

**(Exod. 34:29-35)** - In these verses, the Lord gives us the historical record of an event that, according to the Apostle Paul, has much to teach about Israel under the Old Covenant Law in contrast with spiritual Israel under the New Covenant Gospel. We have seen in our studies of Christ in the Old Testament how that the Old Covenant Law itself was not a covenant of salvation, in and of itself. The law was given to Israel through Moses to show the people their sinfulness and depravity showing the impossibility of salvation based on their works of the law. Even the ceremonial laws of the tabernacle, the priesthood, and the sacrifices could not accomplish eternal salvation from their sins and produce righteousness by which to justify them (*Rom. 3:19-20; Heb. 9:7-13; 10:1-4*). The law had no power to justify them before God, and it had no power to give them spiritual life (*Rom. 8:3*). The law did set forth the Gospel of Christ and salvation by Him in its pictures, types, and shadows, all foretelling of His coming into the world to establish righteousness by which God justifies His people and from which God gives them spiritual life from the dead and brings them to faith in Christ and repentance of dead works.

The only way for any Israelite under the Old Covenant Law to be saved was for God to reveal His truth in Christ beyond the types, pictures, and shadows of the law (*John 5:39-47*). Just like in the New Testament, under the Old Covenant, they had to be born again, given spiritual eyes to see beyond the ceremonies and sacrifices and look to Christ as the promised Messiah. They had to be brought by God to faith in Christ and repentance of dead works according to God's Gospel promise which has never changed. The Bible tells that during their time under the Old Covenant (about 1500 years) that very few of them truly believed the Gospel of God's grace in Christ. There was a small remnant of true believers in each generation, but the majority were blinded by their own unbelief and self-righteousness. Paul described this in *Romans 9:31–10:4*. In *2 Corinthians 3* the Apostle Paul was inspired by the Holy Spirit to take this event in our text and make a spiritual application to the unbelieving Israelites who could not see the glory of God in Christ and salvation by God's grace through Him.

**(2 Cor. 3:1-6)** - In these verses, Paul makes clear the superiority of the Gospel over the Law. As stated before, the Law had no power to declare a sinner righteous before God based on their works because the Law can only condemn sinners to whom sin is imputed (*Rom. 5:13; 1 Cor. 15:56*). The Law could not give spiritual life or change the hearts of any who were under it. The Gospel reveals how righteousness was brought in and established by the Lord Jesus Christ as the Surety, Substitute, and Redeemer of God's people (*Rom. 3:21-26*). It is the Holy Spirit who empowers the Gospel and gives spiritual life in the new birth to sinners and brings them to faith in Christ and true repentance (*Rom. 1:16-18; cf. Jer. 31:31-34*). Paul stated it this way - "*for the letter killeth, but the Spirit giveth life*" (*2 Cor. 3:6*).

**(2 Cor. 3:7-11)** - Here, the apostle draws a stark contrast between the Old Covenant Law and the Gospel. He calls the Old Covenant "*the ministration of death.*" He admits that it "*was glorious*" in its time and administration, and he compares its glory to "*the face of Moses for the glory of his countenance*" (*cf. Exod. 34:30*). We can also consider the glory of God in all of His marvelous and miraculous works during that time. The Old Covenant truly had a degree of glory. But, like the shining face of Moses, the glory of the Old Covenant was ordained by God "*to be done away*" (*2 Cor. 3:7; cf. Heb. 8:13*). Paul calls the Gospel "*the ministration of the Spirit*" and "*the ministration of righteousness*" which exceeds in glory over the Old Covenant. Paul even goes so far as to say that when compared with the glory of God revealed in the face of Jesus Christ and the very righteousness of God revealed in the Gospel, the Law

*“had no glory in this respect, by reason of the glory that excelleth” (2 Cor. 3:10). He wrote, “For if that which is done away was glorious, much more that which remaineth is glorious” (2 Cor. 3:11).*

**(2 Cor. 3:12-14)** - The hope of the Gospel is the absolute certainty of eternal life and glory by God’s promise which is made sure by the glorious Person and finished work of the Lord Jesus Christ. We are forgiven of all our sins by the blood of Jesus Christ. We are righteous in God’s sight because of His righteousness imputed, a righteousness in which God’s law can find no flaw (*Rom. 8:33-34*). This is the glory that is most excellent and that excels all others. This is the shekinah glory of God as He reveals Himself to be both a just God and a Savior. Unlike the glory that shone forth in Moses’s face so that the children of Israel could not steadily gaze upon it, which was eventually to be abolished, this glory revealed in the face of Jesus Christ will never diminish or be abolished.

*“But their minds were blinded”* - When Moses came down from Mount Sinai with a brightness showing from his face, he put a veil over his face so that they could look at him. Paul makes a spiritual application here. The veil over Moses’s face symbolizes the natural spiritual blindness of the children of Israel (and all of us by nature) that blinded their understanding of the Old Testament. By nature we are all blinded from the truth of God’s glory in Christ by our natural ignorance and self-righteousness. There is also a satanic blinding as Satan deceives the whole world (i.e. the world of unbelievers). There is also the judgment of God in judicially blinding those who have continued stubbornly and rebelliously to reject His truth (*Rom. 11:7-10; cf. Isa. 29:9-12*). It takes a miraculous, powerful, and invincible work of God’s power and grace to give blind sinners eyes to see and ears to hear the glory of salvation by His grace in Christ (*Matt. 13:10-17*). And the way God does this is by the Holy Spirit in the new birth under the preaching of the Gospel and by showing sinners their sinfulness and depravity thus driving them to Christ for all salvation, righteousness, forgiveness, and eternal life - *“which veil is done away in Christ.”*

**(2 Cor. 3:15-18)** - Paul states here that the problem the Old Covenant Israelites had in being blinded from seeing the greater and more excellent glory of God in Christ is the same problem that plagued Israel in his own day. This is the same problem that people have today when they read the Bible. The veil of ignorance and self-righteousness is *“upon their heart.”* This is why *“the natural man receiveth not the things of the Spirit of God: for they are foolishness unto him: neither can he know them, because they are spiritually discerned” (1 Cor. 2:14)*. This is why we must be born again else we cannot SEE the kingdom of God (*John 3:3-7*). The only way this veil can be taken away is by God revealing the light of His truth to us in the power of the Spirit to bring us to *“turn to the Lord.”* Until then, the Bible is a closed book to us. Left to ourselves, we will not see and believe the things of the glory of God (*John 3:19-20*).

When Paul states that *“the Lord is that Spirit,”* he means that the Holy Spirit, Who is the sovereign Agent in the new birth and giving spiritual sight to the blind, is Himself God. Where the Holy Spirit does this great work in turning sinners to Christ, *“there is liberty” (Rom. 6:7; 17-18; Gal. 5:1; Heb. 10:19-22)*. This liberty is unhindered freedom for all chosen, justified, redeemed, and regenerated sinners to approach God in Christ and find acceptance, blessing, and fellowship. And because the Spirit has turned us to see the glory of God in Christ, not yet perfectly, but as in a mirror (*1 John 3:1-2*), we are changed, transformed, to be like Christ, again, not perfectly in ourselves, but in that we now have the mind of Christ and have been made new creations in Christ (*1 Cor. 2:16; 2 Cor. 5:14-17; Eph. 2:10*). In the end of all things, we who are now righteous and secure in Christ, by God’s grace, we will be changed by the Spirit to be perfectly conformed to Christ (*1 Cor. 15:50-58*).