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## Study on 2 Cor. 3:12-18

### Eisenach Epistle Selection for the Sixth Sunday after Epiphany

In an outburst of triumphant joy Paul had thanked God for the marvelous successes granted to the Gospel as preached by him and his associates, successes which far surpassed the power of man, 2:16b, successes which he does not ascribe to himself or mention in a spirit of self-glorification, 3:1. These successes are due only to the power of the Spirit of the living God, v. 3, and to the means used by the Spirit in gaining these successes, the Gospel as preached by the ministers of the New Testament, v. 6. This Gospel makes the ministry of the New Testament far more glorious than that of the Old Covenant (vv. 7-11) and empowers the ministers of the New Testament to preach their glad tidings of great joy with proper boldness and utter frankness (vv. 12-18), with unflinching courage (4:1), in holiness of life (4:2), with the assurance that their Gospel will never be void of success (4:3-6). The Epistle for the Sixth Sunday after Epiphany comprises verses 12-18, the closing section of the third chapter, telling of the glory bestowed by the open, unveiled ministry of the New Testament.

"Seeing, then, that we have such hope, we use great plainness of speech," v. 12. In v. 4 the apostle had used the word *trust*, because he was speaking of his assurance that his work had not been in vain, that the Christian congregation at Corinth was the living proof of the efficacy of his preaching. In v. 12 Paul uses the word *hope*, which always looks forward into the future. Hence he has in mind particularly the fact that his ministry is an abiding ministry. While the Old Covenant and its glory was by its very nature an evanescent one, destined to cease, when it should have fulfilled its purpose, the New Covenant was one "which remaineth," v. 11, continuing in its glory forever without variableness or shadow of turning. The New Testament era is not to be superseded by a ministry still more glorious, as, e. g., that of a millennium on earth, where even greater successes will be accomplished by more efficacious means or a greater manifestation of God's grace or power. The ministry of the New Testament shall endure until there is no more need of the ministry of the Gospel; until its purpose to lead all the elect of God to their eternal home has been accomplished; until the Kingdom of Grace, the kingdom of the New Covenant on earth, shall have become the Kingdom of Glory, the kingdom of the New Covenant in heaven. The New Covenant in contradistinction to the Old Covenant is an abiding covenant, outlasting time, enduring through all eternities.

Having this hope, a hope of this nature, so glorious an outlook, the Apostle uses great "plainness of speech," *παρρησία*, tell-



ing all, withholding nothing, keeping nothing secret, but speaking with great frankness, openness. He "uses" this frankness. The use of a thing presupposes its existence, and particularly on the part of God's servant, divine permission of such use. The Apostle means to say that his use of frankness is due not only to divine permission but to the very nature of the New Covenant, which is a covenant of openness and full revelation, in contrast to the Old Testament as symbolized by a custom of its mediator. This custom Paul describes in the next verse, which has been often misinterpreted, but which, once we understand it correctly, will throw a remarkable light on the subject matter discussed by the Apostle.

"And not as Moses, which put a veil over his face that the children of Israel could not steadfastly look to the end of that which is abolished," v. 13. In order to understand this verse and the whole argumentation of the Apostle, we must necessarily understand the situation to which he refers here. Turning to Ex. 34:28-35, we learn that Moses, after having re-established the covenant which Israel had broken, Ex. 32 to 34:27, remained with the Lord on the summit of Mount Sinai forty days and forty nights, v. 28. Coming down from the mountain, he did not know that the skin of his face shone because he had spoken with the Lord. Aaron and all the people, upon seeing the supermundane glory of Moses' face, were afraid to come near him, and only after Aaron and the rulers, encouraged by Moses, had approached him without harm to themselves, did all the children of Israel dare to draw near, "and he gave them in commandment all that the Lord had spoken with him in Mount Sinai," v. 32, quite evidently while they saw his shining face. Then the report continues, literally translated, thus: "And Moses finished speaking to them, and he placed upon his face a veil. And as often as Moses came into the presence of Jehovah to speak to Him, he removed the veil until he went out. And he went out and spoke to the children of Israel what he had been commanded; and the children of Israel saw the face of Moses, that the skin of Moses' face shone. And Moses replaced the veil upon his face till he went to speak to Him," vv. 33-35. There is nothing in this report demanding or even warranting the interpretation that Moses covered his face before speaking to the people and that he proclaimed the laws and revelations only while his face was veiled. On the contrary, we are told twice that the people saw the shining skin, vv. 30. 35. In v. 33 we are clearly told that he put the veil on his face when he had finished speaking to them, while in vv. 34. 35 the sequence of events is Moses' exit, his speech while they saw that his face shone, and the covering of his face. Hence the phrase "until he came out," v. 34, merely states that during all the time of his conversation with God, Moses left



his face uncovered, with uncovered face promulgated the divine revelation, and then placed the veil upon his face.

