



# Training Ideological Robots or Men of God?

Dr JP Malan



# Do we have any examples in the Bible of Ideological Robots?



# Theological Education

“Education  
is not the  
filling of  
a bucket,  
but the  
lighting  
of a  
*fire.*”



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Called

We are called...







A wide-angle photograph of a coastal dune landscape. A wooden boardwalk, made of light-colored planks, winds from the foreground into the distance, curving to the right. The dunes are covered in green and yellowish grasses, with patches of sand visible. In the background, a line of dark evergreen trees marks the horizon under a heavy, grey, overcast sky. The overall mood is serene and natural.

# 2 Corinthians 3:1-18



# Train Men as Living Letters, not Ideological Robots

- a. Letters of **commendation**.
- It refers to a recognised way of establishing friendships.
- It is not some form of self-boasting.
- Self-commendation is equivalent to self-introduction.
- But mMore - he entrusts himself to the other.
- Such letters were also necessary in the early church.





# Letters of commendation

- Paul himself sent letters of commendation on many occasions (Romans 16:1-2, 1 Corinthians 16:3, 16:10-11, 2 Corinthians 8:16-24).
- Paul will describe his letter of recommendation.
- On his first visit, he solidified his friendship with them by **entrusting** himself in **person** rather than presenting them with written letters from third parties.
- Recent **opposition** has shaken the original relationship between Paul and the Corinthians, and some in Corinth may have blamed him for the breach.

# You are a Letter Written on our Hearts

- The Corinthians are his letter of commendation.
- The imagery is **striking**. Not on paper with pen and ink, but a divine letter inscribed on human hearts by the Spirit of the living God.
- It is **not** the **degrees** earned that truly commend a minister but rather the degree of concern for the lives of others and the willingness to sacrifice for them.
- Paul refers to a letter written on “**our** hearts” rather than on the Corinthians’ hearts.
- A letter written in pen and ink is visible to only a few; this letter is visible to all.



# You are a Letter Written on our Hearts

- a. There was nothing wrong with a letter of commendation written on paper, but how much **better** to have a living letter of commendation!
- How much better to produce men of God than ideological robots?
- b. The best **analogy** in today's world might be a certificate of ordination/degree.
- We might almost say, keep your paper to yourself and show us the **changed** lives from your ministry.
- c. The letter in the **heart** of Paul. Are our students in our hearts or are we happy that we have dumped the information on them?



# The writing of Paul's letter of recommendation.

- Paul gives **four** characteristics of the letter in this verse.
- a. A Letter from **Christ**: Paul's letter of recommendation has an author, Jesus Christ.
- b. Ministered by us.
- Paul's letter of recommendation was written with a "pen" and the "pen" was Paul himself. He "wrote into" the lives of the people he served through the Spirit.
- c. Written not with ink but by the Spirit of the living God.
- Our teaching and mentoring must be planned for change.
- d. On tablets of flesh, that is, of the heart.
- The students must be in our hearts that we can work and pray that the Spirit can write the truth on their hearts.





# The writing of Paul's letter of recommendation.

- Paul draws a **contrast** between fleshy hearts and stone tablets.
- “When the LORD finished speaking to Moses on Mount Sinai, he gave him the two tablets of the Testimony, the tablets of stone inscribed by the finger of God.” Exod 31:18
- “I will give you a new heart and put a new spirit in you; I will remove from you your heart of stone and give you a heart of flesh.” Ezek 36:26
- “This is the covenant which I will make with the house of Israel after those days, says the LORD: I will put my law within them, and I will write it upon their hearts; and I will be their God and they will be my people.” Jer 31:33



# The writing of Paul's letter of recommendation.

- The reference to stone tablets is **not** a negative image.
- Paul **contrasts** the law as it functioned in the old covenant.
- Its **inability** to change one's heart, and the **ability** of the Spirit in its work in the heart within the new covenant.
- Paul declares that the **prophecies** about God writing on hearts have come to pass through his ministry in the church at Corinth.



