

The Spirit Gives Life

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Preacher: Austin Wright

[0:00] Would you take your copy now of God's Word and turn with me to 2 Corinthians 3. If you're using the Bible in the seat pocket in front of you, that's page 1259.

1259, 2 Corinthians 3. Our verses will be verses 7 through 18, but for context, I'd like to read the entire chapter. 2 Corinthians 3.

Hear now the Word of the Lord. Are we beginning to commend ourselves again? Or do we need, as some do, letters of recommendation to you or from you?

You yourselves are our letter of recommendation, written on our hearts to be known and read by all. And you show that you are a letter from Christ delivered by us, written not with ink, but with the Spirit of the living God.

Not on tablets of stone, but on tablets of human hearts. Such is the confidence that we have through Christ toward God. Not that we are sufficient in ourselves to claim anything is coming from us.

[1:14] But our sufficiency is from God, who has made us sufficient to be ministers of a new covenant. Not of the letter, but of the Spirit.

For the letter kills, but the Spirit gives life. 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, will not the ministry of the Spirit have even more glory?

For if there was glory in the ministry of condemnation, the ministry of righteousness must far exceed it in glory. Indeed, in this case, what once had glory has come to have no glory at all because of the glory that surpasses it.

For if what was being brought to an end came with glory, much more will what is permanent have glory. Since we have such a hope, we are very bold.

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. But their minds were hardened.

[2:35] For to this day, when they read the old covenant, that same veil remains unlifted because only through Christ is it taken away.

Yes, to this day, whenever Moses is read, a veil lies over their hearts. But when one turns to the Lord, the veil is removed. Now, the Lord is the Spirit.

And where the Spirit of the Lord is, there's freedom. 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. One more prayer. Father, we pray that you would open our eyes to behold wonderful things out of your law.

We admit the truthfulness of your word that the letter kills, but the Spirit gives life. We admit before you this morning that there is no sufficiency in human ministers apart from your power and apart from your grace.

[3:54] And so I pray this morning that what flows from this pulpit would not be about me, but about the glory of Christ by the power of the Spirit. We submit ourselves as in desperate need of Holy Spirit power and unction.

Holy Spirit, preach a greater message than the one that's been prepared. Use your word and fulfill the promise that you have made to transform your people from one degree of glory to another as we behold the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ.

In whose name we pray. Amen. Amen. For the last two months, Pastor Jared has been preaching through the first three chapters of Genesis.

From the glorious account of God's creation and creating all things by his word and his spirit, to the special nature of humanity in the image of God, we have seen beauty and goodness in God's

design.

The last two Sundays, however, in Genesis 3 have taken a turn from the glory of the created order to the tragic fall and rebellion of man against God in the garden.

[5:09] The consequences of Adam's sin in Genesis 3 were catastrophic and cataclysmic. The image of God in man, that great gift given to humanity by God, though not altogether lost, was marred in such a way that man could no longer live out God's faithful design.

Man fell so drastically short of the glory of God and in turn the glory and the life that he was designed to live. Death reigned, Paul put it.

Judgment and condemnation came to all men through the sin of the one man, Adam. But God. God had a plan.

A plan to redeem marred and fallen sinners from sin, death, and eternal separation. This plan that we call good news or gospel first appears like an acorn in the passage that Jared will preach next Sunday, Lord willing.

We'll see that though the created order has been marred by sin, God's original design for humanity will not be thwarted by that fall.

[6:26] Our passage this morning in 2 Corinthians 3 traces the growth of that acorn into this beautiful oak tree. So as we're going through Genesis, we're given the opportunity this morning to pause for a moment and zoom forward in time to see that little acorn of the gospel grow into this giant beautiful oak tree in the promises of God in the new covenant.

By God's grace, in your hands this morning and in our ears as we read, we have the fullness of the revelation of God's plan of redemption.

So we have a question by God's grace that we'll seek to answer from this text this morning and it's this. How will the triune God heal the marred image of God in man and restore him to glory?

How is it that the triune God will heal the marred image of God in man and restore him to glory?

And what we'll see together is that Paul's answer will be nothing short of new creation life.