No reason for this veiling is mentioned in the Old Testament. What the Holy Ghost, speaking through Moses, did not tell us, the same Spirit, speaking through Paul, reveals in our passage. Moses covered his face, after speaking to the Israelites with uncovered face, in order that "the children of Israel could not steadfastly look to the end of that which is abolished," that they were not to look intently, fix their eyes, on the end of that which was being done away with, annulled, which was of a transitory nature, evanescent, the supernatural light radiating forth from the skin of his face.

What was the divine purpose underlying this strange phenomenon? Comparing Ex. 34:29-35 with 2 Cor. 3:6-18, we come to the conclusion that here we have one of the symbols so frequently employed by the Lord in training and teaching His Old Testament people. Both the supernatural shining of Moses' face and the vanishing of this glory were to teach a lesson of utmost importance to Israel, the glory of the Old Testament Covenant and the evanescent character of this covenant and its glory.

The shining face of Moses was, in the first place, continually to call to Israel's memory the glory of the covenant which God had established on Sinai and the exalted position of him who had been chosen by God to be the mediator of this covenant and the leader and legislator of God's covenant people. God wanted Israel to be imbued with the spirit of respectful awe due this covenant, its divine Author, its human mediator. They were to understand very clearly that Moses was not a self-appointed leader nor a ruler chosen by themselves, but God's ordained representative. God wanted them to realize their unconditional obligation to obey all the words and commandments of this covenant transmitted to them by the divinely and gloriously authorized mediator, who spoke not his own thoughts, but the words of the Lord of Glory.

This was the first lesson that Israel was to learn and a lesson they had to be taught over and over. True, the promise of God, Ex. 19:3-6, had made them willing to vow: Ex. 19:8. The majestic manifestation of God's glory on Sinai, Ex. 19:16-19; Deut. 4:11. 12; Heb. 12:18-21, had proved to them the transcendent power and flawless righteousness of the Lord, so that, stricken with fear and terror, they had fled and told Moses, "Speak thou with us, and we will hear," Ex. 20:19. They had repeated their promise of obedience, Ex. 24:3. Yet, when Moses remained on the mount forty days and forty nights, Ex. 24:18, the people forgot their vows, forgot the marvelous manifestation of God's holiness, apostatized from God and spoke disrespectfully of their divinely appointed leader, Ex. 32:1 ff. In true pedagogic wisdom, therefore, the Lord, after



again receiving them into covenant relationship, Ex. 34:10 ff., and knowing that Israel was a stiffnecked people, Ex. 33:3; cp. 34:9, decided to teach them the glory of the covenant and their duty to obey their God and the mediator of the covenant by causing the face of Moses to shine in divine glory whenever he spoke to the people after having received a divine revelation.

Since this was so important a truth and its repetition so necessary, the Lord did not only teach it in this symbolic manner, but had all His prophets, beginning with Moses, din it into the ears of His people, reminding them of their divine obligation to obey the Law of Moses and of the dire consequences of their failure to live up to their duty.

The glory radiating from Moses with such brilliance that the children of Israel could not fix their eyes on it nor bear its supermundane splendor, was a reflected glory, a glory not inherent in himself. It was, as the apostle expressly states, a glory that was being done away with, even while it was shining. This is expressed by the present participle, τὴν καταργουμένην, 2 Cor. 3:7. This glory was not intended to last forever; it was not even to continue unabated until Moses' death. From the moment that it had reached its greatest brilliance, it began to wane. It was a perishable and perishing glory, in need of constant restoration or at least replenishment.

