

2 Corinthians 3:12-14 Commentary

PREVIOUS

NEXT

2 CORINTHIANS - PAUL'S MINISTRY IN THE LIGHT OF THE INDESCRIBABLE GIFT
Click chart to enlarge
Charts from [Jensen's Survey of the NT](#) - used by permission
[Another Overview Chart](#) on right side

Overview of Second Corinthians

2Co 1:1-7:16	2Co 8:1-9:15	2Co 10:1-12:21
Character of Paul	Collection for the Saints	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	Confidence	Vindication
Gratitude		
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 3:12 Therefore having such a hope, we use great boldness in our speech, [\(NASB: Lockman\)](#)

Greek : Echontes (PAPMPN) oun toiauten elpida polle parrhesia chrometha, (1PPMI)

Amplified: Since we have such [glorious] hope (such joyful and confident expectation), we speak very freely and openly and fearlessly. [\(Lockman\)](#)

ESV: Since we have such a hope, we are very bold, [\(ESV\)](#)

KJV: Seeing then that we have such hope, we use great plainness of speech:

NET: Therefore, since we have such a hope, we behave with great boldness, [\(NET Bible\)](#)

NIV: Therefore, since we have such a hope, we are very bold. [\(NIV - IBS\)](#)

NLT: Since this new way gives us such confidence, we can be very bold. [\(NLT - Tyndale House\)](#)

Phillips: With this hope in our hearts we are quite frank and open in our ministry. [\(Phillips: Touchstone\)](#)

Wuest: Having therefore such a hope, we use great freedom and boldness of speech,

Young's Literal: Having, then, such hope, we use much freedom of speech,

- **We use**: 2Co 4:2,3,13, Jn10:24 16:25,29 1Co 14:19 Col 4:4
- **Boldness**: 2Co 7:4 10:1 Ac 4:13,29-31 9:27,29 14:3 Eph 6:19,20 Php 1:20 1Th 2:2 1Ti 3:13
- [2 Corinthians 3 Resources](#) - Multiple Sermons and Commentaries

Related Passages:

Romans 15:13 Now may the **God of hope** fill you with all joy and peace in believing, **so that you will abound in hope** by the power of the Holy Spirit.

Ephesians 1:18 I pray that the eyes of your heart may be enlightened, **so that you will know what is the hope of His calling**, what are the riches of the glory of His inheritance in the saints,

Ephesians 4:4 There is one body and one Spirit, just as also you were called in **one hope of your calling**;

Colossians 1:5 because of **the hope laid up for you in heaven**, of which you previously heard in the word of truth, the gospel

1 Thessalonians 5:8 But since we are of the day, let us be sober, having put on the breastplate of faith and love, and as **a helmet, the hope of salvation**.

Hebrews 6:17-19 In the same way God, desiring even more to show to the heirs of the promise the unchangeableness of His purpose, interposed with an oath, 18 so that by two unchangeable things in which it is impossible for God to lie, we who have taken refuge would have strong encouragement to **take hold of the hope set before us**. 19 This **hope** we have as an anchor of the soul, **a hope** both sure and steadfast and one which enters within the veil,

Hebrews 7:19 (for the Law made nothing perfect), and on the other hand there is a bringing in of **a better hope**, through which we draw near to God.

A MORE GLORIOUS COVENANT A MORE GLORIOUS HOPE A SPEECH THAT IS BOLD

Keep the **context** of this chapter in mind - Paul is defending himself against accusations that he is a false teacher (see 2Co 3:1 2 3 4-note). As he defends himself by identifying himself with the New Covenant (2Co 3:5,6+), he then launches into an explanation regarding the superiority of the New Covenant over the Old Covenant because (as inferred from the context) false teachers were promoting the Old Covenant as necessary for salvation.

Because of Paul's focus on the superiority of the New Covenant, John MacArthur has referred to 2Co 3:6-18 as a "shrunk version of the book of Hebrews", primarily because Hebrews repeatedly emphasizes that compared with the Old Covenant of Law the New Covenant of grace is BETTER:

1. **better** covenant (He 7:22+),
2. **better** hope (He 7:19+, He 8:6+),
3. **better** promises (He 8:6+),
4. **better** sacrifice (He 9:23+, He 12:24+),
5. **better** possession (He 10:34+),
6. **better** country (He 11:16+),
7. **better** resurrection (He 11:35+)
8. **better** provision (He 11:40+).

As an aside, recall that in Hebrews the writer clearly teaches that salvation in the Old Testament was **never** based on keeping the Old Covenant laws and rituals and ceremonies, but instead was **always** based on Christ's death, burial and resurrection which provided the payment for [~redemption] the forgiveness (see [aphesis](#) and [aphiemi](#)) of OT saints which was given in a sense "*on credit*" (providing "*retroactive redemption*") to those who like Abram believed God (Ge 15:6+, He 9:15+ where "*He*" refers to Christ, a truth also reiterated in Ro 3:25, 26+, cp God's provision of the way of salvation in His *protevangelium* [first giving of the Gospel] in Ge 3:15+ where "*you...you*" = Satan). See table below summarizing Paul's points of contrast between the New Covenant and the Old Covenant. (See related studies - New Covenant in the Old Testament; Why the New is Better; Abrahamic vs Old vs New)

Warren Wiersbe introduces this last section of chapter 3 reminding us that "The Bible is basically a "picture book," because it uses symbols, similes, metaphors, and other literary devices to get its message across. In this paragraph, Paul used the experience of Moses and his veil to illustrate the glorious freedom and openness of the Christian life under grace. Paul saw in Moses' experience a deeper spiritual meaning than you and I would have seen as we read Exodus 34:29-35+. ([Bible Exposition Commentary](#))

Therefore ([3767](#)) (**oun**) is a **term of conclusion** which should always prompt us to ask "*What's it there for?*" and thereby to encourage us to re-read the preceding **context**. In this case Paul arrives at his conclusion based upon the surpassing, never ending,

permanent and irrevocable glory of the **New Covenant** based on grace not law or works. Recall that the false teachers in Corinth were attempting to discredit God's **ministry of the Spirit** and **of righteousness** (2Co 3:8,9+) through His apostle. But Paul had a firm hold on the truth of the superiority of the New Covenant compared to the Old Covenant. His firm grasp of this glorious truth in turn "held him firm", and gave him a sure confidence on one hand to boldly proclaim the New Covenant Gospel of grace and on the other hand to irresistibly refute the false teachers who were trying to say one needed to adhere to the Old Covenant of Law (and works) in order to attain righteousness before and acceptance with God.

Paul has just described the New Covenant and based upon its surpassing glory Paul has **hope**, an absolute assurance that God will do good (in this case through those who enter the New Covenant), and this **hope** fuels his bold speech.

Bible in Basic English has a pithy paraphrase "Having then such a hope, we keep nothing back."

Guzik - Since our hope is in a more glorious covenant, we can have a more glorious hope. Because of this hope, Paul can use great boldness of speech. The old covenant restricted and separated men from God; the new covenant brings us to God and enables us to come boldly to Him. ([2 Corinthians 3](#))

Having (present tense - continually having) **such a hope** - The ESV, Amplified and NLT render it "**Since** we have such a hope." The UBS Handbook comments that when translating this passage into other languages "The expression *have... hope* may have to be translated by an idiom: "*we place our hearts in God regarding this matter*." ([UBS Handbook](#)) **Hope** is an absolute assurance that every glorious promise of the New Covenant will come to pass (cf "full assurance" in Heb 6:11+). What a dramatic contrast with the Old Covenant which had no hope for it was a ministry of death (2Co 3:7+), a ministry of condemnation (2Co 3:9+), a letter which kills (2Co 3:6+).

Amplified has "*such glorious hope, such joyful and confident expectation*" which is a good description of how we feel when our eyes are fixed on Jesus, our minds are daily being renewed by His Word and we are filled with (controlled by) His Spirit. **How is your "hope quotient" today?**

Having ([2192](#)) (**echo**) means to possess and here in the present tense means Paul continually had a firm grasp on the **hope** found only in the New Covenant. Stated another way, the truth Paul possessed, possessed him and protected him against the lies of the false teachers and the fiery darts of the Wicked One (Ep 6:16KJV+).

THOUGHT- Beloved, this is why it is so critical for you to make it your daily practice to get into the truth of God's Word so that it might "get into you" and fortify your faith (Ro 10:17+) to fight the good fight of faith (1Ti 1:18, 6:12 so that you might also be able to declare 2Ti 4:7+ at the end of your short time on earth). You are drinking God's "pure milk" (1Pe 2:2+) and eating His soul nourishing "bread" daily (Mt 4:4+) daily...aren't you?

Hope ([1680](#)) (**elpis**) is an absolute certainty of future good - in context of the New Covenant - the absolute, eternal forgiveness of sins as far as east is from west (Ps 103:12), abundant life now and eternal life in the future. **Hope** is the desire of some good with the expectation of obtaining it (eg, our future resurrection bodies - read Ro 8:18, 19+, Ro 8:20, 21+ Ro 8:22, 23+ Ro 8:24 25+). In the OT there are several Hebrew words translated "**hope**" but each has the idea of inviting us to look ahead eagerly with confident expectation, the same idea conveyed by **elpis**. Each Hebrew word for "**hope**" calls for patience, reminding us that the fulfillment of our hope lies in the future ("hold on...the best is yet to come"). **Elpis in the Corinthian letters** - 1 Co. 9:10; 1 Co. 13:13; 2 Co. 1:7; 2 Co. 3:12; 2 Co. 10:15;

- See [Short Excursus on Hope below](#).

We use great boldness in our speech - Many commentators feel Paul's use of **we** refers to himself, but one cannot be dogmatic. **Use** ([chraomai](#)) is in the present tense indicating Paul was continually employing **great boldness** in his speech, "courageous, confident, outspoken proclamation of the gospel, without reluctance or wavering no matter how severe the opposition" (MacArthur). Sound doctrine, Biblical truth of the surpassing glory of the New Covenant undergirds and fortifies one's boldness. Ultimately Paul's **great boldness** was not from his "adequacy" but from the strengthening of his inner man by the Spirit (cf Eph 3:16+ and Acts 4:31+ = filled with Spirit > speak with boldness). Note he says not just **boldness** but **great boldness**. **Phillips** paraphrases it "*We are quite frank*." **NET** translates it "*we employ great openness of speech*" **NJB** has "*we can speak with complete fearlessness*."

Wiersbe - When you are a part of a ministry of increasing glory, you can be bold in what you say; and Paul did not hide his boldness. Unlike Moses, Paul had nothing to conceal. ([Bible Exposition Commentary](#))

Do we as believers really believe we have nothing to conceal but every reason for expressing fearless candor and great freedom in

speaking to the lost about the glorious good news in the New Covenant? As alluded to above, one of the "effects" of being filled with the Spirit (Ep 5:18+) is "altered speech" (cf Ep 5:19+ where first word in Greek = "speaking") and specifically in the context of our conduct among the lost, boldness in proclamation of the New Covenant (Study boldness in the book of Acts - Acts 2:4+, Acts 4:8+ Acts 4:31-33+ Stephen in Acts 6:5, 8, 10+; Acts 9:27-28+ Acts 13:46+ Acts 14:3+ Acts 18:26+ Acts 19:8+ - see Paul's prayer in prison - Ep 6:19 20+)

Vincent comments on Paul's **bold, open speech** noting that "The contrast is with the dissembling (the concealing of facts or intentions under some pretense) with which his adversaries charged him."