First, a little bit of context and then we'll walk through three glimpses of this glorious new covenant reality. In Acts chapter 18, we read about Paul's ministry to Corinth for the very first time.

[7:46] Corinth was a significant Roman capital and a trade center in Greece. Some historians have even called Corinth the San Francisco of the Roman Empire. Now, Paul, when he makes his way to Corinth, consistent with his approach to missions, he found a Jewish synagogue in the city and began to preach the gospel from the Old Testament, seeking to persuade Jews and those Greeks surrounding the synagogue to believe in Jesus.

But shortly after he's joined by his ministry partners Silas and Timothy, this first synagogue resists Paul and stands against him and forces him to leave. And he's very discouraged by this.

But in God's providence, he leads Paul to a second synagogue in that city. And there's a house that he's staying with just outside that synagogue. And wouldn't you know it, the leader of that synagogue, Crispus, is converted by the Holy Spirit preaching the gospel through Paul.

And in a night vision, the Holy Spirit reassures Paul, Do not be afraid, but go on speaking and do not be silent, for I am with you and no one will attack you to harm you, for I have many in this city who are my people.

What a great reassurance for Paul as he is being willing to be poured out as a sacrifice for the people. I have many people in this city, the Spirit said. So Paul obeys the Lord and stays there in Corinth for about a year and a half, instructing people in that church, this new church in Corinth, how to live the faithful Christian life.

[9:24] Soon after Paul leaves, however, he begins to hear a report that things are not going very well in the church at Corinth. And that might be a little bit of an understatement. Though they were indeed a converted body and people who genuinely belonged to the Lord, they were tolerating gross immorality.

They were lacking necessary church discipline. People were getting drunk at the Eucharist or communion. And the church itself was living in a disordered state.

So Paul wrote a letter, 1 Corinthians, to correct these errors, seeking to convince them to stay faithful to the preaching of the gospel and the truth of a healthy biblical church.

But it seems that Paul's first letter wasn't as successful as he had hoped, for he had to return in person to the church for what he called a painful visit in 2 Corinthians 2, 1.

In that visit, he's attempting to set things in order, after which he sends an additional letter that we read about in 2 Corinthians 1, 3-4 that apparently led to the genuine repentance of many there in the church.

[10:32] But needless to say, it was not a very pleasant visit, nor did he consider it to be successful. They didn't view Paul with much respect and authority and love during that visit.

2 Corinthians, the third letter of Paul to the church, was a defense of Paul's apostolic New Covenant ministry against the charges of a group of classically trained rhetoricians called Super Apostles. What a name. Paul, on the other hand, though highly educated at the feet of Gamaliel, was not a classical Ciceronian rhetor, taking the rhetoric of the past and throwing the gospel into these beautiful forms for a price.

No, Paul was poor. He was often mistreated. Though he was very gifted, he did not put the gospel in classical Ciceronian form to impress crowds.

He rather, without peddling the word, faithfully proclaimed the message that people could understand without going through those methods. And he didn't travel with elite letters of recommendation and resumes from famous teachers around the Roman Empire saying, Oh, Paul, you've got to go here, Paul.

[11:57] He's trained in the classical ways. A new Cicero in Corinth. No, Paul had this. You yourselves, Corinthians, are our letters of recommendation.

Written on our hearts to be known and read by all. And you show that you're a letter from Christ delivered by us, written not with ink, but with the spirit of the living God, not on tablets of stone, but on tablets of human hearts.

In other words, Corinthians, God's promises anticipated in Jeremiah 31, 33, and Ezekiel 36, 26 have come true in your very conversions.

You don't need a resume for me. You're alive in Christ. Is that not evidence enough of the power and the ministry of Paul? The sufficiency of Paul's apostolic ministry was not classical rhetoric, letters of recommendation, extravagant honorariums.

No, his sufficiency was from God. The Holy Spirit had been using the apostolic preaching of the gospel to give life to these people.

[13:11] It was the spirit of God who made Paul's ministry significant, sufficient. Because as Paul himself said, the letter kills, but the spirit gives life.

