which are written upon him, and that what is written in him, and to be read by him, by the light of nature is not sufficient for salvation; they are employed as instruments in drawing the rough draught of grace in conversion, and in writing the copy over again, fairer and fairer; being the happy means blessed by God, for the building up of souls in faith and holiness, in spiritual knowledge and comfort. These epistles are

*not written with ink*; of nature's power, or of rhetorical eloquence and moral persuasion;

*but with the Spirit of the living God*: every grace that is implanted in the soul is wrought there by the Spirit of God; or he it is that draws every line, and writes every word and letter; he begins, he carries on and finishes the work of grace on the soul; and that as “the Spirit of the living God”: hence saints become the living epistles of Christ; and every letter and stroke of his making, is a living disposition of the soul in likeness to him; and such are written among the living in Jerusalem, and shall live and abide for ever as the epistles of Christ: again, the subjects of these epistles, or that on which they are written, are

*not tables of stone*; such as the law was written upon, on Mount Sinai: of these tables there were the first and second; the first were the work of God himself, the latter were hewed by Moses, at the command of God, (<sup>f12</sup>Exodus 32:16 34:1) the former being broken when he came down from the mount, which by the Jewish writers are said to be miraculously made, and not by the means and artifice of men <sup>f11</sup>; yea, that they were made before the creation of the world <sup>f12</sup>, and which, they commonly say, were made of sapphire; (see Gill on “<sup>f13</sup>2 Corinthians 3:7”) these, as the latter, were two stones, which, Jarchi says <sup>f13</sup>, were of an equal size; and were, as Abarbinel says <sup>f14</sup>, in the form of small tables, such as children are taught to write upon, and therefore are so called: some pretend to give the dimensions of them, and say <sup>f15</sup>, that they were six hands long, and as many broad, and three thick; nay, even the weight of them, which is said <sup>f16</sup> to be the weight of forty “seahs”, and look upon it as a miracle that Moses should be able to carry them; on these stones were written the ten commands; and the common opinion of the Jewish writers is, that five were written on one table, and five on the other; this is the opinion of Josephus <sup>f17</sup>, Philo <sup>f18</sup>, and the Talmudic writers <sup>f19</sup>; and the tables are said to be written on both sides, (<sup>f20</sup>Exodus 32:15). Some think that the engraving of the letters perforated and went through the tables, so that, in a miraculous manner, the letters were legible on both sides; others think, only the right and left hand of the tables are meant, on which the laws were written, five on a side, and which folded up like the tables or pages of a book; though others are of opinion, that they were written upon, both behind and before, and that the law was written twice, both upon the fore part and back part of the tables, yea, others say four times; and some think the phrase only intends the literal and mystical, the external and internal sense of the law:

however, certain it is, as the apostle here suggests, that the law was written on tables of stone, which may denote the firmness and stability of the law; not as in the hands of Moses, from whence the tables fell and were broken, but as in the hands of Christ, by whom they are fulfilled; or else the hardness of man's heart, his stupidity, ignorance of, and not subject to the law of God:

*but fleshly tables of the heart:* alluding to (<sup><3536></sup>Ezekiel 36:26) and designs not carnal hearts, but such as are made soft and tender by the Spirit of God. The table of the heart is a phrase to be met with in the books of the Old Testament; (see <sup><3188></sup>Proverbs 3:3 7:3 <sup><2470></sup>Jeremiah 17:1) and very frequently in the writings of the Jews <sup>f20</sup>.

**Ver. 4.** *And such trust have we,* etc..] This refers to what he had said in the latter end of the foregoing chapter, and the beginning of this; as that they made manifest the savoury knowledge of God and Christ everywhere, and were the sweet savour of Christ to many souls; were sufficient in some measure, through the grace of Christ, to preach the Gospel sincerely and faithfully, and were attended with success, had many seals of their ministry, and particularly the Corinthians were so many living epistles of commendations of the power and efficacy of their ministry; such confidence and firm persuasion of the truth of grace on your souls, and of our being the happy instruments of it, we have

*through Christ,* the grace of Christ,

*to God-ward:* who is the object of our confidence and hope, and the ground thereof.

