CRAWFORD BIBLE COMMENTARY

BIBLE STUDY

2 Corinthians Chapter 3 —
The New Covenant of the Spirit

A Verse-by-Verse Bible Study from the Crawford Standard Bible

Introduction

2 Corinthians Chapter 3 is one of the richest chapters in the New Testament about the new covenant.

At the end of Chapter 2, Paul asked a question:

“Who is sufficient for these things?”

Who is able to carry a message that brings life to some and judgment to others?

In Chapter 3, Paul gives the answer.

“Our competence comes from God.”

But Paul begins with another issue.

False teachers had come to Corinth.

They carried letters of recommendation to prove they were important.

They criticized Paul because he had no such letters.

Paul answers that he does not need paper letters.

The Corinthians themselves are his letter.

Their changed lives were written by the Spirit of God.

Then Paul compares two covenants.

The old covenant was given through Moses.

It was written on tablets of stone.

It came with glory—so much that Moses' face shone.

But it could not give life.

It showed people their sin and brought condemnation.

And its glory was fading.

The new covenant comes through Christ.

It is written on human hearts by the Spirit.

It brings righteousness and life.

And its glory lasts forever.

Paul then uses the picture of Moses' veil.

Moses covered his face so the people would not see the glory fading away.

Paul says a veil still covers hearts when the old covenant is read without Christ.

But whenever anyone turns to the Lord, the veil is removed.

And then something wonderful happens.

With unveiled faces, believers look at the glory of the Lord and are changed into His image, from glory to glory.

The chapter moves through five movements:

- The Living Epistle (verses 1–3).
- Sufficiency from God (verses 4–6).
- The Glory of the New Covenant (verses 7–11).
- The Veil Removed in Christ (verses 12–16).
- Liberty and Transformation (verses 17–18).

The central truth of 2 Corinthians 3 is:

The new covenant of the Spirit is far more glorious than the old covenant of the letter, because it writes God's life on human hearts, removes the veil in Christ, and transforms believers into the image of the Lord.

I. LETTERS OF RECOMMENDATION

2 Corinthians 3:1 — Do We Need Them?

“Do we begin again to commend ourselves? Or do we need, like some others, letters of recommendation to you, or from you?”

Paul asks two questions.

“Do we begin again to commend ourselves?”

Paul has just spoken about his sincere ministry.

Some might say he was praising himself.

“Or do we need, like some others, letters of recommendation?”

In the early church, letters of recommendation were common and useful.

A traveling believer would carry a letter from his home church to introduce him.

But false teachers had come to Corinth with impressive letters.

They used them to make themselves look important and to cast doubt on Paul.

Paul asks, **“Do I really need a letter to introduce myself to you?”**

He had founded their church.

Cross References

Acts 18:27

> When Apollos wanted to go to Achaia, the believers encouraged him and wrote to the disciples there to welcome him. When he arrived, he was a great help to those who had believed by God's grace.

Romans 16:1

> I recommend to you our sister Phoebe, who serves the church in Cenchreae.

2 Corinthians 5:12

> We are not trying to commend ourselves to you again. Instead, we are giving you a reason to be proud of us, so that you can answer those who take pride in outward appearance rather than in what is in the heart.

Spiritual Principle

A servant of God does not need to build himself up with human credentials.

II. YOU ARE OUR LETTER

2 Corinthians 3:2 — Written on Our Hearts

“You yourselves are our letter, written on our hearts, known and read by everyone.”

Paul gives a beautiful answer.

“You yourselves are our letter.”

The Corinthian church itself was Paul's recommendation.

Their changed lives proved that his ministry was real.

“Written on our hearts.”

Paul carried them in his heart.

They were not just a ministry project to him.

They were people he loved.

“Known and read by everyone.”

People could see what God had done in Corinth.

The church was a public letter that everyone could read.

Cross References

Jeremiah 31:33

> “But this is the covenant I will make with the people of Israel after that time,” declares the LORD. “I will put My law in their minds and write it on their hearts. I will be their God, and they will be My people.”

1 Corinthians 9:2

> Even if others do not see me as an apostle, surely you do! You are the proof that I am the Lord's apostle.