# Adequate Ministers of a New Covenant.

- Paul knows that what he has just written might **sound** proud in their ears.
- It is not a false feeling of **self-confidence** based on his abilities and strengths or the approval of others.
- Paul doesn't consider himself sufficient for the great task of changing lives for Jesus. Only Jesus is sufficient for such a big job.
- We see our human limitations when face to face with “divine omnipotence.” But we also see God's power that can work mightily through “human limitations.”
- God chose **fishermen** and tax-gatherers to be preachers of truth and teachers of piety.
- God makes **fit** for service those who are unfit (1 Cor 15:9).
- Worldly rulers give positions of **responsibility** to individuals, but such appointments can never give the competence to exercise authority effectively.
- God bestows both the **authority** and the **competence**.

# Adequate Ministers of a New Covenant.

- a. Some people **refuse** to be used by God because they think of themselves as “not ready,” but in a sense, we are never ready or worthy. If we were, the sufficiency would be in ourselves and not from God.
- b. “Brethren, if Paul is **not sufficient** of himself, what are you and I? Where are you... Do you indulge in the dream of self-sufficiency? Be ashamed of your folly in the presence of a great man who knew what he said, and who spoke under the direction of the Spirit of God, and wrote deliberately, ‘Not that we are sufficient of ourselves.’” (Spurgeon)
- c. “Our sufficiency is of God; let us practically **enjoy** this truth. We are poor, leaking vessels, and the only way to keep full is to put our pitcher under the perpetual flow of boundless grace. Then, despite its leakage, the cup will always be full to the brim.” (Spurgeon)



## Ministers of the New Covenant:

- The **new** covenant was prophesied in the OT (Jer 31:31) and put into practice by Jesus (Luke 22:19-20).
- a. **Covenant:** “An ‘arrangement’ made by one party with unlimited power, which the other party may accept or reject, but cannot alter.”
- b. This **new** covenant presents the terms by which we can have a relationship with God, centered on Jesus and His work for us.

# Ministers of the New Covenant.

- Not of the letter but of the Spirit. New covenant over the old covenant.
- a. The letter is the law in its **outward** sense, written on tablets of stone.
- b. Paul expresses this point well in Romans 7:5-6.
- S. H. Hooke: “A vine does not produce grapes by Act of Parliament; they are the fruit of the vine’s own life; so the conduct which conforms to the standard of the Kingdom is not produced by any demand, not even God’s, but it is the fruit of that divine nature that God gives as the result of what He has done in and by Christ.”
- For Paul, the letter is part of the old covenant now transcended by the new covenant inaugurated by the age of the Spirit.
- c. The indwelling Spirit then becomes for us a law written on our hearts.
- d. We can’t neglect our Bibles (which some might say is the letter) because now we have the Spirit.

# Teach with the Liberty of the New Covenant.

- Now the Lord is the Spirit; and where the Spirit of the Lord is, there is liberty.
- a. The Lord is the Spirit.
- b. Where the Spirit of the Lord is, there is liberty. Paul's thinking follows like this.
- Just as Moses had the liberty to relate to God without the veil in the presence of the Lord, so we have liberty because of the presence of the Holy Spirit.
- The divine presence caused Moses' transformation, and Paul would argue that every believer can experience the divine presence and the glorious transformation through the Spirit. Paul's ministry mediates the Spirit, whose function is to transform the lives of believers progressively into the image of Christ.
- Consider what Paul is **not** saying. He is not giving license to any Pentecostal or Charismatic excess. We have great liberty in our relationship with God through what Jesus did and through what the Holy Spirit is doing, but we never have the liberty to disobey what the Spirit says in the **Word** of God.
- That is a perversion of true liberty, not a Spirit-led liberty.



# Teach with the Liberty of the New Covenant.

- There is liberty.
- But what kind of freedom does Paul have in mind? Freedom from what? Law?
- It is liberty from that blindness and hardness upon men's hearts until they have received the Holy Spirit.
- Freedom is not freedom from some **constraint**.
- The foremost difference between Moses' ministry and Paul's is the work of the Spirit that enables all believers "to turn" and to enter into the Lord's presence.
- Applying this concept to the lives of theological students, we can see that the veil represents anything that **obstructs** their vision of God's glory and truth.
- Students should be reminded that while the study of theology is important, it should always point us to the person of Jesus Christ and the eternal truths of the Gospel.
- The lesson for theological students is to not be preoccupied with **outward** forms or temporary systems, but to seek the true glory of God revealed in Christ.