**Ver. 5.** *Not that we are sufficient of ourselves,* etc..] Though we are sufficient for this work to which God has called us, and have such trust and confidence that he has blessed and owned us, and done such great things by us; yet we do not ascribe anything to ourselves, to any power of ours, to any self-sufficiency in us: for “we are not sufficient of ourselves” neither for the work of the ministry, nor for the conversion of sinners, nor for faith and hope in God, nor for any spiritual work whatever; not even to think anything as of ourselves; any good thing, either for our own use and benefit, or for the advantage of others; we are not able of ourselves to meditate with judgment and affection upon the word of God, to study the Scriptures, to collect from them things fit for the ministry; and much less with freedom and boldness to speak of them to edification; and still less

able to impress them upon the heart: for though you who are the epistle of Christ are ministered by us, yet not by any power and self-sufficiency of ours;

*but our sufficiency is of God*; to think, to speak, and to act for his glory.

**Ver. 6.** *Who also hath made us able ministers*, etc..] This is an answer to the question in (~~47016~~2 Corinthians 2:16) who is sufficient for these things? no man is of himself; we are indeed sufficient for them, but not of ourselves; our sufficiency is of God, he hath made us able, or sufficient ministers: such ministers as are not of men's, but God's making, are sufficient ones; and none are sufficient but whom God makes so; and those he makes able and sufficient, by giving them spiritual gifts, fitting them for the ministry: and these are ministers

*of the New Testament*, or “covenant”; the covenant of grace, of which Christ is the Mediator and surety; called “new”, not because newly made, for it was made with Christ from everlasting; nor newly revealed, for it was made known to Adam after his fall, and to all the Old Testament patriarchs, and was exhibited under the legal dispensation, though but darkly, in types, shadows, sacrifices, etc.. which therefore waxing old is vanished away; and the covenant of grace is now more clearly revealed under the Gospel dispensation, free from all the obscurity it before laboured under; and therefore is called “new”, as well as because it will always continue so, and never give way to another covenant: now the Gospel, and the ministry of it, is nothing else but an exhibition of the covenant of grace, its blessings and promises; and the work and business of those who are ministers of it is not to insist upon the covenant of works, the terms, conditions, obligations, promises, and threatenings of that covenant; but to open and explain the nature, promises, and blessings of the covenant of grace: for such who are fit and proper ministers, are ministers

*not of the letter, but of the spirit*; which is to be understood, not of any difference between the books of the Old and the New Testament, for a faithful minister of the word may and will bring forth things new and old, out of the one as well as the other; nor of the literal and allegorical, or mystical sense of the Scriptures, as if the latter and not the former was only to be attended to; nor of the difference of communicating the Gospel by letters, and preaching it by word of mouth; since both methods may be used for the spread of it, as were by the apostles themselves; but of the difference there is between the law and the Gospel. The law is “the letter”,

not merely because written in letters, for so likewise is the Gospel; but because it is a mere letter, hereby showing what is to be done or avoided, without any efficacy in it, or communicating any to enable persons to obey its commands, to give life to its observers, or either to sanctify or justify any who are under it, or of the works of it; it is a mere letter, as observed by an unregenerate man, who only regards the externals of it, being unacquainted with its spirituality. The Gospel is “the spirit”; (see ~~416~~ John 6:63) it contains spiritual things, and not things merely natural, moral, and civil, as does the law, but spiritual blessings and promises; it penetrates into the spirit and soul of man, and comes from, and is attended with the Spirit of God. The law is

*the letter* that

*killeth*, by irritating and provoking to sin, the cause of death, which though not the design and natural tendency of the law, and therefore not to be blamed, yet so it is, through the corruption of human nature; and by convincing of sin when the sinner is killed, and it dead in his own apprehension; and by not only threatening with death, but by cursing, condemning, and punishing with it:

*but* the Gospel is

*the spirit*, which

*giveth life*; it is a means in the hand of the Spirit of God, of quickening dead sinners, of healing the deadly wounds of sin, of showing the way of life by Christ, and of working faith in the soul, to look to him, and live upon him; it affords food for the support of the spiritual life, and revives souls under the most drooping circumstances. The apostle may allude to a distinction among the Jews, between the body and soul of the law; the words, they say, are **hrwt apwg**, “the body of the law”; and the book of the law is the clothing; and besides these, there is **atyrwad atmçn**, “the soul of the law”; which wise men look into <sup>f21</sup>.