Philippians 1:7

> It is right for me to feel this way about all of you, because I hold you in my heart. Whether I am in chains or defending and confirming the good news, all of you share with me in God's grace.

Spiritual Principle

Changed lives are the best evidence of true ministry.

Key Truth

People are reading your life.

What does it say about Christ?

III. A LETTER FROM CHRIST

2 Corinthians 3:3 — Written by the Spirit

“It is clear that you are a letter from Christ, delivered through us, written not with ink but with the Spirit of the living God, not on tablets of stone but on tablets of human hearts.”

Paul takes the picture further.

“You are a letter from Christ.”

Christ is the true author.

“Delivered through us.”

Paul was only the messenger who delivered it.

“Written not with ink but with the Spirit of the living God.”

Ink fades.

The Spirit's work lasts.

“Not on tablets of stone but on tablets of human hearts.”

Here Paul begins comparing the two covenants.

The Ten Commandments were written by God's finger on stone.

But the prophets promised a day when God would write His law on hearts.

Ezekiel promised that God would take away hearts of stone and give hearts of flesh.

That promise has come true in the new covenant.

Cross References

Exodus 31:18

> When the LORD finished speaking with Moses on Mount Sinai, He gave him the two tablets of the covenant law, tablets of stone written by the finger of God.

Jeremiah 31:33

> “But this is the covenant I will make with the people of Israel after that time,” declares the LORD. “I will put My law in their minds and write it on their hearts. I will be their God, and they will be My people.”

Ezekiel 11:19

> I will give them one heart and put a new spirit in them. I will take away their heart of stone and give them a heart of flesh.

Spiritual Principle

In the new covenant, the Spirit writes God's life on human hearts.

Crawford Bible Study Principle

Every believer is a letter from Christ, written by the Spirit, for the world to read.

IV. CONFIDENCE THROUGH CHRIST

2 Corinthians 3:4 — Before God

“Such confidence we have through Christ before God.”

Paul speaks of his confidence.

“Such confidence.”

He was sure that his ministry was real.

He was sure the Corinthians were the work of God.

“Through Christ.”

His confidence did not come from himself.

It came through Christ.

“Before God.”

Paul was confident not just before people, but in God's presence.

This was not pride.

It was trust in what God had done.

Cross References

Ephesians 3:12

> In Him and through faith in Him we can come to God with freedom and confidence.

Philippians 3:4

> although I myself have reasons to put confidence in the flesh. If anyone else thinks he has reasons to trust in the flesh, I have even more.

Hebrews 10:19

> So, brothers and sisters, since we have confidence to enter the Most Holy Place by the blood of Jesus,

Spiritual Principle

True confidence comes through Christ, not through ourselves.

V. OUR COMPETENCE COMES FROM GOD

2 Corinthians 3:5 — Not in Ourselves

“Not that we are competent in ourselves to claim anything for ourselves, but our competence comes from God.”

Here is the answer to Paul's question from Chapter 2:

“Who is sufficient for these things?”

“Not that we are competent in ourselves.”

No human being is adequate for the work of God in his own strength.

“To claim anything for ourselves.”

Paul does not take credit for what God has done.

“But our competence comes from God.”

God makes His servants able.

He gives the strength, the wisdom, and the power.

This is both humbling and freeing.

Humbling, because we cannot do it alone.

Freeing, because we do not have to.

Cross References

John 15:5

> I am the vine; you are the branches. If you stay joined to Me and I to you, you will bear much fruit. Apart from Me you can do nothing.

Philippians 4:13

> I can do all things through Him who gives me strength.

Philippians 2:13

> For it is God who is working in you, giving you the desire and the power to do what pleases Him.

Spiritual Principle

God makes His servants able to do what He calls them to do.

Application

Is there a task God has given you that feels too big?

Your competence comes from God.

VI. MINISTERS OF A NEW COVENANT

2 Corinthians 3:6 — The Letter Kills, the Spirit Gives Life

“He has made us ministers of a new covenant—not of the letter but of the Spirit. For the letter kills, but the Spirit gives life.”

Paul describes his calling.

“He has made us ministers of a new covenant.”

A **covenant** is a binding relationship God makes with His people.

The prophet Jeremiah promised a new covenant.