# Teaching the Transforming Glory of the New Covenant.

- We all with unveiled faces: Paul invites every Christian to a special, glorious **intimacy** with God.
- This is a relationship and transforming power that is not the property of just a few privileged Christians.
- It can belong to everyone who has an unveiled face.
- The emphatic “we all” refers to the experience of all Christians, not just that of apostles or Christian ministers, because Paul is not simply contrasting himself with Moses.
- It is “we” as opposed to the unbelieving Jews. Christians are “able to bear the bold, direct revelation of God’s glory” because the state of their heart has been changed.
- How do we get an unveiled face? When one turns to the Lord, the veil is taken away (2 Cor 3:16). If we will turn to the Lord, He will take away the veil and we can be one of the “we all.”



# Teaching the Transforming Glory of the New Covenant.

- Beholding as in a mirror the glory of the Lord: We can see the glory of the Lord, but we cannot see His glory perfectly.
- A mirror in the ancient world did not give nearly as good a reflection as our mirrors do today.
- As mirrors, among the Jews, Greeks, and Romans, were made of highly polished metal, it would often happen, especially in strong light, that the face would be greatly illuminated by this strongly reflected light; and to this circumstance the apostle seems here to allude.
- In this mirror we see an image, a reflection of the glory of God, which is as close as human beings can ever get to this ultimate reality.
- A direct vision of God is “not for this world” but awaits the end of the age. Christ, however, is the image of God, and we have the privilege of seeing the glory of God in the face of Christ (4:6).
- God is no longer isolated on a faraway mountaintop but may be met in the heart of the believer who turns to the Lord.





# Teaching the Transforming Glory of the New Covenant.

- Are **being** transformed: As we behold the glory of God, we will be transformed. God will change our lives and change us from the inside out.
- God uses the new covenant to make us transformed people, not just nice people.
- “How can I change?” or “How can they change?” The best and most enduring change comes into our lives when we are transformed by **time** spent with the Lord.
- There are other ways to change, such as guilt, willpower, or pressure, but none of these methods bring change that is as deep and lasting as the transformation that comes by the Spirit of God as we spend time in the presence of the Lord.
- We can never encounter God and remain unchanged. Beholding this glory affects our transformation as we are changed into a real likeness of him. The fall tarnished that image and glory, but not irreparably.
- It requires something: **beholding**. The word means more than a casual look; it means to make a careful study.



# Teaching the Transforming Glory of the New Covenant.

- Into the same image: As we look into “God’s mirror,” we are changed into the same image of the Lord.
- This is how you can know someone is spending time with the Lord: They are being transformed into the same image.
- We might have expected Paul to write “into the same glory” instead of “into the same image.” Paul knew that it is not our physical appearance that is being changed but our inner being! Outward appearances remain deceptive (5:12, 16).
- God shines the divine light in hearts (4:6), and it is only in our hearts where true glory can reside and our hearts that count with God. Hearts from which action flows
- In beholding the true glory of the Lord reflected in Christ, our minds become transformed (Rom 12:2) so that we are not conformed to this world and its perceptions and values but conformed to Christ and the pattern of his suffering and resurrection (Rom 8:29).
- The passive voice, “are being transformed,” indicates that this transformation is done by God, and Paul’s exegesis makes clear that it happens through the Spirit.



# Teaching the Transforming Glory of the New Covenant.

- The individual is “not transformed into Christ himself, as the pagan myths might suggest; rather, through that constant subjection to the reflected glory the person is gradually being transformed into a likeness of him.”
- The transformation is not instantaneous but must continually be made actual. This process will not be completed until the resurrection.
- Much depends on what we “see” when we look into “God’s mirror.”
- In this analogy, “God’s mirror” is not a mirror that shows us what we are as much as it shows us what we will become, and what we will become is based on our picture of who God is.