May we be reminded today that teaching, no matter how externally impressive, without the accompanying power of the Holy Spirit is like a body without a soul, lifeless, dead, ineffective. It is a corpse on display. For the letter kills, but the spirit gives life. So how will the triune God heal the marred image of God in man and restore him to glory?

The same way he created the universe, by his word and by his spirit. The Holy Spirit, the spirit of the resurrected Christ, gives life.

And Paul gives us three glimpses this morning into God's new creation plan. First, we'll see that God promises in the new covenant a greater glory. Verses 7 through 11, a greater glory.

[14:20] Now, if we are to be successful in unpacking these verses, we have to come at a definition of what glory means. What is it that Paul intends for us to understand as glory?

Al Mohler helpfully writes that glory here is something like the intrinsic reality and outward manifestation of God's power and character.

An intrinsic reality, but the outward manifestation of God's power and character. Another theologian adds, we have the personal presence of the Lord in all his goodness and in the fullness of his revealed character.

And yet another, the revealed person, character, work, and power of the Lord Jesus Christ. So we might weave these helpful definitions together to say something like, the greater glory involves an outward manifestation, an experience of the personal presence of the Shekinah glory of God and the revelation of the person, work, and power of Jesus Christ.

Now, Paul here in these few verses makes a lesser to a greater argument to defend his new covenant ministry, to demonstrate the significance of what God had done in the hearts of the Corinthian believers by Christ's spirit.

[15:39] We're introduced to the Mosaic covenant in contrast to the new covenant. So what is it that Paul teaches here about the Mosaic covenant or the law? Well, he describes it, if you look at your Bibles, as the ministry of death, a ministry of condemnation, carved in letters on stone.

Now, in the passage that Pastor Jared read for us in our assurance of pardon, we were shown that there was something that the law could not do. But this has nothing to do with the wonder of the law, but the problem with us and our sinful flesh.

The law is similar to an x-ray machine. We might call the x-ray machine a ministry of brokenness. If I'm feeling internal pain and I go to the x-ray machine and it shows me that I have a broken bone, it is showing me that I have a problem.

It's revealing something to me. It can't fix it for me, but it can show me that I indeed have a problem with brokenness. In a similar way, the law reveals to us that we are separated from God because of our sin and that sin proceeds to bring forth death.

We see in the word condemnation, the reality that before God, apart from Christ, in Adam, we stand guilty. The gavel of divine justice says condemned.

[17 : 10] And the law was God's plan to show and point forward to the need for his son, Christ, to be our source of salvation. Its location is intentionally stated as carved in letters on stone.

This is an external rule list. Do this. Don't do this. But as we all know, when we receive a list of rules, those rules do not give us the power to obey them.

Often the moment that we receive a rule, we go, yeah, I don't want to do that. Or perhaps, don't do this. I'm going to do that.

I'm going to try to get around this rule list that's been given to me. And the purpose of the law, as it was indeed glorious, it was so glorious in its origin from God that Moses had to veil his face because the Israelites could not gaze upon the glory of the law revealed as covenant.

But what was God's design, or telos, its purpose, was to point forward to Christ as the fulfillment of all God's salvific promises.

[18 : 25] It reminds me, we have a Dalmatian at the house, and sometimes he can be intelligent, and other times not so much. I could drop a piece of food on the floor, and Pongo is right here looking at me, and I point, and I point at the food, and the dog is looking at me.

Hey, hey, hey. And I'm pointing, I'm pointing, and he's looking straight at me. That's similar to what Paul is saying people are doing when they look to the old covenant, the law, which is supposed to say, hey, look at Christ, and they're looking straight at the law.

The law is a pointer finger directly to Christ as fulfillment. As Paul says in Romans, Christ is the telos of the law. He is the end of the law.

And so we see the law does have glory, but it's a ministry of death. It's a ministry of condemnation, and there's much that we cannot do in the receiving of the law.

We are shown our sin. We're shown our reality before God. We're shown our need for a savior. We're shown our need for Yahweh to save us, but the law itself is not the ministry of salvation.

[19 : 31] Remember, Paul's defending his ministry here. Notice that in his lesser to greater argument, he's making the bold claim, my ministry is greater than Moses' ministry.