Here was the second lesson of vital importance that God wanted to teach Israel. The Old Testament was not an end in itself; it was only the means to an end. In due time it was to give way to another covenant, far more glorious. It was to stress the majesty of the demanding and punitive holiness and justice of God and to show the utter impossibility of satisfying this holiness by any efforts on the part of man, the sinner. Sin was to become to them the horrible thing it really is, a separation from God, a rebellion against the Most High. The children of Israel, therefore, were not to pin their faith and their hope of salvation on the outward performance of the rites and ceremonies prescribed in the Mosaic Law, but on Him to whom all these rites pointed forward, the promised Woman's Seed, their Messiah and Redeemer. To Him, therefore, Moses at the end of his life once more directed their attention as to the Prophet like unto him, but far greater than he, unto whom they must hearken if they desired forgiveness of sin, true righteousness, and eternal salvation, which he and his Law could never procure for them. Deut. 18:15-19. The later prophets in very plain language likewise pointed out the insufficiency of the Old Covenant rituals (1 Kings 8:27; Ps. 50:7-14; Is. 1:11 ff.; 66:1, 2; Jer. 6:20; Amos 5:21-24), its evanescence (Jer. 3:16; 31:31-34; Ezek. 11:16), and constantly called attention



to the spiritual character of the kingdom their Messiah was to establish. These truths should have filled the hearts of the Israelites with gratitude, with longing for the New Covenant and its blessings (Ps. 14:7; 53:7), with a fervent desire and a firm resolve to serve their kind and gracious and wise God of salvation with unabating zeal and unwavering obedience.

The Searcher of hearts, however, knew that the heart also of the children of Israel was a deceitful thing and desperately wicked. He knew that this heart would only too readily be inclined to regard the insufficiency and the impermanence of the Mosaic covenant as an excuse to neglect and despise its demands and its promises. Its mediator, though brilliantly gifted, divinely called, and highly honored (Deut. 34:10-12), was, after all, a human being, the glory of his face a dying glory. Why submit to him, why honor him and his covenant? In order to hold in check the wicked and deceitful heart, God wisely decided, in particular, symbolically to veil the disappearance of Moses' glory, so that Israel would not fix its attention unduly on the fleeting character of Moses' glory, and, in general, to place in the background the impermanence of the covenant as compared with its privileges and obligations. And this pedagogy He followed throughout the era of nonage of His children; cp. Gal. 4:1-3. While reminding them, as we have already seen, of the transitoriness and inefficacy of the Old Covenant, while emphasizing clearly the spiritual character and greater glory of the New Covenant, still He described the new era in the terms of the ritual and ceremonies of the old. It is Zion, Jerusalem, the Temple, the priests and Levites, the sacrifices, in brief, the Levitical worship which furnishes both the terminology and the background for the description of the glory of the New Covenant. And God's purpose throughout was to prevent neglect and contempt of the Old Covenant while it lasted. The children of Israel were to fix their eyes not so much on the transitory character of their covenant as on the covenant demands and promises and in true faith to find hope and comfort in the latter and strength and willingness strictly to obey the former.

Did Israel learn the lessons God intended to teach them? We read, But their minds were blinded, v. 14 a, ἐπωρόθη, hardened, rendered callous. Their minds, νοήματα, the products of their mind, of their reason, of their thinking, became hardened, petrified, obdurate.

Paul does not say that God was the cause of their hardening, either by predestinating them unto such hardening or by telling Moses to place the veil before his face in order to prevent them from seeing the real meaning and purpose of the Old Testament or by hardening their hearts in punishment of their stubborn-



ness. Since the latter, the punitive hardening by God's justice, is irrevocable, and since v.16 admits the possibility and actuality of conversion, the Apostle can have in mind here only the self-hardening of the Jews, their stubborn refusal to learn the lesson taught by the Lord in clear words and by various symbols. They took for granted what their own mind told them instead of listening wholeheartedly and attentively and believingly and obediently to God's Word as revealed in Scripture. Neglecting and despising the real glory of the Old Testament, its demand of perfect love toward God and their fellow men and its promise of a Savior in whom they would have righteousness and strength, they regarded the external fulfillment of its demands as sufficient and went so far as to rely on outer membership in Israel as a guarantee of eternal salvation, irrespective of their mode of life. And overlooking the transitory character of the Mosaic covenant and its fulfillment in Christ, they took for granted that it would last forever, that the Temple would be the center of worship until the end of time, that salvation not only was of the Jews, John 4:22, but that, in order to be a member of God's covenant people, one had to submit to all the rites and regulations of the Mosaic Law. Such was the spirit that persisted in spite of the warnings and exhortations of Moses and the prophets. Deut. 10:16; Is. 1:10-15; Jer. 7:8-34; cp. Matt. 23:3-28; Mark 7:1-23. That was the reason why Jesus, the Messiah, met with the bitterest opposition from His own countrymen.