John MacArthur says that Paul statement that **we use great confidence** "is saying "I am so confident of New Covenant promise by faith in Jesus Christ, I am so confident that it fills the heart with hope that the old covenant never gives, it takes away the despair and the fear and the doubt and it places joy and peace and hope. I am so confident that I am courageous and outspoken and bold and without reluctance and without hesitation no matter what kind of severe reaction I get. I can't hold back, I can't hesitate."...So Paul says the New Covenant gives **hope**, is **permanent**, provides **righteousness** and gives **life**. ([The Glory of the New Covenant Part 5](#))

Adam Clarke - We speak not only with all confidence, but with all imaginable plainness; keeping back nothing; disguising nothing; concealing nothing: and here we differ greatly from the Jewish doctors, and from the Gentile philosophers, who affect obscurity, and endeavour, by figures, metaphors, and allegories, to hide every thing from the vulgar. But we wish that all may hear; and we speak so that all may understand. ([2 Corinthians 3](#))

Chrysostom - We every where speak freely, concealing nothing, reserving nothing, suspecting nothing, but speaking out plainly: and we have no fear of dazzling your eyes, as Moses did those of the Jews.

Wiersbe - When you are free to speak, then there is no fear and you have confidence. A believer can come with boldness (same word as "confidence") to the throne of grace (He 4:16+) with openness and freedom and not be afraid. We have this boldness because of the shed blood of Jesus Christ (He 10:19+). Therefore, we should not cast away our confidence, no matter what the circumstances might be. We should not have confidence in ourselves, because we are too prone to fail; but we should have confidence in Jesus Christ who never fails. ([Bible Exposition Commentary](#))

Writing to the saints at Thessalonica **Paul** declared that...

after we (Paul, Silvanus and Timothy - 1Th 1:1+) had already suffered and been mistreated (**hubrizo** = insulted, treated injuriously with insolence, even with wicked violence and with reproach) in Philippi, as you know, we had the **boldness** in our God to **speak** (Greek = parrhesiazomai = to be frank in their utterances, confident in their spirit and demeanor as they spoke) to you the Gospel of God amid much opposition (agon [English "agony"] - intense struggle like the intense contest for victory in Olympic games with either physical or nonphysical force and against strong opposition). (1Th 2:2+)

Confidence ([3954](#))(**parrhesia/parresia** from **pás** = all + **rhesis** = speech, act of speaking) is literally all speech or speaking all things and thereby conveys the idea of freedom to say all. The basic idea in the word is freedom of speech, when the word flowed freely. It is that attitude of openness that stems from freedom and lack of fear ("shaking" fear - godly, reverential fear is always appropriate) means in essence the freedom to say all. The Greeks used **parrhesia** of those who had the right to speak openly in the assembly. Other nuances of **parrhesia** include speaking with plainness, openness and confidence (Acts 2:29), speaking publicly or in the open (Jn 7:13, 11:54, 18:20) or even something done in public (Jn 7:26, Col 2:15-note) **Confidence** - Boldness. Courage. Fearlessness in the face of danger. A state of mind marked by freedom from uncertainty, diffidence, or embarrassment. A trusting or reliance. An assurance of mind or firm belief in the integrity, stability or veracity of the truth and reality of the superiority and sufficiency and spiritually stabilizing impact in the New Covenant of grace.

In classical writings slaves did not have the privilege of bold speech before their master. How different is the speech of believers, who as bondservants of Christ, servants of the Most High God, possess all the privileges of a son or daughter in the family and can speak endearments openly even such intimate words "**Abba**" (Aramaic for "**father**" and like our English "Daddy" or "Papa")! (Used by Jesus in Gethsemane - Mk 14:36+ and used by believers - Ro 8:15+ Ga 4:6+) The hope of the New Covenant far from constraining believers, liberated them and enabled them to speak openly and with complete confidence before God because of their exalted, eternal position in Christ, God's beloved Son.

THE OLD COVENANT	THE NEW COVENANT
Written with ink on tablets of stone 2Cor 3:3-note	Written with the Spirit on tablets of human hearts 2Cor 3:3
Adequacy from Self 2Cor 3:5-note	Adequacy from God 2Cor 3:5
The Letter (law) Kills (3000 @ Sinai – Ex 32:28) 2Cor 3:6-note	The Spirit gives Life (3000 @ Pentecost – Acts 2:41) 2Cor 3:6
Ministry of Death (glory...fading) 2Cor 3:8-note	Ministry of the Spirit (more glory) 2Cor 3:8
Ministry of Condemnation 2Cor 3:9-note	Ministry of Righteousness 2Cor 3:9
No glory (~glory of moon) 2Cor 3:10-note	Glory that surpasses (~glory of sun) 2Cor 3:10
Fading Glory: Temporary 2Cor 3:11-note	Remains in Glory: Permanent 2Cor 3:11
Reading of Old Covenant hearts veiled 2Cor 3:14,15-note	Turn to the Lord Veil is removed in Christ 2Cor 3:16-note
(By implication Bondage)	Where Spirit of the Lord is Liberty 2Cor 3:17-note
Glory fading on Moses' face No Internal Transformation 2Co 3:13-note	Glory going to glory on saints' faces Continual Internal transformation by the Spirit 2Cor 3:18-note

2 Corinthians 3:13 and are not like Moses, who used to put a veil over his face so that the sons of Israel would not look intently at the end of what was fading away ([NASB: Lockman](#))

Greek : kai ou kathaper Mouses etitheis (3SIAI) kalumma epi to prosopon autou, pros to me atenisai (AAN) tous huiou Israel eis to telos tou katargoumenou (PPPNSG).

Amplified: Nor [do we act] like Moses, who put a veil over his face so that the Israelites might not gaze upon the finish of the vanishing [splendor which had been upon it]. ([Lockman](#))

ESV: not like Moses, who would put a veil over his face so that the Israelites might not gaze at the outcome of what was being brought to an end. ([ESV](#))

KJV: And not as Moses, which put a veil over his face, that the children of Israel could not steadfastly look to the end of that which is abolished:

NET: and not like Moses who used to put a veil over his face to keep the Israelites from staring at the result of the glory that was made ineffective. ([NET Bible](#))

NIV: We are not like Moses, who would put a veil over his face to keep the Israelites from gazing at it while the radiance was fading away.. ([NIV - IBS](#))

NLT: We are not like Moses, who put a veil over his face so the people of Israel would not see the glory, even though it was destined to fade away. ([NLT - Tyndale House](#))

Phillips: We are not like Moses, who veiled his face to prevent the Israelites from seeing its fading glory. ([Phillips: Touchstone](#))

Wuest: and not even as Moses put a covering over his face to the end that the sons of Israel should not fix their gaze upon the termination of that which is passing away.

Young's Literal: and are not as Moses, who was putting a veil upon his own face, for the sons of Israel not stedfastly to look to the end of that which is being made useless,

- Ex 34:33-35
- **Would not:** 2Co 3:18
- **At the:** Ro 10:4 Ga 3:23,24 Eph 2:14,15 Col 2:17 Heb 10:1-9
- [2 Corinthians 3 Resources](#) - Multiple Sermons and Commentaries

Related Passages: KEEP THE CONTEXT IN MIND - Note that the passage below (Exodus 34:29-35+) describes Moses' **second** return from 40 days in God's presence on Mount Sinai, the **first** return ending dramatically with Moses smashing the two tablets when he saw the worship of the golden calf (Ex 32:19, Dt 9:16-17). At that time there was no description of glory radiating from his face. Recall also that on the first 40 days on Mount Sinai, it was Yahweh Who cut the stone tablets and wrote on them (Ex 32:15-16), and Joshua accompanied him up the mountain part of the way (Ex 24:13, Ex 32:17). Now on the second 40 day visit to Mount Sinai Moses was to cut out two stone tablets, ascend the mountain alone (no Joshua in Ex 34:1, 3) and write down the words of the covenant (God had written the first time) (Ex 34:27). And now we come to the description in Exodus 34:29-35 when Moses' returns to the Israelite camp after his second 40 days with Yahweh. This time Moses' face shone because of his speaking with Yahweh (Could this be related to Moses' prayer in Ex 33:18 "Show me Your glory"?). This is where the passages below pick up.

Exodus 34:29-35+ It came about when Moses was coming down from Mount Sinai (and the two tablets of the testimony were in Moses' hand as he was coming down from the mountain), that Moses did not know that **the skin of his face shone** because of his speaking with Him. 30 So when Aaron and all the sons of Israel saw Moses, behold, **the skin of his face shone**, and they were **afraid** to come near him. 31 Then Moses called to them, and Aaron and all the rulers in the congregation returned to him; and Moses spoke to them. 32 Afterward all the sons of Israel came near, and he commanded them to do everything that the LORD had spoken to him on Mount Sinai. 33 When Moses had finished speaking with them (the sons of Israel), **he put a veil over his face**. 34 But whenever Moses went in before the LORD to speak with Him, **he would take off the veil until he came out**; and whenever he came out and spoke to the sons of Israel what he had been commanded, 35 the sons of Israel would see **the face of Moses**, that the skin of Moses' face shone. So **Moses would replace the veil over his face** until he went in to speak with Him.

DISCLAIMER - As explained below, this is not an easy section to interpret and there is great variation in the commentaries.

Paul Brown makes the following statement (with which I agree) about the difficulty of this chapter and especially verses 13-18 (although I personally think v18 is straightforward) (**Note:** This quote is repeated at beginning of sections v12-14 and v15-17).

If we agree with **F F Bruce** that "of all the Pauline epistles, 2 Corinthians is probably the one which presents most problems to the interpreter", **we might also add that chapter three is probably the most difficult to interpret, with verses 12-18 presenting the greatest problems**. Van Unnik says about them, 'The path to their right interpretation is beset with a great many difficulties and there is hardly a single point on which expositors agree.'² In her recent, detailed study of this passage Linda Belleville says, "Almost every exegete who has studied 2 Cor 3:12-18 has struggled with its apparent lack of cohesion and its exegetical ambiguities",³ and when AT Hanson comes to v 17 he says, "we now approach what could be called the Mount Everest of Pauline texts as far as difficulty is concerned."⁴ This article does not aspire to scale Everests, but presents a modest excursion into the foothills and hopes to cast some light on Paul's use of the veil in these verses. ([Exegesis 16:Lifting the Veil - Paul Brown - Foundations 31](#))

Hanson full quote say that chap. 3 is "the Mount Everest of Pauline texts as far as difficulty is concerned—or should we rather call it the sphinx among texts, since its difficulty lies in its enigmatic quality rather than its complexity?" ("The Midrash in II Corinthians 3," 19).

And are not like Moses Who used to put a veil over his face ([prosopon](#)) **so that the sons of Israel would not look intently** ([atenizo](#)) **at the end** ([telos](#)) **of what was fading away** ([katargeo](#) - present tense - continually fading) - Paul has just stated they

use **great boldness in our speech** (2Cor 3:12). Now he states they are **not like Moses who used to put a veil over his face**. Note that the verb **put** is in the imperfect tense picturing him as doing this action over and over.

My interpretation of **not look intently** - While Moses was speaking to God or to the sons of Israel, the veil was not covering his radiant face. The glory on his face was a fading glory and so he put a veil on his face. Some commentators say he did this because they were afraid of his shining face (see [passages above](#)) and that is why he put on a veil. However if you keep reading [passages above](#) it is clear that Moses assuages their fears and the leaders and the people came near to him. After he spoke to them, he would put on a veil and he repeats this process according to these [passages](#). Notice that Ex 34:33-35 suggest that after Moses spoke to the people, he would put the veil back over his face. Clearly this would prevent the Israelites from seeing the glory of his face but other than this obvious effect Moses gives no specific explanation of why he put the veil over his face. This is where Paul fills in the blanks so to speak, explaining the purpose was that the sons of Israel might not see the end of the glory which was fading. Now why did Moses not want them to see the end of the glory? That is where the commentaries really begin to diverge in interpretation. What follows is first a summary of five interpretations and then explanations from commentators I frequently quote and highly respect. Ultimately you will have to pray about this and ask the Spirit to show you which is the most likely interpretation.

