

LIVING THE CHRISTLIFE
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The Ministry of the Spirit 2 Corinthians 3:7-18

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.

—2 Corinthians 3:7-18 (ESV)

The supremacy of the ministry of the Spirit over the ministry of the written law.

Put another way...

The supremacy of

a life in Christ through His Spirit that establishes our standing with God, vs.
our success in perfect living, i.e. keeping the law, that establishes our standing with God.

A new life, spiritual transformation, a new person	vs.	Self-effort, self-improvement, self-righteousness, religious rituals, rule-keeping, etc.
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vv 7ff – Now if the ministry of death (!)...

Paul refers to the entire system of Mosaic law—the “old testament”—as the “ministry [*diakonia*] of death”!

It was a system that was fulfilled by Christ and which served to reveal that all people are sinners and can never fully live up to the standard of holiness and obedience that God requires

All of the former sacrifices point to the coming sacrifice of Christ and were validated by the sacrifice of Christ

Most Christians today are not seeking to live according to the Mosaic law—but many are caught up in a mindset of legalism—rule-keeping—as *the basis of their relationship with God*.

It isn't.

We are to realize that the ministry of the Spirit is not merely a replacement of the old covenant but is one that far exceeds it in glory.

Even the old covenant—which was a ministry of death (v 7), a ministry of condemnation (v 9)—even this ministry came with glory.

How much more then will that glory be exceeded by the ministry of the Spirit (v 8), the ministry of righteousness (v 9). So far is it exceeded, the old covenant now has come now to have “no glory at all”! (v10)

This should be our view toward any idea of self-effort that can give us life and make us right with God.

All the glory belongs to Christ—and none of it belongs to us.

Paul uses the experience of Moses and the Israelites as types of other theological truths: namely, 1) the fading glory of his face, and 2) his veil.

The fading glory

Though initially so bright it was fearful to look upon, the former glory was fading, and eventually went away

This is a picture—a type—of what was to happen as the law was fulfilled in Christ

The veil of Moses

This is a picture—a type—of the blindness of those Jews who cling to the law and will not accept Jesus as the Christ (Messiah), who fulfills it

The veil kept the Israelites from seeing that the glory of the law was fading—and today, they still cannot see that the glory of the law has faded. It “remains unlifted.” (v14)

continuing with the veil as a type...

The veil not only hides the fading glory of the law, it covers their hearts, making them unreceptive to Christ Himself

“whenever Moses is read”—whenever Judaism is practiced, their hearts are thus covered by a veil

v 16 – But when one turns to the Lord, the veil is removed

The veil of understanding is removed – i.e. they can see that the law has been surpassed by Christ

The veil of their hearts is removed – through faith in Christ, when one “turns to the Lord,” they receive new life, and their hearts are changed.

v 17 – “Now the Lord is the Spirit...”

The summative statement.

“The Lord *is* the Spirit...”

Let this sink in.

Jesus *is* the Spirit.

Salvation in Christ *is* the transforming life of Christ given to us, through the Holy Spirit,
who is the Spirit of Christ.

This is what it means to “be saved.” This is what it means to “be a Christian.”

“and where the Spirit of the Lord is, there is freedom.”

This means freedom from the law.

Freedom from being judged according to rule-keeping.

v 18 – “And we all...”

This is the glorious condition and experience of those who are in Christ.

“with unveiled face”—the ability to see the truth, provided by Christ

“beholding the glory of the Lord” – it is about Jesus Himself!

“are being transformed into the same image” – the image of Christ

“from one degree of glory to the another” – step by step, and it is all wonderful

“For this comes from the Lord...”

It is all from Christ—we are receiving what He is giving

“who is the Spirit.”

The Holy Spirit in us is Christ in us.

The Lord is the Spirit.

This is the Christian life. This is salvation. This is freedom from the law.