This self-hardening against God and His Word, be it Law or Gospel, is all that natural man can accomplish. Natural mind is enmity against God; the things of the Spirit of God are foolishness unto him, neither can he know them. 1 Cor. 2:14. The very manner in which God speaks of the total depravity of man in such passages as Gen. 6:5; 8:21; Mark 7:21, 22; Rom. 3:9-18 is hateful to him, an offense. The Law, revealing man's heart as it is, works wrath, angry denial of this truth so odious to the carnal mind, puffed up with pride and self-satisfaction. And the Gospel of Christ crucified, the vicarious atonement of the suffering Savior, is, to Jew and Gentile alike, a stumblingblock, folly, and foolishness. Therefore all the products of this mind, its thoughts and plans and ideas and schemes, are hardened, cast into the inflexible mold of unbelief and hatred against God. They either will in open defiance against God serve sin and enter upon the downward course described in Rom. 1:18-32; or if they resist this temptation, they will be bound the faster in the chains of pride and self-satisfaction. If man is not a publican and sinner, he is a self-righteous Pharisee or a combination of both, in every case hardening his mind and all his thinking against both Law and Gospel. Man today is by nature no better than the Jew of Paul's day.



"For until this day remaineth the same veil untaken away in the reading of the Old Testament, which veil is done away in Christ," v. 14 b. This statement proves, γάρ, the fact and the continuance of the self-hardening of Israel. Paul speaks here of the Old Testament in contrast to the New Testament. 2 Cor. 3:6. Moses' covenant was the old one, παλαιά, the term implying the idea of being worn out and ready to pass away (cp. Heb. 8:13); hence a very appropriate term in this connection. This is the only time it is used in the Bible.

"The same veil" which was referred to in v. 13 as preventing the Israelites from fixing their attention on the end of that which was being done away, still abides, remains, to this day, to the time at which the apostle wrote this letter. It abides during,<sup>1)</sup> or as the A. V. translates it, in the reading of the Old Testament. The term "reading," ἀνάγνωσις, in New Testament usage designates not private perusal of the Bible, but the public reading of parts of the Old Testament in the synagogues and early Christian meeting places. Acts 13:15; 1 Tim. 4:13; cp. Acts 15:21. Naturally the same veil remains also when these people privately read and study the Old Testament.

This veil remains unremoved, abides as one not unveiled, or lifted away.<sup>2)</sup> On the expression "to unveil a covering" compare ἀνακαλύπτειν συγκαλύμμα, Deut. 22:30 (LXX); also Is. 47:2 (LXX). The Apostle simply states the fact that the veil still abides, without stating where it remains or what object it veils. He tells us that in verse 15. It lies upon their heart. But before he tells us that, he states another wonderful fact, which makes the veiling of

1) We translate "during" or "in the reading" and not "over the reading." The latter translation is preferred by Meyer, Bachmann, and others, who find here a correspondence expressed between the veil hanging over Moses' face while he spoke to the people and the veil hanging over the reading of the Old Testament by means of which Moses still spoke. But there are valid reasons against adopting this interpretation. (1) We have learned that the veil did not cover Moses' face when he proclaimed the divine revelations. Hence the correspondence does not exist and could not have been intended by the Apostle. (2) What an involved explanation, which really explains nothing, is that, e. g., of Meyer, that Paul conceives the public reading as "taking place under the veil enwrapping this act, so that in the reading the Jews remained shut out from insight into the New Covenant." Why did he not simply say, On the Old Testament when it was read to them? (3) In Paul's conception the veil hung neither on the Old Testament nor on the reading of it, but, according to v. 15, on the hearts of the Jews whenever the Law was being read.

2) Many commentators translate the μὴ ἀνακαλυπτόμενον as an absolute nominative or accusative, "Since it is not revealed that the veil is annulled in Christ." Then the Apostle would be stating a falsehood. The removal of the veil in Christ was revealed already in the Old Testament, as we have seen, and certainly most clearly in the New Testament era, of which the Apostle speaks; cp. "to this day," and the present tense, "remaineth," μένει.



the hearts of the Jews the more remarkable. We read: "Which veil is done away in Christ." Two very important truths are taught here in connection with the veil: the one, that it was to be *abolished* at some time by someone; the other, that this annulment of the veil was to be accomplished *in Christ*.