[Lexham Research Commentary on 2 Corinthians](#) writes "Paul says the purpose of Moses' veil was that the Israelites "might not stare at the end (telos) of what was transitory (katargeō)" (2 Cor 3:13). **There are at least five different interpretations of this phrase.** (1) **The most common understanding** is that the glory on Moses' face faded between his encounters with Yahweh, and he veiled it to keep the Israelites from seeing it fade so as "to avoid the people's disappointment" (Martin 1986, 68) or keep them from "disparage[ing] Moses as being of no more than temporary importance" (Barrett 1973, 119)). (2) **A second interpretation** is that Moses veiled his face to protect Israel from God's judgment. In this view, the meaning of [telos](#) is "consequence," and the veiling was an act of mercy. In contrast to Moses, Paul can boldly proclaim the gospel since the Spirit brings life rather than judgment or death (Hafemann 2005, 359). (3) **A third view** is that Moses' veil kept the Israelites from recognizing that the old covenant performed "only an interim function until its supersession by the Christ-event" (Thrall 1994, 258). (4) **Harris** offers a fourth interpretation of 2 Cor 3:13, in which the veil kept the people from gazing in amazement until the glory faded. Moses' repeated action taught the people that the Sinaitic covenant was only a temporary arrangement, and by putting on the veil, he "visually dramatized the coming eclipse of the glory of the Sinaitic covenant" (Harris 2008, 462–63). (5) **A fifth interpretation** is that Moses' veiling was an "acted parable" that demonstrated to the people that their sins had made them unable and unworthy to view even temporary glory without interruption" (Harris 2005, 298). ([See more on this topic below](#))

THOUGHT - When Paul preached the New Covenant, he did not put a veil over his face as Moses did when he was finished speaking to Israel. Every minister of the New Covenant (and we are all in some sense ministers for our "pulpit" is wherever we find ourselves in our daily life) does not have to hide his face, for the glory of the Gospel will never grow dim or fade away. Paul can be bold and has no need of a veil, for he has nothing to hide (and neither do we beloved!) in proclamation of the Gospel.

John MacArthur has some interesting comments, although they are a bit [enigmatic](#) - Moses veiled himself to hide from the frightened Israelites the blazing glory that shone forth from his face (Ex. 34:30+ = "they were afraid" ED: I DISAGREE WITH THIS COMMENT - SEE [RELATED PASSAGES ABOVE](#)). Though the glory of the old covenant was designed to fade in the face of the more glorious new covenant, it was nevertheless a devastating, brilliant, blinding glory (ED: CAREFUL READING OF THE [EXODUS PASSAGE](#) DOES NOT SUGGEST IT WAS A "BLINDING GLORY."). As Moses had been unable to see the glory of God because it would have destroyed him (Ex. 33:20), so the partial glory on Moses' face was too much for the people to look on (ED: AGAIN THE TEXT DOES NOT CLEARLY MAKE THAT STATEMENT). Moses' veiling of his face was so that the sons of Israel would not look intently at what Paul calls the **end** of what was **fading away**. That expression symbolizes the shadowy, veiled, diminishing nature of the glorious Mosaic covenant (ED: I THINK THIS IS A BETTER EXPLANATION FOR VEILING THEN FEAR OR POTENTIAL BLINDNESS). It was replete with types, pictures, symbols, and mystery. It could never be fully understood without the new covenant, connected to the person and work of the coming Messiah (ED: cf Col 2:17+). Even the inspired writers of the Old Testament did not fully understand everything that they wrote (1 Peter 1:10–12+ - ED: AND AS STATED ABOVE MOSES MADE NO ATTEMPT TO EXPLAIN WHY HE PUT THE VEIL ON AFTER SPEAKING TO THE ISRAELITES). ([MNTC-2 Cor](#))

Guzik explains that "From [reading the account](#) in Ex 34:29-35+, one might first get the impression that Moses wore a **veil** after his meetings with God so the people wouldn't be afraid to come near him and that it was to protect them from seeing the shining face of Moses (ED: AS SUGGESTED BY DR MACARTHUR). But here Paul explains the real purpose of the **veil**: not so the shining face of Moses would be hidden, but so that the *diminishing glory of his face* would not be observed, because the *glory was fading*. (ED: NOW GUZIK INTERPRETS THIS AND I TEND TO AGREE) The *passing glory of the Old Covenant* contrasts with the *enduring glory of the New Covenant*. ([2 Corinthians 3](#))

IVPBCNT - Moses' glory had to be covered—unlike Paul's forthright speech (2Co 3:12)—and would always fade away—unlike the glory of Paul's message, revealed through the Spirit who came to reside in believers. Jewish men in Paul's day did not cover their

heads unless they were ashamed or mourning.

Bruce Barton - Paul interpreted the veil over [Moses'] face as an effort on Moses' part to conceal the fact that the radiance of his face was fading away. In the fading away of this brilliance, Paul saw a sign that the old covenant, which Moses presented to the people, would also fade. ([Life Application Commentary - 2 Corinthians](#))

Homer Kent - Paul uses the incident at Sinai when Moses placed a veil over his face (Ex. 34:33–35) to illustrate his point. The KJV translation of Exodus 34:33 implies that Moses wore the veil while he was speaking with Israel, and then took it off. The supplied word "till" has been corrected to "when" in ASV, NASB, and NIV. **The idea of the passage is that Israel was allowed to see the radiant face of Moses when he was conveying God's word to them, but that he covered his face when he was finished.** Paul correctly understood the reason to be that Moses did not wish the Israelites to be watching his face each time the glory faded away. ([2 Corinthians 2:14-4:18 The Glory of Christian Ministry - An Analysis](#))

J Vernon McGee - Now let's make this very clear again that the veil Moses put on his face was not because his face was shining with a glory so that they couldn't look at him. It was because that glory was beginning to fade away. The fact that Moses' face shone was a glorious thing, but the glory began to fade. ([2 Corinthians 3 Commentary](#))

Charles Swindoll has an interesting comment - Yet 2 Corinthians 3:13 says that Moses kept the veil over his face to cover up the fact that the glory was fading, indicating that outside the very presence of God, our own finite, sinful inadequacy cannot maintain the glory of God. After all, it was God's glory, which He shared with Moses, not Moses' self-generated glory. ([Insights on 1&2 Corinthians](#))

Albert McShane - This boldness and confidence of the gospel preacher (2Co 3:12) is in sharp contrast to the veiled face of Moses at the time of the giving of the Law. In this covering of the face of Moses, Paul sees a picture of the veil that is upon the Jews as they read the Law (**ED:** PAUL DEFINITELY USES THE VEIL AS A METAPHOR IN 2Cor 3:14-15). ([What the Bible Teaches - 2 Corinthians](#))

W Mundle on the **veil** - Paul disregards the fear motive. He interprets the passage to mean that Moses put on the veil in order that the Israelites might not see the end of the temporary radiance. The passing glory (doxa) of the old covenant is contrasted with the eternal glory of the new (2 Cor. 3:11). (NIDNTT)

Marvin Vincent comments that when one looks at Ex 34:30-35 "The true sense of the Hebrew is given by the Septuagint --"When he ceased speaking he put a veil on his face;" not because the Israelites could not endure the radiance, but that they should not see it fade away. Whenever Moses went into the presence of God he removed the veil, and his face was again illumined, and shone while he delivered God's message to the people. Then, after the delivery of the message, and during his ordinary association with the people, he kept his face covered. (As an aside, he would have had no problem with masking mandates in our 2020-21 COVID-19 world!)....Paul's comparison is between the ministry of Moses, interrupted by intervals of concealment, and the gospel ministry, which is marked by frank and full proclamation. The opposition is twofold: (1) Between the veiled and the unveiled ministry, as regards the mere fact of concealment in the one case, and openness in the other. (2) Between the ministry which was suspended by the veiling that its end might not be seen, and that which proceeds 'from glory to glory,' having no termination (Alford). The face of Moses needed a continually renewed illumination: in the face of Christ the glory abides forever. ([2 Corinthians 3](#))

Murray Harris notes it is interesting that "in rabbinic tradition the glory of Moses' face was undiminished right up to the day of his death when he was 120 years old." (As someone has quipped "*Who wants to follow a leader who is losing his glory?*") ([Expositor's Bible Commentary](#)).

F W Grant has stated "The glory on the face of Moses must give way to the glory in Another Face."

Warren Wiersbe - When you are a part of a ministry of increasing glory, you can be bold in what you say ; and Paul did not hide his boldness (2Co 3:12). Unlike Moses, Paul had nothing to conceal. When Moses came down from communing with God (**ED:** THE SECOND TIME-[SEE PASSAGES ABOVE](#)), his face shone, reflecting the glory of God. When he spoke to the people, they could see the glory on his face, and they were impressed by it. But Moses knew that the glory would fade away; so, when he finished teaching the people, he put on a veil. This prevented them from seeing the glory disappear....The word translated **end** in 2 Corinthians 3:13 has two meanings: "**purpose**" and "**finish**." The veil prevented the people from seeing the "**finish**" of the glory as it faded away. But the veil also prevented them from understanding the "**purpose**" behind the fading glory. The Law had just been instituted, and the people were not ready to be told that this glorious system was only temporary (**ED:** WHILE THAT IS A POSSIBLE INTERPRETATION IT IS SOMEWHAT SUPPOSITIONAL, THE NEXT PASSAGE SAYS THEIR MINDS WERE HARDENED WHICH ADDS SOME CREDENCE TO WIERSBE'S INTERPRETATION.). The truth that the covenant of Law was a preparation for something greater was not yet made known to them. ([Bible Exposition Commentary](#))

In another place **Wiersbe** writes "Certainly there was glory to the OT ministry. Glory filled the temple; the glory of God hovered over

the people in the wilderness. The temple and its ceremonies, and the very giving of the Law to Moses, all had glory attached to them. But it was a fading glory, not a lasting glory. Paul cites [the experience of Moses](#) from Ex. 34:29–35. Moses had been in God's presence, and His glory was reflected on his face. But Moses knew that this glory would fade, so he wore a veil over his face whenever talking to the people (ED: THIS IS NOT CLEAR - I THINK MOSES TOOK IT OFF WHEN HE SPOKE AND PUT IT BACK ON AFTER HE SPOKE - Ex 34:33KJV MIGHT SUGGEST THIS BUT ALL OTHER TRANSLATIONS SAY WHEN MOSES FINISHED SPEAKING HE WOULD PUT THE VEIL ON HIS FACE); lest they see the glory fade and lose confidence in his ministry (ED: I DON'T AGREE WITH THIS STATEMENT AS THERE IS NO SCRIPTURAL SUPPORT). (It is commonly taught, but in error, that Moses wore the veil to avoid frightening the people. Note 2Co 3:13, "And not as Moses did, who put a veil over his face so no one could see the glory fade away" (TLB). God never meant for the glory of the Old Covenant to remain; it was to fade away before the abounding glory of the Gospel. If the ministry of condemnation (the Law) was glorious, then the ministry of righteousness (the Gospel) is even more glorious! Paul needs no veil; he has nothing to hide. The glory of the Gospel is there! ([Wiersbe's Expository Outlines](#))

ESV Study Bible on **at the end of what was fading away** - Though commentators differ as to what this means, the most likely interpretation is that Moses put a veil over his face so that the Israelites would not see that the glory was gradually fading, signifying the temporary nature of the old covenant (the "outcome" was that it "was being brought to an end," or fading away; 2 Cor. 3:7, 13). ([ESV Study Bible](#))

Broomall on 2Co 3:13 - We have here the reason for the "great boldness" of Christians. Moses used to put (the verb is in the imperfect tense) a veil on his face so that the Israelites could not see the end of the fading splendor (RSV). In Paul's inspired interpretation of the OT, the evanescent glory that shone from Moses' face after his communion with God becomes typical of the passing glory of the old dispensation. ([2 Corinthians 3](#))

Bernard ([2 Corinthians 3](#)) makes an interesting comment on 2 Cor 3:13 - "The A.V., "could not steadfastly look to the end of that which was abolished," evidently takes [telos](#) as standing for Christ, the fulfilment of the Mosaic law (Ro 10:4, cf similar thought in Jesus' declaration in Mt 5:17+)." Bernard's comment is worth considering because the word for **end** ([telos](#)) in the phrase **at the end of what was fading away** is the same word Paul used in Romans 10:4+ "For Christ is the **end** ([telos](#)) of the law for righteousness to everyone who believes." The OT (all the OT types, shadows, sacrifices, festivals, etc) pointed to Christ (Col 2:16-17+). He was the "end" of the OT law, for He fulfilled the law.