What a statement. You want a letter of recommendation, a more significant ministry than the greatest, perhaps one of the greatest men in Israel's history?

And Paul says, the new covenant ministry is greater than Moses. So what does he teach about the new covenant? The description is the ministry of the spirit and the ministry of righteousness.

So we see in contrast to death, we have spirit or life. And in contrast to condemnation, we have acquittal, righteousness, freedom, gifted status before God.

And how is it that this gift is given? In contrast to the law, which was written on tablets of stone, where is it that the new covenant ministry is written? On the tablets of human hearts.

[20 : 36] So where the law was externally given and a list of what shows us our need of Christ, in the gift of the new covenant, the spirit has written the law of God on the tablets of human hearts so that we by his grace, desire to follow his word and live in accordance with what he's done for us.

What a great gift, a greater glory. Paul says, this ministry, this new covenant ministry, isn't temporary, like the law was. It was being brought to an end.

No, the new covenant ministry is permanent. It's eternal. And because of that, he says, it has much more glory, a surpassing glory.

It's telos, it's design, it's purpose, is nothing short of reconciliation with God and a restored image of God in everlasting glory.

Whereas we internally wept at the loss or the marring of the image of God in man in Genesis 3 and the separation of the relationship between God and man and the great fellowship and

communion they had together in the garden, the good news of the new covenant is that that relationship has been completely restored in Christ and that the image of God which was marred in the garden is being healed even now and awaits a final and perfect healing when Jesus returns.

[22:08] There is a greater glory. I remember as a child loving to get Happy Meals. The incredible McDonald's burger with the toy and the fries and just collecting the things and as a child, have you ever looked at your children when they like something like a Happy Meal and go, you have no idea.

You just have no idea. If you get to pick where you go on your birthday, if you pick McDonald's, you just, you had one shot all year, you pick McDonald's. The first time you have a Five Guys burger, the moment you take that first bite, whatever glory you thought the Happy Meal hamburger had suddenly has no more glory.

Whenever I think of a burger, I never ever think, I think I want to go to McDonald's and grab that Happy Meal, single patty with cheese and a little bit of onions that may have been in the place a little bit too long.

No, I want to go to Five Guys and I want the cheese to be melting. I want there to be lettuce, tomato, onion, jalapeno peppers with the perfect bun and the side of fries. There's a greater glory in the Five Guys burger.

In the New Covenant, y'all, there's such a greater glory than the glory that was present in the Old Covenant that when you look back from the New Covenant to the Old, it's as if that Old Covenant no longer has any glory at all because of the surpassing glory of the New Covenant.

[23:43] In Hebrews 3, the author says, Now Moses was faithful in all God's house as a servant to testify to the things that were to be spoken later.

But Christ is faithful over God's house as a son. We go from servanthood under Moses to sonship in Christ. The glory is surpassing.

It is far beyond whatever glory was genuinely present in the Mosaic Covenant as law. Dane Ortlund writes, God is no longer merely commanding people from the outside.

He is transforming them from the inside. The 18th century particular Baptist John Gill said, 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.

Since the Spirit's ministry in the New Covenant is internal, life-giving, and everlasting, the glory of that ministry far surpasses the glory of the Old Covenant.

[24:48] Paul says his ministry has, indeed, a greater glory. Second, we see beyond just a greater glory, we see a removed veil, a removed veil. This is verses 12 through 17.

In this next movement, Paul teaches that, and by extension, his and our New Covenant ministry is so much greater than Moses' ministry because God included greater promises in the New Covenant.

And here we begin to see some of those promises unpacked. There's surpassing glory in the Spirit of Christ's ministry that gives his chosen human instruments boldness and confidence to proclaim the gospel.

Paul says, wow, we have this great hope. We're very bold. And then he lifts an image from Moses and the veil from Exodus 34 to show the promises of the New Covenant are indeed far better.

You might write down, if you're taking notes, Exodus 34, verses 29 to 35 to perhaps visit later to read the account of this first moment of Moses' face shining and the veil being placed.

