2 Corinthians 3:15-17 Commentary

2 CORINTHIANS - PAUL'S MINISTRY IN THE LIGHT OF THE INDESCRIBABLE GIFT
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Another Overview Chart on right side

Overview of Second Corinthians

2Co 1:1-7:16 Character of Paul	2Co 8:1-9:15 Collection for the Saints	2Co 10:1-12:21 Credentials of Paul
Testimonial & Didactic	Practical	Apologetic
Past: Misunderstanding & Explanation	Present: Practical Project	Future: Anxieties
Apostle's Conciliation, Ministry & Exhortations	Apostle's Solicitation for Judean Saints	Apostle's Vindication of Himself
Forgiveness, Reconciliation Gratitude	Confidence	Vindication
Ephesus to Macedonia: Change of Itinerary Explained	Macedonia: Preparation for Visit to Corinth	To Corinth: Certainty and Imminence of the Visit
2Co 1:1-7:16	2Co 8:1-9:15	2Co 10:1-12:21

2Corinthians written ~ 56-57AD - see Chronological Table of Paul's Life and Ministry

Adapted & modified from Jensen's Survey of the New Testament (Highly Recommended Resource) & Wilkinson's Talk Thru the Bible

2 Corinthians 3:15 But to this day whenever Moses is read, a veil lies over their heart;(NASB: Lockman)

Greek : all' eos semeron enika an anaginosketai (3SPPS) Mouses kalumma epi ten kardian auton keitai (3SPMI);

Amplified: Yes, down to this [very] day whenever Moses is read, a veil lies upon their minds and hearts. (Lockman)

ESV: Yes, to this day whenever Moses is read a veil lies over their hearts. (ESV)

KJV: But even unto this day, when Moses is read, the veil is upon their heart.

NET: But until this very day whenever Moses is read, a veil lies over their minds, (NET Bible)

NIV: Even to this day when Moses is read, a veil covers their hearts. (NIV - IBS)

NLT: Yes, even today when they read Moses' writings, their hearts are covered with that veil, and they do not understand. (NLT - Tyndale House)

Phillips: Yes, alas, even to this day there is still a veil over their hearts when the writings of Moses are read. (Phillips: Touchstone)

Wuest: But even today, whenever Moses is being read, a covering lies upon their heart..

Young's Literal: but till to-day, when Moses is read, a vail upon their heart doth lie,

- Ac 13:27, 28, 29

- 2 Corinthians 3 Resources - Multiple Sermons and Commentaries

Related Passages:

> **Multiple related passages dealing with "judicial hardening" and the related topic of Jesus speaking in parables** - Dt 29:4+, Isa 6:9,10+ Mt 13:11-15+ Mk 4:11-12+ Lk 8:10+ Jn 9:39-41, Jn 12:38-40 Acts 28:26,27+ Ro 11:7-10+, 2Co 3:14-15+, Eph 4:17-18+, 2Th 2:10-12+.

ISRAEL'S PERSISTENT SPIRITUAL BLINDNESS

But (**alla**) introduces a **contrast**. Paul has just stated that the only way the "veil" of spiritual stupor and incomprehension is removed is by believing in the Messiah (2Co 3:14b-note). So the contrast is that instead of believing in their Messiah and instead of understanding that the Old Covenant pointed to their Messiah, they continue in their unbelief to this very **day**. Remember that in **context** the overarching purpose of Paul's discussion of the Old Covenant in this chapter is to emphasize the fading glory and inferiority of the Old (to produce salvation) when compared to the lasting glory and superiority of the New (Better) Covenant.

To this day whenever Moses is read - Clearly a figure of speech referring to the public reading of the Old Covenant (2Co 3:14-note cp "reading of the Law and the Prophets" Acts 13:15) as was (is still) carried out "zealously" by the Jews (especially the orthodox to whom keeping the Sabbath holy is a mitzvah or duty - see Shabbat from Jewish perspective) every Sabbath (theological significance) (Acts 13:14, 15 27). The tragedy is that most of our Jewish friends who keep Shabbat, have a **veil… over their heart** and fail to recognize that the "Sabbath rest" was always meant to point them to the **"Lord of the Rest"** (cp His gracious invitation in Mt 11:28, 29, 30). When one accepts the Messiah's invitation to "**Come**" and receives by grace through faith the **spiritual rest** that only be found by belief in Christ, they rest (cease) from their works of self-effort (and self-deception) performed in vain (Ro 3:20-note) in an attempt to please God and attain righteousness (Is 64:6).

The writer of Hebrews is quite clear that the Shabbat although a literal day ordained by the Old Covenant Law, was always intended to point to spiritual rest in Christ…

> There remains therefore a **Sabbath rest** for the people of God. For the one who has entered His rest has himself also **rested from his works**, as God did from His. Let us therefore be diligent to enter that rest (**not** by *works* but **only** by *faith*), lest anyone fall through following the same example of disobedience (Referring to Israel in the OT - see relationship between and consequence of Israel's being "*disobedient*" and their "*unbelief*" in He 3:18, 19-note). (He 4:9, 10- see note by John Piper, He 4:11-note)
>
> > **Read** (314) (**anaginosko** from **aná** = emphatic, again + **ginosko** = know <> know again) literally to know again or to recognize again. It came to mean to distinguish between, to know accurately and then to read. In the NT **anaginosko** is used only with the meaning of "to read", and especially refers to **reading aloud** and to **public reading**.

One of the most dramatic **Sabbath readings** was by Jesus Himself as recorded by Luke…

> And He came to Nazareth, where He had been brought up; and as was His custom, He entered the synagogue on the Sabbath, and stood up to read (anaginosko). And the book of the prophet Isaiah was handed to Him. And He opened the book, and found the place where it was written, THE SPIRIT OF THE LORD IS UPON ME, BECAUSE HE ANOINTED ME TO PREACH THE GOSPEL TO THE POOR. HE HAS SENT ME TO PROCLAIM RELEASE TO THE CAPTIVES, AND RECOVERY OF SIGHT TO THE BLIND, TO SET FREE THOSE WHO ARE DOWNTRODDEN, TO PROCLAIM THE FAVORABLE YEAR OF THE LORD.
>
> > **Comment**: Jesus reads from Isa 61:1, 2 but stops in mid-sentence in verse 2, not reading "And the day of vengeance of our God" for that terrifying day was yet future [and still is future as of 2011] for it describes Daniel's Seventieth Week, which culminates [and consummates] in the last 3.5 years which Jesus identified as the Great Tribulation [compare Mt 24:15 and Mt 24:31 and Da 9:27-note] which is synonymous with the "time of Jacob's distress" [clearly a future prophecy = read Jer 30:7, 8, 9] when the nation of Israel will be purged of unbelieving Jews, those who persist in having a veil over their heart! As an aside, Isa 61:2 is one of many examples of a "prophetic time gap", in this case indicating almost 2000 years or more between fulfillments! (See also Jesus' Teaching on "Time Gap" in fulfillment of prophecy)
>
> And He closed the book, and gave it back to the attendant, and sat down; and the eyes of all in the synagogue were fixed (intently) upon (same verb atenizo used in 2Co 3:7-note and 2Co 3:13-note) Him. And He began to say to them, "Today this Scripture has been fulfilled in your hearing." (Lk 4:16-21+)
>
> > **Comment**: The bitter irony of this passage is that the very One to Whom the Old Testament pointed was in their very midst

reading a specific passage that He Himself fulfilled at that very moment! **Please, do not EVER accuse God of not being fair!** Notice that even as Paul discusses in this section of 2Corinthians 3, their hearts were "veiled" so that even though they "looked intently", their hearts were spiritually blind and sadly unable to see their Savior standing in their Synagogue!

THOUGHT - Dear "religious friend" (Jew or Gentile), have you (like those observant, very "religious" but unregenerate [See New Birth]] Jews in the Synagogue) heard Jesus Christ speak the truth in His Word and yet have failed to recognize Him as your Savior and Lord by grace through faith? (cp Ep 2:8, 9-note, Ro 10:9, 10-note). May our Father send the wind of His Spirit to soften your stony heart so that today might become "THE DAY OF SALVATION", the day you really recognize and receive Jesus as Savior of your soul. Amen (Ezek 36:26, 27, 2Co 6:2, Jn 1:11, 12, 13)

A veil (kalumma) **lies** (keimai - present tense - lies continually) **over their heart** - Paul in playing off of the previous discussion regarding the literal **veil** on Moses' face preventing the Israelites from seeing the fading of God's glory, now introduces a figurative **veil** to depict the inability of the sons of Israel to see and understand God's purpose in the Old Covenant readings heard every Sabbath. Those readings were meant to shut them up to sin (Ga 3:22NLT+), to show them the sinfulness of sin (Ro 7:7+, Ro 3:20+), to be a tutor to lead them to Christ (Ga 3:24NLT+). What was to be a "means" (in the sense of pointing to Christ) to an end (salvation in Christ) became the "end" in itself.

Veil (kalumma) is used figuratively in this verse to indicate **unbelief** which functions as an impediment to the "spiritual vision" of the sons of Israel. This fact helps us understand why our Jewish friends have such difficulty when we present the good news of the New Covenant to them -- they didn't even comprehend God's purpose in the Old Covenant! But beloved, "Is anything too difficult for Jehovah?" (Ge 18:14a, Lk 1:37ASV+). So keep praying for your Jewish friends. And keep speaking the Word of Life to them for as our Lord Jesus Christ told His disciples "With men it is impossible, but not with God; for all things are possible with God" (Mk 10:27+, context = Mk 10:25-26+) and He alone can open their hard hearts even as He opened Lydia's (Gentile) heart to believe the words spoken by a Jewish believer named Paul! (Acts 16:13-14+)

Guzik - Since the **veil** that hid Moses' face now lies on their heart, they still think there is something superior or more glorious in the ministry of Moses. (2 Corinthians 3)

John MacArthur reminds us that even though the glory of the Old Covenant was fading there was "Nothing wrong with the **covenant**. The problem is with their **heart**. The (sons of Israel continually manifest an) unwillingness to be broken, the unwillingness to confess sin and repent… (this) is the whole point of the **hardness of the hearts** of the people of Israel that they would not be broken. And where there is a broken and a contrite heart (Ps 51:17), there is therefore a proper apprehension of the meaning of the Old Covenant and a casting of oneself on the mercy and grace of a forgiving God Whom even the Old Testament believers knew was forgiving. The prophet asked "Who is a God like Thee, Who pardons iniquity And passes over the rebellious act of the remnant of His possession?" (Micah 7:18 - see how complete is God's forgiveness - Mic 7:19, cp Is 38:17, Is 44:22, Ps 103:12, cp Lv 16:20, 21 the New Covenant = Je 31:34)"

Veil (2571) (**kalumma** from **kalupto** = cause something to be covered over and hence not visible) is literally a covering or veil but is used figuratively here to refer to something that functions as an impediment, hindrance, obstruction or obstacle. 2Co 3:13 is literal veil, but 2Co 3:14-16 are figurative uses referring to an impediment. **Classical Greek** - several different symbolic meanings are conveyed with the use of kalumma. For instance, the "covering" of the head is an expression of sorrow (Sophocles Ajax 245 [Fifth Century B.C.]). Also, the "veil" or "covering" was a commonly practiced magico-religious custom in which the head of a corpse was "covered" in order to protect the deceased against demon forces. The "veil" was also sometimes associated with a type of mask, emphasizing both prescience and unreality (see Oepke, "kalumma," Kittel, 3:558–560). Kalumma can also denote other "coverings" such as the skull (the covering of the brain), an eyelid, portions of a roof, or a fishnet (Liddell-Scott). **Kalumma** in NT only in 2 Co. 3:13; 2 Co. 3:14; 2 Co. 3:15; 2 Co. 3:16. **Septuagint** - Especially of Moses' veil - Ex 27:16; Ex 34:33; Ex 34:34; Ex 34:35; Ex 35:11; Ex 39:34; Ex 40:5; Nu 3:25; Nu 4:8; Nu 4:10; Nu 4:11; Nu 4:12; Nu 4:14; Nu 4:25; In the Book of Numbers the use of kalumma, along with katakalumma, is used to instruct the Levites to place a "covering" over the holy objects (e.g., the ark of the covenant, the altar, altar vessels, etc, to keep from being touched or seen for to look at them or touch them could mean death (Nu 4:15, 20+).