In it, God would forgive sins and write His law on hearts.

Jesus established that new covenant through His blood.

“Not of the letter but of the Spirit.”

The **letter** refers to the law written on stone.

The law itself is good and holy.

But it could only tell people what to do.

It could not give them the power to do it.

“For the letter kills.”

The law showed people their sin and declared them guilty.

It brought condemnation and death.

“But the Spirit gives life.”

The Holy Spirit gives new life.

He changes hearts from the inside.

He gives the power to live for God.

Cross References

Jeremiah 31:31

> “The days are coming,” declares the LORD, “when I will make a new covenant with the people of Israel and the people of Judah.”

Hebrews 8:6

> But now Jesus has received a far greater ministry, just as the covenant He brings is better and is based on better promises.

John 6:63

> The Spirit gives life; the flesh accomplishes nothing. The words I have spoken to you are Spirit and life.

Spiritual Principle

The law shows us our sin; the Spirit gives us new life.

Key Truth

The problem was never the law.

The problem was the human heart.

The new covenant changes the heart.

VII. THE GLORY ON MOSES' FACE

2 Corinthians 3:7 — The Ministry That Brought Death

“Now if the ministry that brought death, carved in letters on stone, came with glory—so much that the Israelites could not gaze at the face of Moses because of its fading glory—”

Paul now compares the two covenants.

“The ministry that brought death.”

The old covenant revealed sin and declared sinners guilty.

“Carved in letters on stone.”

The Ten Commandments.

“Came with glory.”

The giving of the law was glorious.

When Moses came down from Mount Sinai, his face shone with God's glory.

“So much that the Israelites could not gaze at the face of Moses.”

The people were afraid to look at him.

“Because of its fading glory.”

But that glory did not last.

It faded.

This was a picture of the old covenant itself.

It was glorious, but it was temporary.

Cross References

Exodus 34:29

> When Moses came down from Mount Sinai with the two tablets of the covenant law in his hands, he did not know that the skin of his face was shining because he had been speaking with the LORD.

Exodus 34:30

> When Aaron and all the Israelites saw Moses, his face was shining, and they were afraid to come near him.

Deuteronomy 5:22

> The LORD spoke these words with a loud voice to your whole assembly on the mountain, out of the fire, the cloud, and the deep darkness. He added nothing more. Then He wrote them on two stone tablets and gave them to me.

Spiritual Principle

The old covenant was truly glorious, but its glory was temporary.

VIII. EVEN MORE GLORIOUS

2 Corinthians 3:8 — The Ministry of the Spirit

“will not the ministry of the Spirit be even more glorious?”

Paul draws the conclusion.

If the old covenant came with glory—

“Will not the ministry of the Spirit be even more glorious?”

Of course it will.

The old covenant was written on stone.

The new is written on hearts.

The old brought death.

The new brings life.

The old was given through Moses.

The new is given through Christ and the Spirit.

Cross References

Romans 8:2

> For through Christ Jesus the law of the Spirit who gives life has set you free from the law of sin and death.

Galatians 3:5

> Does God give you His Spirit and work miracles among you because you obey the law, or because you believe what you heard?

John 16:13

> When the Spirit of truth comes, He will guide you into all truth. He will not speak on His own. He will tell you what He hears, and He will show you what is still to come.

Spiritual Principle

The new covenant ministry of the Spirit surpasses the old in glory.

IX. CONDEMNATION AND RIGHTEOUSNESS

2 Corinthians 3:9 — How Much More Glorious

“For if the ministry that brought condemnation was glorious, how much more glorious is the ministry that brings righteousness!”

Paul gives a second comparison.

“The ministry that brought condemnation.”

The law declared, **“Guilty!”**

It showed that no one could keep it perfectly.

“Was glorious.”

Even so, it revealed God's holiness.

“How much more glorious is the ministry that brings righteousness!”

The new covenant declares, **“Righteous!”**

Through faith in Christ, sinners are made right with God.

Which is more glorious?

A message that condemns, or a message that saves?

Cross References

Romans 8:1

> So now there is no condemnation for those who belong to Christ Jesus.

Romans 3:22

> This righteousness from God comes through faith in Jesus Christ to all who believe. There is no difference between people.