[26:03] But I'll simply read verse 35 as we look at this image in 2 Corinthians 3. The people of Israel would see the face of Moses that the skin of Moses' face was shining.

And Moses would put the veil over his face again until he went in to speak with God. Now as I work through Paul's use of this image in these verses, I will be following the exegesis of the 17th century English theologian John Owen who points out in this passage a double veiling.

A veil over Moses' face and a veil over the sinful heart. What I'll call the external veil and the internal veil. So let's look at the external veil first and then the internal veil.

We'll call this external veil the veil that was literally over Moses' face and then how Paul uses that in his theology here. Now Moses, he put a veil over his face so that the Israelites might not gaze, he says, at the outcome or the telos of what was being brought to an end.

Why? So why would Moses veil his face? Dan Ortlund observes, Moses wore a veil lest the Israelites mistook which era of redemptive history they lived in.

[27:30] God did not want the Israelites to mistake which era of redemptive history they were in. What stage of growth is the oak tree of the promise of the gospel?

The glory contained in the law was intended to point to the telos of the law which is Christ as Paul argues in Romans 10.4.

And if the Israelites were to gaze at the pointing finger pointing to Christ rather than Christ himself they would be like Pongo staring at me and not staring at the glorious food that awaited him. And so Moses veils his face. John Owen observes because the Mosaic covenant contained glorious truths that pointed forward to Christ Moses veiled his face lest the people look to the scaffolding as the telos rather than the building.

What a terrible mistake to make to see the building being built and the scaffolding surrounding the building and to look at the scaffolding and go wow that's some pretty impressive scaffolding.

[28:38] I think I'd like to stare at the scaffolding of this building rather than the building that is being built the living stones as Peter later helps us to see. But this external veil also represents for Paul something like the obscurity or the presence of the promise of the gospel in types and shadows in the old covenant pointing forward to Christ.

as we read the law as we read the Mosaic covenant we see these institutions and promises that point forward toward Christ without mentioning his name specifically.

The Bible calls those things types or shadows of the substance that is Christ to come. And so Paul seems to be using this metaphor of the external veil over Moses' face as something like the types and the shadows contained in the old covenant that pointed forward to Jesus.

John Gill agrees saying that Moses' veil is an emblem of the gospel being veiled under the law. The promise is present. We know that God made promises to Abraham that his seed would be the answer to the promises and in the Mosaic covenant mediating between that we see pieces that point forward to the fact of what Jesus would actually fulfill and this veil in Paul's theology seems to be functioning as something like an emblem of the gospel glory of Christ veiled underneath the law. The external remedy to the veil over Moses' face is the very thing Paul says he's trying to do here. Boldly preach the new covenant gospel.

[30:26] Moses he was not like that. He veiled with a veil over his face but in contrast with the veil over Moses' face Paul says we are confident and very bold preaching the gospel of the Lord Jesus Christ because the fullness has come.

We have the fullness of God's revelation in Christ the external veil of Moses in the preaching of the gospel is removed. All of those types and shadows are now shown to be completely filled in what Paul calls the mystery of God which is Christ in you.

All of those mysteries now have their revelation in Jesus and Paul says because of that we're very bold and the Holy Spirit in the preaching of the gospel has removed the external veil from Moses' face that was contained in the law itself.

But then why do people reject it? If the external veil is removed objectively in the preaching of the gospel why does one chapter earlier Paul say the gospel is an aroma of life to some and aroma of death to others?

After all he's been cast out of the synagogue in Corinth before. He knows that as he preached the apostolic gospel not everyone received it. The veil seemingly wasn't removed even though the objective preaching of the gospel had removed the external veil of Moses' face.

[31:56] This is where John Owen is so helpful in helping us see the internal veil that remains. To this day whenever Moses is read Paul says a veil lies where?

Over Moses' face? Over their hearts. Owen says this is symbolic of the ignorance the darkness the blindness that is on men by nature.

One of the effects of Adam's sin in the garden is this blindness this sinfulness this hardened heart this heart of stone that needed to be replaced with a heart of flesh the very promise that Paul said had already happened to the Corinthian church that now their heart had been written on but some did not believe.