# Teaching the Transforming Glory of the New Covenant.

- If we have a false picture of God, we will see that false picture in God's "mirror" and will be transformed into that same image – much to our harm, both for now and eternity.
- Many Christians have lost or never learned a sound doctrine of regeneration.
- Having made that decision, they make no effort to allow the Spirit to renew them.
- We don't have to be in bondage to a false image of ourselves or of God. When we behold the picture of God as He is in truth, we will be transformed into His image.
- Calvin speaks to this great design of God: "That the image of God, which has been defaced by sin, may be repaired within us... the progress of this restoration is continuous through the whole of life, because it is little by little that God causes His glory to shine forth in us."



# Teaching the Transforming Glory of the New Covenant.

- Are being transformed: This work of transformation is a process. No one comes away from one incredible time with the Lord perfectly transformed.
- **From glory to glory:** The work of transformation is a continual progression. It works from glory to glory. It doesn't have to work from backsliding to glory to backsliding to glory. God's work in our lives can be a continual progression, from glory to glory.
- By the Spirit of the Lord: Paul emphasises two things.
- **First**, this access to God and His transforming presence is ours by the new covenant, because it is through the new covenant we are given the Spirit of the Lord.
- **Secondly**, this work of transformation is God's work in us. It happens by the Spirit of the Lord, not by the will or effort of man. We don't achieve or earn spiritual transformation by beholding as in a mirror the glory of the Lord.
- We simply put ourselves in a place where the Spirit of the Lord can transform us.

# Mentor Students to be Men of God

- Mentoring Warm-hearted Men: A biblical concept that involves older, more experienced individuals guiding and teaching younger ones. Titus 2:7-8
- Mentoring men involves teaching and modeling in a compassionate and loving attitude.
- Mentoring students is a valuable and rewarding endeavour, offering a chance to guide young believers in their faith and personal development.
- Here are some key principles and approaches you might consider:
- **Prayer.** Pray for and with them.
- **Biblical Foundation:** Ground your mentoring in the Scriptures, to teach, encourage, and provide wisdom.
- **Relationship Building:**

# Mentor Students to be Men of God

- **Discipleship:** Help your mentees grow in what it means to be a disciple of Christ. Encourage them to develop spiritual disciplines such as prayer, Bible study, and worship.
- **Encouragement:** Be a source of encouragement and affirmation, reminding your mentees of their value in God's eyes and encouraging them to persevere in their faith.
- **Challenge:** Don't shy away from challenging your mentees to grow. This might involve confronting sinful behavior, encouraging them to step out of their comfort zones, or helping them develop a deeper understanding of complex theological concepts.
- **Modeling:** Lead by example, demonstrating what a life of faith looks like through your own words and actions.



# Mentor Students to be Men of God

- **Community:** Encourage your mentees to be involved in a Christian church, where they can find support and accountability.
- **Lifelong Learning:** Emphasize the importance of lifelong learning and growth in the Christian walk. Encourage them to continue seeking knowledge and understanding of God's Word.
- **Flexibility:** Be flexible in your approach, recognizing that each mentee is unique and may have different needs and learning styles.
- By following these **principles**, you can help mentor Christian students to grow as men of God, deepen their relationship with God, and live out their calling as disciples of Christ.



# Teaching the Transforming Glory of the New Covenant.

- To train men of God – keep the mirror of the glory of Jesus Christ before them.
- Lead them to turn to the Lord and remove the veil.
- Give them a love to dig into God’s word to behold the beauty of the Lord revealed to them.
- Teach them to enjoy the glory of the Lord and they will be changed.
- The transformation you desire them to have in Christ will come if you will turn their eyes to Jesus and enjoy the glory that is revealed through him.
- In the process we find ourselves being transformed by God through His Spirit, from one degree of glory to another, until one day, in the words of 1 John 3, we shall see him and become like him.

# Training Men of God

- As we embark on this journey together, let us remember that our goal is not just to produce graduates, but to cultivate men who will be a force for good in the world—men who will lead with integrity, serve with humility, and inspire others with their warmth and compassion.
- Let us commit ourselves to this task, knowing that the future of our society depends on the values we instill in our students today.