Romans 5:17

> Death ruled because of one man's sin. But how much more will those who receive God's overflowing grace and the gift of righteousness rule in life through the one man, Jesus Christ!

Spiritual Principle

The law condemns, but the gospel brings righteousness through Christ.

Crawford Bible Study Principle

The law says, “Guilty”; the gospel says, “Forgiven.”

X. NO GLORY IN COMPARISON

2 Corinthians 3:10 — The Surpassing Glory

“For what was glorious has no glory now in comparison with the surpassing glory.”

Paul makes a striking statement.

“What was glorious has no glory now.”

The old covenant was glorious.

But compared to the new, it seems to have no glory at all.

“In comparison with the surpassing glory.”

Think of the moon.

At night, it shines brightly.

But when the sun rises, the moon fades from view.

The moon has not changed.

But its light is overwhelmed by the far greater light of the sun.

So it is with the old and new covenants.

Cross References

Hebrews 8:6

> But now Jesus has received a far greater ministry, just as the covenant He brings is better and is based on better promises.

Hebrews 8:13

> By calling this covenant “new,” God has made the first one old. And what is old and aging will soon disappear.

Colossians 2:17

> These were only a shadow of the things that were to come. The reality is found in Christ.

Spiritual Principle

The glory of Christ outshines everything that came before.

XI. WHAT LASTS

2 Corinthians 3:11 — How Much Greater

“And if what was fading away came with glory, how much greater is the glory of that which lasts!”

Paul gives a third comparison.

“What was fading away.”

The old covenant was temporary.

It was meant to prepare the way for Christ.

“Came with glory.”

Even so, it had glory.

“How much greater is the glory of that which lasts!”

The new covenant will never fade.

It is permanent.

It is eternal.

Cross References

Hebrews 8:13

> By calling this covenant “new,” God has made the first one old. And what is old and aging will soon disappear.

Hebrews 12:27

> The words “once more” show that the things that can be shaken—created things—will be removed, so that what cannot be shaken will remain.

1 Peter 1:25

> but the word of the Lord lasts forever. And this word is the good news that was announced to you.

Spiritual Principle

The new covenant in Christ will last forever.

XII. WE ARE VERY BOLD

2 Corinthians 3:12 — Such a Hope

“Therefore, since we have such a hope, we are very bold.”

Paul draws a practical conclusion.

“Since we have such a hope.”

The hope of the new covenant—a glory that lasts forever.

“We are very bold.”

The word means speaking openly and freely, without fear.

Paul did not need to hide anything.

He could speak plainly about the gospel.

Confidence in the message gives courage to the messenger.

Cross References

Ephesians 3:12

> In Him and through faith in Him we can come to God with freedom and confidence.

Acts 4:29

> Now, Lord, look at their threats, and help Your servants speak Your word with great boldness.

Acts 4:31

> After they prayed, the place where they were meeting was shaken. They were all filled with the Holy Spirit and spoke the word of God boldly.

Spiritual Principle

Hope in the new covenant gives boldness to speak openly.

Application

Are you speaking boldly about Christ?

XIII. MOSES' VEIL

2 Corinthians 3:13 — Not Like Moses

“We are not like Moses, who would put a veil over his face to keep the Israelites from gazing at the end of what was fading away.”

Paul refers back to the story in Exodus.

After speaking with God, Moses' face shone.

When he spoke to the people, he covered his face with a veil.

When he went back to speak with God, he took the veil off.

Paul explains one reason for the veil.

“To keep the Israelites from gazing at the end of what was fading away.”

The glory on Moses' face was fading.

The veil kept the people from seeing it fade.

This was a picture of the old covenant itself.

Its glory was temporary.

Paul says, **“We are not like Moses.”**

Paul does not need to cover anything up.

The glory of the new covenant does not fade.

Cross References

Exodus 34:33

> When Moses finished speaking with them, he put a veil over his face.

Exodus 34:34

> But whenever he went in before the LORD to speak with Him, he removed the veil until he came out. When he came out and told the Israelites what he had been commanded,

Exodus 34:35

> they saw that his face was shining. Then Moses would put the veil back over his face until he went in again to speak with the LORD.

Spiritual Principle

The glory of the new covenant does not fade and does not need to be hidden.