Isaiah 25:7 we see a glimpse of this idea of the internal veil where Isaiah writes and he will swallow up on this mountain the covering that is cast over all people the veil that is spread over all nations.

How can this internal veil be removed? If the gospel preaching is the means of removing the external veil over Moses' face how can the internal veil be removed?

[33:19] 2 Corinthians 4:6 For God who said let light shine out of darkness has shown in our hearts to give the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ.

Do you see just how significant the work of the Holy Spirit is in New Covenant ministry? Paul says the God who said let there be light and there was light had to do a work of recreation in our hearts in order for us to behold the face of God the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ.

So if you are here this morning and you belong to Christ and the spirit is within you you are a work of new creation even though the outer man is fading away day by day the inner man is being renewed and this affliction is working for us an eternal weight of glory.

To remove this internal veil requires a work of new creation by God's word and by his spirit. It's a great reflection a contrast a theme traced from God's work of creation and his work of redemption. He is doing something new within us as he is restoring that which was broken and not only restoring it but making it even better than it would have been prior to the fall.

[34:52] Y'all our God is so incredible and his promise to turn all things for the good of those who love him is made so plain in the very fact that whatever Adam lost in Christ we gain even more.

We are not simply restored to Eden but we are transformed into glory and ever increasing glory.

Just as an acorn has the capacity in perfection to grow so the image of God has the capacity to expand and grow and to honor God and glorify God and reflect God in ever increasing ways.

It's one thing that makes the excitement of heaven so worth looking forward to that we will never be bored. the infinite cannot comprehend the finite cannot comprehend the infinite and yet as we behold the face of God will ever be made more in his likeness and will know more and more without ever exhausting all there is to know of the glory of God.

His past glories his present glories his future glories all a part of beholding the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ. Ortlund observes only by union with Christ do the scales fall off from one's eyes and one sees the deepest intent and inescapable terminus of the Old Testament and here's the good news when you read the Old Testament now what do you see?

You see the pointer finger to Christ you see the types pointing forward to the fulfillment of the type you see the shadow pointing forward to the substance and you rejoice in Christ in the Old Testament where Paul says almost weeping to this day the Israelites read and know the Hebrew better than we and yet they miss the whole purpose of the law because the purpose of the law was to point forward to Christ what great glory we have that those of us in this room who've never ever read one Hebrew word can know the Hebrew Old Testament better than those who are masters of the Hebrew language why?

[37:08] because of the spirit of Christ writing his law upon your heart and opening your eyes to behold the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ transforming you from one degree of glory to another this is why the psalmist prayed open my eyes that I may behold wondrous things out of your law perhaps you might make it a practice this week as you take the word of God and open it to simply begin with that prayer open my eyes that I may behold wonderful things out of your law because I want to point out from this text that where they don't see Christ is when when the law of Moses is read this is an important note in Paul because it's a connection to the word the word of God is where we see the glory glory we're in a stage of walking by faith and not yet by sight so where is it your faith will be built up and you will be transformed from one degree of glory to another it is in the word of God and so we look to the word and we pray Holy

Spirit do what only you can do for the letter the letters and the words on the page can kill but you can give life as your word is shown to me and as I look by faith as it were behold the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ in the written word in Christ the double veil is removed and what does Paul say we receive the Spirit gives life and he gives freedom freedom to see freedom from condemnation and that belongs as we'll see to just the Christian leaders no all Christians here we are we finally reached the answer to our question in the text how is it that the image of God will be healed and man restored to glory verse 18 our final point a transformed image 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 we've now reached what a theologian called one of the most important texts in the

New Testament for understanding what it means to be a Christian it's not simply Moses or Paul or a pastor or a trained academic theologian whose faces are unveiled oh no we all we all every Christian from the Christian who first is converted from the Christian who just comes to know Jesus who maybe has never even heard of Noah or Moses or Adam that Christian new creation life has

the veil removed and so does the seasoned Christian the mature believer we all with unveiled face are beholding the glory of the Lord if you are a Christian this morning rejoice you're indwelt by the Holy Spirit and the veil of mystery in the Mosaic covenant is removed in the preaching of the gospel and the veil of sinful blindness that we all had on us in Adam has been removed you are free by the Spirit to behold the glory of God in the Word and to reflect his likeness not as Moses who veiled his face not as the children of Israel who said ah we can't stand to see the glory but as children of God who say we want to see your face seek the face of the Lord the psalmist said seek his face always and now we can why is that so important because now that we know and believe the gospel and have the Spirit of Christ