Note that the Apostle does not merely say that the veil is lifted; he uses a much stronger word—it is being abolished, done away with, destroyed. The veil had served its purpose: it had aided in keeping the children of Israel under tutors and governors until the time appointed of the Father, in bondage under the elements of the world, Gal. 4:2,3. Now the fullness of time, the time of the New Covenant, has come, and the veil is abolished. The Apostle uses the present tense because he had used the word "remaineth" in the present tense to describe a state continuing from centuries past to the present day. In a similar manner the present *καταργεῖται*, "is done away," describes a state which occurred in Christ, when by His death, resurrection, and ascension He finally and forever destroyed this veil, an act the effects of which continue from that time onward throughout time and eternity. The message of the New Covenant is, The veil is put away! Old things have passed away, etc., 2 Cor. 5:17b. And why? Answers the Apostle, "In Christ." And 2 Cor. 5:18-21 he expands on this brief statement. Compare also Gal. 3:4; Eph. 2:11-22. "In Christ" does not mean in the faith of Christ. It is not our faith, but Christ who destroys the veil. Our faith merely basks in the glory and sunshine of the New Testament, in which Christ has withdrawn and destroyed all the veils hiding the fullness of His glory. And, oh, what a complete destruction of the veils hiding by man's own fault the real purpose and meaning of the Old Testament has Christ effected! The veil that caused the Jews to regard the outward fulfillment of the Mosaic Law or the performance of sacrifices or the mere membership in the commonwealth of Israel as a guarantee of everlasting salvation, how completely and gloriously destroyed by Christ, who was made unto us the righteousness of God, with which God is well pleased and which alone can satisfy the conscience at all times against all accusations of the evil Foe! That Law with all its demands and ceremonies and restrictions, that Law which served as a partition wall between Jews and Gentiles, is battered down, abolished by Jesus Christ, who made in Himself of twain one new man, Eph. 2:14-21. That misreading of the Old Testament, that misinterpretation of its symbols, which made this unbearable burden, Acts 15:10, a permanent institution, is now abolished in Christ, in whom we have life and liberty from all the laws of Moses free and gratis.

Now we understand the reason why Paul could say, We use



great plainness of speech, and the distinction he makes between his own method of preaching and that of Moses, vv. 12, 13. This frankness and openness is in keeping with the very nature of the New Testament. While the Old Testament had only the example, the pattern, the shadow, of things to come (Col. 2:17; Heb. 8:5; 9:23; 10:1), the New Testament has the body, the very image of good things, the heavenly things themselves, the eternal actualities and realities which Christ has procured. The Old Testament was the time of prophecy, of promise; the New Testament, of fulfillment and realization; the Old Testament, one of hope and expectation and longing; the New Testament, of actual possession and full fruition and enjoyment. In agreement with this nature of the New Testament its ministry may and should make use of this blessed privilege. We should preach the full Gospel, the good tidings of great joy, without reservation, without if and but. "It is finished!" cried Christ, John 19:30. The veil is abolished! writes the Apostle. Let us not put the veil back on the Gospel by restrictions, by conditions to be fulfilled, by any human addition, whereby the Gospel of the free grace of God, of perfect righteousness in Christ, of sure salvation, is darkened, or covered, or deprived of the least ray of its divine glory. Let us, like the Apostle, use that plainness and openness and frankness in preaching the Gospel that is demanded by the very nature of the New Testament.

And yet, in spite of the glorious facts that the Apostle had stated v. 14c, "even unto this day, when Moses is read, the veil is upon their heart," v. 15. 'Αλλά marks the contrast between the two facts, seemingly contradictory opposites: The veil is annulled; the veil still remains. It remains "when Moses is read," ἡνίκα ἂν ἀναγινώσκῃται. This conjunction occurs in the New Testament only here and v. 16. "It denotes the indefinite idea, as the subjunctive shows. Note the ἂν and ἐάν (indefinite also and with notion of repetition)." Robertson, *A Grammar*, First Ed., p. 971. Bauer-Preuschen translates, when; with present subjunctive, as often; for the aorist subjunctive with ἂν he lists two papyrus passages where it evidently means, every time when, as often as.