XIV. THEIR MINDS WERE HARDENED

2 Corinthians 3:14 — Only in Christ

“But their minds were hardened. To this day the same veil remains when the old covenant is read; it has not been removed, because only in Christ is it taken away.”

Paul now applies the picture of the veil in a new way.

“But their minds were hardened.”

Many in Israel did not understand what God was doing.

“To this day the same veil remains when the old covenant is read.”

When the Old Testament was read without faith in Christ, its true meaning remained hidden.

It was as if a veil covered it.

“Because only in Christ is it taken away.”

The Old Testament points to Jesus.

Without Him, it cannot be fully understood.

Paul himself was Jewish.

He wrote this with deep love for his people.

And elsewhere he expressed great hope for them.

The same veil can cover anyone's heart, Jew or Gentile, until they turn to Christ.

Cross References

Exodus 34:33

> When Moses finished speaking with them, he put a veil over his face.

Romans 11:25

> I do not want you to be unaware of this secret truth, brothers and sisters, so that you will not think you are wiser than you are: part of Israel has been hardened until the full number of Gentiles has come in.

Isaiah 6:10

> Make the hearts of these people dull. Make their ears deaf and close their eyes. Otherwise they might see with their eyes, hear with their ears, understand with their hearts, and turn and be healed.

Spiritual Principle

The Scriptures are fully understood only in the light of Christ.

Key Truth

Jesus is the key that unlocks the meaning of the whole Bible.

XV. A VEIL OVER THEIR HEARTS

2 Corinthians 3:15 — When Moses Is Read

“Even to this day when Moses is read, a veil covers their hearts.”

Paul repeats the point.

“When Moses is read.”

The law of Moses was read every Sabbath in the synagogues.

“A veil covers their hearts.”

Notice the veil is now over the **heart**, not the face.

The problem was not the Scriptures.

The problem was the heart of the reader.

A heart that does not turn to Christ cannot see the full truth.

Cross References

Exodus 34:33

> When Moses finished speaking with them, he put a veil over his face.

Acts 15:21

> For Moses has been preached in every city since ancient times and is read in the synagogues every Sabbath.

Romans 10:3

> Because they did not know the righteousness that comes from God and tried to set up their own, they did not submit to God's righteousness.

Spiritual Principle

Spiritual blindness is a matter of the heart, not the mind alone.

XVI. THE VEIL IS TAKEN AWAY

2 Corinthians 3:16 — Whenever Anyone Turns to the Lord

“But whenever anyone turns to the Lord, the veil is taken away.”

Here is wonderful hope.

“But whenever anyone turns to the Lord.”

Anyone.

Jew or Gentile.

Religious or not.

The moment a person turns to the Lord—

“The veil is taken away.”

The blindness is removed.

The truth becomes clear.

Paul is echoing Moses.

When Moses turned to speak with the Lord, he took off his veil.

When anyone turns to the Lord, the veil is removed from their heart.

Paul himself experienced this.

When he met Jesus on the road to Damascus, something like scales fell from his eyes.

Cross References

Exodus 34:34

> But whenever he went in before the LORD to speak with Him, he removed the veil until he came out. When he came out and told the Israelites what he had been commanded,

Isaiah 25:7

> On this mountain He will remove the covering that hangs over all peoples, the veil that covers all nations.

Acts 9:18

> Immediately something like scales fell from Saul's eyes, and he could see again. He got up and was baptized.

Spiritual Principle

Turning to the Lord removes the veil from the heart.

Crawford Bible Study Principle

No veil is too thick for Christ to remove.

Application

Pray for those you know who cannot yet see the truth.

The moment they turn to the Lord, the veil will be lifted.

XVII. WHERE THE SPIRIT IS, THERE IS LIBERTY

2 Corinthians 3:17 — The Lord Is the Spirit

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

Paul explains who removes the veil.

“Now the Lord is the Spirit.”

The Lord we turn to is present by His Spirit.

The Spirit is the One who works in our hearts to remove the veil.

The Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit work as one.

“And where the Spirit of the Lord is, there is liberty.”

Liberty means freedom.

Freedom from the veil.

Freedom from condemnation.