**Ver. 7.** *But if the ministration of death*, etc..] The apostle having observed the difference between the law and the Gospel, the one being a killing letter, the other a quickening spirit, enlarges upon it, and more, fully explains it; and proceeds to take notice of other things in which they differ; and to show the superior glory and excellency of the one to the other; for



that by “the ministration of death”, he means the law, as delivered to Moses on Mount Sinai, is clear from its being said to be

*written and engraven in stones*; as that was by the finger of God himself: rightly does the apostle say, that it was both “written” and “engraven”; for the two tables of the law are expressly said to be written with the finger of God, (<sup><0218></sup>Exodus 31:18) meaning either the Spirit of God, who is sometimes so called, (<sup><0110></sup>Luke 11:20) compared with (<sup><0128></sup>Matthew 12:28) or the power of God, which at once caused this writing to exist; and it is in so many words affirmed, that “the writing” was “the writing of God”; and not of man, nor of any creature, no not of an angel, (<sup><0216></sup>Exodus 32:16) yea, even the two tables which were hewn out by Moses, after the first were broken, were written upon by the Lord himself, and not Moses, (<sup><0301></sup>Exodus 34:1). So that as the work of the tables was the work of God, and wonderfully made, the form of the letters, as Abarbinel <sup>f22</sup> observes, were miraculously made by him; for this law was, *εν γραμμασι*, “in letters”, as the apostle here says; and as it was written in the Hebrew language, very likely it was in the same form of letters now in use with the Jews; though some have thought that the Samaritan letters are the original ones: moreover, the law was not only written, but “engraven”; for so it is said, that the writing was graven upon the tables, (<sup><0216></sup>Exodus 32:16) and though the word so rendered is no where else used but there, it is rightly rendered graven, as appears by the apostle in this place; and which may lie confirmed by the Targumist on that, who renders it by *qyqj*, “engraven”; and by the Septuagint *κεκολαμμενη*, which signifies the same; and so in the book of Zohar <sup>f23</sup>, the letters are said to be *wpyl gta*, “engraven” on the tables: and that the tables were tables of stone, it is certain; they are often so called, (<sup><0212></sup>Exodus 24:12 31:18 34:1 <sup><0309></sup>Deuteronomy 9:9,10 10:1) wherefore the apostle very properly says, that the law was engraven “in stones”; but what stones these tables were made of cannot be said; the Jews, who affect to know everything, will have them to be precious stones, but what they were they are not agreed in; for though they generally say <sup>f24</sup> they were made of the sapphire stone, and sometimes say <sup>f25</sup> they were hewed out of the sapphire of the glorious throne of God; yet at other times they call them marble tables <sup>f26</sup>; and Aben Ezra <sup>f27</sup> was of opinion, that the tables which Moses hewed were not of any precious stone, for he asks where should a precious stone of such size be found? though others pretend to say <sup>f28</sup>, that Moses in a miraculous manner was shown a sapphire quarry in the midst of his tent, out of which he cut and hewed the stones;

but very likely they were common ones; however, certain it is, that the tables of stone, as written and engraven by the Lord himself, were made, as the apostle here says, “in glory”, *εγενησε εν δοξη*; and so Jarchi on (<sup>(1326)</sup>Exodus 32:16) “and the tables were the work of God”, says, this is to be understood literally *wdwbk bw*, “and in” or “for his glory”; or by his glorious power he made them: now this law, though thus written and engraven, and glorious, it was “the ministration of death”; and is so called, because it threatened and punished the transgressors of it with a corporeal death; they that sinned against it died without mercy upon proper evidence and witnesses; every precept of it had this penalty annexed to it, in ease of disobedience; as the having any other goals but one, making of graven images, taking the name of God in vain, the violation of the sabbath, dishonouring of parents, murder, adultery, theft, and covetousness; instances there are of each of these being punishable by this law with a bodily death: and besides, it is the ministration of eternal death, the wages of sin the transgression of the law; which is that wrath of God, a sense of which it is said to work; the curse it threatens with and the second death or lake of fire it casts into: and may be said to be the “ministration” of it; as it shows persons they are deserving of it, pronounces the sentence of it on them, and will execute it upon them, if grace prevent not; now though it was the ministration of death, yet it