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+).

Face ([4383](#)) ([prosopon](#) from [prós](#) = toward + [ops](#) = the eye or face) is literally the eye toward, the front part of one's head, the countenance (Latin ~ *con* = with + *teneo* = to hold, literally the contents of a body and then the outline which constitutes the whole figure, the face as expressing a person's character or mood). One of the most notable uses of [prosopon](#) is found in the Septuagint translation of Numbers 6 in the famous Aaronic blessing "The Lord make His **face** (Lxx = [prosopon](#)) shine on you, and be gracious to you (Nu 6:25)." **Dwight L Moody** commenting on the Aaronic Blessing said: Here is a benediction that can go all the world over, and can give all the time without being impoverished. Every heart may utter it: it is the speech of God: every letter may conclude with it; every day may begin with it; every night may be sanctified by it. Here is blessing—keeping—shining—the uplifting upon our poor life of all heaven's glad morning. It is the Lord Himself Who brings this bar of music from heaven's infinite anthems **Comment:** Indeed when Jehovah-Jesus makes His face to shine upon us as we meditate on His glory and beauty in His living and active Word, we are benefactors of His **grace**

and experience a change in our **face**...from one degree of glory to another!

Look intently (816) (**atenizo** from **a** = intensifies + **teino** = stretch, strain) means to fix one's gaze on something or stare at something (2Co 3:7+, cf eyes "fixed on" Jesus in Lk 4:20+). Gaze earnestly. Look straight at something. The sons of Israel could not look directly into Moses' face because of the intensity of the supernatural glory his skin reflected. Moses' face certainly would have made a "great endorsement" for beauty creams that promise to make your face radiant (but this of course would have been "false advertising" for the glory was from presiding in the presence of the Lord, not the putting of cream on one's face)!

The end (5056) (**telos**) speaks of a consummation, a goal achieved, a result attained, or a realization. **The end** (**to telos**) is an idiom which serves as a marker of the conclusion to what has preceded, in this case the termination of the glory on Moses' face.

Fading (2673) (**katargeo** from **kata** = intensifies meaning + **argeo** = to be idle or inactive from **argos** = ineffective, idle, inactive from **a** = without + **érgon** = work) literally means to reduce to inactivity. To cause something to come to an end. The present tense indicates the glory on Moses was continually fading which serves as prophetic picture of the temporary nature of the Old Covenant, the old "worn out" order.

Lexham Research Commentary on 2 Corinthians summary of interpretations of 2Co 3:13

- **Barrett** (1973, 119) contends that Paul contradicts the intention of Exod 34:29–35. While Exodus implies that Moses veiled himself because the people were afraid, Paul says Moses veiled himself so the Israelites wouldn't see the glory end and "thus be led to disparage Moses as being of no more than temporary importance." With other commentators, he notes that the Greek grammar supports the idea that "what was ending" was not the glory of Moses' face, but the old covenant, "the religious framework of law under which Israel was constituted as a people." ---- "2 Corinthians 3:12–13" BNTC: The Second Epistle to the Corinthians
- **Belleville** (1996, 102–107) calls 2 Cor 3:12–18 "a brief version of Paul's lengthier reflections" in Rom 9–11 on the Jews' rejection of Jesus. She says the purpose of Moses' veil was to prevent the Israelites from scrutinizing "the fading character of his ministry," and she understands the metaphor of the veil with respect to the Israelites (2 Cor 3:14) to refer to their mental sluggishness. She applies the metaphor both to the Mosaic covenant ("instead of lying over Moses' face, it now lies over the Mosaic covenant") and to the Israelites' hearts ("Paul portrays Israel's mental stupor in terms of a veil that has settled over the heart of the nation") (107). She notes, however, that the individual Israelite could respond personally to the Lord (and have the veil removed), even though the nation remained unresponsive (2 Cor 3:16). ---- "2 Corinthians 3:12–16" The IVP New Testament Commentary Series: 2 Corinthians
- **Garland** (1999, 191) evaluates the two basic alternatives for understanding Moses' veil: (1) Moses was hiding something or (2) Moses was protecting the people. Garland argues that interpretations of 2 Cor 3:13 that understand the glory (doxa) to have faded, misread the grammar: *katargeō* is a neuter or masculine participle and cannot modify the feminine noun *doxa*. He concludes that Hafemann's interpretation offers the best solution to the interpretative challenges (see below). He also notes that the people's problem was hardened hearts, "not simply dull minds." ---- "2 Corinthians 3:13" NAC: 2 Corinthians
- **Hafemann** (2000, 154–57) contrasts Paul's indirect reference to Moses' veiling in 2 Cor 3:7 with his reference in 2 Cor 3:13. He asserts that in the first instance, Israel could not look at Moses because their rebellion would have brought judgment on them. However, in the second instance, "Moses veiled himself both to embody this judgment and to mediate the mercy of the renewed covenant" (154). Because the Spirit had changed the Corinthians' attitude toward God, Paul did not need to "veil himself" before them. However, the Israelites were hardened to Paul's message of the new covenant just as they were to Moses' message of the old covenant: "From Sinai on, Israel has been hardened [by God!] to the revelation of God's glory in her midst" (156–57). This hardening is spiritual and moral, not intellectual. ---- "Excursus: The Glory and the Veil of Moses in Post-Biblical Judaism" Paul, Moses, and the History of Israel: The Letter/Spirit Contrast and the Argument from Scripture in 2 Corinthians 3; "The Boldness of Paul and the Veil of Moses" Paul, Moses, and the History of Israel: The Letter/Spirit Contrast and the Argument from Scripture in 2 Corinthians 3; "2 Corinthians 3:13" NIVAC: 2 Corinthians
- **Harris** (2005, 337) thinks Moses veiled his radiance to keep the Israelites from staring at his face "in utter amazement" until the brilliance faded. In his view, Moses' repeated action of veiling was a way to teach Israel that the covenant would eventually be eclipsed. Harris discusses several different interpretations of 2 Cor 3:13 in his NIGTC volume.---- "2 Corinthians 3:13" EBC: Romans—Galatians (Revised Edition); "2 Corinthians 3:12–13" EBC: Romans through Galatians; "2 Corinthians 3:13" NIGTC: The Second Epistle to the Corinthians
- **Martin** (1986, 68) discusses the possible meanings of *telos*, including "termination/end" and "goal/purpose." He concludes that the key word in the text is not "veil" (*kalumma*), but the verb *atenizō* ("to gaze"). The problem is that Israel "persisted in looking at a face that symbolized a 'ministration' ... which in turn was on the way out." The Israelites of Moses' day and the Jews of Paul's demonstrated "their obtuseness by looking to Moses as the final embodiment of God's salvation." ---- "2 Corinthians

3:13" WBC: 2 Corinthians

- **Scott** (2011, 78) contends that Moses' veil protected the people from the consequence (telos) of the glory: judgment for their hardened hearts. He also notes that God was the one who hardened the Israelites (2 Cor 3:14). In Scott's view, the veil over Israel's heart represents its obduracy, and Paul used the imagery "to show the historical continuity" between contemporary and OT Israel: "The original reason for the veil has not changed in all those centuries. The veil thus becomes a metonymy of effect (veiling) for cause (rebellious and unrepentant disposition)." ---- "2 Corinthians 3:12–16" UBCS: 2 Corinthians
- **Thrall** (1994, 257–58) identifies seven interpretations of Paul's understanding of Moses' veil. She prefers to see telos as "goal" or "final destiny" and argues that Moses' veil concealed from the Israelites the temporary nature of the old covenant. She argues that Moses' fading radiance symbolized "the impermanence of the Mosaic system," and Moses engaged in "some degree of intentional deception." ---- "2 Corinthians 3:13" ICC: A Critical and Exegetical Commentary on the Second Epistle to the Corinthians, Volume 1

Bob Utley - Paul makes several comparisons between Moses' covenant and Jesus' covenant.

1. the Lord of Exodus = the Spirit of Jesus
2. only Moses could approach God intimately; all believers in Christ can approach God
3. Moses' glory faded; Jesus' glory never fades
4. Moses' followers cannot see Christ in the OT; Jesus' followers through the Spirit can correctly interpret the OT in light of Christ
5. Moses brought the bondage of performance; Christ brings the freedom of grace
6. the letter of the Mosaic Law brings death; the Spirit of the New Covenant brings life, life eternal, life abundant
7. Moses' covenant was unable to produce a righteous people; Jesus' covenant does produce righteous people (both objectively in justification and subjectively in sanctification)

QUESTION - [Why did Moses have to wear a veil?](#)

ANSWER - When God began to give the Law to Israel, He did so accompanied by an overwhelming atmospheric display of thunder and lightning, smoke and fire, and the sound of a trumpet on the top of Mt. Sinai. This was to warn the people that He is holy and should not be approached. Anyone who tried to come up the mountain would be killed. (See Exodus 19 and Hebrews 12:18–19.)

When God delivers the [Ten Commandments](#), the people are so frightened that they are afraid to have God speak. They ask that [Moses](#) deliver the Law instead (Exodus 20:18–21). So Moses approaches God and receives the Law in Exodus 21–23. He delivers it to the people who are called to affirm their willingness to obey in Exodus 24:3,7.

In Exodus 25–31 Moses goes up to the mountain and receives the plans for the tabernacle and the tablets of stone on which God had engraved the Ten Commandments. Upon his return to the Israelite camp, Moses finds the Israelites worshipping the [golden calf](#) in violation of the Law they had just agreed to keep. In anger Moses smashes the stone tablets to bits and proceeds to address this sin in the camp (chapter 32.)

After the sin had been dealt with, God invites Moses to come back up the mountain to receive the Law again, engraved on new tablets of stone. Moses goes up the mountain alone and [meets with God](#). There he begs for pardon for the nation. God forgives and renews the covenant with Israel and once again provides a summary form of the Law, the Ten Commandments (see Exodus 34:1–27). Moses spends 40 days and nights with God on the mountain, and during that time he did not eat or drink (Ex 34:28). It seems that the glory of God sustained him.

After spending this extended amount of time with God, Moses comes down the mountain, and his face is shining with the glory of God (Exodus 34:29). We don't know exactly what this would have looked like, but it was frightening to his brother, [Aaron](#), the high priest; and to all the rest of the people. Because everyone was afraid to come near Moses (Ex 34:31), he wore a veil over his face to shroud the glory (Ex 34:33–35). (**ED: I DISAGREE - THE TEXT OF Ex 34:32 SAYS ISRAEL DID APPROACH MOSES. AFTER HE SPOKE THEN HE PUT THE VEIL OVER HIS FACE = Ex 34:33**) We are not told how long this lasted, but presumably the glory began to fade when Moses was no longer regularly going into the presence of God. How long Moses wore the veil is unknown, but the veil is not mentioned during the remaining years of his leadership—roughly 38 years.

The story of Moses' veil as recorded in the Old Testament is pretty straightforward. But Paul's mention of the veil in the New Testament has caused some to take a second look at the reason Moses chose to wear a veil. 2 Corinthians 3:13 says, "We are not like Moses, who would put a veil over his face to prevent the Israelites from seeing the end of what was passing away." This makes it sound as if Moses put the veil over his face to prevent the Israelites from seeing that the glory was beginning to fade. If this verse is read *in isolation*, it would indeed seem to imply that Moses' veil was designed to make people think his face was still shining, even when it wasn't; however, such an interpretation simply highlights the danger of reading verses in isolation. When 2 Corinthians

3:13 is read in the context of Paul's total argument, we find that it says nothing about Moses' motive for veiling his face.

In 2 Corinthians 3, Paul is contrasting the glories of the Old and New Covenants, and he concludes that the New Covenant is far more glorious.