God transforms us from one degree of glory to another by his word the word transformed there is used by the gospel writers to refer to Jesus as transfiguration this is nothing short of glorification here is the contrast when Moses is read to the unbeliever it is a ministry of death but now for you when Moses is read you are gloriously being transformed from one degree of glory to another by seeing Christ with the eyes of faith and though our outer man may not reflect that although we have weaknesses and suffering and illnesses and frustrations and pain and afflictions our inner man is being renewed refreshed day by day week by week as we behold the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ participating now by his spirit as our guarantee in the foretaste of glory we know we have so much more glory to experience on that day but yet our God has not left us without glory to taste now and so we gather around the word and we behold the glory of God and we watch each other become transformed from one degree of glory to another and we see Paul tell us this is not something that

I do this is not something that you do he says this comes from the Lord who is the spirit so you can trust today as a Christian God is transforming you from one degree of glory to another by his word and by his spirit and it's not something you're doing it's something he's doing and yet aren't we so thankful that he's given us means means of approaching his word to behold his glory the means of baptism and the Lord's supper to see his glory pictorially shown for us the word shown in sight but what is it that we are being transformed into did you catch it the same image the same image not Moses not Paul who's the image Christ the image of the invisible

[43:54] God the image of God and man that was marred in the fall is being perfected by the true image the image of the invisible God the divine eternal son Ortlund once again writes united to him we look like him as we gaze at him it is the regaining of our lost humanity our fallen dignity we look at the beauty of Christ as we look at the mirror seeing Christ but also seeing and becoming our true selves the Holy Spirit is molding us even now into the final resplendent radiance that will be of such a bright beauty that the world will not be able to stand the sight husbands and wives think of it one day we'll finally be able to look at each other and say I always knew you'd be like this I always saw that you'd be like this

I saw you at your best I saw you at your worst and finally you're here what a glory fathers and mothers to look at our children and say finally I always knew you could do this with Christ's help and now you finally reflect his glory perfectly the result of God's plan of redemption is something even greater and more beautiful than what Adam experienced before the fall and wasn't it glorious to imagine what he experienced walking with God in the garden in the cool of the day and yet believer you get something even better what a glory as Isaac Watts penned in the great hymn Jesus shall reign in him that is Christ the tribes of Adam boast more blessings than their father lost in him the tribes of Adam boast more blessings than their father lost very recently

I have had the blessing of knowing a Christian in her 90s she is one of the most generous people I've ever met one of the most trusting people in the Lord things come her way that she wasn't expecting and she turns to the Lord in prayer and says I know I've seen the Lord be faithful to me and as I get to know her her name is Lib the more that I get to know her and we see her it's almost as if there is a radiance not a visible light but something like the reflection of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ in Christian maturity year after year after year after year and I go I'm not like that yet but this passage reminds me that I will be I will be transformed from one degree of glory to the next and wherever you may be this morning in Christ whatever you may be struggling with whatever feelings of discouragement and frustration you may feel trust this promise as you behold the glory of

God in the face of Jesus Christ you are being transformed from one degree of glory to the next because the new covenant contains a greater glory live in hope and confidence in the gospel of

Jesus Christ we have a greater glory because the new covenant removes the veil pray every day for the spirit's help to see all of scripture in light of the glory of Christ because how dare we approach his word and not get the glory I want to see your face and because of the new covenant because it transforms us into Christ image from one degree of glory to another behold the glory of God in the face of Jesus through word and sacrament trusting that the Holy Spirit is indeed doing this work of transformation within you how much of God do you want how much glory do you want we have treasure in the word and we have the spirit as our foretaste and guarantee and so with the psalmist

I exhort you seek his face always behold his glory for you are forever being changed let's stand together for prayer