Freedom from trying to earn God's favor by keeping the law.

Freedom from the power of sin.

This is not freedom to do whatever we want.

It is freedom to know God and live for Him.

Cross References

John 8:36

> So if the Son sets you free, you will be truly free.

Galatians 5:1

> Christ has set us free so that we can live in freedom. So stand firm, and do not let yourselves be held again under slavery.

Galatians 5:13

> Brothers and sisters, you were called to be free. But do not use your freedom as an excuse to please your sinful nature. Instead, serve one another in love.

Spiritual Principle

The Spirit brings true freedom to know and serve God.

Key Truth

True liberty is not freedom from God.

It is freedom for God.

XVIII. FROM GLORY TO GLORY

2 Corinthians 3:18 — Transformed into His Image

“And we all, with unveiled faces, beholding the glory of the Lord as in a mirror, are being transformed into the same image from glory to glory, which comes from the Lord, who is the Spirit.”

This is one of the most beautiful verses in the Bible.

“And we all.”

Not just Moses.

Not just Paul.

All believers.

“With unveiled faces.”

Moses had to wear a veil.

But believers have nothing covering their faces.

We can look at God's glory openly.

“Beholding the glory of the Lord as in a mirror.”

We see the Lord's glory, especially as it is revealed in Jesus Christ.

We see Him in His word.

“Are being transformed into the same image.”

The word **transformed** is the same word used for Jesus' transfiguration.

As we look at Christ, we become like Him.

And notice: **“are being transformed.”**

It is a process.

It is happening now.

“From glory to glory.”

Step by step.

Day by day.

From one degree of glory to the next.

“Which comes from the Lord, who is the Spirit.”

This change is God's work.

We behold.

He transforms.

Cross References

Romans 8:29

> For those God knew ahead of time, He also chose to become like His Son, so that His Son would be the firstborn among many brothers and sisters.

Romans 12:2

> Do not copy the ways of this world, but let God change you by giving you a new mind. Then you will be able to understand what God wants—what is good, pleasing, and perfect.

1 John 3:2

> Dear friends, we are God's children now, and what we will be has not yet been shown. But we know that when Christ appears, we will be like Him, because we will see Him as He really is.

Spiritual Principle

As we behold Christ, the Spirit transforms us into His image.

Crawford Bible Study Principle

We become like what we behold—so behold Christ.

Application

How much time do you spend looking at Christ in His word?

What you behold is shaping who you are becoming.

XIX. SIX GREAT LESSONS FROM 2 CORINTHIANS 3

1. Believers Are Living Letters

“You are a letter from Christ.”

Principle:

Our lives are testimonies written by the Spirit of God, more powerful than any written recommendation.

2. True Sufficiency Is from God

“Our competence comes from God.”

Principle:

Ministry is not about human strength but divine empowerment through the Spirit.

3. The New Covenant Surpasses the Old

“The letter kills, but the Spirit gives life.”

Principle:

The law engraved on stone brought death and condemnation, but the Spirit brings righteousness and life.

4. Christ Removes the Veil

“Only in Christ is it taken away.”

Principle:

Without Him, spiritual blindness remains, but through Him, hearts are unveiled to see God's glory.

5. Freedom Is in the Spirit

“Where the Spirit of the Lord is, there is liberty.”

Principle:

Life in Christ is not bondage to rules but liberty empowered by the Spirit.

6. Transformation Is Ongoing

“Being transformed into the same image from glory to glory.”

Principle:

As we behold Christ, the Spirit changes us from one degree of glory to another until we reflect His image.

XX. THE OLD COVENANT AND THE NEW COVENANT

Paul compares the two covenants throughout this chapter.

The Old Covenant

- Given through Moses.
- Written on tablets of stone.
- The letter.
- Brought death.
- Brought condemnation.
- Its glory faded.
- Was temporary.
- Its meaning is veiled without Christ.

The New Covenant

- Given through Christ.
- Written on human hearts.
- The Spirit.
- Gives life.

- Brings righteousness.
- Its glory surpasses the old.
- Lasts forever.
- Removes the veil and transforms us.

An Important Balance

Paul is not saying the law was bad.

The law was holy, good, and glorious.

It revealed God's holiness and showed people their need.