- The [Old Covenant](#) was written on tablets of stone; the [New Covenant](#) is written on the heart (2Co 3:3).
- The Old Covenant is the letter of the Law, while the New Covenant is of the Spirit. The letter kills but the Spirit gives life (2Co 3:6).
- The Old Covenant brings condemnation; the New Covenant brings righteousness (2Co 3:9).
- The Old Covenant had a glory that faded; the New Covenant has a glory that remains and in fact so far surpasses it that the Old Covenant appears to have no glory by comparison (2Co 3:10–11).

2 Corinthians 3:12–13 gives another contrast. Ministers of the New Covenant are unlike Moses. New Covenant ministers proclaim the *unfading* glory in a bold manner, while Moses wore a veil to shield Israel from a *fading* glory. Paul is not giving us new insight into what Moses was doing. There is no new information in 2 Corinthians 3 concerning the events in Exodus 34. The main point is that the Old Covenant glory was temporary; the shining of Moses' face was destined to fade, just as the Law he proclaimed. The emphasis is that the veil prevented the Israelites from seeing a temporary glory, not that they were prevented from noticing that the glory was gradually fading, much less that Moses had some personal (perhaps prideful) reason for hiding the fact that it was fading. This paraphrase may help: Unlike Moses, who wore a veil to conceal the temporary glory of the Old Covenant, we boldly proclaim the permanent glory of the New Covenant.

Paul goes on to say that, just as Moses gave Israel the Law with a veil over his face, even today, when the Law is read, a veil descends over the hearts of unbelieving Israelites. Then and now, Israel's vision is obscured, and they are hard of heart. The "veil" prevents them from seeing the true glory of God. The veil is only taken away when they turn to Christ (2 Corinthians 3:14–16).

Paul ends his illustration of Moses' veil by making something of a comparison to Moses. Moses beheld the glory of God, and his face reflected God's glory; so New Testament believers behold the glory of God and are transformed into that glory (2 Corinthians 3:18).

Moses wore a veil for the reason stated in Exodus 34—his shining face frightened the Israelites. Paul uses that historical incident to contrast the ministries of the Old and New Covenants. [GotQuestions.org](#)

2 Corinthians 3:14 But their minds were hardened; for until this very day at the reading of the old covenant the same veil remains unlifted, because it is removed in Christ. ([NASB: Lockman](#))

Greek : alla eporothe (3SAPI) ta noemata auton. achri gar tes semeron hemeras to auto kalumma epi te anagnosei tes palaias diathekes menei (3SPAI) me anakaluptomenon (PPPNSN), oti en Christo katargeitai (3SPPI);

Amplified: In fact, their minds were grown hard and calloused [they had become dull and had lost the power of understanding]; for until this present day, when the Old Testament (the old covenant) is being read, that same veil still lies [on their hearts], not being lifted [to reveal] that in Christ it is made void and done away. ([Lockman](#))

ESV: But their minds were hardened. For to this day, when they read the old covenant, that same veil remains unlifted, because only through Christ is it taken away. ([ESV](#))

KJV: But their minds were blinded: for until this day remaineth the same veil untaken away in the reading of the old testament; which veil is done away in Christ.

NET: But their minds were closed. For to this very day, the same veil remains when they hear the old covenant read. It has not been removed because only in Christ is it taken away. ([NET Bible](#))

NIV: But their minds were made dull, for to this day the same veil remains when the old covenant is read. It has not been removed, because only in Christ is it taken away. ([NIV - IBS](#))

NLT: But the people's minds were hardened, and to this day whenever the old covenant is being read, the same veil covers their minds so they cannot understand the truth. And this veil can be removed only by believing in Christ. ([NLT - Tyndale House](#))

Phillips: But it was their minds really which were blinded, for even today when the old agreement is read to

them there is still a veil over their minds - though the veil has actually been lifted by Christ. ([Phillips: Touchstone](#))

Wuest: But their minds were hardened, for to this very day the same covering remains at the reading of the testament whose usefulness is over, it not being revealed that it [the covering] is being done away in Christ.

Young's Literal: but their minds were hardened, for unto this day the same vail at the reading of the Old Covenant doth remain unwithdrawn -- which in Christ is being made useless--

- **but their minds** - 2Co 4:3,4 Ps 69:23 Isa 6:9-10 Isa 26:10-12 Isa 42:18-20 Isa 44:18 Isa 56:10 Isa 59:10 Jer 5:21 Ezek 12:2 Mt 6:23 Mt 13:11-15 Jn 9:39-41 Jn 12:40 Ac 28:26,27 Ro 11:7-10,25
- **the same veil** 2Co 4:6 Isa 25:7 Mt 16:17 Lk 18:31, 32, 33, 34 24:25, 26, 27, 44, 45, 46 Jn 8:12 Jn 12:46 Ac 16:14 26:18 Eph 1:17 18 19 20
- [2 Corinthians 3 Resources](#) - Multiple Sermons and Commentaries

Related Passages:

Deuteronomy 29:4+ "Yet to this day the LORD has not given you a heart to know, nor eyes to see, nor ears to hear.

Psalms 69:23 May their eyes grow dim so that they cannot see, And make their loins shake continually.

Isaiah 6:9-10+ He said, "Go, and tell this people: 'Keep on listening, but do not perceive; Keep on looking, but do not understand.' 10 "Render the hearts of this people insensitive, Their ears dull, And their eyes dim, Otherwise they might see with their eyes, Hear with their ears, Understand with their hearts, And return and be healed."

Isaiah 44:18 They do not know, nor do they understand, for He has smeared over their eyes so that they cannot see and their hearts so that they cannot comprehend.

Isaiah 56:10 His watchmen are blind, All of them know nothing. All of them are mute dogs unable to bark, Dreamers lying down, who love to slumber;

Isaiah 59:10 We grope along the wall like blind men, We grope like those who have no eyes; We stumble at midday as in the twilight, Among those who are vigorous we are like dead men.

Jeremiah 5:21 'Now hear this, O foolish and senseless people, Who have eyes but do not see; Who have ears but do not hear.

Hebrews 3:8+ DO NOT HARDEN (present -continually, active - willful choice, subjunctive - possibility) YOUR HEARTS AS WHEN THEY PROVOKED ME, AS IN THE DAY OF TRIAL IN THE WILDERNESS,

Hebrews 3:15+ while it is said, "TODAY IF YOU HEAR HIS VOICE, DO NOT HARDEN YOUR HEARTS, AS WHEN THEY PROVOKED ME." (quotation from Ps 95:7-8.)

Hebrews 4:7+ He again fixes a certain day, "Today," saying through David after so long a time just as has been said before, "TODAY IF YOU HEAR HIS VOICE, DO NOT HARDEN YOUR HEARTS."

ISRAEL'S CALLOUSED MINDS

2Co 3:14-15 illustrate the danger of continually rejected the truth about God that has been revealed. The danger is judicial blindness of the eyes to spiritual truth and hardening of the heart which cannot comprehend spiritual truth. All men have had a chance from Paul writes that "the wrath of God is revealed from heaven against all ungodliness and unrighteousness of men who (actively, willfully, continually) suppress the truth in unrighteousness, 19 because **that which is known about God is evident within them for God made it evident to them.** 20 For (EXPLAINS HOW GOD MADE IT EVIDENT) since the creation of the world His invisible attributes, His eternal power and divine nature, have been clearly seen (CAN YOU SEE HOW DANGEROUS IS THE TEACHING OF EVOLUTION - IT FUTILELY ATTEMPTS TO EXPLAIN AWAY THE CREATOR!), being understood through what has been made, so that **they are without excuse.**(Ro 1:18-20) At the Great White Throne judgment of all unbelievers of all time, there will be NO EXCUSES like "God you didn't give me a chance," etc. He did give sinners a chance, but when they rejected Him, he placed a veil over their minds which made them incapable of comprehending spiritual truth. This is a frightening place to be!

But (alla) introduces a contrast. **UBS Handbook** notes that "The significance of the word **But** with which verse 14 begins should not be ignored. Paul hastens to add after 2Co 3:13 that Moses is not to be blamed; rather the peoples' hearts **were hardened.** Knox

makes the contrast even sharper, saying "*but in spite of that....*" ([UBS Handbook](#)) Paul will now make a spiritual application of Moses' veil.

Broomall - Paul here gives a spiritual application for the physical **veil** on Moses' face. That (LITERAL) **veil** now becomes a (FIGURATIVE) **veil** that keeps the Jews from understanding the true import of the old covenant as they read it. The word **noema**, here translated minds, is used almost exclusively in this epistle (2Co 2:11; 4:4; 10:5; 11:3; cf. Phil 4:7). The cognate verb form (**noeo**) designates "rational reflection or inner perception" (Arndt; cf. its use in Jn 12:40; 1Ti 1:7; Heb 11:3). The passive form **were blinded** ("*hardened*" in NAS) denotes the **judicial blindness** that befell Israel when the nation rejected Christ (cf. Jn 12:40; Rom 11:7, 25). Such blindness may be due to God (Cf. Rom 11:7, 8), Satan (Cf. II Cor 4:4), or man himself (Cf. Heb 3:8). The clause, which veil is done away in Christ, can also be translated as in the ASV or as in the RSV. The verb is done away (present passive of *katargeō*; see II Cor 3:7b) means that this veil of spiritual blindness is being removed from the hearts of believing Israelites the moment they "see" Christ as their Saviour (cf. Jn 9:40, 41). ([2 Corinthians 3](#))

Related Resource:

- [What is spiritual blindness? | GotQuestions.org](#)

Their minds (noema) were hardened ("petrified") - **NIV** = "their minds were made dull" **NET** = "their minds were closed." Somewhat more literally their thoughts were hardened, which is just a way of describing unbelief. The reason they did not understand the glory of the Old Covenant and God's intended purpose of the Law, was because they refused to believe! And when they refused to believe God's presence, power and provision (see Dt 29:2-3+) God hardened their hearts (Dt 29:4+) **Were hardened** is in the aorist tense which indicates that the hardening is a **past completed action** and the passive voice (divine passive) indicates the hardening is the effect of an "outside agent", in context the **judicial hardening** of the sons of Israel by God Who is perfectly just in all His ways

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+.

Gromacki makes an interesting statement that "The proclamation of the law produces and confirms blindness, whereas the preaching of the gospel removes blindness." That is not completely true. It is true if the law is rejected. But if it is received, the Spirit uses it to drive the person's will toward the Gospel. See [Purpose of the Law](#). Gromacki goes on to rightly explain that "Their spiritual hardness was caused by their own sin and stubbornness (Jn 9:39–41; Heb. 3:8), controlled by Satan (2Co 4:4), and confirmed by God (Isa. 6:9–10; cf. John 12:38–41; Rom. 11:7–8)." ([2 Corinthians - Stand Firm in the Faith](#))

Homer Kent - This dramatic procedure of Moses, however, was confronted by the spiritual hardness of Israelite hearts. Most of them failed to understand the true nature of the glory of Moses' face. Paul explains that the same spiritual dullness existed among the Jews of his day. Just as the veil hid the fading glory of Moses' face from Jewish observers, so the same sort of obscuring veil seemed to hide the true meaning of the old covenant when the Jews read it. They were unable to see that it was transient, that it pointed to Christ, and that it would be replaced by a new covenant. The obscuring veil of unbelief remains unlifted for Israel because it is removed only in connection with Christ and His work. Only by faith in Him can a person see the glory of the new covenant, as well as the replacement of the old by the new. ([2 Corinthians 2:14-4:18 The Glory of Christian Ministry - An Analysis](#))

Albert McShane - Just as Paul had switched from literal letters (2Co 3:1) to spiritual letters in 2Co 3:2, so here he sees in the literal veil covering the Law-giver an illustration of the covering on the minds of the Jews as they read the Law. Only when Christ comes into view can the true purpose of the Law be discovered. Although He has come and fulfilled all the types and shadows of the Law, yet Paul has to say that until this day the veil remains on the minds of those under the law. For nearly half a lifetime he remained in this blindfolded state and must have felt deeply saddened that so many of his fellow Israelites were still where he once was. ([What the Bible Teaches - 2 Corinthians](#))

MacArthur - Israel failed to grasp the glory of the old covenant because of stubborn, hard-hearted unbelief....Throughout their history the Jewish people (with a few exceptions such as Zacharias and Elizabeth [Luke 1:5–6], Simeon [Luke 2:25], Anna [Luke 2:36], and others of the believing remnant [cf. Ro 11:5]) "stiffened their necks so as not to heed [God's] words" (Jer. 19:15; cf. 7:26; 17:23; Deut. 10:16; 2 Kings 17:14; 2 Chron. 30:8; Neh. 9:29).