*was glorious.* There were many things which made it so; but what the apostle here particularly takes notice of is the glory that was upon the face of Moses, when he received it and brought it from the Lord, which was very great;

*so that the children of Israel could not steadfastly behold the face of Moses, for the glory of his countenance, which glory was to be done away.* The history of this may be read in (<sup>(1329)</sup>Exodus 34:29,30,35) it was a real visible glory that was upon the skin of his face, so that it shone again; it is said, “the skin of his face shone”; and this shining of his face the apostle very properly calls “the glory of his countenance”: agreeably to the Septuagint version, which renders it, “the appearance of the skin, or colour of his face, was glorified”; and still nearer to the paraphrase of Onkelos, which is, “the splendour of the glory of his countenance was great”; and to the Targum of Jonathan, which also assigns the reason of it, and which seems to be the true one, “the splendour of the form of his countenance was glorious, because of the splendour of the glory of the majesty of God, at the time he talked with him”. The Vulgate Latin version has led many

wrong, to paint Moses with two horns, rendering it, “his face was horned”, the Hebrew word having the signification of an horn in its derivative; because glory darted from him like horns, as rays of light do from the sun; see (<sup>310</sup>Habakkuk 3:4 \*marg) and this brightness and glory were so very great, and so dazzling, that Aaron and the people of Israel were afraid to come nigh; which Jarchi, a Jewish writer, imputed to their sin, and shame, and fear, having worshipped the calf; but our apostle ascribes it to the lustre of his countenance, which was such that they could not steadfastly look upon it; they saw it indeed, as it is said in (<sup>1345</sup>Exodus 34:35) yet they could not look wistly at it, nor bear the splendour of it; though this was only a glory, which was to continue but a while; according to the opinion of Ambrose <sup>f29</sup>, this glory continued on Moses's countenance as long as he lived; but be it so, it at last was done away: now this glory was put there to bear a testimony to the divine authority of the law, that it came from God, and was to be received at the hands of Moses, with awful reverence as from God, and to make them afraid of violating a law which came with such majesty and glory; and also to command awe and respect from the Israelites to Moses, whom they were inclined at every turn to treat with contempt, and to let them see that he had communion with God, which this was the effect of: now this was a circumstance which rendered the law glorious, and was expressive of a real glory in it; which, though as this on Moses's face, “was to be done away”; wherefore the apostle argues;

**Ver. 8.** *How shall not the ministration of the Spirit*, etc..] By “the ministration of the Spirit”, is meant the Gospel; so called not only because it ministers spiritual things, as peace, pardon, righteousness and salvation, spiritual joy and comfort, and even spiritual life; but because it ministers the Spirit of God himself, by whom it is not only dictated, and by him at first confirmed, and who qualifies persons for the preaching of it; but by it he conveys himself into the hearts of men, and makes it powerful for illumination, consolation, edification, and an increase of every grace; and therefore must be rather glorious, or much more glorious than the law, the ministration of death.

**Ver. 9.** *For if the ministration of condemnation be glory*, etc..] So the Jews call the law, for they say, **hrwt al a dwbk ^ya**, “there is no glory but the law” <sup>f30</sup>; this is another head of opposition or difference between the law and the Gospel, from whence the superior glory of the one to the other is argued. The law is “the ministration of condemnation”; as sin is a transgression of the law, it accuses for it, convicts of it, pronounces

guilty, and adjudges to death on account of it; which is the condemnation it ministers; and this it does to all Adam's posterity, and for his sin too; and to all the actual transgressors of it, to all unbelievers, to all that are under it; even to God's elect themselves, as considered in Adam, and in themselves as transgressors; and this it ministers to their consciences when convicted, though it is never executed on them, because of the suretyship engagement and performances of Christ. The Gospel is

*the ministration of righteousness*; not of a legal one, or a man's own, but of the righteousness of Christ, by which the law is honoured, justice is satisfied, and God's elect justified from all sin and condemnation; this being perfect, pure, and spotless, and for ever: the Gospel is “the ministration” of it, as it is a means of stripping a man of his own righteousness, of revealing Christ's to him, and of working faith in him, and encouraging him to lay hold upon it for himself; and thus it is not to righteous persons, but sinners, to all believers, to all the second Adam's posterity; now as

*much more* as righteousness exceeds condemnation, and a justified state a condemned one, so “much more” does the Gospel

*exceed* the law

*in glory*.