But it could not give life.

It pointed forward to Christ, who fulfills it.

Key Truth

The old covenant showed us our need; the new covenant meets it in Christ.

XXI. THE STORY OF MOSES' VEIL

Paul draws on Exodus 34.

Moses Spoke with God

On Mount Sinai, Moses spent time in God's presence.

His Face Shone

When he came down, his face reflected God's glory.

The People Were Afraid

They could not look at him.

Moses Wore a Veil

He covered his face when speaking to the people.

Moses Removed the Veil Before the Lord

When he went to speak with God, he took the veil off.

Paul's Application

- The fading glory pictures the temporary old covenant.
- The veil pictures hearts that do not yet see Christ.
- Turning to the Lord removes the veil, as Moses did.
- Believers now see God's glory with unveiled faces.

Crawford Bible Study Principle

Moses reflected God's glory for a moment; believers are being transformed by it forever.

XXII. HOW TRANSFORMATION HAPPENS

Verse 18 shows how believers become like Christ.

We Turn to the Lord

The veil is removed.

We Behold His Glory

We look at Christ, especially in His word.

The Spirit Transforms Us

The change is His work, not ours.

We Are Changed Gradually

“From glory to glory.”

We Become Like Christ

“Into the same image.”

One Day the Change Will Be Complete

“When Christ appears, we will be like Him.”

Key Truth

We behold, and He transforms.

XXIII. WHAT 2 CORINTHIANS 3 TEACHES ABOUT JESUS AND THE SPIRIT

Christ Writes on Hearts

“You are a letter from Christ.”

Our Confidence Is Through Christ

“Such confidence we have through Christ.”

The Veil Is Removed in Christ

“Only in Christ is it taken away.”

The Spirit Gives Life

“The Spirit gives life.”

The Spirit Brings Liberty

“Where the Spirit of the Lord is, there is liberty.”

The Spirit Transforms Us into Christ's Image

“Which comes from the Lord, who is the Spirit.”

Crawford Bible Study Principle

Christ opens our eyes, and the Spirit makes us like Him.

XXIV. QUESTIONS AND ANSWERS FOR PERSONAL STUDY

Question 1

Why didn't Paul need letters of recommendation?

The Corinthians themselves were his letter.

Their changed lives proved his ministry was real.

Question 2

What does it mean that believers are a “letter from Christ”?

Christ wrote on their hearts by the Spirit.

Their lives show the world what Christ has done.

Question 3

Where does our competence for ministry come from?

From God.

No one is adequate in his own strength.

Question 4

What does “the letter kills, but the Spirit gives life” mean?

The law shows us our sin and condemns us.

But the Spirit gives new life and changes our hearts.

Question 5

Was the law bad?

No.

The law was holy and glorious.

But it could not give life, and it pointed forward to Christ.

Question 6

Why did Moses' face shine?

He had been in the presence of God.

His face reflected God's glory.

Question 7

Why did Moses wear a veil?

Paul says it kept the people from seeing the glory fade.

It pictured the temporary nature of the old covenant.

Question 8

What is the veil over people's hearts today?

It is spiritual blindness that keeps people from understanding the truth about Christ.

It can cover any heart until that person turns to the Lord.

Question 9

How is the veil removed?

Whenever anyone turns to the Lord, the veil is taken away.

Question 10

What kind of liberty does the Spirit give?

Freedom from condemnation, from the power of sin, and from trying to earn God's favor.

It is freedom to know God and live for Him.

Question 11

How are believers transformed into Christ's image?

By beholding His glory.

The Spirit changes them step by step, from glory to glory.

Question 12

What should 2 Corinthians 3 change about the way Christians live today?

2 Corinthians 3 should cause believers to live:

- As living letters that show Christ to the world.
- Depending on God's strength, not their own.
- Rejoicing in the new covenant.
- Free from condemnation.
- Reading the whole Bible in the light of Christ.
- Praying for those whose hearts are veiled.
- Speaking boldly about the gospel.
- Spending time beholding Christ.

XXV. PERSONAL APPLICATION

2 Corinthians 3 asks several important questions.

What Does My Life Say About Christ?

If people read my life, what would they learn?

Am I Relying on My Own Strength?