McGee - Their minds are blinded until this very day. The veil that Moses wore on his face is now a veil on the minds of God's ancient people. It is still there because of the fact that these people actually do not see that Christ is the end of the Law for righteousness. They do not see that He is the fulfillment of the whole Law. The blindness is still there. When we get into the next chapter, we will find that the "god of this world" has blinded the minds of those who do not believe, and we will see why this is true (2Co 4:3-4+) ([2 Corinthians 3 Commentary](#))

Wiersbe on minds were hardened - There was a "spiritual veil" over their minds and hearts. Their "spiritual eyes" were blinded, so that when they read the Old Testament Scriptures, they did not see the truth about their own Messiah. Even though the Scriptures were read systematically in the synagogues, the Jewish people did not grasp the spiritual message God had given to them. They were blinded by their own religion.....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!" (ED: HE MAY NOT HAVE REALIZED IT BUT HE DESCRIBED ANOTHER JEWISH MAN - Acts 9:18+) The veil is removed by the Spirit of God and they receive spiritual vision. ([Bible Exposition Commentary](#))

P E Hughes - Even when confronted with the glory shining from Moses' countenance the Israelites were unwilling to receive what God had to communicate to them through him; and in consequence their minds were hardened: their understandings were dulled and deadened. This is always the result of refusing and suppressing the revelation of divine truth. A veil of intellectual darkness hides the glory which has been deliberately rejected. (The epitaph of the rebellious Israelites and of all hardened sinners is simply this: "Knowing God, they glorified Him not as God, neither gave thanks; but became vain in their reasonings, and their senseless heart was darkened" (Ro 1:21). We are warned, therefore, of the terrible possibility of intellectual hardening when face to face with the glorious revelation of divine truth; and the responsibility is proportionately greater of those who are confronted, not with the partial and transient glory of the law, but with the surpassing and permanent glory of the gospel of Jesus Christ.

Moses alludes to their **minds...hardened** in Deuteronomy writing "Yet to this day the LORD has not given you a heart to know, nor eyes to see, nor ears to hear." (Deut. 29:4+) This passage reflects divine judicial hardening.

It is interesting that Paul had just used this rare word ([noema](#)) in 2Co 2:11+ to warn not to be ignorant of the **schemes** ([noema](#)) of Satan, and now uses [noema](#) for "**minds**" here in 2Co 3:14. Paul could be warning that they must be careful for their own minds, which Satan will attempt to lead astray for ([noema](#)) is used in 2Co 11:3+ (cf Satan's effect in 2Co 4:4+)

[The martyr Stephen](#) used great boldness (because he was Spirit filled Acts 6:5, 8, 10+, cf Acts 4:31+) summing up Israel's past when he confronted the Jewish leaders referring to them as "**stiff-necked** ([sklerotrachelos](#)) and **uncircumcised in heart** (cf Dt 10:16+, Dt 30:6+, Jer 4:4) and ears are **always resisting** ([antipipto](#) in present tense = continually, active voice = willfully!) the Holy Spirit; you are doing just as your fathers did. (Acts 7:51+) (See also Acts 28:25-27+)

Throughout the centuries, Israel had refused to submit to God and obey the covenant their ancestors had made with Yahweh (cf Ex 24:3,7+ = "we will do"). Their ears refused to truly hear (and heed) God's truth, their hearts did not receive (welcome) His truth, and their necks did not bow (surrender, yield) to His Word of truth. As a result, they killed their own Messiah, in Whom believing brings "the end to the Law for righteousness"! (Ro 10:4NLT+) The Jews (except the believing remnant) sought only the physical circumcision which was impotent in regard to gaining favor with God or achieving righteousness (right standing before God). As a result, their minds were (judicially) hardened by God. They continued to place emphasize the physical ritual of circumcision, failing to comprehend that the external act was always meant to be symbolic of an internal "circumcision" (Ro 2:28-29+), which was evidenced by a desire (and Spirit enabled power) to please God and to obey Him out of love not out of legalism! (see Circumcision - external of the foreskin & internal of the heart). Their minds were hard and their hearts were cold toward God and the glorious truths He had "veiled" in the Old Covenant. Praise God that He is removing the veil in Christ for many Jewish people. [Take a moment and watch some of the videos of Jewish men and women who have had the veil removed and recognized Yeshua their Messiah.](#) (e.g. In [Isaiah 53 God opened her eyes!](#))

Jesus alluded to the hardness of the minds of His Jewish audience declaring "Do not think that I will accuse you before the Father; the one who accuses you is **Moses**, in whom you have set your hope. For if you believed **Moses** (author of the Pentateuch, the first 5 books, the "Torah" or law), **you would believe Me; for he wrote of Me.** But if you do not believe his writings, how will you believe My words? (Jn 5:45-47, cf Jn 5:39). Jesus was not saying that one could be saved by believing the Old Covenant Law per se but that one was saved by believing in the Messiah Who was clearly and repeatedly portrayed in prophecies (see Messianic Prophecy) and in the ceremonies, feasts, sacrifices and rituals that were present (albeit in "veiled" form to those with hard hearts and minds) even in the Torah (E.g., see Dt 30:14+ even quoted by Paul in Ro 10:6,7+, Ro 10:8+).

MacArthur comments that "Moses, you remember, came down the mountain, attempted to show them the glory of God representative in the old covenant by the glory on his face, and he was rejected instead of recognizing the glory, they were willfully dull and willfully unbelieving. And it was still so in Paul's time until this day, he says, until this very day. At the reading of the old covenant, which was done, by the way, every Sabbath in the synagogue, according to Luke 4:17, 18, 19, 20, 21, they went into the synagogue and the old covenant would be read. The same veil remains unlifted. The old covenant is still obtuse, still obscure. They still don't understand the purpose of it. They think it's supposed to save them and it's not. They think that it's less of a moral standard

than it is. They underestimate its righteousness. Its attempt to reveal sin is ineffective. Instead of revealing their sin, it is used as a means to demonstrate their righteousness. Its ceremonial purpose was to symbolize the redemptive plan in Christ. And, of course, they rejected Christ so they rejected not only the moral part of the Law by lowering the moral standard, they rejected the ceremonial part by missing the purpose and the point of it. They were so ignorant that the Apostles had to preach all around Jerusalem that Jesus Christ must needs have suffered and died to fulfill Messianic prophecy. They had no clue. Their ignorance and their unbelief in the meaning of the old covenant, made them therefore ignorant of the new covenant. Because they didn't properly understand that the old covenant was to drive them to sin in its moral area and to drive them to see their need of a Savior in the ceremonial area, because they missed all of that they couldn't comprehend the new covenant... They don't comprehend the new covenant. Do you know why? Because they don't comprehend the old covenant. They think they do, they don't. They don't know that it was designed to drive them to despair about their sin and to portray through the symbols and the pictures the redemptive plan of God that points directly to none other than Jesus Christ, but since they don't understand the old covenant, they can't understand the new covenant. The veil of ignorance obscures the meaning of the old covenant to the hardened heart. It was meant to lead them to Christ, they just didn't see it ([The Glory of the New Covenant, Part 5](#))

Adam Clarke explains their **minds were hardened** - By resting in the letter (the Law), shutting their eyes against the light that was granted to them (**ED**: For example, see the good news that was available to them through the example of God's crediting of righteousness to Abram's account when he believed God in Ge 15:6+), they contracted a hardness or stupidity of heart. And the veil that was on the face of Moses, which prevented the glory of his face from shining out, may be considered as emblematical (as a picture or symbol) of the veil of darkness and ignorance that is on their hearts, and which hinders the glory of the Gospel from shining in. ([2 Corinthians 3](#))

Bob Utley - Spiritual blindness has both a spiritual origin -- [1] **God** by the use - hardened is passive voice [divine passive], cf. Isa. 6:9–10; Isa 29:10; John 12:40; Ro 9:18 and [2] **Satan**, cf. 2 Cor. 4:4) and **human** origin (cf. John 3:19–20). Moses used a **literal veil**; this term is now used to describe the inner blindness of contemporary rabbinical Judaism. Jews are walking in the judgment of Isa. 6:9-10+ and Isa 29:10. This also relates to the Jews of our day who refuse to accept Jesus as the Messiah (cf. 2Co 3:15). [2 Corinthians 3 Commentary](#)

Minds ([3540](#)) (**noema** from **noéo** = perceive in turn from **noús** = mind) is literally the result of the activity of the "nous" or mind, that part of man which thinks. **Noema** means that which is thought (a thought), perceived with the mind (a mental perception), understood, pondered, or considered. Paul uses **noema** again in the next chapter "And even if our Gospel is veiled, it is **veiled** to those who are perishing, in whose case the god of this world (Satan --1Jn 5:19 Ep 2:2 Jn 12:31 14:30) has blinded the **minds (noema)** of the unbelieving (disbelieving, lacking in faith, not trusting) so that they might not see the light of the gospel of the glory of Christ, who is the image of God." (2Co 4:3, 4) **Robertson** draws our attention to the order of events: (1) They refused to believe and so (2) Satan got the power to blind their thoughts. That happens with wilful disbelievers. (Woe!) **We must pray for God** "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 and an inheritance among those who have been sanctified by faith in" Christ (Acts 26:18).

Noema is a keyword in 2 Corinthians - here are all NT uses - 2 Co. 2:11; 2 Co. 3:14; 2 Co. 4:4; 2 Co. 10:5; 2 Co. 11:3; Phil. 4:7

Were hardened ([4456](#)) (**poroo** from **poros** = small piece of stone, a kind of marble, and thence used of a callus on fractured bones; see related word **porosis**) means to make hard as stone and used figuratively to describe that which has become callous or insensitive to touch. The effect is to cause the person to have difficulty understanding or comprehending. In the New Testament, **poroo** is used only in the spiritual sense referring to the devastating effect sin and unbelief exert on one's **heart** or **mind**. In this passage Paul describes the sons of Israel as possessed of a closed mind, mental obtuseness and intellectual blindness. **Friberg** writes that **poroo** is a medical technical term (Hippocrates) cover with thick skin or callous; of body organs thicken. **Liddell Scott** explains the literal meaning is "to petrify, turn into stone"

Barclay on the related word **porosis** explains that "Porosis comes from poros, which originally meant a stone that was harder than marble. It came to have certain medical uses. It was used for the chalk stone which can form in the joints and completely paralyze action. It was used of the callus that forms where a bone has been broken and re-set, a callus which is harder than the bone itself. Finally the word came to mean the loss of all power of sensation; it described something which had become so hardened, so petrified that it had no power to feel at all. That is what Paul says the heathen life is like (Ep 4:17, 18, 19+) (Ed: And in the present context this is the condition of the majority of the sons of Israel even to the present time)...The terror of sin is its petrifying effect. The process of sin is quite discernible (Ed: I think perhaps "quite indiscernible" is a better description of the deceitfulness of sin and its hardening effect [see

note] Heb 3:13). No man becomes a great sinner all at once. At first he regards sin with horror. When he sins, there enters into his heart remorse and regret (Ed: But not genuine repentance or turning from that sin! - cp "sorrow of the world" ["Sorry I got caught" type sorrow!] in 2Co 7:10b). But if he continues to sin there comes a time when he loses all sensation and can do the most shameful things without any feeling at all. His conscience is petrified (Cp "seared...conscience" 1Ti 4:2 - see illustration below). (Ed note: This is because all men in Adam are totally depraved and have an inherent sin nature from Adam to commit sins). ([Barclay, William: New Testament Words:. Westminster John Know Press, 1964](#))

Poroo - 5x in 5v in **NAS** - Mark 6:52 Mk 8:17; John 12:40; Ro 11:7; 2Co 3:14. The only use in the non-apocryphal Septuagint is Job 17:7 describing the "dimming" of one's eyes as a result of grief.