Moses was read every Sabbath and twice each week in the synagogues and undoubtedly read at home and taught to the children. The Jews were well versed in the Law and were well acquainted with the promise of the Messiah (Matt. 2:4 ff.; 17:11, 12; John 1:46, 47; 4:25; 7:41, 42; etc.); they compassed sea and land to make one proselyte (Matt. 23:15); they were ready to die for their religion. Yet all the while a veil hung upon their hearts, a veil of their own weaving; the veil of unbelief and blindness to their own Scriptures. All the while they misread both the Law and the Gospel of the Old Testament. All the while they



refused to cast aside their own righteousness, their own mistaken notions, their own vain dreams of temporal power, and to fall down before Jesus to own Him their Lord and King, their God and Redeemer. This they refused to do although such turning to the Lord in repentance and faith would have abolished this veil and opened to them also the full glory of the Old Testament in the bright light of the New.

"Nevertheless, when it shall turn to the Lord, the veil shall be taken away," v. 16. Practically all commentators agree that Paul here again refers to Ex. 34:34; adopting as much of the phraseology of the LXX as he can use to express another important truth. He does not, however, teach a general conversion of Israel, occurring perhaps in the millennium. In the first place, he speaks of repeated turnings, as the ἡνίκα εἰς clearly indicates. No one teaches frequent conversions of Israel as a nation, and the Apostle would contradict himself; cp. Rom. 11:7; 1 Thess. 2:16. Secondly, the singular cannot refer to Israel as a nation. In the preceding context Paul had spoken of the nation as the children of Israel, vv. 7, 13, and had used the plural pronoun, vv. 14, 15. The change from the plural to the singular would be a very harsh one. Nor is it necessary to assume so sudden and harsh a change. The subject of "turn" is found in v. 15, "their heart." On the expression, "the heart turns to the Lord" cp. Luke 1:17; Mal. 4:16; Joel 12:13; 2 Chron. 36:13. That is the true circumcision (Rom. 2:29; Acts 7:51), already demanded in the Old Testament (Deut. 10:16; 30:6; Jer. 4:4), consisting in being given a new heart and spirit (Ezek. 11:19, 20). Whenever the heart of the unbelieving Jew is turned to the Lord, whenever he accepts Jesus as his personal Savior, the veil is taken away. Περιαιρέω means to remove that which surrounds an object from around it. The present tense teaches again a very important lesson. Such a removal is not necessarily at once a complete removal. It is rather a gradual process. How difficult was it even for the disciples of Jesus to rid themselves of this veil of preconceived ideas! Matt. 16:22; 20:20 ff.; Luke 9:45; 18:34; Acts 1:6; 10:14, 15, 28; 11:2 ff.; 15:1-5, 24; etc. To this day chiliastic Fundamentalists have not rid themselves of this veil. The better we learn to know Jesus and His glory, the more we study the Old Testament in the light of the New, the more completely will the veil which was annulled in Christ be removed from our hearts, the better we shall understand the Old Testament and its many prophecies by word or symbol of the coming Messiah and His kingdom; the more clearly we shall realize that already in the Old Testament no other way to eternal life was revealed than that of faith in the Woman's Seed (Gen. 3:15), the Man, the Lord (Gen. 4:1), the Lord, our Righteousness (Jer. 23:6); the more



joyously shall we be convinced that Jesus is our only Savior, our perfect Redeemer.

"Now, the Lord is that Spirit; and where the Spirit of the Lord is, there is liberty," v. 17. Now, *δέ*, is explanatory. Paul explains why conversion to the Lord Jesus has the effect of taking the veil off the heart of the unbeliever. The Lord is, of course, the same Lord referred to in v. 16, whom we identified with the Christ of v. 14. This Lord, the Mediator of the New Covenant, in whom the veil hanging over the heart of man is said to be destroyed, v. 14, is unlike the mediator of the Old Testament, not a mere man. He is "the Spirit." He is not merely spirit, or a spirit, having spiritual nature, as angels are spirits, though they are created beings; or as the new man, created after God's likeness, is frequently called "spirit." The Apostle in order to avoid any possibility of misunderstanding, writes *τὸ πνεῦμα*, *the Spirit*; the one eternal Spirit, like whom there is none other, the ever-living God. Together with the Father and the Holy Ghost He is the Spirit, the three persons being the one Spiritual Being. Since He is the Spirit, His words are therefore able to accomplish things for which no man is sufficient (cp. 2 Cor. 2:14-16), and therefore fully able to kill through the letter of the Law spoken by Him and to quicken by the spirit of life breathing in the Gospel spoken by Him (2 Cor. 3:6). Hence He is well able to cause the heart of unbelieving man to turn to Him in true faith and thereby to remove the veil that hung upon his heart.

