Epistle of the heart:

II Cor. 3:2-6, 12-16, 18

2Ye are our epistle written in our hearts, known and read of all men:

**Epistle** in Greek is *epistole* (1992), which means “epistle or letter.”

**Written** is *eggrapho* in Greek (1449) which means “to engrave, inscribe, record, write on or in.”

**Known** is *ginosko* in Greek (1907) which means “to come to know, get a knowledge of, perceive, understand.”

**Read** is *anaginosko* in Greek (314) which means “to distinguish between, to recognize, to know accurately, to acknowledge, to read.”

“It is, that the conversion of the Corinthians, under the faithful labors of the apostle, was a better testimonial of his character and fidelity than any letters could be. To see the force of this, it must be remembered:

(1) That Corinth was an exceedingly dissolute and abandoned place;

(2) That a large number of them had been converted, and a church organized;

(3) That their conversion, and the organization of a church in such a city were events that would be known abroad; and,

(4) That it had been accomplished entirely under the labor of Paul and his companions” (Barnes’ Notes, [www.biblehub.com)](http://www.biblehub.com)).

3*Forasmuch as ye are* manifestly declared to be the epistle of Christ ministered by us, written not with ink, but with the Spirit of the living God; not in tables of stone, but in fleshy tables of the heart.

**Manifestly declared** is *phaneroo* (5319) in Greek which means “to make manifest or visible, to make know what has been hidden, to make actual and visible, realized, to make know by teaching.”

**Ministered** is *diakoneo* (1247) in Greek which means “to be a servant, attendant, to wait upon.”

“Forasmuch, as ye are manifestly declared.—The metaphor appears to shift its ground from the subjective to the objective. It is not only as written in his heart, but as seen and known by others, that they (the Corinthians) are as a letter of commendation. They are as a letter which Christ had written as with the finger of God.

“Written not with ink.—Letters were usually written on papyrus, with a reed pen and with a black pigment (atramentum) used as ink. (Comp. [2John 1:12](http://biblehub.com/2_john/1-12.htm).) In contrast with this process, he speaks of the Epistle of Christ as written with the “Spirit of the living God.”

4And such trust have we through Christ to God-ward:

Trust is pepoithesis (4006) in Greek which means “trust, confidence, reliance.”

“And such trust have we - Such confidence have we that we are appointed by God, and that he accepts our work.

“Through Christ - By the agency of Christ. Paul had no success which he did not trace to him; he had no joy of which he was not the source; he had no confidence, or trust in God of which Christ was not the author; he had no hope of success in his ministry which did not depend on him.

“To God-ward - Toward God; in regard to God (πρὸς τὸν Θεόν pros ton Theon). Our confidence relates to God. It is confidence that he has appointed us, and sent us forth; and confidence that he will still continue to own and to bless us. (Barnes’ Notes, [www.biblehub.com)](http://www.biblehub.com)).

5Not that we are sufficient of ourselves to think any thing as of ourselves; but our sufficiency *is* of God;

**Sufficient** is *hikanos* (2425) in Greek which means “sufficient, enough, sufficient in ability, ample in character.”

**Sufficiency** is *hikanotes* (2426) in Greek which means ability or competency to do a thing.”

“Not that we are sufficient of ourselves — For this great work of converting sinners, and creating them anew; or so much as to think any thing as of ourselves — To form even right views of the gospel and divine things, much less to communicate such views to others, and less still to render them effectual to men’s salvation. But our sufficiency is of God — To whom we do and must ascribe whatever qualifications we have for our office, and whatever success we have in it” (Benson Commentary, www.biblehub.com).

6Who also hath made us able ministers of the new testament; not of the letter, but of the spirit: for the letter killeth, but the spirit giveth life.

“Not of the letter - Not of the literal, or verbal meaning, in contradistinction from the Spirit; see the notes on [Romans 2:27](http://biblehub.com/romans/2-27.htm), [Romans 2:29](http://biblehub.com/romans/2-29.htm); [Romans 7:6](http://biblehub.com/romans/7-6.htm). This is said, doubtless, in opposition to the Jews, and Jewish teachers. They insisted much on the letter of the Law, but entered little into its real meaning. They did not seek out the true spiritual sense of the Old Testament; and hence, they rested on the mere literal observance of the rites and ceremonies of religion without understanding their true nature and design. Their service, though in many respects conformed to the letter of the Law, yet became cold, formal, and hypocritical; abounding in mere ceremonies, and where the heart had little to do. Hence, there was little pure spiritual worship offered to God; and hence also they rejected the Messiah whom the old covenant prefigured, and was designed to set forth.

“The mere letter of the Law of Moses. The effect of it was merely to produce condemnation; to produce a sense of guilt, and danger, and not to produce pardon, relief, and joy” (Barnes’ Notes, [www.biblehub.com)](http://www.biblehub.com)).

“Spirit (that is, the gospel) giveth life: the gospel, in the letter of it, showeth the way to life; and the gospel, in the hand of the Spirit, or with the Spirit, working together with it, (the Holy Spirit using it as its instrument), giveth life; both that life which is spiritual, and that which is eternal, as it prepareth the soul for life and immortality” (Matthew Poole’s Commentary, www.biblehub.com).

12Seeing then that we have such hope, we use great plainness of speech:

**Plainness** is *parresa* in Greek which means “freedom in speaking, unreservedness in speech, open, frank, without concealment, without ambiguity or circumlocution, free and fearless confidence.”