**Ver. 10.** *For even that which was made glorious*, etc..] The apostle grants that there was a glory in the law: it “was made glorious”; it was glorious in the author of it, who is God; it was of his appointing and ordaining, agreeable to his nature, and a declaration of his will; his authority was stamped upon it, and it was written by himself, which cannot be said of any other law whatever; it was glorious in its promulgation, God himself appeared in great glory at the giving of it; Christ was then present; it was ordained by angels, and by them delivered into the hands of Moses, on whose face such a glory was left as could not be steadfastly looked upon; and it was attended with thunderings, lightnings, the sound of a trumpet, etc.. it was glorious in the matter of it, it contained great and excellent things; the substance of it is love to God, and to our neighbour; and it was glorious in its properties, being, in its nature and substance, holy, just, good, spiritual, perfect, immutable, and eternal; but yet

*had no glory in this respect, by reason of the glory that excelleth*. There is such an excelling glory in the Gospel, that the other is swallowed up and lost in it; it excels it in those things in which it was so glorious: in the

author of it, which, though the same, yet with this difference; the law was given by God as a judge, the Gospel by him as a Father, as the Father of Christ, and of his people in him; the law is the birth of his holiness and righteousness, the Gospel of his wisdom, grace, and love; the law declares his will with respect to duty, the Gospel with respect to salvation; the authority of God is stamped on the law, but the Gospel is the image of Christ; the law was written by the finger of God, but the Gospel was hid in his heart, and came from thence: in the promulgation of it, through the long train of patriarchs and prophets, that went before it to usher it in; it was published by Christ, the Son of God himself, confirmed by the gifts and miracles of the Holy Ghost, and in it is a greater display of the glory of God; it was attended with angels too, and a voice from heaven delightful and not terrible; and there was a glory on Christ's countenance, far exceeding that of Moses's: in the matter of it; which is the love, grace, and mercy of God; the Lord Jesus Christ, in all the glories and fulness of his person and offices; salvation by him, spiritual blessings, exceeding great and precious promises; neither of which are to be observed in the law: the ordinances of it vastly exceed the legal ones; and it has greatly the advantage of it in its effects on the souls of men, when accompanied by the Spirit of God.

**Ver. 11.** *For if that which is done away*, etc..] Here another difference is pointed out, which subsists between the law and the Gospel, and proves that the one is more excellent and glorious than the other. The law is “that which is done away”; not merely the ceremonial law, or the judicial law, but the whole ministry of Moses, and particularly the law of the Decalogue: for the better understanding of this, distinguish between the matter and ministry of it; the ministry of it by Moses is done away, the matter of it so far as of a moral nature abides: distinguish between the law, as in the hands of Moses and of Christ; as in the hands of Moses it is broken to pieces and abolished, as in the hands of Christ, as King in his church, it remains: distinguish between precepts and precepts; some are mixed, being partly moral, and partly ceremonial, as the fourth and fifth commands, and others are not; what is ceremonial, or purely related to the Jews whilst in their civil policy, and in the land of Canaan, is done away; but what is purely moral, is, as to the matter of it, still obliging: distinguish between the law as a covenant of works, and as a rule of walk and conversation; as a covenant of works it is done away, as a rule of walk and conversation it still continues: distinguish between persons and persons; to

them that are redeemed from it, it is done away; to them that are under it, it remains; and lastly, distinguish between a right and a wrong use of it; as to any use of it to justify us before God, by our obedience to it, it is done away; but as it may be of use to convince sinners of sin, and to direct saints in a course of righteousness, so it abides. The Gospel is “that which remaineth”; which denotes the continued efficacy, the incorruptibleness, the inexpugnableness, and duration of it; notwithstanding all the opposition of men and devils to it, still its blessings, promises, doctrines, ordinances, and effects continue; it remains in the Scriptures, in the church, in the hearts of believers, and in the world too, until all the elect of God are gathered in: now as things that remain are much more glorious than those which are done away, so the Gospel must be much more glorious than the law.