Again, this statement is further explained in the next sentence connected with it by another *δέ*, but, however. "Where, however, the Spirit of the Lord is, there is liberty." The Spirit of the Lord is the Holy Ghost, who is called the Spirit of the Son of God (Gal. 4:6), of Christ (Rom. 8:9; 1 Pet. 1:11). Where this Spirit is, there is liberty, for the Spirit of God and Christ imparts the liberty which Christ has procured for all men (John 8:32, 36; Gal. 5:1) to the individual by working saving faith in his heart. The Holy Spirit is mentioned here because the appropriation of Christ's salvation to man is chiefly His work. The exalted Christ sends His Spirit to build the Church purchased by the Lord's blood. This Spirit, who with the Father and the Son is the fountain of life (Ps. 36:9), is active in and through the Gospel preached by the Christian Church and its messengers. Here is, therefore, not the dead letter of the Law, which demands, which promises only on condition of perfect obedience, but cannot work that obedience, that willingness, that perfect love toward God and the fellow man demanded by it. Here is not the lifeless ink (cp. v. 3), the weak word of a human being, unable to grant that salvation it promises. Here is the Spirit, the almighty Spirit of the Lord, of that Lord



who has actually accomplished our deliverance, our salvation; who has procured for us righteousness, life, and salvation. The living Spirit of this living Lord works life, spiritual life, in the hearts of men dead in trespasses and sins, generates faith, justifies, sanctifies, keeps us safe, finally leads us to the land of everlasting life and liberty. Where this Spirit dwells and rules, there is no more bondage to sin and devil and death and damnation, there no longer the enemies of our salvation can dominate our hearts and minds. There is freedom, the glorious liberty of the children of God through Jesus Christ. This joyful truth is brought to its climax in the next verse.

"But we all, with open face beholding as in a glass the glory of the Lord, are changed into the same image from glory to glory, even as by the Spirit of the Lord," v. 18. "We all," Paul includes himself with all his readers, with all whose heart has turned to the Lord Jesus. "With open face beholding as in a glass." The Greek word *κατοπτρίζω* in the active voice means to mirror, to reflect. The middle, according to Preuschen-Bauer, means to look at oneself in a mirror. For this usage he lists a number of passages. In our passage, the only time the word occurs in the New Testament, an object is added. Hence we translate, We behold for ourselves as in a mirror the glory. The connection demands this translation rather than that favored by other interpreters, We mirror the glory. Not by mirroring the glory are we changed. The mirroring forth of Christ's glory rather follows the change. We are changed into the same image by beholding for ourselves the glory of Christ, the middle designating the interested, intent, eager beholding. This interpretation is in full keeping with the history of Moses' shining face, to which again there is a manifest reference here. Whenever Moses spoke to the Lord, he took the veil off his face, spoke to the Lord with "open face," mouth to mouth, Ex. 34:34. But he did not behold the uncovered glory of God, Ex. 33:18-23; He saw God "apparently," Num. 12:8, in a form or appearance which God had assumed as the cloak of His glory. So we with our face uncovered, no veil lying on it, with clear understanding, behold the glory of the Lord, but behold it not in its fullness; we behold Him as in a glass, a mirror, in His holy Word, which clearer than any other means reflects and reveals to us His glory, which the eye of sinful man cannot see. Cp. 1 Cor. 13:12. In Scripture, what glories beyond comprehension are revealed to us: the Creator; the Lawgiver; the Holy, Holy, Holy; the unsearchable Jehovah, I AM THAT I AM; the Redeemer; the Author of our salvation; our mighty Friend, Father, Comforter! Who can enumerate the items composing His glory as revealed in Scripture? While on the face of Moses the glory gradually waned and disappeared, we (as was



