

The Glory of the New Covenant (2 Cor. 3)

I. THE TRANSFORMING POWER OF THE NEW COVENANT

¹¹If what is passing away [Old Covenant] was glorious, what remains [New Covenant] is much more glorious. ¹²Therefore, since we have such hope [confidence]...¹⁷Where the Spirit of the Lord is, there is liberty. ¹⁸But we all, with unveiled face, beholding as in a mirror the glory of the Lord, are being transformed into the same image from glory to glory, just as by the Spirit of the Lord. (2 Cor. 3:11-18)

A. ***Hope***: Confidence before God equips us to experience more of God’s transforming power.

¹⁶Let us therefore come boldly [with confidence] to the throne of grace, that we may obtain mercy [forgiveness] and find grace [enabling power] to help in time of need. (Heb. 4:16)

B. ***Much more glorious***: The New Covenant is more glorious than the Old Covenant. The people under the Old Covenant experienced God’s glory, miracles, healing, prophetic ministry, and much more. The glory of the New Covenant is the transforming power of the indwelling Spirit. In the New Covenant God promised to write His Word on our hearts and minds (Jer. 31:33).

¹⁶“This is the covenant that I will make... ‘I will put My laws [Word] into their hearts [emotions], and in their minds [understanding] I will write them...” (Heb. 10:16)

1. ***Heart***: God promised to empower our emotions until we actually desire righteousness.

2. ***Mind***: God promised to enlighten our mind so that we understand and enjoy God’s Word.

C. ***There is liberty***: The Spirit provides liberty in our emotions from condemnation, shame, fear, and bondage to sinful desires, depression, addictions, spiritual dullness, etc.

D. ***Being transformed***: The Spirit transforms our mind, emotions, and ministry to others by empowering us to reflect God’s image (character) and express His power in our lives.

E. ***By the Spirit***: Only the supernatural work of the Spirit can change the human heart. Thus we must cooperate with the Spirit and cultivate friendship with Him, being careful not to resist Him. We are to do our part (beholding the Lord), and the Lord will do His part (transforming us).

II. COOPERATING WITH THE SPIRIT IN THE PROCESS OF OUR TRANSFORMATION

A. ***Beholding God’s glory***: Beholding God’s glory includes *focusing on* (study, meditate, encounter) His character (emotions), power, and wisdom as expressed in creation, redemption (the cross), and His leadership over history. We also “behold His glory” in the many small ways that He provides for, inspires, and uses us (i.e., giving expression to the Spirit’s impressions on our heart).

B. ***The “beholding and becoming” principle***: Whatever emotion we behold in God’s heart is imparted to our heart. God empowers us to love Him by revealing Himself as One who loves us. As we fill our mind with right understanding about God, the Spirit changes our emotions.

¹⁹We love Him because [we understand that] He first loved us. (1 Jn. 4:19)

- C. Moses prayed to see God’s glory. God answered by promising to proclaim His Name to him. Proclaiming the Lord’s name includes His character (personality, emotions, and moral qualities).
¹⁸*Moses said, “Please, show me Your glory.”* ¹⁹*Then He said, “I will make all My goodness pass before you, and I will proclaim the name of the LORD before you...”* (Ex. 33:18-19)
⁶*And the LORD passed before him [Moses] and proclaimed, “The LORD, the LORD God, merciful and gracious, longsuffering, and abounding in goodness and truth...”* (Ex. 34:6)
1. **The LORD God:** First, God revealed His authority to direct the nations and our lives.
 2. **The Lord is merciful:** The Lord is tender in relating to us in our weaknesses and sin. God’s tender mercy is the first aspect of His personality that He revealed to Moses.
¹⁸*Who is a God like You, pardoning iniquity...He delights in mercy.* (Mic. 7:18)
 3. **The Lord is gracious:** He does not give us what we deserve. He is generous in how He evaluates our weak efforts to obey and serve Him. He understands the weakness of our frame and does not reject us because of it. He graciously uses and rewards us for every act of obedience (Mt. 10:42; Heb. 6:10). This dignifies every day of our life.
¹⁰*He has not dealt with us according to our sins, nor punished us according to our iniquities...¹⁴He knows our frame; He remembers that we are dust.* (Ps. 103:10-14)
 4. **The Lord is longsuffering:** He bears long with us instead of “writing us off.” God suffers long with our sinful responses to Him. He does not lose enthusiasm for us when we fail.
 5. **The Lord abounds in goodness:** He overflows with good plans for us. He will not withhold His best from us in relationships, ministry assignments, finances, etc. (Ps. 84:11).
- D. **As in a mirror:** The quality of our beholding the Lord is “dim” beholding like a mirror in the ancient world. We all “gaze dimly,” i.e. we lack clarity and focus in the process of coming before Him in prayer and meditation. This is the only type of beholding that God requires from us.
¹⁸*But we all, with unveiled face, beholding as in a mirror the glory of the Lord, are being transformed into the same image from glory to glory...* (2 Cor. 3:18)
¹²*For now we see in a mirror, dimly, but then face to face.* (1 Cor. 13:12)
- E. **From glory to glory:** Our growth is progressive and usually in small steps. Do not try to measure how much you are growing. Many overlook the small expressions of God’s glory in their life.
- F. **Unveiled face:** We come with confidence without any shame because Jesus paid the price.

III. FOR SMALL-GROUP DISCUSSION (i.e., FCF FRIENDSHIP GROUPS)

1. Identify one point that inspired or challenged you. Why? What will you do differently to apply it?
2. Identify one point that you want to impart to a younger believer. Why? How will you approach this?
3. Identify one point that you would like to gain more understanding of. How will you seek to gain it?