13And not as Moses, *which* put a veil over his face, that the children of Israel could not stedfastly look to the end of that which is abolished:

“Moses put the veil over his face that they might not see the end, the fading away of that transitory glory. For them it was as though it were permanent and unfading. They did not see—this is St. Paul’s way of allegorising the fact stated—that the whole system of the Law, as symbolised by that brightness, had but a fugitive and temporary being” (Elloicott’s Commentary, [www.biblehub.com)](http://www.biblehub.com)).

14But 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.

**Blinded** is *poroo* (4456) in Greek which means “to cover with a thick skin, to harden, to make the heart dull, to grow hard, callous, become dull, lost the power of understanding, to blind.”

**Veil** is *kalymma* (2571) in Greek which means “a veil, covering; that which prevents a thing from being understood.”

“But their minds were blinded - The word used here (πωρόω pōroō) means rather to harden; to make hard like stone; and then to make dull or stupid. It is applied to the heart, in [Mark 6:52](http://biblehub.com/mark/6-52.htm); [Mark 8:17](http://biblehub.com/mark/8-17.htm); to persons, in [Romans 11:7](http://biblehub.com/romans/11-7.htm); and to the eyes, in [Job 17:7](http://biblehub.com/job/17-7.htm). Paul refers here to the fact that the understandings of the Jews were stupid, dull, and insensible, so that they did not see clearly the design and end of their own institutions. He states simply the fact; he does not refer to the cause of it. The fact that the Jews were thus stupid and dull is often affirmed in the New Testament”.

“Which vail is done away in Christ - In the manifestation, or appearance of Jesus the Messiah, the veil is removed. The obscurity which rested on the prophecies and types of the former dispensation is withdrawn; and as the face of Moses could have been distinctly seen if the veil on his face had been removed, so it is in regard to the true meaning of the Old Testament by the coming of the Messiah. What was obscure is now made clear; and the prophecies are so completely fulfilled in him, that his coming has removed the covering, and shed a clear light over them all.” (Barnes’ Notes, [www.biblehub.com)](http://www.biblehub.com))

15But even unto this day, when Moses is read, the veil is upon their heart.

“When Moses is read - When the five books of Moses are read, as they were regularly and constantly in their synagogues; see the note on [Luke 4:16](http://biblehub.com/luke/4-16.htm).

The vail is upon their heart - They do not see the true meaning and beauty of their own Scriptures - a description as applicable to the Jews now as it was to those in the time of Paul” (Barnes’ Notes, [www.biblehub.com)](http://www.biblehub.com))

16Nevertheless when it shall turn to the Lord, the veil shall be taken away.

18But we all, with open face beholding as in a glass the glory of the Lord, are changed into the same image from glory to glory, *even* as by the Spirit of the Lord.

“But we all - All Christians. The discussion in the chapter has related mainly to the apostles; but this declaration seems evidently to refer to all Christians, as distinguished from the Jews.

With open face - compare note on [1 Corinthians 13:12](http://biblehub.com/1_corinthians/13-12.htm). Tyndale renders this: "and now the Lord's glory appeareth in us all as in a glass." The sense is, "with unveiled face," alluding to the fact [2 Corinthians 3:13](http://biblehub.com/2_corinthians/3-13.htm) that the face of Moses was veiled, so that the children of Israel could not stedfastly look on it. In contradistinction from that, Paul says that Christians are enabled to look upon the glory of the Lord in the gospel without a veil - without any obscure intervening medium.

“Beholding as in a glass - On the word "glass, and the sense in which it is used in the New Testament, see the note on [1 Corinthians 13:12](http://biblehub.com/1_corinthians/13-12.htm). The word used here κατοπτριζόμενοι katoptrizomenoi has been very variously rendered. Macknight renders it, "we all reflecting as mirrors the glory of the Lord." Doddridge, "beholding as by a glass." Locke, "with open countenances as mirrors, reflecting the glory of the Lord." The word κατοπτρίζω katoptrizō occurs no where else in the New Testament. It properly means to look in a mirror; to behold as in a mirror. The mirrors of the ancients were made of burnished metal, and they reflected images with great brilliancy and distinctness. And the meaning is, that the gospel reflected the glory of the Lord; it was, so to speak, the mirror - the polished, burnished substance in which the glory of the Lord shone, and where that glory was irradiated and reflected so that it might be seen by Christians. There was no veil over it; no obscurity; nothing to break its dazzling splendor, or to prevent its meeting the eye. Christians, by looking on the gospel, could see the glorious perfections and plans of God as bright, and clear, and brilliant as they could see a light reflected from the burnished surface of the mirror.

“From glory to glory - From one degree of glory to another” ((Barnes’ Notes, [www.biblehub.com)](http://www.biblehub.com))

**Open** is *anakalypto* (343) in Greek which means “unveil, uncover, drawing back a veil; be revealed.”

**Beholding as in a glass** is *katoptrizo* in Greek which means “to show in a mirror, to reflect, to behold one’s self in a mirror.”

**Glory** is *doxa* (1390) in Greek which means “splendor, brightness, magnificence, majesty, majesty in the sense of absolute perfection of God.”

**Changed** is *metamorphoo* (3339) in Greek which means “transform, transfigure, i.e. was resplendent with a divine brightness; transformed into the same image of consummate excellence that shines in Christ; the change of moral character for the better.”