John 12:40 quotes Isa 6:10+ (where it was actually issued as a command to the prophet Isaiah) giving an example of divine judicial hardening, the penalty for continual rejection God's Word of Truth and Life (see discussion) - "HE HAS BLINDED THEIR EYES AND HE **HARDENED** THEIR HEART, SO THAT THEY WOULD NOT SEE WITH THEIR EYES AND PERCEIVE WITH THEIR HEART, AND BE CONVERTED AND I HEAL THEM."

MacArthur comments: Although God predestined such judgment, it was not apart from human responsibility and culpability (see Jn 8:24).

In Romans **Paul** in addressing the spiritual fate of the sons of Israel asks "What then? That which Israel is seeking for, it has not obtained, but those who were chosen (the **remnant**, see "partial hardening" of Israel below in Ro 11:25) obtained it, and the rest **were hardened** (passive voice as in 2Co 3:14 indicating the hardening is the effect of an "outside agent", specifically God Who is perfectly justified in so doing in light of their repeated rejection and incessant wanton spiritual harlotry) (Ro 11:7+)

Comment This verse describes a judicial act of God for refusal to heed the Word of God (cp God's hardening in Ex 4:21 7:3 9:12 10:20, 27 11:10 14:4, 8, 17; [Ryrie explains "*Seven times Pharaoh hardened his own heart before God first hardened it, though the prediction that God would do it preceded all.*"] Dt 2:30 Jn 12:40), in response to their hardened hearts (Ex 8:15, 32 9:34 10:1 2Chr 36:13 Ps 95:8 Pr 28:14 Mt 19:8 Mk 3:5 Ep 4:18 Heb 3:8, 15 4:7). **Thus divine hardening is not the cause of their rejection of the Gospel, but a punishment for it.** This hardening (even as here in 2Co 3:14) was (is) the result of Israel's persistence in resistance to the Word of Truth, just as Pharaoh's heart was hardened because he resisted the truth. We would expect a pagan idol worshipping despot to harden himself against the Lord, but we would not expect God's chosen people to do so. Nevertheless, most of the sons of Israel **were hardened** because they deserved it and it was a just recompense for their sin of rejecting the light they had received. Remember that all of the ceremonies (festivals, temple services and sacrifices, etc - see 3rd column entitled "Shadows of Messiah in Tabernacle") were like "giant pictures" pointing to the coming Messiah and Redeemer. (eg, compare Ex 12:11 with 1Co 5:7).

For I do not want you, brethren, to be uninformed of this mystery, lest you be wise in your own estimation, that a **partial hardening (porosis)** has happened to Israel until the fulness of the Gentiles has come in (Ro 11:25+)

Comment: Notice that The current hardening of Israel in rejecting Messiah has two components. First, it is a partial hardening so that some Jews, represented by the believing remnant (the "Israel of God" Gal 6:16) will be enabled to see the glory of the New Covenant. Second, the hardening of Israel has a limit so that when the fullness of Gentiles has come in the blindness of Israel will be removed "in Christ" (cp Zech 12:9, 10 descriptive of the time of the Second Coming of Christ - **notice** how it will be made possible for their blind eyes to be opened to recognize their Messiah).

It is interesting to read a parallel description of Jesus' Jewish disciples where **heart** is substituted for **mind**...

Then He got into the boat with them, and the wind stopped; and they were utterly astonished, for they had not gained any insight from the incident of the loaves, but their **heart** was **hardened**. (Mk 6:51-52+, see a similar use of **poroo** in Mk 8:17+)

John MacArthur: The disciples' minds were impenetrable, so that they could not perceive what Christ was saying (cf. Mk 4:11, 12). This phrase conveys or alludes to rebellion, not just ignorance

William MacDonald: The thought seems to be that even after seeing the power of the Lord in the miracle of the loaves, they still did not realize that nothing was impossible for Him. They shouldn't have been surprised to see Him walking on the water. It was no greater a miracle than the one they had just

witnessed. Lack of faith produced hardness of heart and dullness of spiritual perception.

Charles Ryrie: they were spiritually insensitive to the truth concerning the deity of Christ that His miracles were continually demonstrating.

ILLUSTRATION - Insensitiveness to Sin -- A little girl in London held up her broken wrist and said, "Look, Mommy, my hand is bent the wrong way!" There were no tears in her eyes. She felt no pain whatever. That was when she was four years old. When she was six, her parents noticed that she was walking with a limp. A doctor discovered that the girl had a fractured thigh. Still she felt no pain. The girl is now fourteen years old. She is careful now, but occasionally looks at blisters and burns on her hands and wonders, "**How did this happen?**" **She is insensitive to pain!** Medical specialists are baffled by the case. It is called *ganglioneuropathy*. There is another insensitiveness which is deadlier and more dangerous— insensitiveness to sin! Paul said of this malady: "Having their consciences seared as with a hot iron" (1Ti 4:2).

READING OLD COVENANT WITH UNLIFTED VEIL

For until the reading of the Old Covenant - As was and is still done in Jewish synagogues ("*temples*") around the world each **Sabbath** (cp Acts 13:14, 15).

MacArthur- The old covenant remained obscured, its purpose misunderstood. People wrongly thought that they could be saved by keeping it.

Gromacki "When Moses spoke to the people, the veil was upon his face, but when the law of Moses was later read, the veil was upon the hearts of the individual Jews and of national Israel. In both cases, the people could not see the glory of God, namely the glory of Jesus Christ. Jesus challenged His generation: "Search the scriptures; for in them ye think ye have eternal life: and they are they which testify of me" (John 5:39). He later concluded: "For had ye believed Moses, ye would have believed me: for he wrote of me. But if ye believe not his writings, how shall ye believe my words?" (John 5:46–47). In Paul's day, the situation had not changed ("until this day"), and it is still true in this era. When a person stops trusting in his effort to keep the law and starts to believe in God's provision, then "the veil is done away in Christ." Just as Moses removed the veil when he was in the presence of the Lord, so the veil will be lifted from the hearts of Jews when they see the fulfillment of the law's demands in the person and redemptive work of Christ (Rom. 10:1–13). They need to have their spiritual understanding opened by Christ to see him in the Old Testament (Luke 24:25–27; 44–45).

" ([2 Corinthians - Stand Firm in the Faith](#))

Warren Wiersbe addresses the question of "*Why did most of Israel reject her own Messiah?*"...- The reason? There was a "spiritual veil" over their minds and hearts. Their "spiritual eyes" were blinded, so that when they read the Old Testament Scriptures, they did not see the truth about their own Messiah. Even though the Scriptures were read systematically in the synagogues, the Jewish people did not grasp the spiritual message God had given to them (2Co 3:14, 2Co 3:15-note). They were blinded by their own religion. ([Bible Exposition Commentary](#))

Reading (320) (**anagnosis** from **aná** = emphatic, again + **ginosko** = know <> know again) means to read something written, especially public reading of Scripture as in the present context (cp Acts 13:15 1Ti 4:13 Neh 8:8)

Old (3820) (**palaios** from **palai** = in the past, long ago) antique, not recent, not new, old in the sense of worn out and decrepit. **Palaios** means in existence for a long time, and in a number of contexts conveys the sense of being obsolete, antiquated or outworn. Worn out from use is the idea in (Mt 9:16, 17 Mk 2:21, Lk 5:36) **Palaios** brings out the idea of "worn out", the result of the wear and tear of time, the old as outworn and clearly is not something to be desired. **Palaios** is a clear contrast with **kainos** (fresh) used in 2Co 3:6.

Covenant (1242) (**diatheke** from **diatithemi** = set out in order, dispose in a certain order <> from **dia** = two + **tithemi** = to place pictures that which is placed between two Thus, a covenant is something placed between two = thus an arrangement between two parties) literally conveys the idea of a testament, as in one's last will and testament.

The same veil (**kalumma**) (**meno** - present tense - continually) **remains unlifted** (**anakalupto**) - The literal reading is "remains, it not (Greek negative = me) being (present tense, divine passive) revealed (**anakalupto**) that it is done away in Christ." Paul is drawing from the OT Exodus story to show that even as Moses' veil prevented the sons of Israel from seeing the fading glory of the Old Covenant, so too today a figurative veil continually remains and is not being revealed to the minds of most Jewish people. They are unable to see "*the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Christ*" (2Co 4:6) in the New Covenant. Even as the veil of Moses obstructed the view of the glory of his face (which seems to be a picture of the glory of the Old Covenant), the Jews remain

ignorant of the spiritual purpose of their own law, which is like an impediment, hindrance, obstruction or obstacle so they cannot see the glorious truth of the New Covenant.

Unlifted literally reads "**not** (*me* = negation) **uncovered** (*anakalupto* = uncover)"

The "spiritual veil" must be drawn back (so to speak) by the Holy Spirit Who Alone can open their hardened, spiritually dully minds and spiritually circumcise their hardened hearts (see Ro 2:28, 29+, cf Col 2:11+) to the truth of the Gospel of grace in the New Covenant (cf 2Th 2:13, Acts 16:14, cp Jn 6:44).

Garland - The veil, then, is not simply a metaphor for Israel's failure to see and understand. As Paul sees it, Israel's fundamental problem is not a failure to comprehend the law but a failure to obey it (Rom 2:17–29; Gal 6:13). They do not suffer from an intellectual deficiency but from a moral one that prevents them from seeing and believing, hearing and understanding. The veil comes to stand for this hardened condition that prevents those who may treasure, defend, and diligently study the law from apprehending God's true glory. From the very beginning, when the covenant was first read to them by Moses, they suffered from a spiritual hardening of the arteries. Paul insists that the people remain in that same condition when the law is being read to them today ([NAC-2Cor](#))

Murray Harris: The veiling, where it exists (cf. 2Co 3:14, 15), comes from the unbelief of "those who are perishing" (cf. 1Co 1:18; 2Co 2:15+), whose minds have been blinded by the god of "the present evil age" (Gal 1:4+), who wishes to prevent them from seeing the gospel-light that focuses on Christ's glory as the image of God. ([Expositor's Bible Commentary](#))

Colin Kruse -Just as the **veil** prevented the ancient Israelites from seeing the brightness of Moses' face, so too **the same veil**, as it were, remained unlifted when the Jews of his own day read the Old Testament. They could not see that the old covenant had come to an end and the new had already been inaugurated. (TNTC-2Co)

Vincent comments on **the same veil**..."The expression their minds were hardened is carried out figuratively. There is a veil over their minds when the law is read, as there was over Moses' face. They cannot yet recognize the end of the Mosaic ministry."

Guzik - Since **the same 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](#))

Adam Clarke feels that the **unlifted veil** is an allusion "to the conduct of the Jews in their synagogues: when they read the law they cover their whole head with a veil, which they term the *ללל tallith*, veil, from *ללל talal*, to cover; and this voluntary usage of theirs, the apostle tells us, is an emblem of the darkness of their hearts while they are employed even in sacred duties."

VEIL REMOVED IN CHRIST

Because (*hoti*) is used to explain how the "veil" is "drawn back" from a "hardened mind".

It is removed in Christ - **NLT** paraphrases this "*And this veil can be removed only by believing in Christ.*" This passage is permeated with amazing grace, for only the grace of God and the Spirit of grace (Heb 10:29) could remove the spiritual blindness of self-righteousness, tradition and sin (Heb 3:13) that had hardened (and still does harden) Jewish minds. This is Paul's way of describing what happens when one believes in Christ -- the "veil" is supernaturally removed, so that the Word of God even in the Old Covenant is seen to point to the living Word Who became flesh (Jn 1:1, 14+). That which the Jews (and all lost men) are not able to understand in their natural, unregenerate state (1Co 2:14+) suddenly becomes understandable for God provides an indwelling Teacher, the Spirit of Christ, to teach the truth (Jer 31:33, 34+, cp Jn 14:16 26, 15:16, 17, 26 16:7, 8; cp 1Jn 2:20 27+). Paul further explains the removal of the veil in the next verse stating that this supernatural removal of the veil occurs when a person turns to the Lord. (2Co 3:16). Of course here we see the mystery of divine sovereignty and free will or man's responsibility to respond to God's sovereign revelation.