Heart (2588) (**kardia**) does is never used in the New Testament with the literal meaning of the physical organ that pumps blood. Instead **kardia** is always used figuratively to refer to our "inner person" from which thoughts, emotions and affections flow and which functions in a sense as a person's "control center". The heart is often equated with the mind as Paul is doing in this chapter (cp 2Co 3:14) **Vine** writes that **kardia**…came to denote man's entire mental and moral activities, and to stand figuratively for the hidden springs of the personal life. (Collected writings of W. E. Vine) **Kardia** in the Corinthian letters - 1 Co. 2:9; 1 Co. 4:5; 1 Co. 7:37; 1 Co. 14:25; 2 Co. 1:22; 2 Co. 2:4; 2 Co. 3:2; 2 Co. 3:3; 2 Co. 3:15; 2 Co. 4:6; 2 Co. 5:12; 2 Co. 6:11; 2 Co. 7:3; 2

Co. 8:16; 2 Co. 9:7

The KJV Bible Commentary notes that "Unfortunately, as far as the Jews are concerned, Christ is still a stumbling block they cannot see (cf. 1Co 1:23). For the apostle this is no light matter but a concern which caused him great anxiety (cf. Ro 9:1-5+). But now the **veil** is not so much upon the revelation of the glory but upon their own hearts (cf Lk 24:25+ = "O foolish men slow of heart to believe in all that the prophets have spoken!"; Acts 13:27-29+). (KJV Bible Commentary)

A T Robertson adds that **a veil lies over their heart** is a "Vivid and distressing picture, a fact that caused Paul agony of heart (Ro 9:1-5). With wilful blindness the rabbis set aside the word of God by their tradition in the time of Jesus (Mark 7:8, 9)" (2 Corinthians 3)

In Ephesians Paul explains that our "spiritual heart" has "eyes" (Eph 1:18). In 2Co 4:4 Paul says their "spiritual vision" has been blinded by Satan because they have refused to believe the Gospel. And so in the present passage Paul is saying that the eyes of the heart of the Jews cannot see because they have been blinded (the veil obstructs their vision). Paul was sent by Jesus to preach the gospel to

> open their eyes ("spiritual eyes" of their heart and mind) so that they may turn from darkness to light and from the dominion of Satan to God, in order that they may receive forgiveness of sins (one of the great promises of the New Covenant Mt 26:28) and an inheritance among those who have been sanctified by faith in" Christ (Acts 26:18).

Guzik writes that "Many Christians with a heart to preach their Jewish friends have wondered why it is rarely so simple as just showing them that Jesus is the Messiah. This is because **a veil lies on their heart**. Unless God does a work in them, so they turn to the Lord and have the veil taken away (2Co 3:16) (opening the eyes of their heart to "*the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Christ*." 2Co 4:6, cp Jn 11:40), they will never see… the surpassing glory of Jesus and the New Covenant. Of course, it could be said that the Jews are not the only ones for whom a veil lies over their heart. Gentiles also have "veils" that prevent them from seeing Jesus and His work for us (on the Cross). But Jesus is more than able to take the veils away! This points to the essential need of prayer in evangelism. It has been rightly said that it is more important to talk to God about men than it is to talk to men about God. But we can do both! (2 Corinthians 3)

ILLUSTRATION OF SPIRITUAL BLINDNESS - The Global Prayer Digest 3/29/01 has an example of a "veil" and the resulting spiritual blindness of men to the Truth (2Co 4:4): The Negere son was honored that he could wear the mask during the funeral ceremony for his deceased father. He knew that this mask was intended to keep the spirit of his father from tormenting the living. The 150,000 Negere people of Côte d'Ivoire are well known in African art circles because of their masks. The 14-inch mask has an angular face shape with an open mouth, a triangular nose, and tubular eyes. Often they are covered with bird feathers, braided fibers, protruding horns, and a bell. Only selected male members of the tribe are allowed to wear the mask. The mask is ceremonially important to appease the evil spirits and to plead with the high god for the needs of the people. During a funeral they talk with the deceased on behalf of the family. The bell serves to awaken the spirits if they go to sleep.

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2 Corinthians 3:16 but whenever a person turns to the Lord, the veil is taken away.(NASB: Lockman)

Greek : enika de ean epistrepse (3SAAS) pros kurion, periaireitai (3SPPI) to kalumma.

Amplified: But whenever a person turns [in repentance] to the Lord, the veil is stripped off and taken away. (Lockman)

ESV: But when one turns to the Lord, the veil is removed. (ESV)

KJV: Nevertheless when it shall turn to the Lord, the veil shall be taken away.

NET: but when one turns to the Lord, the veil is removed. (NET Bible)

NIV: But whenever anyone turns to the Lord, the veil is taken away. (NIV - IBS)

NLT: But whenever someone turns to the Lord, the veil is taken away. (NLT - Tyndale House)

Phillips: Yet if they "turned to the Lord" the veil would disappear. (Phillips: Touchstone)

Wuest: However, whenever it [Israel] shall turn to the Lord, the covering is being taken away [by the one who turns to the Lord].

Young's Literal: and whenever they may turn unto the Lord, the veil is taken away.

- **Whenever a man turns to the Lord** - Ex 34:34 Dt 4:30 Dt 30:10 La 3:40 Ho 3:4,5 Ro 11:25, 26, 27
- **The veil**: Isa 25:7 Isa 29:18 Isa 54:13 Jer 31:34 Jn 6:45,46
- 2 Corinthians 3 Resources - Multiple Sermons and Commentaries

Related Passages:

> Deuteronomy 4:30 "When you are in distress and all these things have come upon you, in the latter days you will return to the LORD your God and listen to His voice.

IS THERE ANY HOPE FOR ISRAEL? YES!
AT ANY & EVERY "TURN"! PRAISE THE LORD!

But (**de**) indicates that in contrast to the spiritual death (Jn 8:24) that results from a hard ("spiritually uncircumcised") heart ("spiritual atherosclerosis"), there is a supernatural "miracle cure" available for a person who expresses genuine repentance and belief in Christ (cp Ro 10:9, 10+, Acts 16:31+, Acts 4:12+).

Guzik - Paul could say of his fellow Jews that a veil lies on their heart, but he could also say that the veil can be taken away in Jesus. Paul knew this well because he was once veiled to the glory and superiority of Jesus.. Many Christians with a heart to preach to their Jewish friends wonder why it is rarely so simple as just showing them that Jesus is the Messiah. This is because a veil lies on their heart. Unless God does a work in them so they turn to the Lord and have the veil taken away, they will never see the fading glory of Moses' covenant and the surpassing glory of Jesus and the new covenant.i. Of course, it could be said that the Jews are not the only ones with a veil … on their heart. Gentiles also have "veils" that separate them from seeing Jesus and His work for us clearly, and Jesus is more than able to take those veils away. This points to the essential need of prayer in evangelism. It has been rightly said that it is more important to talk to God about men than it is to talk to men about God, but we can do both of these important works. (2 Corinthians 3)

Whenever - At any or every time that one turns to Christ. Any time is the right time to turn to the Lord.

John MacArthur explains that Paul is saying…Like Moses, when a man goes into the presence of the Lord, i.e., when he turns to Christ, God takes away the veil and he sees the direct glory (of Christ). When sinners turn to the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ, the veil is removed… When we come (in belief) to the Lord Jesus, the veil is off, the glory is clear, the knowledge of the glory of God shines in our hearts in the face of Jesus Christ. (Read 2Co 4:6)… So Paul says whenever a man turns to the Lord, the veil is taken away at once by God. True understanding floods the soul. The Gospel becomes clear, the veil is removed. So Paul in this most intricate argument once again makes reference to the illustration from Exodus (**Ed**: by using the phrase "**the veil is taken away**" just as it was in the OT story of Moses when he went into the presence of the LORD [Ex 34:34]).. (The Glory of the New Covenant, Part 5)

Phillip Hughes relates the surpassing glory of the New Covenant to the transfiguration glory of Christ in the presence of Moses who himself was not glorified (Read Mt 17:1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8, compare Peter's testimony when they saw His glory [Lk 9:32] in 2Pe 1:16, 17-note. John refers to the same experience - Jn 1:14, 18). God had removed the veil from the hearts of Peter, James and John to be able to see the glory of the Messiah (so don't give up hoping, praying and sharing with your unbelieving, unregenerate Jewish friends!). On that mountain height, Moses and Elijah appeared with Christ but it was ***Christ alone*** Who was transfigured with heavenly radiance before the eyes of Peter, James and John. It was ***His*** face that shone as the sun and ***His*** garments that became white and dazzling. It was of ***Him*** alone that the voice from the cloud said, `This is My beloved Son in whom I am well pleased, hear ye Him.' And thereafter the disciples saw no one, ***save Jesus only***. It is He Who abides. The glory in which Moses and Elijah appeared was not their own but Christ's glory—the glory which He had with the Father before the world was (Jn 17:5). Just as in the wilderness the glory, which shone from Moses' face, was the reflected glory of Yahweh, so too on the mount of transfiguration the glory with which he was surrounded was the glory of the same Yahweh. Christ alone is the full, the abiding, the evangelical glory. To turn to Him is to turn to the Light of the world. To follow Him is not to walk in darkness, but to have the light of life (Jn. 8:12). (Paul's Second Epistle to the Corinthians)

Guzik feels that in this context the **liberty** which Paul is emphasizing is "the liberty of access. He is building on his words from 2Co 3:12 (note): we use great boldness of speech. **Boldness** is a word that belongs with **liberty**. Because of the great work of the Holy Spirit in us through the New Covenant, we have a bold, liberated relationship with God. (2 Corinthians 3)

Whenever a person turns to the Lord, the veil is taken away- Notice the mysterious juxtaposition of human responsibility and divine sovereignty. Man turns to God. God takes away. **Turns** is epistrepho in aorist tense which indicates that the "turning" is performed at a moment in time (when **a person** believes in Christ) and it is done once and for all (completed action). Theactive voice indicates it is a choice of the individual's will. Is this not mysterious, amazing grace? Indeed!

Jamieson comments on **whenever a person turns to the Lord** explaining that "Whenever the Israelites turn to the Lord, Who is the Spirit of the law, the (figurative) veil is taken off their hearts in the presence of the Lord just as the literal veil was taken off by Moses in going before God. No longer resting on the dead letter (of the Old Covenant of Law),… they by the Spirit commune with God (**Ed**: i.e., The Holy Spirit gives the believer unfettered freedom of access into the very presence of the Holy One of Israel even as Moses had access to His Glorious Presence.).