Or do I trust that my competence comes from God?

Am I Living Under the Letter or the Spirit?

Am I trying to earn God's favor, or living by His grace?

Do I Read the Bible in the Light of Christ?

Do I see Jesus throughout Scripture?

Who Do I Know Whose Heart Is Veiled?

Am I praying for them to turn to the Lord?

Am I Walking in the Spirit's Freedom?

Or am I still living in bondage?

How Much Time Do I Spend Beholding Christ?

What am I looking at most?

Am I Being Transformed?

Am I more like Christ than I was a year ago?

XXVI. A CRAWFORD BIBLE STUDY PRINCIPLE

“We Become What We Behold”

Moses spent time with God, and his face shone.

He did not try to make it shine.

It shone because he had been with God.

The same is true for believers today.

We cannot make ourselves holy by trying harder.

We cannot change our hearts by our own effort.

But as we look at Christ—

In His word.

In prayer.

In worship.

The Spirit changes us.

Slowly.

Steadily.

From glory to glory.

We become like what we look at most.

If we fill our eyes with the world, we become like the world.

If we fill our eyes with Christ, we become like Christ.

This creates a powerful principle.

Transformation is not mainly about trying.

It is about beholding.

Principle:

Look at Jesus, and the Spirit will make you like Him.

XXVII. FINAL APPLICATION

2 Corinthians Chapter 3 was written to a church being impressed by the wrong things.

False teachers came with letters of recommendation.

They boasted in their credentials.

Some may have urged a return to the old covenant.

Paul pointed them to something far greater.

The Corinthians themselves were Paul's letter, written by the Spirit.

The new covenant was more glorious than the old.

The veil was removed in Christ.

And believers were being transformed into His image.

2 Corinthians 3 therefore reminds us:

Never trust in human credentials.

Never rely on your own strength.

Never go back to living by the letter.

Never stop praying for those whose hearts are veiled.

Never stop beholding Christ.

The church does not need more impressive letters.

It needs:

Lives written by the Spirit.

Servants made able by God.

Hearts unveiled by Christ.

And believers being transformed from glory to glory.

The same Spirit still works:

Tell people that the Spirit gives life.

Tell people that there is no condemnation in Christ.

Tell people that the veil can be removed.

Tell people that God can transform them.

And every day:

Turn to the Lord.

Behold His glory.

Walk in His freedom.

Be transformed into His image.

Closing Prayer

Heavenly Father,

Thank You for the new covenant in Jesus Christ.

Thank You that You have written Your life on our hearts by Your Spirit.

Thank You that our competence comes from You.

Thank You that the Spirit gives life.

Thank You that in Christ there is no condemnation.

Thank You that whenever anyone turns to the Lord, the veil is taken away.

Thank You that where the Spirit of the Lord is, there is liberty.

Thank You that we are being transformed into the image of Christ, from glory to glory.

Forgive us when we have trusted in our own strength.

Forgive us when we have lived under the letter instead of by the Spirit.

Forgive us when we have filled our eyes with the world instead of with Christ.

Make our lives letters that clearly show Christ to everyone who reads them.

Give us boldness to speak the gospel openly.

Remove the veil from the hearts of those we love who do not yet know You.

Help us read Your word and see Jesus on every page.

Keep our eyes fixed on Christ.

And by Your Spirit, make us more and more like Him every day.

“And we all, with unveiled faces, beholding the glory of the Lord as in a mirror, are being transformed into the same image from glory to glory.”

In Jesus' name, Amen.

Key Verse

“And we all, with unveiled faces, beholding the glory of the Lord as in a mirror, are being transformed into the same image from glory to glory, which comes from the Lord, who is the Spirit.” — 2 Corinthians 3:18

Central Truth

The new covenant of the Spirit is far more glorious than the old covenant of the letter, because it writes God's life on human hearts, removes the veil in Christ, and transforms believers into the image of the Lord.

2 Corinthians 3 in One Sentence

Paul declares that the Corinthians are his living letter written by the Spirit, that his competence comes from God as a minister of the new covenant whose life-giving glory surpasses the fading glory of the old, and that whenever anyone turns to the Lord the veil is removed and believers are transformed into Christ's image from glory to glory.