



POWER IN WEAKNESS | THE GENUINE ARTICLE (4)

September 28, 2025

2 Corinthians 3:1-18

PURPOSE

To discover and experience Jesus Christ in our midst
To cultivate mutually encouraging relationships
To participate in God's mission to the world

GETTING TO KNOW EACH OTHER

Discussion Question

- Who is someone who has greatly influenced you and how?

WORSHIP 10 MIN

PLEASE OPEN IN PRAYER

RESPONSIVE PRAYER — Psalm 27

The Lord is my light and my salvation;

Whom shall I fear?

The Lord is the stronghold of my life;

Of whom shall I be afraid?

One thing have I asked of the Lord,

That will I seek after:

That I may dwell in the house of the Lord

All the days of my life,

To gaze upon the beauty of the Lord

And to inquire in his temple.

I believe that I shall look upon the goodness of the Lord

In the land of the living!

Wait for the Lord;

Be strong, and let your heart take courage;

Wait for the Lord!

SCRIPTURE READING

2 Corinthians 3:1-18

¹Are we beginning to commend ourselves again? Or do we need, as some do, letters of recommendation to you, or from you? ²You yourselves are our letter of recommendation, written on our hearts, to be known and read by all. ³And 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.

⁴Such is the confidence that we have through Christ toward God. ⁵Not that we are sufficient in ourselves to claim anything as coming from us, but our sufficiency is from God, ⁶who 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.

⁷Now 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, ⁸will not the ministry of the Spirit have even more glory? ⁹For if there was glory in the ministry of condemnation, the ministry of righteousness must far exceed it in glory. ¹⁰Indeed, in this case, what once had glory has come to have no glory at all, because of the glory that surpasses it. ¹¹For if what was being brought to an end came with glory, much more will what is permanent have glory.

¹²Since we have such a hope, we are very bold, ¹³not 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. ¹⁴But their minds were hardened. For to this day, when they read the old covenant, that same veil remains unlifted, because only through Christ is it taken away. ¹⁵Yes, to this day whenever Moses is read a veil lies over their hearts. ¹⁶But when one turns to the Lord, the veil is removed. ¹⁷Now the Lord is the Spirit, and where the Spirit of the Lord is, there is freedom. ¹⁸And 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.

BIBLE STUDY **Summary**

40 MIN

Paul begins by addressing what legitimates true Christian ministry. Unlike the “peddlers of God’s word” (2 Cor 2:17), who rely on self-commendation or letters of recommendation, Paul insists that the proof of his ministry is the Corinthians themselves — believers who bear the fruit of ministry, which shows itself both inwardly (on our heart) and outwardly (known and read by all). They are his “letter,” written not with ink but by the Spirit of the living God (verses 2-3). How amazing that even with all the brokenness and disloyalty in the Corinthian church, they still can attest to the truthfulness of Paul’s ministry! The Corinthians, like all believers, are evidence of the church’s pilgrim state — marked by sin, yet transformed by grace, living simultaneously in the present evil age (Galatians 1:4; Westminster Confession of Faith [WCF] 25.3) and in the dawning reality of the new creation (2 Corinthians 5:1-5).

Paul then contrasts the old covenant, written on tablets of stone (Exodus 31:18; 32:15), with the new covenant, in which God writes his law upon the hearts of his people (Jeremiah 31:33; Ezekiel 36:26). This inward work is accomplished by Christ, who alone is our sufficiency (verses 4-6; cf. 1:22). The “letter kills, but the Spirit gives life” (verse 6), for the law apart from Christ condemns (Romans 7:9-11), while the Spirit brings the life of regeneration (John 6:63; Titus 3:5). The old covenant, though glorious, was temporary and meant to point forward to Christ (Galatians 3:23-25). By contrast, the new covenant is permanent, surpassing in glory, and will remain until the end of the world (2 Cor 3:11; WCF 7.5-6).

Finally, Paul explains that those who remain under the law are blinded by a veil, as Moses’ face was veiled after seeing the glory of God (Exodus 34:33-35). Yet in Christ the veil is removed, and believers are able to behold the glory of God through our union to him (Matthew 27:51; Mark 15:38; Luke 23:45; verses 14-16). Where the Spirit of the Lord is, there is true freedom (verse 17) — not only out of sin’s bondage, but also into the liberty of adoption (Romans 8:15; WCF 20.1). Through the Spirit’s work, Christians are transformed “from one degree of glory to another” (verse 18), reflecting the image of Christ and anticipating the fullness of glory in the age to come (Romans 8:29-30; WCF 13.3). Thus,

Paul shows that the legitimacy of gospel ministry is not found in outward commendation but in the Spirit's life-giving power through Christ, who makes his people living letters of the new covenant.

1. Looking at the Bible

- From the passage, share with the group some key phrases or ideas that stood out to you.

2. Looking at Jesus

At Central we believe that all of Scripture points to Jesus. In other words, Jesus is the theological center of the Bible. Every passage not only points to Jesus, but the grand narrative of the Bible also finds its fulfillment in the person and work of Jesus.

- In verse 6, Paul writes that he is a minister of a new covenant. Hebrews 7-9 (esp. 8:6; 9:15; 12:24) explains that Jesus is the one who establishes and mediates the new covenant. Discuss what this could mean.

3. Looking at our Hearts

- Discuss verse 12. How do our beliefs shape our attitudes?
- What specific beliefs about Christ and the gospel give us courage in daily life and ministry?
- Can you think of ways that wrong beliefs (about God's character, about our identity, about the world) can lead to harmful attitudes?

4. Looking at our World

- Compare verse 17 with Isaiah 61:1-2. How can we as the church be the image-bearers to offer freedom to the world?
- What are some ways in which the world does not currently experience the freedom that the gospel brings?

PRAYER 15 MIN

Pray for each other: Share any prayer requests you have.

Praise God that we have confidence through Christ, and in him we are sufficient (verses 4-5). Pray that those around the world who have darkened hearts and are living in bondage to sin would cease their suppression of truth in unrighteousness and would come to know the freedom received through union with Christ in the gospel.