> **Turns** (1994)(**epistrepho** from **epí** = motion toward + **strepho** = twist, turn quite around or reverse) means to revert, to turn about, to turn around, to turn toward, to return and figuratively to convert. The idea is a definite turn to God in conduct as well as in one's mind. The meaning of the verb **epistrepho** gives us an excellent picture of true **repentance** (see **metanoia**) = An unsaved person lives solely for self but when he or she **turns to the Lord**, the Spirit of Christ (see note below) **turns** their life **around** so that they now begin to live for their Savior (not *perfection* but *direction* - instead of one's face fixed like flint "*hell-ward*", they have (been) turned around (by the Spirit) and are marching "*heaven-ward*"! If not, they need to heed 2Co 13:5+. One of the best illustrations of turning to the Lord (and the meaning of repentance) is found in Paul's use of **epistrepho** in first Thessalonians "they themselves (see 1Th 1:8) report about us what kind of a reception we had with you, and how you ***turned to*** (**epistrepho**) God ***from*** idols (a beautiful description of repentance) to serve a living and true God (a beautiful description of the fruit of repentance) (1Th 1:9+)

Luke uses epistrepho in his description of **John the Baptist** whose ministry was to prepare the way of the Lord writing that…

> he (John the Baptist) **will turn back** (**epistrepho**) many of the sons of Israel **to the Lord** their God. And it is he who will go as a forerunner before Him in the spirit and power of Elijah, TO **TURN** THE HEARTS OF THE FATHERS **BACK** (**epistrepho**) TO THE CHILDREN, and the disobedient to the attitude of the righteous; so as to make ready a people prepared for the Lord." (Lk 1:16+, see Mt 3:2, 5-8+ - notice his proclamation included repentance. See his message in Acts 19:4+)

Peter speaking to the **sons of Israel** on Pentecost called them to turn to the Lord…

> **Repent** (aorist imperative = Command to do this now. It is urgent!) therefore and **return** (**epistrepho** also in the aorist imperative) that your sins may be wiped away, in order that times of refreshing may come from the presence of the Lord and that He may send Jesus, the Christ appointed for you (Acts 3:19, 20+)

Peter used **epistrepho** again in his first epistle…

> He Himself bore our sins in His body on the Cross, that we might die to **Sin** (Sin as a slavemaster - no longer in bondage but liberated) and live to righteousness; for by His wounds you were healed (refers to spiritual not physical healing as context clearly teaches). For you were continually straying like sheep (cp Is 53:6+), but now you **have returned** (**epistrepho** - been turned toward or converted) to the Shepherd and Guardian of your souls. (1Pe 2:25+)

The **Septuagint (LXX)** uses **epistrepho** occasionally to describe conversion. For example, **David** alludes to the converting power of the Word of God in the Old Testament that…

> The law of the LORD is perfect, **converting** (Lxx = **epistrepho**) the soul; The testimony of the LORD is sure, making wise the simple; (Psalm 19:7NKJV+)

David again speaks of conversion in Psalm 51…

> Then I will teach transgressors Your ways, and sinners will be **converted** (Lxx = **epistrepho**) to You. (Psalm 51:13+)

> **Lord** (2962) (**kurios** from **kuros** = might or power) refers to the Lord Jesus Christ, the One Who has sovereign power and supreme authority. Beloved, this is the Glorious One to Whom we turn for there is salvation in no other Name but Jesus (Acts 4:12+, Mt 1:21+).

I am reminded of **Charles Haddon Spurgeon's** turning to the Lord and the veil being removed when he heard a simple laymen preaching the most profound of messages based on one verse, Isaiah 45:22 (See Spurgeon's Personal Testimony) in which the **LORD** (see Is 45:21) declared (**Red** = commands)…

Look unto me, and be ye saved,
all the ends of the earth:
for I am God, and there is none else.
Isaiah 45:22KJV

Spurgeon responded to the Lord's command to **Turn and Look and God** immediately removed the veil of unbelief from his heart.

Have you turned to look at the Lord?

MacArthur refers to Ro 10:4 which says"**Christ is the end of the Law for righteousness to everyone who believes."** Christ is the purpose of the Law for righteousness to the one who believes. The New Covenant is a superior covenant. It's a ***better*** covenant… a far-better covenant. It's an incomparable covenant. For all of the reasons that Paul has given us -- (1) It gives ***life***… the other was a killer. (2) It provides ***righteousness***, the other one simply exacerbated our sinfulness. (3) It is ***permanent***, the other one was fading. (4) It brings ***hope***, the other one was hopeless. (5) It is ***clear***, the other one was shaded and veiled in pictures and types. (6) And the New Covenant is ***Christ-centered***. The veil in 2Co 3:14 is removed in Christ… and in 2Co 3:16, "Whenever a man turns to the Lord, the veil is taken away." (The Glory of the New Covenant)

Alan Redpath gives wonderful personal testimony to the glory **a person** sees when he **turns to the Lord** and the veil is **taken away** - "I have a clear view of Jesus. I have seen Him, felt Him, and I have known Him in a far deeper way than simply by the outward physical appearance; I have felt the reality of His life begin to burn in my heart. I have seen in Christ the glory of a life that is totally submitted to the sovereignty of God. That glory has begun to take hold of me, and I have begun to see that this is the one life that God expects of any man He made in His own image. I have seen the marks of the cross upon Him, and by His grace the marks of the cross have been put upon me and I am no longer my own; I am bought with a price, redeemed by His precious blood. Yes, I have seen Him--not in the outward physical sense only, but in the inward sense of a deep spiritual reality. I have had a clear view of Jesus and my life will never be the same again. (Blessings Out of Buffetings by Alan Redpath Page 44)

Spurgeon offers a similar testimony writing that…

> **Simply by looking to Jesus**, I had been delivered from despair, and I was brought into such a joyous state of mind that, when they saw me at home, they said to me, "Something wonderful has happened to you;" (**Ed**: The veil had been taken away in Christ!) and I was eager to tell them all about it….I have always considered, with Luther and Calvin, that the sum and substance of the gospel lies in that word Substitution, --Christ standing in the stead of man. If I understand the gospel, it is this: I deserve to be lost for ever; the only reason why I should not be damned is, that Christ was punished in my stead, and there is no need to execute a sentence twice for sin. On the other hand, I know I cannot enter Heaven unless I have a perfect righteousness; I am absolutely certain I shall never have one of my own, for I find I sin every day; but then Christ had a perfect righteousness, and He said, "There, poor sinner, take My garment, and put it on; you shall stand before God as if you were Christ, and I will stand before God as if I had been the sinner; I will suffer in the sinner's stead, and you shall be rewarded for works which you did not do, but which I did for you." I find it very convenient every day to come to Christ as a sinner, as I came as the first. "You are no saint," says the devil. Well, if I am not, I am a sinner, and Jesus Christ came into the world to save sinners. Sink or swim, I go to Him; other hope I have none. By looking to Him, I received all the faith which inspired me with confidence in His grace; and the word that first drew my soul--**"Look unto Me**,"--still rings its clarion note in my ears. There I once found conversion, and there I shall ever find refreshing and renewal. (HALLELUJAH! AMEN!) (Spurgeon's Personal Testimony)
>
> **THOUGHT** - Have you simply looked at Jesus?

T**he veil is taken away** - **Taken away** is the work of God and thus is in the divine passive. Metaphorically as used in this verse **periaireo** means to take away completely that with which one is, as it were, enveloped. In other words Paul describes the taking away of the veil from surrounding the hearts of those (Jews and Gentiles) who believe.

> **Taken away** (4014) (**periaireo** from **perí** = around, suggests completeness + **haireo** = in sense of take, seize, grasp) means to take away from around something (picture it binding and constricting movement) and so to remove that which envelops. In secular Greek it was a nautical term meaning to cast lose by taking up the anchors from both sides of the ship in preparation for departing. To take away altogether or entirely. In a secular Greek writing it was used of taking off from oneself, as taking off one's helmet and of taking off the cover of a letter (and thus opening it). Metaphorically as used in this verse **periaireo** means to take away completely that with which one is, as it were, enveloped. In other words Paul describes the taking away of the veil from surrounding the hearts of those (Jews and Gentiles) who believe.

Warren Wiersbe comments that "In each of the three churches I have pastored, it has been my joy to baptize Jewish people who have trusted Jesus Christ. It is amazing how their minds open to the Scriptures after they have been born again. One man told me, “It’s like scales falling from your eyes. You wonder why everybody doesn’t see what you see!” The veil is removed by the Spirit of God and they receive spiritual vision… As a nation, Israel today is spiritually blind; but this does not mean that individual Jews cannot be saved. The church today needs to recover its lost burden for Israel. We are their debtors, because all the spiritual blessings we have came through Israel. “Salvation is of the Jews” (Jn 4:22). The only way we can “pay off” this debt is by sharing the Gospel with them and praying that they might be saved (Ro 10:1).(Bible Exposition Commentary)

An illustration of a **"veil"** that was **"taken away"** - On the road to Emmaus Jesus encountered two men (Cleopas and another

unnamed) whose hearts were to some degree **veiled to the meaning of the Old Testament passages** that prophesied of the Messiah…

> And He said to them, "O foolish men and **slow of heart** to believe in all that the prophets have spoken! "Was it not necessary for the Christ to suffer these things and to enter into His glory?" And beginning with **Moses** (Old Covenant) and with all the **prophets** (Lk 24:44 adds "the Psalms"), He explained to them the things concerning Himself in all the Scriptures. (Lk 24:24-27+)
>
> > **MacArthur**: the gist of what He expounded would have undoubtedly included an explanation of the OT sacrificial system, which was full of types and symbols that spoke of His sufferings and death.
> >
> > **Comment**: From the context these two men were among the believing Jewish remnant who had **'their eyes… opened** " (Lk 24:31 where "opened" = same verb describing Lydia's conversion Acts 16:14; compare "**the veil is taken away**" 2Co 3:16), so that they able to recognize Jesus (which indicates that they were believers for Jesus' post-resurrection appearances were only to believers).

Vincent - The verb (taken away) occurs twice in Acts 27:20, 40 of the taking away of hope, and of the unfastening of the anchors in Paul's shipwreck; and in He 10:11, of the taking away of sins. There is an allusion here to the removal of the veil from Moses' face whenever he returned to commune with God. See Ex 34:34.

Richards concludes that "The Old Covenant administered by Moses offered **no inner transformation.** This is illustrated by Moses himself, for after leaving God's presence he put a veil over his face so the people would not see the splendor, which God's presence had imparted, fade away. In contrast, because God's Spirit now lives within the believer a process of transformation is taking place. That transformation, marked by increasingly clear reflection through the believer's life of the splendor of Christ Himself, is the mark of New Covenant ministry. (Richards, Lawrence. The Bible Reader's Companion)

A PRAYER OF
PRAISE AND THANKSGIVING
FOR GOD REMOVING THE VEIL

I love **Dr MacArthur's prayer** which is a good way to sum up this passage "We're so grateful, our God, that You have lifted the veil and that You've let us see the glory of Christ. Oh we thank You that You've given us life, that You've provided righteousness that what You've done for us is permanent and forever, that You've filled us with hope, that You've drawn us into the very vision of Christ and we gaze at His glory. Nothing is veiled anymore. We with unveiled face behold the glory. Father, we're not many noble and not many mighty and we're certainly not the profound, we're the common and the base, but we understand what the religious elite of the world don't understand and we see the glory that is veiled to them. Such mercy overwhelms us and we thank You and praise You for it in Christ's name. Amen. (The Glory of the New Covenant, Part 5)

The Veil Taken Away
Preached at Zoar Chapel, London,
on July 28, 1844
J. C. Philpot

"But whenever anyone turns to the Lord, the veil is taken away!" 2 Cor. 3:16

In looking at this portion of Holy Writ, I shall endeavor, with God's blessing, to show—

1. What the veil is.
2. What it is to turn to the Lord.
3. What it is to have the veil taken away.

And may God the Spirit own his word with power to our consciences.