**Ver. 12.** *Seeing then that we have such hope*, etc..] Having this confidence, and being fully persuaded that God has made us able and sufficient ministers of the Gospel, has called and qualified us for such service; and since we have such a ministry committed to us, which so much exceeds in glory the ministry of Moses, a ministry not of death and condemnation, but of the Spirit and of righteousness; not which is abolished and done away, but which does and will remain, in spite of all the opposition of hell and earth:

*we use great plainness of speech*; plain and intelligible words, not ambiguous ones: or “boldness”; we are not afraid of men nor devils; we are not terrified by menaces, stripes, imprisonment, and death itself: or “freedom of speech”; we speak out all our mind, which is the mind of Christ; we declare the whole counsel of God, hide and conceal nothing that may be profitable to the churches; we are not to be awed by the terror, or drawn by the flatteries of men to cover the truth; we speak it out plainly, clearly, with all evidence and perspicuity. The apostle from hence passes on to observe another difference between the law and the Gospel, namely, the obscurity of the one, and the clearness of the other.

**Ver. 13.** *And not as Moses, which put a veil over his face*, etc..] This he did, because there was such a glory upon his face when he came down from the mount, that the Israelites could not bear to look upon him; and also to take off that dread of him which was upon them, for they were afraid to come nigh him; and that so they might be able to hearken and attend to the words of the law, he delivered to them: the account of

Moses's putting on this veil is in (<sup><1233></sup>Exodus 34:33) where Onkelos renders it by *ypan tyb*, “the house of the face”, or a “mask”: and Jarchi on the place says it was a “garment”, which he put before his face; and both the Targums of Jonathan and Jerusalem call it *ardws*, “a linen cloth”: now this veil upon his face had a mystery in it; it was an emblem of the Gospel being veiled under the law, and of the darkness and obscurity of the law in the business of life and salvation; and also of the future blindness of the Jews, when the glory of the Gospel should break forth in the times of Christ and his apostles; and which was such,

*that the children of Israel*, the Jews, as in the times of Moses, so in the times of Christ and his apostles,

*could not steadfastly look to*; not upon the face of Moses, whose face was veiled; not that they might not look, but because they could not bear to look upon him; but they could not look

*to the end of that which is abolished*; that is, to Christ, who is the end of the law, which is abrogated by him: to him they could not look, nor could they see him to be the fulfilling end of the law for righteousness; which being fulfilled, is done away by him; and this because of the blindness of their hearts, of which blindness the veil on Moses' face was typical: though the Alexandrian copy and the Vulgate Latin version read, “to the face of him which is abolished”.

**Ver. 14.** *But their minds were blinded*, etc.] This confirms the sense given of the foregoing verse, and shows, that not the Israelites only in Moses's time, but the Jews in the times of the Gospel, had their minds so blinded, that they could not behold the glory of the Gospel, nor Christ the end of the law; (see <sup><5107></sup>Romans 11:7,8,25).

*For until this day*, to this very time,

*remaineth the same veil untaken away*; not the selfsame veil that was on Moses's face, but the veil of blindness, darkness, and ignorance, upon the hearts of the Jews:

*in the reading of the Old Testament*; the books of the Old Testament, which were used to be read in their synagogues every sabbath day; the true spiritual meaning of which, as they respect Christ and the Gospel dispensation, they understood not; of which darkness, the veil on the face of Moses was a type and emblem:

*which veil is done away in Christ*; can only be removed by Christ, by his Spirit and grace, and through the light of the Gospel of Christ, shining into the heart; and so dispel that blindness and ignorance which is in the understanding; whereby the books of the Old Testament are understood, and appear to agree exactly with the Gospel of Christ, in the books of the New Testament.