Moses through faith) are, by beholding the glory of the Lord in His Word, "changed into the same image from glory to glory." In chap. 4:4, 5 Paul speaks of the light of the glorious Gospel of Christ, literally, the radiancy of the Gospel of the glory of Christ; and by this Gospel God shines into our heart in order to create in our hearts, by nature dark and dreary, the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ. Looking into the glorious Gospel, reading its life-giving message, we are changed. By the power of the Gospel we undergo a metamorphosis, a complete transformation, in character, in thought, and word, and deed. The glory of our Savior, His perfect sinlessness as revealed in Holy Writ, cleanses our heart from its pride and self-righteousness; teaches us to realize in ever greater measure our own imperfections, our sinful depravity, our helplessness, the futility and utter folly of self-satisfied virtuousness. When we see the God-man suffering and dying on the cross, as revealed in Is. 53 and the Gospels, our hearts by the power of the Spirit are filled with an ever-growing hatred of sin, our sin, our iniquity, which crucified the Lord of Glory, which killed the Prince of Life. When the pages of Scripture reveal to us that unspeakable love of God, who gave His only-begotten son for us, and that divine love of Jesus who died for us, the Holy Spirit by this Word creates in our cold and sluggish hearts a true and affectionate love toward our God of mercy, our Savior; the desire to become more like Him; the power to crucify our Old Adam and its sinful lusts, to put on daily the new man, to grow in grace, to become more like our heavenly Father, our glorious Savior. Rom. 13:14; Eph. 4:24; 2 Pet. 1:4.

So we are changed, gradually but surely, into God's image from glory to glory. There is no waning, no diminution, no disappearance of the glory; there is a constant progress. The glory of today is but the steppingstone to a greater glory, a closer approach to the perfect image presented in our Savior, until we arrive yonder, where all imperfections will be a thing of the past and body and soul will shine forth as perfect images of our glorified Savior. Let us hear Luther: "The risen Christ is that image which is placed before us in order that we may know that He has risen in token of the victory over our sin. This picture is held before us in the Gospel and is mirrored into our heart that we may hold it fast by faith, that is, when we believe that this Word is true and daily practice and exercise it. In this manner the glory proceeds from Him to us, and the result is that we become constantly more glorious and enter into that same image that is Himself. Therefore Paul says that we do not at once become strong and perfect but that we must increase day by day until we arrive at the fullness of His likeness." (St. L. XI: 694.)



"Even as by the Spirit of the Lord." "Even as," i. e., in full keeping with the nature of one who is fully qualified to accomplish so glorious a change. This thought is brought out also by the omission of the article before the two nouns Lord and Spirit, which omission stresses the qualitative force of these nouns. The Greek words are best translated, from Lord of Spirit or, in closer approximation to v. 17, from Lord, Spirit. Paul undoubtedly means to express the fact that Jesus indeed is Lord; a Lord such as a lord must be to qualify for this great honor, the Lord of lords and King of kings, with whom nothing is impossible, who rules supreme in His kingdom as only He can rule. And this Lord is the Lord of Spirit, or Lord who is Spirit in the fullest and noblest sense of that term. His innermost nature and being is Spirit, transcending and penetrating all human thoughts (Is. 57:15), enlivening, spiritualizing, glorifying, all those who accept Him as their Lord and King, their Spirit and Savior. To Him alone be power and glory forever and ever! Ps. 115:1; Rev. 5:12.

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This is a very suitable text for the last Sunday of the Epiphany season. The glory of the Lord Jesus manifested in the Gospel and the glorious power of the latter is the chief theme of this passage. The preacher may choose the theme *The Glory of the New Testament Ministry*. 1. It clearly reveals to man the fullness of the Lord's glory. 2. It freely makes us partakers of this glory.— *The Glory of the Lord in His Congregation*. 1. Proclaimed without a veil. 2. Seen with believing hearts. 3. Reflected in Christlike lives. (Lenski, *Eisenach Epistle Selections*.)— *Christ the Center of Scripture*. To Him the Old Testament points prophetically. Him the New Testament reveals as the Author and Finisher of our glory.— *Salvation Only in Christ*. Moses in all his glory cannot save us. Christ is the Light shining to the perfect day.— *Salvation, Not of Men but of God*. Man can only harden himself. Only in God's light can man see light and live in it.— *The Folly of Unbelief*. It hardens our heart to God's revelation. It shuts us out from Jesus and His glory.— *Lord, Strengthen Our Faith!* Preserve us from hardening our minds. Reveal unto us the fullness of Thy glory.— *Let Us Bring into Captivity Every Thought to the Obedience of Christ*. Following our own mind, we shall never see the light (neither in the Old nor in the New Testament). Only faith in Christ transforms us from glory to glory.— *The Christian's Spiritual Growth*. By the grace of God he does not harden his mind. By the grace of God his eyes are opened to the glory of the Gospel. By the grace of God he is gradually transformed into God's image.

TH. LAETSCH