I. What the veil is.

There is, then a veil upon the human heart. And what is meant by the expression? We are not to understand by the word "veil" such as are now worn by women, which do not hide, so much as show off the features. The ancient veil worn by the Eastern women (and the same, I believe, is worn to this day), completely obscured the countenance. It was a thick covering which they wore over their

face when they went abroad; it being considered to this day in the East highly indelicate that a single feature of a female's countenance should be seen. Thus Judah did not know Tamar, though she was his own daughter-in-law, and of course he had often seen her, because "she covered herself with a veil." (Ge 38:14, 15.)

Thus also, we find, that the veil of the tabernacle, which separated the holy of holies from the holy place, was very thick; for it consisted of four distinct coverings, as we read (Exod. 36:35), "And he made a veil of blue, and purple, and scarlet, and fine twined linen." These four distinct pieces seem to have been quilted together with needlework, which we know was the case with the hanging for the tabernacle door (v. 37); and all these put together into one piece formed a thick, dense, impenetrable covering. The veil of the tabernacle was then more a curtain, or rather four curtains sewed one over the other, than what we understand by the word veil. And thus, by the veil upon the heart, we are to understand a covering, or curtain, so dense, thick, and closely-knit, as to exclude all light from penetrating through it; not merely shutting out the person from seeing, but also shutting out the person from being seen.

In looking, then, at the veil upon the heart of man by nature, we must take with us this idea of a dense, impenetrable covering, to understand what the Spirit of God means by the expression.

If we look, then, at the veil over man's heart by nature, we shall find it to consist of covering upon covering. For instance:

1. There is the veil of IGNORANCE.

What a thick, dense, impenetrable covering is that! If we look back to the days of darkness and unregeneracy, in what dense ignorance did we walk. The very doctrines of grace, and the whole scheme of salvation, were hidden from our eyes, and we understood not a single truth of the gospel aright. Our minds were wrapped up in such thick clouds of ignorance, that we knew neither God nor ourselves, neither our state here or hereafter. This veil of ignorance spread over the heart seems spoken of, Isaiah 25:7, "He will destroy in this mountain the face of the covering cast over all people, and the veil that is spread over all nations." And again, "Darkness shall cover the earth, and gross darkness the people." (Isaiah 60:2.) And thus Paul testifies that the Gentiles walk, "Having the understanding darkened, being alienated from the life of God through the ignorance that is in them, because of the blindness of their heart." (Eph. 4:18.)

2. But this is not the only covering that goes to make up this thick, dense, impenetrable veil. There is the veil of UNBELIEF.

So that could man by the dint of his natural faculties overcome his ignorance, and thus strip off one part of the veil, the other part, that of unbelief, would still remain. Look at the scribes and Pharisees; the Lord wrought such amazing and undeniable miracles, as we should think must have convinced them that he was the Messiah—as, for instance, the raising up of Lazarus from the dead. They saw him come out of the sepulcher with their bodily eyes at the word of Jesus; but it had no effect on their minds. They saw the blind restored to sight, the lame walk, and the deaf receive hearing; but it never wrought faith in their consciences. They were, as the Apostle says, "shut up in unbelief." (Rom. 11:32, margin.) This is just our state by nature; unbelief has such possession of our hearts that we cannot believe the things of God until they are made known to us by divine revelation.

3. But again; there is the covering of SELF-RIGHTEOUSNESS

What a motley monster is man in his natural state! Full of evil, continually committing sin, daring God to his face by a thousand crimes, and yet setting up his own righteousness! We might just as well expect that a felon in prison, who is there awaiting in the condemned cell the merited punishment of his aggravated crimes, of his murders, robberies, and continued outrage against all human laws, should hope to come out of prison by his good deeds and obedience to the laws of his country, as expect such a vile wretch as man to hope to climb up to heaven by the ladder of his good words, good thoughts, good works, and good intentions. But the veil upon his heart prevents him from seeing that by anything he can do he cannot please God. Self-righteousness in all its forms is so interlaced with every thought of our heart, so intertwined with every fiber of our natural mind, that though we know ourselves to be sinners, yet self-applause and self-complacency bid us do something to gain God's favor.

4. But again; there is the veil of SUPERSTITION.

What a hold has superstition over the minds of men! If we go into any country parish, what superstition universally reigns over the minds of those dead in sin! How church and churchyard, ecclesiastical vestments and gown, font and altar, are well near worshiped! And in town, as well as country, in dissenter as well as in churchman, what superstitious feeling prevails; and how much passes off for religion and piety that was never wrought in the heart and conscience by God the Spirit! I believe there are many people who cannot sin comfortably until they have said their prayers, and cannot launch out with an easy conscience into the pleasures of the world, until they have gone to church or chapel. They must needs attend upon the ceremonies and forms of religion to get a license for sin, as a school-boy learns his task to obtain a holiday.

5. And then, there is the veil of PREJUDICE.

How deeply prejudiced are men's minds against the truth, and against all who profess or preach it! Have we ourselves not in time past walked in this path? What deep prejudice have our minds been steeped in against the truths of God's word! And have we not looked upon the people who held and preached them rather as monsters than men! When I walk through the streets of the town in which I live, I can see sometimes prejudice staring out from the very eyes of the people, especially the well-dressed and respectable, whom I meet; and though they cannot, through mercy, bring anything against my life and conduct, so great is their prejudice because I hold and preach the truth, that I believe they look upon me as a worse character than an adulterer, a swearer, or a drunkard. The prejudice painted in their very features sometimes almost amuses, and sometimes annoys me; sometimes stirs up my pride, and sometimes makes me thankful that I differ from them, and suffer reproach for the Lord's sake.

6. And then, there is the veil of ENMITY.

"The carnal mind is enmity against God." What bitter enmity there is in man against the humbling truths of the gospel, against all who live godly in Christ Jesus, and against everything spiritual and heavenly, or that breathes the Spirit of the Lord!

7. Then, there is the covering of PRIDE.

And O, what a dense veil is that, which, like an unclean bird, spreads its baneful wings over a man's heart, that he will not submit to the humbling truths of the gospel!

8. And then, there is the veil of HYPOCRISY, in which man is so deeply sunk, prompting him to every hypocritical word and action.

All these coverings, one upon another, are so spread over the heart of man by nature, that the truth of God, of itself, cannot reach him; so that he has no eyes to see, no ears to hear, no heart to feel, no conscience to submit to the power of truth. O, in what a sunken state man is! We never can abase man too much. O the gulf of misery and ruin into which he has fallen through the transgressions of our first parents! O the depths of depravity into which he has been hurled! O the bottomless abyss of destruction and guilt into which, when Adam fell, he cast himself and all his race! But though so awful is man's state, yet, "the veil" upon his heart prevents him from seeing the depths of his own fall. This is one of the worst features of man's ruin, that it is hidden from him, and that he knows nothing of it until, through a miracle of grace, he is plucked out of the pit of horror, and saved from going down to the abyss of hell, with all his sins and crimes upon his head. Ministers, therefore, can never abase man too much, nor point out too clearly the awful abyss of ruin and degradation into which he has fallen; and the more they point it out, the more witness have they in the consciences of those who know something of these things by painful experience. But the veil on man's heart hides from him his own ruin; and until the veil in a measure is removed, he never knows, never sees, never feels one truth aright.

II. What it is to turn to the Lord?

Now the first work, (and this leads me to the second branch of the subject) of the Spirit of God on the heart, is, not to remove the veil, (that is a second work), but to discover the veil. If I may use such an expression, the Spirit of God breathing on a man's heart, blows away a little corner of the veil spread over it; and then we begin for the first time to see and feel that there is a veil there. The beginning of knowledge is to learn our foolishness; the beginning of mercy is to feel our misery; the beginning of salvation is to know our condemnation; and the beginning of eternal life is to pass under the sentence of everlasting death.

It is thus that the Lord, in his overflowing love to the objects of his choice, begins to deal with their consciences. The conscience is the place where God always begins, as the Apostle says in his own ministry, "Commending ourselves to every man's conscience in the sight of God:" He begins to deal with a man's conscience, when, by the secret light and life of his Spirit, he makes him see and feel something of his lost and undone state before God. Eternal realities thus are made to lie upon his conscience; the truths of God to come into his soul; and the entrance of God's word to give light to his heart.

Now where did your religion begin? It is a grand point to know where your religion began; for if the beginning be all right, all is right; and if the beginning be wrong, is it not to be feared that all the rest is wrong? Did your religion begin with conscience, for that is the place where God begins? Were eternal realities laid upon your mind? Did a sense of your sinfulness come upon your soul? Did you feel what a ruined wretch you were in the sight of a holy God? Did you see what a veil by nature there was upon your heart? As a man begins to see these things, the veil is in a measure beginning to be removed; he begins to see eternal things in a clearer light, and as the veil thins away, to feel them with a more powerful life.

Now this leads him to "turn to the Lord." When God's truth comes into the conscience, and eternal realities lie close upon the mind, and we thus see and feel that there is a veil upon our hearts, we begin to turn to the Lord that the veil may be taken away. And there is no true turning to the Lord until these things are spiritually and experimentally felt.

But what does turning to the Lord imply? It implies a turning away from everything else. We never knew our need of a Savior until conviction of sin was brought into the conscience; we thought we could be saved by our works until we knew something of the purity and spirituality of God's law. We thought ourselves wise in our own generation, yes, that "wisdom would almost die with us," until we

felt our ignorance and blindness, and that there was a thick veil spread over our hearts.

Now, as the Lord the Spirit enables a poor sinner to turn to the Lord (for it is the Spirit's work to turn to the stronghold the "prisoners of hope,") he begins to unfold to him who the Lord is. This is the grand turning point, the Spirit fulfilling his covenant office in showing a condemned sinner who the Lord is. This is the first discovery that there is a refuge; the first ray of gospel light whereby the way of escape is made known; the first dawn of hope in the soul; the first setting the feet in the way of peace. After the Lord has quickened our souls, for a time we often go, shall I say, blundering on, not knowing there is a Jesus. We think that the way of life is to keep God's commandments, obey the law, cleanse ourselves from sin, reform our lives, and cultivate universal holiness in thought, word, and action and so we go, blundering and stumbling on in darkness; and all the while never get a single step forward.

But when the Lord has allowed us to weary ourselves to find the door, and let us sink lower and lower into the pit of guilt and ruin, from feeling that all our attempts to extricate ourselves have only plunged us deeper and deeper, and the Spirit of God opens up to the understanding and brings in the soul some spiritual discovery of Jesus, and thus makes known that there is a Savior, a Mediator, and a way of escape—this is the grand turning point in our lives, the first opening in the 'valley of Achor' of the 'door of hope'. And when the soul has once seen that there is a Jesus, and once felt a measure of the power of his resurrection, it never goes to any other quarter for pardon, justification, and salvation.

We may compare the soul in this state to a mariner shipwrecked by night an a reef of rocks, and seeing the first dawn of light in the horizon. Does he not instinctively turn to the point where the sun is to rise? Are not his eyes anxiously fixed upon the dawning day? He does not look to the North for the sun to appear; he does not turn to the South, or to the West, but to the East, for there the dawn breaks, and there he keeps his eyes fixed until the sun rises. So with the poor shipwrecked soul cast away upon the shoals of despondency, and washed up on those rocks, where he fears he must starve or die. When the Spirit of God begins to open up with power in his conscience that there is a Jesus, that he is the only Mediator, that the Son of God has come down and taken a holy human nature into union with himself, and is now at the right hand of the Father, it is the first break of day, the first dawn of hope; and upon that bright spot does the shipwrecked soul fix his longing eyes until the Sun of Righteousness arises upon it, with healing in his wings.