**Ver. 15.** *But even unto this day, when Moses is read*, etc..] These words are an explanation of the former, and show that by the Old Testament is designed, more especially, Moses, or the writings of Moses; which were frequently read, and preached upon in the Jewish synagogues; (see ~~4H35~~ Acts 13:15 15:21) and that by “the veil untaken away”, is meant,

*the veil upon their heart*; that is, the veil of blindness, ignorance of Christ, and the Gospel; of the prophecies of the Old Testament, and even of the law itself, its nature, use, and end; preferring the traditions of their fathers, before the written law of Moses.

**Ver. 16.** *Nevertheless, when it shall turn to the Lord*, etc..] The heart, upon which the veil now is; or the body of the Jewish nation, as in the latter day; when they “shall turn”, or “be turned”, by the Spirit, power, and grace of God, to the Lord Jesus Christ, and look upon him whom they have pierced, and mourn, and embrace him as the true Messiah and only Saviour:

*the veil shall be taken away*; the veil of blindness and ignorance, respecting themselves, case, state, and condition, and the way of salvation by Christ; the veil of unbelief, with regard to his person, offices, and grace, and of error in points of the greatest moment and importance; then all the darkness and obscurity that is upon the books of Moses and the prophets, and which is now upon their hearts in reading them, will be gone. The prophecies of the Old Testament will be seen in their proper light, and to be evidently fulfilled in Christ; the true nature, use, and end of the law, will be discovered; and both they and that will be freed from all darkness that now attends them. The Jews themselves acknowledge, that though the law is light, yet there is an obscurity in it, by reason of the several ways of interpreting it; and therefore,

“he that studies in it, has need to remove, **hws m rj a hws m**, “veil after veil”, which is upon the face of it, in order to come at the light of it <sup>f31</sup>.”



and intimate, that the veil on Moses's face was an emblem of this obscurity, which agrees with what the apostle hints in this context; and also own, that there is now upon them a veil of ignorance; and, say they <sup>f32</sup>, God has promised to remove, **wml kç I [m twl ksh Æsm**, perhaps it should be **hws**m, “the veil of folly off of our understanding”, referring, as is thought, to (~~287~~ Isaiah 25:7).

**Ver. 17.** *Now the Lord is that Spirit*, etc..] “The Lord”, to whom the heart is turned, when the veil is removed, is Jesus Christ; and he is “that Spirit”, or “the Spirit”: he, as God, is of a spiritual nature and essence; he is a spirit, as God is said to be, (~~402~~ John 4:24) he is the giver of the Spirit of God, and the very life and spirit of the law, without whom as the end of it, it is a mere dead letter: or rather as by Moses in (~~405~~ 2 Corinthians 3:15) is meant, the law of Moses, so by the “Lord” here may be meant the Gospel of Christ: and this is that Spirit, of which the apostles were made ministers, and is said to give life, (~~406~~ 2 Corinthians 3:6).

*And where the Spirit of the Lord is, there is liberty*; which may be understood of the third person in the Godhead; where he is as a spirit of illumination, there is freedom from former blindness and darkness; where he is as a spirit of regeneration and sanctification, there is freedom from the bondage of sin, and captivity of Satan; where he is as a comforter, there is freedom from the fear of hell, wrath, and damnation: where he is as a spirit of adoption, there is the freedom of children with a father; where he is as a spirit of prayer and supplication, there is liberty of access to God with boldness, Though rather the Gospel as attended with the Spirit of God, in opposition to the law, is here designed; and which points out another difference between the law and the Gospel; where the law is, there is bondage, it genders to it; it has a natural tendency to it: quite contrary is this to what the Jews <sup>f33</sup> say, who call the law, **twryj** , “liberty”: and say,

“that he that studies in the law, hath **al km wryj** , “freedom from everything”:

whereas it gives freedom in nothing, but leads into, and brings on persons a spirit of bondage; it exacts rigorous obedience, where there is no strength to perform; it holds men guilty, curses and condemns for non-obedience; so that such as are under it, and of the works of it, are always under a spirit of bondage; they obey not from love, but fear, as servants or slaves for wages, and derive all their peace and comfort from their obedience: but

where the Gospel takes place under the influence of the Spirit of God, there is liberty; not to sin, which is contrary to the Gospel, to the Spirit of God in believers, and to the principle of grace wrought in their souls; but a liberty from the bondage and servitude of it: a liberty from the law's rigorous exaction, curse, and condemnation, and from the veil of former blindness and ignorance.