Removed ([2673](#)) (**katargeo** from **kata** = intensifies meaning + **argeo** = to be idle or inactive from **argos** = ineffective, idle, inactive from **a** = without + **érgon** = work) literally means to reduce to inactivity. To cause something to come to an end. When any person is converted to God, then the veil of ignorance is taken away (comes to an end).

In Christ - In the doctrines that teach about the good news found only in the truth about Christ. Only as the Jew came to **be in Christ** (by grace through faith) was the (spiritual) veil set aside. Paul reiterates this same truth using slightly different wording in 2Co 3:16.

Clarke comments that "It is only by acknowledging Christ that the darkness is removed, and the end and spiritual meaning of the law

discerned.

Matthew Henry writes that "It is the duty of the ministers of the Gospel to use great plainness or clearness of speech. The Old Testament believers had only cloudy and passing glimpses of that glorious Saviour, and unbelievers looked no further than to the outward institution. But the great precepts of the Gospel (eg, believe, love, obey) are truths stated as clearly as possible. And the whole doctrine of Christ crucified (1Co 1:18, 23 2:2), is made as plain as human language can make it. Those who lived under the law, had a veil upon their hearts. This veil is taken away by the doctrines of the Bible about Christ.

SHORT EXCURSUS ON BIBLICAL HOPE

Biblical Hope - Ultimately for every believer the best which is yet to come is not a concept but a Person, ***the Lord Jesus Christ, our Hope*** (1Ti 1:1YLT). Indeed as Paul exhorts, may we each be ***living...*** ***looking*** for the blessed hope and the appearing of the glory of our great God and Savior, Christ Jesus who gave Himself for us, that He might redeem us from every lawless deed and purify for Himself a people for His own possession, zealous for good deeds. (Titus 2:13+, Titus 2:14+) What are you fixing your hope on today? What you are ***looking*** (hoping) for will determine what you are ***living*** for. **Hope** as the world typically defines it is a desire for some future occurrence of which one is not assured of attaining. The ancient world did not generally regard **hope** as a virtue, but merely as a temporary illusion. Historians tell us that a great cloud of **hopelessness** covered the ancient world. Philosophies were empty; traditions were disappearing; religions were powerless to help men face either life or death. People longed to pierce the veil and get some message of hope from the other side, but there is none outside of Christ.

Spurgeon...Oh, what a blessed hope this is, — that, though we fall asleep, we shall surely wake again; and when we awaken, it will be in the likeness of the great Head of the family, and we ourselves shall be heirs of an inheritance in which there will be no sin and no corruption. That inheritance is kept for us, and we are kept for it; so the double keeping makes it doubly sure. Happy are the people to whom these verses apply. (1 Peter 1- Commentary)

Gabriel Marcel said, "**Hope** is for the soul what breathing is for the living organism.

A study of German concentration camp survivors found that those prisoners who were able to hold onto their sense of hope ('things are going to get better' or 'we're going to get out of here one day') were much more likely to survive. Hope then was not optional but for these prisoners proved to be a matter of life and death.

Vincent writes that **hope** "in classical Greek, has the general signification of expectancy, relating to evil as well as to good. Thus Plato speaks of living in evil hope ("Republic," i., 330); i.e., in the apprehension of evil; and Thucydides, of the hope of evils to come; i.e., the expectation or apprehension. In the New Testament the word always relates to a future good. (Vincent, M. R. Word Studies in the New Testament Vol. 1)

Seneca, Rome's leading intellectual figure, tutor of the depraved emperor Nero (who forced Seneca to commit suicide!) and contemporary of Paul tragically defined **hope** as "an uncertain good", the antithesis of Biblical **hope**! What a difference the new birth in Christ makes in one's temporal and eternal perspective.

The cynical editor **H. L. Mencken** also inaccurately defined **hope** as "a pathological belief in the occurrence of the impossible." His cynical definition does not even agree with the secular Webster's Collegiate dictionary which defines "**Hope**" much like the NT declaring that hope means "to cherish a desire with anticipation, desire with expectation of obtainment, expect with confidence."

Biblical **hope** is not "finger crossing", but is alive and certain because of the **resurrection of Jesus Christ** from the dead. Life without Christ is a hopeless end whereas life in Christ is an endless hope.

The book of Hebrews defines **hope** as that which gives "full assurance" (He 6:11-note). Thus we can have strong confidence that God is going to do good to us in future. The opposite of hope is **despair**, (hopelessness; a hopeless state; a destitution of hope or expectation) which is all that those without Christ as Savior can know, for Paul defines hope as "Christ Jesus, Who is our Hope" (1Ti 1:1). Recalling our Hope to mind is a sterling antidote for despair, according to the "prescription" of the psalmist who advocates preaching the following "sermon" to yourself when your hope ebbs low...

Why are you in despair, O my soul?

And why have you become disturbed within me?

Hope (Lxx = *elpizo*, a command) in God, for I shall again praise Him

For the help (Lxx = *soterion* = salvation) of His presence.

The venerable "prince of preachers", **C H Spurgeon** has some sage comments on this "self sermon"...

As though he were two men, the psalmist talks to himself. His faith reasons with his fears, his **hope** argues with his sorrows. These present troubles, are they to last forever? The rejoicings of my foes, are they more than empty talk? My absence from the solemn feasts, is that a perpetual exile? Why this deep depression, this faithless fainting, this chicken hearted melancholy? **As Trapp says, "David chides David out of the dumps;"** (**Ed:** The psalm is actually attributed to the "sons of Korah" Ps 42:1) and herein he is an example for all desponding ones. To search out the cause of our sorrow is often the best surgery for grief. Self ignorance is not bliss; in this case it is misery. The mist of ignorance magnifies the causes of our alarm; a clearer view will make monsters dwindle into trifles.

Why art thou disquieted within me? Why is my quiet gone? If I cannot keep a public Sabbath, yet wherefore do I deny my soul an indoor Sabbath? Why am I agitated like a troubled sea, and why do my thoughts make a noise like a tumultuous multitude? The causes are not enough to justify such utter yielding to despondency. Up, my heart! What aileth thee? Play the man, and thy castings down shall turn to liftings up, and thy disquietudes to calm.

Hope thou in God. If every evil be let loose from Pandora's box, yet is there **hope** at the bottom. This is the grace that swims, though the waves roar and be troubled. God is unchangeable, and therefore His grace is the ground for unshaken **hope**. If everything be dark, yet the day will come, and meanwhile **hope** carries stars in her eyes; her lamps are not dependent on oil from without, her light is fed by secret visitations of God, which sustain the spirit.

For I shall yet praise Him. Yet will my sighs give place to songs, my mournful ditties shall be exchanged for triumphal paeans. A loss of the present sense of God's love is not a loss of that love itself; the jewel is there, though it gleams not on our breast; **hope** knows her title good when she cannot read it clear; she expects the promised boon though present providence stands before her with empty hands.

For I shall yet praise Him for the help of His countenance Salvations come from the propitious face of God, and He will yet lift up His countenance upon us (Nu 6:24, 25, 26). Note well that the main **hope** and chief desire of David rest in the **smile of God**. His face is what he seeks and hopes (with assurance) to see, and this truth will recover his low spirits, this truth will put to scorn his laughing enemies, this truth will restore to him all the joys of those holy and happy days around which memory lingers. This is grand cheer. This verse, like the singing of Paul and Silas, looses chains and shakes prison walls (Acts 16:25, 26).

He who can use such heroic language in his gloomy hours will surely conquer. In the garden of hope grow the laurels for future victories, the roses of coming joy, the lilies of approaching peace. ([More notes on Ps 42:5](#))

A HOPELESS END VERSUS AN ENDLESS HOPE

Although the Old revealed spoke of the Hope of Israel and predicted His coming to save His people as well as Gentiles, there was no mention that the Messiah of hope would actually live within each member of His redeemed church. Paul explained that in the New Covenant, "God willed to make known what is the riches of the glory of this mystery among the Gentiles, which is Christ in you, the **hope** of glory." (Col 1:27-note) The unsaved are born into the world but have "no **hope** and (are) without God in the world" (Ep 2:12-note, 1Th 4:13-note) and if they die without Christ, they will be hopeless forever! The Italian poet, **Dante**, in the **Divine Comedy**, put this inscription over the world of the dead: "*Abandon all hope, you who enter here!*" In other words, life without Christ is a hopeless end whereas life in Christ is an endless hope.

Jeremiah lamented that his "soul has been rejected from peace...(and) forgotten happiness" until he discovered the "**secret**" (Notice that he **chooses** to recall this truth to his minding which indicates that he had known it in the past -- this "dynamic of ready recall" is also vital to the sustenance of our spiritual lives, beloved. How often we need to recall what we know to be true about God and His dealings with us. As an aside, this is one of the great benefits of Scripture memorization - **you are Memorizing His Word** (see discussion) **aren't you?** Remember it is worth your investment of time and effort, for in contrast to the passing pleasures [He 11:25-note] of this passing world [1Jn 2:17-note], the only entity other than human souls which will not pass away is the **Word of Truth** [Ps 119:43-note, 2Co 6:7, Col 1:5-note, 2Ti 2:15-note, Jas 1:18-note!]). The passage below and Ps 42:5 might be a great place to begin memorizing, especially if you are a bit "hope deficient"...

"This I recall to my mind therefore I have **hope**.

The LORD'S lovingkindnesses indeed never cease,
For His compassions never fail.

They are new every morning
Great is Thy faithfulness.

The LORD is my portion," says my soul,
Therefore I have **hope** in Him."
(Lamentations 3:21, 22, 23, 24)

**Future looking
facilitates
Godward living**

For more discussion of the great Christian virtue of hope, one that is probably the least understood and appreciated (appropriated) of the great "triumvirate" faith, hope and love. Most Christians have a reasonably good comprehension of faith and love, but far fewer understand the soul satisfying significance of our blessed hope. If you are one of the latter group, let me encourage you to take a few days and work through at least some of the Scriptures that elaborate on our blessed hope. I can assure you that your soul will be satisfied and your spiritual "sight" will be stimulated to "straighten up" (Lk 21:28) and to begin looking for His appearing, a perspective which should radically impact your living and specifically your choices. As you study Biblical Hope you will come to realize that we are indeed living in a time when the return of our Blessed Hope is imminent...

For we through the Spirit, by faith,
are **waiting** for the hope of righteousness.
See also Gal 5:5NLT

Suggestion - Take a moment and do a simple study on **hope** by observing the following passages and recording what each teaches about hope (and don't forget to check the **context**). **I guarantee it will "buoy" up any soul's flagging hope!** Acts 23:6, 24:15; 26:6, 7; 28:20; Ro 5:2-note, Ro 5:4,5-note, Ro 8:20, 21-note, Ro 8:24-note, Ro 12:12-note, Ro 15:4-note, Ro 15:13-note, 1Co 13:13, 2Co 1:7, 2Co 10:15, Ga 5:5, Ep 1:18-note, Ep 2:12-note; Ep 4:4-note; Php 1:20-note; Col 1:5-note, Col 1:23-note, Col 1:27-note; 1Th 1:3-note; 1Th 2:19-note; 1Th 4:13-note; 1Th 5:8-note; 2Th 2:16; 1Ti 1:1; Titus 1:2-note; Titus 2:13-note; Titus 3:7-note; Heb 3:6-note; He 6:11-note, He 6:18-note; He 7:19-note; He 10:23-note; 1Pe 1:3-note, 1Pe 1:21-note; 1Pe 3:15-note; 1Jn 3:3-note

- The Blessed Hope: Part 1
- The Blessed Hope: Definition
- The Blessed Hope: Source of
- The Blessed Hope: Part 2
- The Blessed Hope: Stabilizing Effect
- The Blessed Hope: Sanctifying Effect
- Other resources on the Blessed Hope