It is a great step in a man's experience to turn wholly and solely to the Lord, and renounce all creature righteousness, all forms and ceremonies as a way of salvation. It is a great mercy to turn away from them, as the shipwrecked mariner turns away from his sinking ship, and looks to the rising sun to show him some way of escape, and thus afford him some gleam of hope.

But, as the soul turns to the Lord, it is with earnest prayer and supplication. As we read, Jer. 31:9, "They shall come with weeping, and with supplications will I lead them." This is the way in which the Lord always leads the 'people of his choice'—he creates the desire, raises up the power to ask in prayer, and then graciously answers the request. "I will yet, for this," he says, "be enquired of by the house of Israel to do it for them." (Ezek. 36:37.) "Then shall you call upon me, and you shall go and pray unto me, and I will hearken unto you. And you shall seek me, and find me, when you shall search for me with all your heart." (Jer. 29:12, 13.)

III. The REMOVAL of the veil.

And this leads us to the third branch of the subject—the taking away of the veil. There are three steps in experience connected with the veil upon the heart–

1. The knowledge of the veil being there.

2. The turning to the Lord, that he would take the veil away.

3. The removal of it; as the Apostle speaks in the text, and also intimates a little lower down—"We all, with open," or, as it is literally, "with unveiled face, beholding as in a mirror the glory of the Lord." The veil is taken away when the soul turns to the Lord. The light of his countenance, the beams of his grace, and the sheddings abroad of his mercy, dissolve and melt the veil away, just as the sun thaws away the winter snows.

And what does the soul see when the veil is removed? Until this dense covering was taken away, it saw nothing aright, heard nothing aright, felt nothing aright, but stumbled on in thick darkness. But when the soul turned to the Lord, and gave itself wholly and solely unto him, there was a discovery to faith of the glorious Person of Jesus, divine realities became manifested in the Spirit's light, and sealed upon the conscience by a measure of the Spirit's teaching. And this is what the Apostle speaks of in the next chapter, where he says, "God, who commanded the light to shine out of darkness, has shined in our hearts to give the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ." (2 Cor. 4:6.)

1. Until the veil is taken away, we do not see the glory of GOD shining forth in the Person of Jesus.

But what is it to see the light of the knowledge of the glory of God thus shining? It is to see all the perfections of God shine forth in the glorious Person of Jesus. We cannot know God outside of knowing Christ. He is "the blessed and only Potentate, the King of

kings, and Lord of lords; who only has immortality, dwelling in the light which no man can approach unto; whom no man has seen nor can see." (1 Tim. 6:15, 16.) "You can not see my face; for there shall no man see me, and live." (Exod. 33:20.) But the invisible God having sent his only begotten Son into the world, who is "the brightness of his glory, and the express image of his Person;" and he having taken into union with himself a holy human nature, it is thus, as the Spirit of God gives us light to see by faith the Person of Immanuel, that we view the glory of God shining forth in the face of the God-Man Mediator. The Lord, therefore, gently chided Philip, when he said, "Lord, show us the Father, and it suffices us. Jesus says unto him, Have I been so long time with you, and yet have you not known me, Philip? He who has seen me has seen the Father; and how say you then, Show us the Father?" (John 14:8, 9.)

2. But what do we see in the PERSON of Jesus, when the veil is removed?

We see in him all the perfections of God harmonize, and specially behold "justice and mercy meeting together, righteousness and peace kissing each other." And we see in this great truth, which is all the comfort of a believing soul, how that "God can be just, and yet the justifier of him that believes in Jesus." We see that God can pardon the sinner, and yet condemn the sin; that all the attributes of Jehovah shine forth in the face of Jesus, without clashing, without collision, and that the love, mercy, and grace of a Three-One God beam forth in the Person of Christ. We see that a propitiation has been made for sin; that atoning blood has been shed to satisfy all law-claims, "to make reconciliation for iniquity, and bring in everlasting righteousness;" that a sacrifice has been offered up which God has accepted; and a ransom paid which the Father has received as a complete acquittance of the debt due to divine and inflexible justice.

When we see and feel this, the veil is removed. We may have been wearying ourselves, and we should have gone on wearying ourselves to the end of our lives, trying to make ourselves righteous, to put away our sins, to purge our consciences, and reconcile our guilty souls to God. We might go on heaping up prayer upon prayer, tear upon tear, sacrament upon sacrament, and mass upon mass, and yet after all sink down into a deserved hell. And there all will sink who are not 'experimentally acquainted' with the propitiation made for sin through the sacrifice of the only begotten Son of God. Into that pit of horror will all sink, who put confidence in any other way of salvation than the meritorious sacrifice offered up on Calvary, or look to any other way of salvation than that propitiation which the Son of God has made by his obedience and blood. What virtue and efficacy there is in his blood to purge the guilty conscience! God the Spirit lead us deeply into it!

There is a great deal of caviling in some men's minds about the expression, "the blood of God." 'How,' say they, 'could the Godhead bleed? How could the Godhead suffer?' But if it is not the blood of him who was God, I might just as well rely for salvation on the blood of one of the thieves that were crucified with him. What is Christ's human nature? That is the rock on which many gallant ships have struck. It is not a person having a distinct existence apart from the Deity of Christ; but it is a nature—what the Holy Spirit calls that "Holy One," (Luke 1:35); "a body that God had prepared for him," (Heb. 10:5) taken into intimate, mysterious, and inexplicable union with the Person of the Son of God. So that, whatever that human nature did and suffered, from its intimacy and union with the Son of God, the Son of God did and suffered. Did that nature bleed? It bled as having union with Deity; it being, so to speak, the instrument that Deity made use of.

To use an illustration—as my soul touches an object through my hand, or speaks its thoughts by my tongue; so Deity not being itself able to bleed, bled through the humanity. Did that nature suffer? It was not the mere suffering of a human person, as a man might suffer; but it was the suffering of a holy nature in intimate union with the Person of the Son of God. And did that nature obey? The Son of God obeyed through and with that nature. So that, to cavil at the expression, "the blood of God," is nothing less than to strike a blow at a great fundamental truth. We might object, on the same ground, to the expression, "God our righteousness," as the Prophet speaks, "And this is the name whereby he shall be called, the Lord our righteousness," that is "Jehovah our Righteousness." (Jer. 23:6). Who is our righteousness but the Son of God? And what was that righteousness but the obedience of his human nature? for Godhead could no more obey than suffer and bleed; and yet Jehovah is our righteousness. And if we do not object to the expression, "the righteousness of God," why should we cavil at the expression, "the blood of God?"

Now this is the grand mystery which faith embraces, and which is dear to the heart of every God-taught soul. What a power and efficacy, as the veil is taken off the heart, does faith see in that sacrifice! What a propitiation does it see made for sin by the blood of the Son of God! Faith does not view it as the blood of man! Can the blood of man put away sin? But when we see it as the blood of the Son of God, O what a value, efficacy, power, and glory shine forth in it! But until the veil is taken off the heart we cannot see it; nor can we, until the Spirit makes it experimentally known, learn what a divine reality there is in this blood to purge the guilty conscience.

3. So with respect to Christ's obedience to the law, if his obedience were merely the obedience of man, it could not justify all the persons of his elect; but being the obedience of the Son of God, who "being found in fashion as a man, humbled himself, and became obedient unto death, even the death of the cross"—it becomes a justifying robe for every soul to whom it is imputed, and who, by the removing of the veil, takes a happy and blessed shelter under it.

4. Again. As the veil is taken off the heart, we begin to see and feel what a power there is in true religion, what a reality in divine teaching, and what a sweetness there is in the inward testimonies of God.

Most men's religion is nothing else but a round of 'forms'. Some have their 'doings', some their 'doctrines', and others their 'duties'. And when the one has performed his doings, the other learned his doctrines, and the third discharged his duties, why, he is as good a Christian, he thinks, as anybody. While all the time, the poor deceived creature is thoroughly ignorant of the kingdom of God, which stands not in word, but in power.

But as the veil of ignorance and unbelief is taken off the heart, we begin to see and feel that there is a power in vital godliness, a reality in the teachings of the Spirit; that religion is not to be put on and put off as a man puts on and off his Sunday clothes; but when we come away from chapel we cannot take off our religion, fold it up, and put it away into the drawer, and there let it lie safe and quiet all the week. Where vital godliness is wrought with divine power in a man's heart, and preached by the Holy Spirit into his conscience, it mingles, daily and often hourly, with his thoughts, entwines itself with his feelings and becomes the very food and drink of his soul. But until the veil was taken away, we could put our religion on and off at pleasure; and were often glad to take off the tight Sunday coat, and slip on the comfortable week-day clothes.

As then we begin to see and feel the reality and power of vital godliness, it separates us from those who have only a name to live while they are dead; it makes us manifest as one of "the peculiar people;" and our friends and companions, no, the only people whose society we really love, are those who have felt divine realities by divine teaching. We can no more do with a dead profession of truth, than with a dead profession of error! We can no more make friends and companions of presumptuous professors, than of swearers, adulterers, or drunkards. And feeling, or at least desiring to feel, in our hearts—light, life, savor, dew, and power for ourselves—we look out for those who have experienced these things themselves; and in whom we can read, if we have a discerning eye, the legible lines of God's Spirit written upon their conscience, or towards whom we can feel a sweet knitting of soul, as taught by the same Spirit the same realities which we believe the Holy Spirit has taught us.

Now when a man comes to this spot—to see and feel what a reality there is in the things of God made manifest in the conscience by the power of the Holy Spirit, it effectually takes him out of dead churches, cuts him off from false ministers, winnows the chaff from the wheat, and brings him into close communion with the broken-hearted family of God.

5. But as the veil is removed, the soul also begins to see and feel the workings of inward sin that it was previously ignorant of.

The removal of the veil not merely shows us the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ, but everything contrary to that glory. The pride of our heart, the power of our unbelief, the enmity of our carnal mind, the awful hypocrisy, the daring presumption, the abominable treachery, the fleshy lusts, and all the obscene imaginations of our depraved nature, that will work in us in spite of all our groans and cries to the contrary—all this, as the veil is taken off the soul, becomes more and more manifested, and we have (and O, what a sight it is!) a sight of ourselves. Did ever a man see so filthy a sight as himself! When he looks down into the sewer of his own nature, does he not see everything there, creeping and crawling, like tadpoles in a ditch, to disgust him?

But even this works together for good; for as a man feels a measure of light and life in his conscience, and sees and feels also, more and more of the workings of his depraved nature, and the breakings forth of the hypocrisy of a treacherous heart, he is brought to look more simply and more singly to the glorious Person of the Son of God, and cast himself more sincerely and unreservedly upon that blood which cleanses from all sin.

And thus, as the veil is removed from off the heart, he begins to drink more deeply into the spirit of the gospel, into the mind of Christ, into the reality of the things of God, into union and communion with Jesus, into the solemn renunciation of self, into an abhorrence of evil, and separation from the world, and learns to live a life of faith upon the Son of God.

But the veil is continually (if I may use the expression) "flapping back again over the heart," it is not so taken away that no more darkness is felt, no more ignorance known, no more self-righteousness, and no more of its accompanying fruits perceived. It is removed as long as the Spirit shines, as long as the soul sees light in God's light. But the veil at times seems to come back over our hearts as much as if it never had been removed. We have to walk in darkness, and have no light; and frequently have to grope for the wall like the blind, and grope as if we had no eyes. We can see no beauty in Jesus, and can scarcely believe there is a Jesus. We can see none of our evidences; all seem clean swept away, and scarcely a landmark left; we can find no more cries and groans in our soul than in the emptiest professor, and can feel no more godly sensations or spiritual movements in our hearts than if we were deceived altogether.