**Ver. 18.** *But we all with open face*, etc..] We are not like Moses, who had a veil on his face; nor like the Jews, who have one on their hearts: "but we all"; not ministers and preachers of the Gospel only, but all believers, whether Jews or Gentiles, greater or lesser believers, who are enlightened by the Spirit of God, and are converted to Christ: "with open face"; which may regard the object beheld, the glory of Christ unveiled, that has no veil on it, as Moses had on his face, when he delivered the law; or the persons beholding, who are rid of Jewish darkness; the veil of the ceremonial law, and of natural darkness and blindness of mind; and so clearly and fully, comparatively speaking,

*beholding as in a glass*; not of the law, but of the Gospel, and the ordinances of it; not with the eyes of their bodies, but with the eyes of their understandings, with the eye of faith; which sight is spiritual, delightful, and very endearing; throws a veil over all other objects, and makes souls long to be with Christ: the object beheld is

*the glory of the Lord*; Jesus Christ: not the glory of his human nature, which lies in its union to the Son of God, and in its names which it has by virtue of it; and in its being the curious workmanship of the Spirit of God, and so is pure and holy, and free from all sin; and was outwardly beautiful and glorious, and is so at the right hand of God, where we see him by faith, crowned with glory and honour; and shall behold him with the eyes of our bodies, and which will be fashioned like to his glorious body; but this sight and change are not yet: rather the glory of his divine nature is meant, which is essential and underived, the same with his Father's; is ineffable, and incomprehensible; it appears in the perfections he is possessed of, and in the worship given to him; it was manifested in the doctrines taught, and in the miracles wrought by him; there were some breakings forth of this glory in his state of humiliation, and were beheld by the apostles, and other believers, who saw his glory, as the glory of the only begotten of the Father. Though the glory of Christ as Mediator, being full of grace and truth, seems to be chiefly designed; this he has from God, and had it from

everlasting; this he gives to his people, and is what makes him so glorious, lovely, and desirable in their eye: and whilst this delightful object is beheld by them, they are

*changed into the same image*; there was a divine image in man, in his first creation; this image was defaced by sin, and a different one took place; now in regeneration another distinct from them both is stamped, and this is the image of Christ; he himself is formed in the soul, his grace is wrought there; so that it is no wonder there is a likeness between them; which lies in righteousness and holiness, and shows itself in acts of grace, and a discharge of duty. The gradual motion of the change into this image is expressed by this phrase,

*from glory to glory*: not from the glory of the law to the glory of the Gospel; or from the glory of Moses to the glory of Christ; rather from the glory that is in Christ, to a glory derived in believers from him; or which seems most agreeable, from one degree of grace to another, grace here being signified by glory; or from glory begun here to glory perfect hereafter; when this image will be completed, both in soul and body; and the saints will be as perfectly like to Christ, as they are capable of, and see him as he is: now the efficient cause of all this, “is the Spirit of the Lord”. It is he that takes off the veil from the heart, that we may, with open face unveiled, behold all this glory; it is he that regenerates, stamps the image of Christ, and conforms the soul to his likeness; it is he that gradually carries on the work of grace upon the soul, increases faith, enlarges the views of the glory of Christ, and the spiritual light, knowledge, and experience of the saints, and will perfect all that which concerns them; will quicken their mortal bodies, and make them like to Christ; and will for ever rest as a spirit of glory on them, both in soul and body: some read these words,

*by the Lord of the Spirit*, and understand them of Christ, others read them, “by the Lord the Spirit”, as they very well may be rendered; and so are a proof of the true and proper deity of the Holy Spirit, who is the one Jehovah with the Father and the Son. The ancient Jews owned this;

“the Spirit of the living God, (say <sup>f34</sup> they,) *arwbh wnyyh*, this is the Creator himself, from him all spirits are produced; blessed be he, and blessed be his name, because his name is he himself, for his name is Jehovah.”