Now we fear that there has never been a single spark of grace in our hearts; for the word of God is hid from our view, the promises buried in impenetrable darkness, and past experiences covered with a thick, black cloud. This makes a man feel more of the veil on his heart than before. The feelings of darkness, when light does not shine; the sensation of misery, when mercy is not manifested; the sense of helplessness, when strength is not given; the experience of absence, when presence is denied—all these teach us

what the veil is!

But O, what profitable lessons are learned in this dark valley of humiliation, in these trials, exercises, and temptations! How, by this experience, we learn more in what vital godliness consists! How the marrow of religion is more opened up in our conscience! How we learn more to cease from our own works! How we see more what a barren wilderness there is in our own heart! And feeling how deceitful and hypocritical it is, we learn to place less confidence in it.

And when the Lord sees fit to bring the soul out of darkness—will it not make the light more precious? The gloom that hung over the soul—will it not make God's countenance more sweet when it comes? And the unbelief, the coldness, the deadness, the depravity, the hardness, and the apparent searedness of conscience which the soul has to grapple with—will it not make it prize more and more the teachings, leadings, and guidings of God the Spirit? And thus, by these various dispensations of God, we learn more to cease from man, to cease from ourselves, to cease from our own wisdom, to look more simply, more singly, more solely and wholly unto the Lord of life and glory, and to depend more upon the Spirit to work in us that which is well pleasing in his sight.

Let me just, in a few words, sum up the whole. Look at the three steps. The veil felt; the turning to the Lord; and the removal of the veil. These are the three steps in the divine life, commencing when it is first communicated to the soul.

Now, if you are a child of God, taught by the Spirit, you will know one or more of these branches. You will have learned, first, what it is to have the veil over your hearts, under which you will groan and sigh—you will experience the darkness, hardness, deadness, depravity, hypocrisy, unbelief, and presumption of your carnal mind; and under it you may groan for months, and sometimes for years, before light, life, and power manifestly come to melt the veil away.

The next step is, to turn to the Lord with all our heart and all our soul; to see and feel that there is a Savior; I do not mean in the judgment—but in the heart and conscience. This will produce a springing up out of ourselves to lie at the feet of the Lord; that we may receive divine life out of his fullness, and feel its powerful operations in the soul. To him will flow our desires, our supplications, our pantings, and our longings to know him and him only. This is the grand turning point.

And then comes the third step, the taking off the veil from the heart; a discovery to the soul, by the Spirit, of the glory of God in the face of Jesus; the inward reception into the heart and conscience of the Son of God with power; of his blood to cleanse the guilty conscience, of his righteousness to justify the naked soul, of his love as balm for every wound, and of all his attributes as God-Man, as suited to every need, every misery, and every sense of our wretchedness and ruin.

And this path of the just, as the light, shines more and more unto the perfect day; so that the soul, as the Lord leads it on, becomes more and more acquainted with its vileness—and his goodness; its worthlessness—and his infinite worth; its guiltiness—and his blood as purging from sin, its nakedness and filthy rags—and his glorious robe of righteousness. And thus, as we sink into a deeper knowledge of ourselves, we rise higher into a knowledge of Christ; and as we are brought into the wilderness, God is more glorified by leading us in it. So that, while we sink to our right spot—a sinner saved by grace—we learn to put the crown of glory upon the head of him to whom alone it belongs, yielding the praise and thanksgiving to God the Father, God the Son, and God the Spirit, as one undivided, glorious, and ever-living Jehovah, both now and forever!

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2 Corinthians 3:17 Now the Lord is the Spirit, and where the Spirit of the Lord is, there is liberty.(NASB: Lockman)

Greek: o de kurios to pneuma estin; (3SPAI) ou de to pneuma kuriou, eleutheria.

Amplified: Now the Lord is the Spirit, and where the Spirit of the Lord is, there is liberty (emancipation from bondage, freedom). [Is 61:1, 2] (Lockman)

ESV: Now the Lord is the Spirit, and where the Spirit of the Lord is, there is freedom. (ESV)

KJV: Now the Lord is that Spirit: and where the Spirit of the Lord is, there is liberty.

NET: Now the Lord is the Spirit, and where the Spirit of the Lord is present, there is freedom. (NET Bible)

NIV: Now the Lord is the Spirit, and where the Spirit of the Lord is, there is freedom. (NIV - IBS)

NLT: For the Lord is the Spirit, and wherever the Spirit of the Lord is, there is freedom. (NLT-Tyndale House)

Phillips: For the Lord to whom they could turn is the spirit of the new agreement, and wherever the Spirit of the Lord is, men's souls are set free. (Phillips: Touchstone)

Wuest: But the Lord is the Spirit and where the Spirit of the Lord is there is liberty.

Young's Literal: And the Lord is the Spirit; and where the Spirit of the Lord is, there is liberty;

- **Lord**: 2Co 3:6 Jn 6:63 1Co 15:45
- **Where**: Ps 51:12 Isa 61:1 Ro 8:2,15,16 Ga 4:6 2Ti 1:7
- 2 Corinthians 3 Resources - Multiple Sermons and Commentaries

THE SPIRIT OF CHRIST IS GOD: ANIMATING, GLORIFYING, LIBERATING & TRANSFORMING

Now the Lord is the Spirit, and where the Spirit of the Lord is, there is liberty The Lord is Jesus Christ (see previous verse 2Co 3:16) and the Spirit of the Lord is the Holy Spirit (although not everyone agrees with the interpretation).

Utley - The ministry of Jesus and the Spirit are inseparably linked (cf. vv. 17–18). The ministry of the Spirit is to magnify Jesus. It is described in John 16:8–14. (2 Corinthians 3 Commentary)

Vincent writes that "The **Lord** Christ of 2Co 3:16 is the (Holy) **Spirit** Who pervades and **animates** the New Covenant of which we are ministers (2Co 3:6-note), and the **ministry of the Spirit** is with **glory** (2Co 3:8-note) (**Ed**: And the **Spirit liberates** us [2Co 3:17] and **transforms** us from glory to glory - 2Co 3:18-note).

> **Lord** (2962) (**kurios** from **kuros** = might or power) has a variety of meanings/uses in the NT and therefore one must carefully examine the context in order to discern which sense is intended by the NT author. The main sense of **kurios** is that of a supreme one, one who is sovereign and possesses absolute authority, absolute ownership and uncontested power.

Dr Charles Ryrie comments that **the Lord is the Spirit** is "A strong statement that Christ and the Holy Spirit are one in essence, though Paul also recognized the distinctions between them (2Co 13:14). (The Ryrie Study Bible)

The KJV Bible Commentary offers a well reasoned explanation that "Paul is not saying “the Lord is Spirit” (in the same sense that is indicated in Jn 4:24) but “the Lord is the Holy Spirit, the Third Person of the Godhead.” It is also important to note here that Paul is not confusing the two Persons. Jesus said earlier, “I and my Father are one” (Jn 10:30). He bears the same relationship to the Holy Spirit. Here is the ineffable mystery of the Trinity, one in essence yet three distinct personalities. (KJV Bible Commentary: Nelson)

In a "Trinitarian passage" in Romans 8 Paul clearly identifies **Jesus** with the **Spirit** which helps us understand the phrase the **Spirit of the Lord**…

> However, you are not in the flesh but in the Spirit, if indeed the **Spirit of God** (the Father) dwells in you. But if anyone does not have the **Spirit of Christ** (the Son), he does not belong to Him. And if Christ is in you, though the body is dead because of sin, yet the spirit is alive because of righteousness. But if the Spirit of Him (Father) who raised Jesus from the dead dwells in you, He who raised Christ Jesus from the dead will also give life to your mortal bodies through His Spirit who indwells you. (Ro 8:9+, Ro 8:10, 11+, see also Jn 14:16 and Jn 14:18 which also identifies Jesus Christ with the Holy Spirit)

Where the Spirit of the Lord is, there is liberty - The Spirit of Christ turns a person to the Lord Jesus Christ, taking the veil from their heart so they can "see" Christ in the New Covenant, at the same time bringing them into the broad pastures of spiritual **liberty** in Christ. The false teachers at Corinth were apparently holding forth the Law as the way to change one's life, but Paul teaches that it is only the **Spirit of the Lord** Who can transfer one from a life of legalistic bondage and into a life of liberty.

Paul describes this liberty declaring

> For the law of the **Spirit** of life in **Christ Jesus** has **set you free** (**eleutheroo**) from the law (the principle) of sin and of death.
>
> For you have not received a spirit of slavery leading to fear again (contrast the reaction of the sons of Israel in Ex 34:29), but you have received a spirit of adoption as sons by which we cry out, “Abba! Father!” The **Spirit Himself** bears witness with our spirit that we are children of God (Ro 8:15, 16+).
>
> Because you are sons, God has sent forth the **Spirit of His Son** into our hearts, crying, “Abba! Father!” Therefore you are no longer a slave (bondage), but a son (liberty); and if a son, then an heir through God. (Ga 4:6, 7+)

> **Liberty** (freedom) (1657) (**eleutheria** from **eleutheros** - that which is capable of movement, freedom to go wherever one likes, unfettered; see word study on verb **eleutheroo**) describes the state of being free and stands in opposition to slavery or bondage. Liberty describes the state of being free from restraint. In NT terms, freedom is not the right to do as you wish, but the power to behave as you should. **Vine** writes that "**liberty** is rendered **freedom** in Gal 5:1 “with freedom did Christ set us free.” The combination of the noun

(freedom) with the verb stresses the completeness of the act, the aorist (or point) tense indicating both its momentary and comprehensive character; it was done once for all. The word is twice rendered "**freedom**" in the RV of Gal 5:13 (KJV, "liberty"). The phraseology is that of manumission from slavery, which among the Greeks was effected by a legal fiction, according to which the manumitted slave was purchased by a god; as the slave could not provide the money, the master paid it into the temple treasury in the presence of the slave, a document being drawn up containing the words "for freedom." No one could enslave him again, as he was the property of the god. In 2Co 3:17 the word denotes "freedom" of access to the presence of God. (Vine's Expository Dictionary of Old Testament and New Testament Words)

Guzik feels that in this context the **liberty** which Paul is emphasizing is "the liberty of access. He is building on his words from 2Co 3:12 (note): we use great boldness of speech. **Boldness** is a word that belongs with **liberty**. Because of the great work of the Holy Spirit in us through the New Covenant, we have a bold, liberated relationship with God. (2 Corinthians 3)

Matthew Poole on **liberty** - "A **liberty** from the yoke of the law, from sin, death, hell; but the **liberty** which seems here to be chiefly intended, is a **liberty** from that blindness and hardness which is upon men's hearts, until they have received the Holy Spirit." (2 Corinthians 3)

Jamieson commenting on **there is liberty** writes that "**There** and **there only**. Such cease to be slaves to the letter, which they were while the veil was on their heart. They are free to serve God in the Spirit, and rejoice in Christ Jesus (Php 3:3): they have no longer the spirit of bondage, but of free sonship (Ro 8:15; Ga 4:7). **Liberty** is opposed to the letter (of the legal ordinances), and to the veil, the badge of slavery: also to the fear which the Israelites felt in beholding Moses' glory unveiled (Ex 34:30; 1Jn 4:18) (**Ed**: This removal of fear facilitates the believer's bold access into the very Throne Room of God!).

Bob Utley on **there is liberty** - This refers to freedom from spiritual blindness, self-righteousness, and legalism caused by a personal faith relationship with Jesus Christ (cf. John 8:32, 36; Rom. 14: 1 Cor. 8; 10:23ff; Gal. 5:1, 13).One of my favorite commentators, **F. F. Bruce**, in his book, **Paul: Apostle of the Heart Set Free**, says "Paul certainly knew the love of Christ to be the all-compelling power in life. Where love is the compelling power, there is no sense of strain or conflict or bondage in doing what is right: the man or woman who is compelled by Jesus' love and empowered by his Spirit does the will of God from the heart. For (as Paul could say from experience) 'where the Spirit of the Lord is, there the heart is free' " (p.21). (2 Corinthians 3 Commentary)

Adam Clarke adds that "Wherever this Gospel is received, there the Spirit of the Lord is given; and wherever that Spirit lives and works, there is liberty, not only from Jewish bondage, but from the slavery of sin-from its power, its guilt, and its pollution.

Jesus expounds on the essence of **true liberty** in Himself as addressed Jews who had ostensibly believed Him (but subsequent verses indicate their believe was not genuine saving faith - see Jn 8:39, 40, 41, 42, 43, 44, 45, 58, 59)…

> If you continue in (stay with, abide in, dwell in, "stay at home" with, to abide by, continue to live in) **My Word**, then (When?) you are truly (What implication? true vs ___) disciples of Mine and you will know the **truth** (Not just "knowledge" but ultimately a Person - Jn 14:6), and the **truth** will make you free (**eleutheroo** - liberate from slavery to Sin [Ro 6:18+, Ro 6:22+] and bondage to the Law, cp Gal 5:1+). They answered Him, "We are Abraham's descendants and have never yet been enslaved to anyone; how is it that You say, 'You will become free'?" Jesus answered them, "Truly, truly, I say to you, everyone who commits sin (continually, as their habitual practice) is (continually) the slave of sin. The slave does not remain in the house forever; the son does remain forever. "So if the Son makes you free (**eleutheroo**), you will be free (**eleutheros**) indeed. (Jn 8:31-36).

Matthew Henry - Where the Spirit of the Lord is, and where He works, as He does under the Gospel-dispensation, there is **liberty** (2Co 3:17), freedom from the yoke of the ceremonial law and from the servitude of corruption (Acts 15:10+ Ga 5:1+ Mt 11:28, 29, 30+); **liberty** of access to God (Ro 5:1+, Ro 5:2KJV+), and freedom of speech in prayer (He 4:16+, He 10:19-21+, He 10:22-23+). The heart is set at liberty, and enlarged, to run the ways of God's commandments.

Andrew Bonar - Liberty of the spiritual life…- The heavenly life imparted is liberty and truth and peace; it is the removal of bondage and darkness and pain. So far from being a mechanical constraint, as some would represent, it is the removal of the iron chain with which guilt had bound the sinner. It acts like an army of liberation to a down-trodden country, like the warm breath of spring to the frost-fettered tree. For the entrance of true life or living truth into man's soul must be liberty, not bondage.

J H Jowett speaks of the **liberty** wrought by the Holy Spirit…

> IN the Holy Spirit I experience a large emancipation. "Where the Spirit of the Lord is, there is liberty." I am delivered from all enslaving bondage—from the bondage of legalism, and ritualism. I am not hampered by excessive harness, by multitudinous rules. The harness is fitting and congenial, and I have freedom of

movement, and “my yoke is easy and my burden is light.”

And I am to use my emancipation of spirit in the ministry of contemplation. I am to “behold, as in a glass, the glory of the Lord.” My thought has been set free from the cramping distractions devised by men, and I am now to feast my gaze upon the holy splendors of my Lord. It is like coming out of a little and belittling tent, to feast upon the sunny amplitude of the open sky! I can “cease from man,” and commune with God.

And the contemplation will effect a transformation. “We are changed into the same image from glory to glory.” The serene brightness of the sky gets into our faces. The Lord becomes “the health of our countenance,” and we shine with borrowed glory. (Jowett Daily Meditation)

Bob Utley - SPECIAL TOPIC: JESUS AND THE SPIRIT

There is a fluidity between the work of the Spirit and the Son. **G. Campbell Morgan said the best name for the Spirit is “the other Jesus.”** (**ED**: OF COURSE ONLY "ONE JESUS" EFFECTED ATONEMENT FOR OUR SINS WITH HIS PRECIOUS BLOOD!) The following is an outline comparison of the work and titles of the Son and Spirit.

1. Spirit called “Spirit of Jesus” or similar expressions (cf. Ro. 8:9; 1 Cor. 15:45; 2 Cor. 3:17; Gal. 4:6; 1 Pet. 1:11).

2. Both called by the same terms

a. “truth”

(1) Jesus—John 14:6
(2) Spirit—John 14:17; 16:13

b. “advocate”

(1) Jesus—1 John 2:1
(2) Spirit—John 14:16; 16:7

3. All three persons of the Trinity indwell believers:

a. **Jesus**—Matt. 28:20; John 14:20, 23; 15:4–5; Rom. 8:10; 2 Cor. 13:5; Gal. 2:20; Eph. 3:17; Col. 1:27
b. **Spirit**—John 14:16–17; Rom. 8:9, 11; 1 Cor. 3:16; 6:19; 2 Tim. 1:14
c. **even the Father**—John 14:23; 2 Cor. 6:16

C H Spurgeon on **Spiritual Liberty**…

Liberty is the birthright of every man. But where do you find liberty unaccompanied by religion? This land is the home of liberty, not so much because of our institutions as because the Spirit of the Lord is here — the spirit of true and hearty religion. But the liberty of the text is an infinitely greater and better one, and one which Christian men alone enjoy. He is the free man whom the truth makes free. Without the Spirit of the Lord, in a free country, ye may still be bondsmen; and where there are no serfs in body, ye may be slaves in soul. Note —

I. WHAT WE ARE FREED FROM.

1. The bondage of sin.

Of all slavery there is none more horrible than this. “O wretched man that I am, who shall deliver me” from it? But the Christian is free.

2. The penalty of sin — eternal death.

3. The guilt of sin.

4. The dominion of sin.

Profane men glory in free living and free thinking. Free living! Let the slave hold up his fetters and jingle them, and say, “This is music, and I am free.” A sinner without grace attempting to reform himself is like Sisiphus rolling the stone up hill, which always comes down with greater force. A man without grace attempting to save himself is engaged in as hopeless a task as the daughters of Danaus, when they attempted to fill a vast vessel with bottomless buckets. He has a bow without a string, a sword without a blade, a gun without powder.

5. Slavish fear of law.

> Many people are honest because they are afraid of the policeman. Many are sober because they are afraid of the eye of the public. If a man be destitute of the grace of God, his works are only works of slavery; he feels forced to do them. But now, Christian, “Love makes your willing feet in swift obedience move.” We are free from the law that we may obey it better.

6. The fear of death.

> I recollect a good old woman, who said, “Afraid to die, sir! I have dipped my foot in Jordan every morning before breakfast for the last fifty years, and do you think I am afraid to die now?” A good Welsh lady, when she lay a-dying, was visited by her minister, who said to her, “Sister, are you sinking?” But, rising a little in the bed, she said, “Sinking! Sinking! Did you ever know a sinner sink through a rock? If I had been standing on the sand I might sink; but, thank God! I am on the Rock of Ages, and there is no sinking there.”

II. WHAT WE ARE FREE TO.

“Where the Spirit of the Lord is, there is liberty,” and that liberty gives us certain rights and privileges.

1. To heaven’s charter.

> Heaven’s Magna Carta is the Bible, and you are free to it — to all its doctrines, promises, etc. You are free to all that is in the Bible. It is the bank of heaven: you may draw from it as much as you please without let or hindrance.

2. To the throne of grace.

> It is the privilege of Englishmen that they can always send a petition to Parliament; and it is the privilege of a believer that he can always send a petition to the throne of God. It signifies nothing what, where, or under what circumstances I am.

3. To enter into the city.

> I am not a freeman of London, which is doubtless a great privilege, but I am a freeman of a better city. Now some of you have obtained the freedom of the city, but you won’t take it up. Don’t remain outside the Church any longer, for you have a right to come in.

4. To heaven.

> When a Christian dies he knows the password that can make the gates wide open fly; he has the white stone whereby he shall be known as a ransomed one, and that shall pass him at the barrier.

Richard Sibbes speaks about the **Signs of spiritual liberty**: —

Wheresoever the Spirit of God is, there is —

I. A LIBERTY OF HOLINESS, TO FREE US FROM THE DOMINION OF SIN

(Luke 1:75). As children can give a bird leave to fly so it be in a string to pull it back again, so Satan hath men in a string if they live in sin. The beast that runs away with a cord about him is caught by the cord again; so, having Satan’s cords about us, he can pull us in when he lists. From this we are freed by the Spirit.

II. A BLESSED FREEDOM AND AN ENLARGEMENT OF HEART TO DUTIES

God’s people are a voluntary people. Those that are under grace are “anointed by the Spirit” (Ps 89:20), and that spiritual anointment makes them nimble. Otherwise spiritual duties are as opposite to flesh and blood as fire and water. When we are drawn, therefore, to duties, as a bear to a stake, for fear, or out of custom, with extrinsic motives, and not from a new nature, this is not from. the Spirit. For the liberty of the Spirit is when actions come off naturally, without any extrinsic motive. A child needs not extrinsic motives to please his father. So there is a new nature in those that have the Spirit of God to stir them up to duty, though God’s motives may help as the sweet encouragements and rewards. But the principle is to do things naturally. Artificial things move from a principle without them, therefore they are artificial. Clocks and such things have weights that stir all the wheels they go by, and that move them; so it is with an artificial Christian. He moves with weights

without him; he hath not an inward principle of the Spirit to make things natural to him.

III. COURAGE AGAINST ALL OPPOSITION WHATSOEVER, JOINED WITH LIGHT

AND STRENGTH OF FAITH, BREAKING THROUGH ALL OPPOSITIONS.

Opposition to a spiritual man adds but courage and strength to him to resist. In Acts 4:23, seq., when they had the Spirit of God, they encountered opposition; and the more they were opposed, the more they grew. They were cast in prison, and rejoiced; and the more they were imprisoned, the more courageous they were still. There is no setting against this wind, no quenching of this fire, by any human power. See how the Spirit triumphed in the martyrs. The Spirit of God is a victorious Spirit (Ro 8:33, 34; Acts 6:10, 15).

IV. BOLDNESS WITH GOD HIMSELF, otherwise a "consuming fire?"

For the Spirit of Christ goes through the mediation of Christ to God. That familiar boldness whereby we cry, "Abba, Father," comes from sons. This comes from the Spirit. If we be sons, then we have the Spirit, whereby we cry, "Abba, Father."

J A Stowell on **liberty of the Spirit**…

The liberty of the Spirit: — How much is made of earthly liberty — the shadow of true freedom. How true it is that, whilst many men "profess to give liberty to others, they themselves are the slaves of corruption." Men are content to be slaves within who would be very indignant at any attempt to make them slaves without. The apostle, speaking of the bondage of the law, said that, when the heart of the Jew shall turn to the Lord, then, and not till then, shall they come to the true freedom. Where the Spirit of the Lord is, there is —

I. LIBERTY FROM CONDEMNATION.

If a man is under sentence of death he cannot find liberty. He may forget his imprisonment in mirth and feasting, but it is not the less real because he forgets it. The morning will come when he will be dragged off to his fearful doom. We are under the sentence of God's broken law. "The soul that sins shall die." How beautiful, then, the language of the apostle! (Ro 8:1).

II. LIBERTY FROM LAW.

The law knows nothing of mercy and forgiveness, nor does it afford the least help to holiness. Its command is, "Do this, and live; break this in the least, and die." Therefore, "by the deeds of the law " shall no man have peace with God. But "what the law could not do," etc. (Ro 8:2, 3, 4).

III. LIBERTY TO OBEY.

Many think they are free, and that they will do as they like; but they do not like to do what they ought to like, and therefore they are slaves after all. The way in which a man may convince himself of his slavery is to try to be what he ought to be. He can do nothing of himself, and he must be brought to feel that he can do no good thing without God. But what the flesh cannot do the Spirit will enable him to do. "It is God which worketh in us, both to will and to do of His good pleasure"; therefore "work out your own salvation," etc.

IV. LIBERTY TO FIGHT THE GOOD FIGHT OF FAITH.

A man can do battle with his corrupt nature, he can win the victory over the principalities and powers of darkness, and his sword is a sword of liberty. The drunkard becomes sober, the impure chaste, the vindictive forgiving, by the power of the Spirit of God.

V. LIBERTY OF ACCESS TO GOD.

The one true and living way is open, but it cannot be discerned except a man has it revealed to him by the Spirit of God. Through Christ we have access by one Spirit unto the Father.

VI. LIBERTY OF HOLY BOLDNESS AND FORTITUDE IN THE SERVICE OF GOD.

J C Philpot on liberty of the gospel (the New Covenant)…

A third feature of the gospel is, that it is the **perfect law of liberty** "for "**where the Spirit of the Lord is, there is liberty;"** (2Co 3:17) and, therefore, all the precepts of the gospel, as animated by the Spirit, harmonize with this perfect liberty. Under the law, all is bondage; under the gospel, all is liberty. Whatever, therefore, does not breathe liberty, call it what you will, wrap it up and disguise it how you may, is not the gospel. Here many teachers and preachers have erred in handling and enforcing the precept. They have read and heard of the

liberty of the gospel, for that is too plainly revealed and insisted upon in the New Testament to be questioned or denied, but they have been afraid of extending this liberty to the precept, as if the necessary consequence was that we were at liberty to obey it or not, just as we pleased. Now this is a thorough misconception of the nature of the liberty of the gospel, and of the liberty of the precept as a part of that gospel. To this timorous though mistaken apprehension we may trace the tenacity with which so many have held that the Mosaic law is the believer's rule of life. Their poor, timorous, servile minds, drenched and drowned in legal bondage, were afraid of the gospel, as if it were a kind of tamed lion, which would be very quiet and do nobody any harm as long as it was kept in a cage, but must not be allowed to get out, lest it should work incalculable mischief.

Or, to change the figure, they treated it almost as if it were a ticket of license. Man, who, though, from his good conduct in prison, he might be set at a kind of half liberty, yet was to be carefully watched, lest he should associate himself with thieves, or commit a burglary. And thus the free, noble, glorious gospel of the grace of God, containing in its bosom and holding forth the eternal love of the Father, the blood and righteousness of the Son, and the teaching and testimony of the Holy Spirit—this pure and precious gospel, which proclaims liberty to the captive and the opening of the prison to those who are bound, has been shut up, caged, and confined within all sorts of bars, conditions, and limitations, as if it were a wild beast which "had three ribs in the mouth of it between the teeth of it;" and which, if let loose, would "arise and devour much flesh." (Dan. 7:5.) Yes, this pure and precious gospel has been suspected of all manner of evil deeds; and if, by its good and excellent behavior it has sometimes been allowed a half liberty, yet has it been most carefully watched with the jealous eyes of a whole host of clerical and lay police, lest it should plot a murder or accomplish a robbery. What so much troubles the clergyman of some quiet country parish as the appearance in it of a preacher of the gospel, and the opening of a little cottage where a few poor people meet to hear it? What an immediate outcry is raised. "O these dreadful, those dangerous doctrines! Are they come at last into my parish—my domain?" As if this poor, humble minister were come to burn down the parish rectory; or as if his few hearers, probably by his own confession the best-living people in the parish, met together to get drunk, or strengthen each other's hands in all manner of sin and wickedness.

And this terribly outcry of "dangerous doctrines" is raised by men who see no danger in the careless profanity of the rich, and the loose licentiousness of the poor; no danger in, or at least who raise no warning cry against, the stealthy advance of Popery; no danger in the rapid growth of infidelity; no danger in bishops and deans denying the verbal inspiration of the Scriptures. But they are not the first, and will not be the last, who have spared the thief and arrested the honest man, justified the wicked and condemned the righteous. But these blind judges are not the only men who bark at the gospel. How the great bulk of preachers and writers, far and near, whether they call themselves churchmen or dissenters, are of one mind either wholly to cast out the precious gospel, or, by abridging it of its liberty, to stop its vital breath. And to do this wretched work more effectually, they have constructed a cage for the gospel out of the precepts of the gospel; and thus not only made it a prisoner, but have found or fashioned chains and fetters to tie it hand and foot by strips torn from its own clothes.

But how ignorant are all such men of what the liberty of the gospel is; and that it is a liberty not to sin—but from sin—a holy, heavenly freedom of spirit which engages every willing affection of the heart to yield the obedience of faith. In fact, liberty is the very essence of the gospel—its vital breath, its animating spirit; for "where the Spirit of the Lord is, there is liberty." (2Cor. 3:17.) The gospel is "the perfect law of liberty," therefore the very perfection of liberty, and thus thoroughly and entirely free from the least taint of bondage, the slightest tincture of servitude. It is this perfect freedom which distinguishes it from the law which "works wrath" (Ro 4:15) and "genders to bondage." (Gal. 4:24.) It is, therefore, a freedom from sin—(Ro 6:18;) from the guilt of sin, as having "the heart sprinkled from an evil conscience;" (Heb 10:22;) from the filth of sin, by "the washing of regeneration and renewing of the Holy Spirit;" (Titus 3:5;) from the love of sin, through "the love of God, shed abroad in the heart by the Holy Spirit;" (Ro 5:5;) from the dominion of sin, as "not being under the law but under grace;" (Ro 6:14;) and from the practice of sin, by becoming servants to God, so as to have our fruit unto holiness, and the end everlasting life." (Ro 6:22.)

How, then, can this pure, holy, and precious gospel be condemned as leading to licentiousness? It is because its power, its preciousness, its happy, holy, heavenly liberty have never been experimentally known by them that some, like the Galatians, do all they can to frustrate the grace of God, by turning again to the weak and beggarly elements whereunto they desire to be in bondage; (Gal 2:21; 4:9;) while others, like those monsters of wickedness whom Jude and Peter denounce with such burning words, pervert and abuse the liberty of the gospel unto licentiousness, "They are blots and blemishes, reveling in their pleasures," and, "while they promise others liberty, are themselves the servants of corruption." (2Pe 2:13, 19.)

Now the liberty of the gospel, as revealed in the Scriptures, and made experimentally known to the soul, steers, so to speak, between the two extremes, and is as perfectly free from the least intermixture of legal bondage as from the least taint of Antinomian licentiousness. It is, indeed, this holy liberty, heavenly power, and gracious influence of the precious gospel, under the teaching and testimony of the Holy Spirit, which makes it so suitable to our case and state when first convinced of sin, and cast into prison under guilt and condemnation. What release but a perfect release would suit our deplorable case as prisoner—in the pit where there is no water, shut up under wrath and guilty fear through a condemning law and an accusing conscience? This pure and precious gospel, therefore, comes down to us poor miserable captives, shut up in bondage under the law, under a guilty conscience, under the tormenting accusations of Satan, and the doubts and fears of our own trembling, misgiving heart. Yes, it comes down to our pitiable state and condition as a message of pure mercy, as revealing and proclaiming pardon and peace through a Saviour's blood; and when, by grace, we can receive, embrace, and entertain it as a word from God to us, proclaiming liberty as with a jubilee trumpet through every court and ward of the soul.

And shall we take, or willingly allow any one else to take prisoner this heavenly messenger and shut her up in the condemned cell? Shall we stand tamely by and not lift up our voice with indignation when we see this beauteous visitant, fresh, as it were, from the very courts of heaven, and radiant with the glory of God, laid hold of by a villainous jailer, as if she came to rob and murder? What were we before this precious gospel reached our ears and hearts? Were we not bondslaves to sin, serving diverse lusts and pleasures, taken and led captive by Satan at his will—and while we talked about enjoying life, were, through fear of death, subject to bondage? When we saw the saints of God not daring to do what we did greedily, we thought that they were the slaves, and we the free men, not knowing that "to whom we yield ourselves servants to obey, his servants we are, whether of sin unto death, or of obedience unto righteousness;" (Ro 6:16;) not knowing that "whoever commits sin is the servant of sin," and that our boasted freedom was real servitude, while their apparent bondage was real freedom; for they had an interest in that precious declaration—"If the Son, therefore, shall make you free, you shall be free indeed." (Jn 8:36.)

As, then, the spirit of liberty is the spirit of the gospel, it must be the very spirit of the precept also as an integral part of the gospel. If, therefore, you have never known the spirit of liberty in the gospel, you have never known the spirit of the precept, which is a part of that liberty; and if you have never known the spirit of the precept, you have never once performed one of the precepts aright. All your obedience has been not in newness of the spirit, but in the oldness of the letter.

O how pious and religious some of you have been, if not now are! How you have set the precepts before your eves and tried to keep them—how harshly you have judged others who were not so strict in keeping the commandments as you believed you were—how you spied out the liberty of some of the dear family of God which they had in Christ Jesus, that you might, by your conversation, or your preaching, your letters of advice, your solemn warnings, your sharp and angry reproofs, your praying at them, and, as you thought and said, for them, bring them into bondage. (Gal 2:4) How dangerous you considered must be the liberty of the gospel if it should set anyone who professed godliness free from all those shackles and fetters which, the more self-imposed and the stricter they were, the more closely you hugged them to your self-righteous bosom! Thus you took the precepts of the gospel out of their connection with the liberty of the gospel, and turned them into moral duties to feed your legal, self-righteous spirit. And what was the consequence? Bondage, guilt, and fear in your own conscience, for you could never keep the precept even according to your own interpretation of it; harsh judgment of all who did not partake of your legal spirit, whatever might be their experience or consistency; close alliance with shallow professors held fast in the same bonds with yourself; and a gradual departure from the truths of the gospel, until a miracle of grace put you into the furnace, there to learn what your own arm could do for you, and that nothing but the gospel, in its blessed liberty and power, could save your soul.

We have rather wandered from our point, but we could not show the liberty of the precept as animated by the spirit of the precept, and its harmony with the whole tenor and current of the gospel, without entering a little into the nature of the liberty of the gospel; and, as this is a subject of great importance, and very dear to us, we have been tempted to stray somewhat from our due limits. But now observe the connection between the 'spirit of the precept' and the 'liberty of the gospel'. In order, then, that this liberty of the gospel should not be abused unto licentiousness, it is guided and regulated by the precept, and by the spirit of the precept as animating the letter. The liberty of the gospel is a living, animated principle—not a dead letter, but a gracious power and influence. This is one of its main blessings. The precept therefore, in guiding and regulating this liberty, must be animated, too, with spirit and life, or you would have the strange anomaly, the gross and

palpable inconsistency, of a living body walking with dead feet, or served by paralyzed hands. (**The Precepts of the Word of God**)