

2 Corinthians 2:14 – 3:18

The **Peter Principle** is the principle that "In a Hierarchy Every Employee Tends to Rise to His Level of Incompetence." It was formulated by Dr. Laurence J. Peter and Raymond Hull in their 1969 book *The Peter Principle* ... It holds that in a hierarchy, members are promoted so long as they work competently. Sooner or later they are promoted to a position at which they are no longer competent (their "level of incompetence"), and there they remain, being unable to earn further promotions. This principle can be modeled and has theoretical validity. Peter's Corollary states that "in time, every post tends to be occupied by an employee who is incompetent to carry out his duties" and adds that "work is accomplished by those employees who have not yet reached their level of incompetence".

Wikipedia Article: [See Here](#)

Peter Principle Study in Italy: [See Actual Study Here](#)

The Dilbert Principle: "Leadership is nature's way of removing morons from the productive flow."

See [Dilbert from February 5, 1995](#)

Everyone feels inadequate, helpless or incompetent to some degree. Now let's apply this to the Christian life. We have a supremely high calling, an important assignment, as Paul tells us today, to carry the fragrance of Christ to the world. If we don't feel inadequate to some degree, then we don't understand the assignment that God has given us. But our ability to carry out our mission can't come from somewhere within ourselves; we don't have the internal means or sufficiency to adequately represent Jesus, or take Jesus, to others around us. The ability to do that has to come from God Himself. That's the point Paul tries to make to the Corinthian church today.

We need to remember that our ability to do God's will is the direct result of what God does within us.

- I. Allow God's sufficiency to give you confidence. 2:14 – 3:6
- II. Allow yourself to reflect God's glory. 3:7-18

- I. Allow God's sufficiency to give you confidence. 2:14 – 3:6

- A. 2:15-16 Christ within us is perceived differently by different people. We become the aroma of life or death to them, depending on how they connect with Christ. This is a serious responsibility for us to carry, because that other person's relationship with Christ is literally a matter of life and death for them – yet, to some degree, they perceive that relationship with Him through us. Therefore Paul asks: "Who is sufficient for these things?" He answers this further down.

- B. 2:17 **We are not ... peddling the word of God.** Plato used this same Greek term *kapelos* to ridicule philosophers who "peddled wisdom," with a primary motive of profit or personal gain. Paul's motives were pure.

2 Cor 2:17 NLT *You see, we are not like the many hucksters who preach for personal profit...*

Back in 1 Cor. 9, Paul clearly teaches that those who do the work of the ministry have a right to receive support. But this is very different from those whose motive for ministry is really financial gain. The true servant of Christ is called to serve.

- C. 3:3-6 Paul is echoing the language of the New Covenant as prophesied in the OT:

Jeremiah 31:31-34 NKJV ³¹“Behold, the days are coming, says the Lord, when I will make a new covenant with the house of Israel and with the house of Judah— ³²not according to the covenant that I made with their fathers in the day that I took them by the hand to lead them out of the land of Egypt, My covenant which they broke, ³³though I was a husband to them, says the Lord. ³³But this is the covenant that I will make with the house of Israel after those days, says the Lord: I will put My law in their minds, and write it on their hearts; and I will be their God, and they shall be My people. ³⁴No more shall every man teach his neighbor, and every man his brother, saying, ‘Know the Lord,’ for they all shall know Me, from the least of them to the greatest of them, says the Lord. For I will forgive their iniquity, and their sin I will remember no more.”

Eze 36:26-27 NKJV ²⁶I will give you a new heart and put a new spirit within you; I will take the heart of stone out of your flesh and give you a heart of flesh. ²⁷I will put My Spirit within you and cause you to walk in My statutes, and you will keep My judgments and do them.

- D. 3:5-6 We are not sufficient in ourselves; God has made us sufficient. The Greek can be translated “God has qualified us.” What qualifies a person to serve Jesus Christ? What makes a person capable or sufficient for that task? It is God’s call that qualifies, for with His call He provides the power to do the work.
- E. 3:6 **the letter kills, but the Spirit gives life.** What does Paul mean by this? He’s going to elaborate on this idea a bit more right now.

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- II. Allow yourself to reflect God’s glory. 3:7-18

- A. 3:7-9 When Paul talks about the letter of the law, the Old Covenant, as a “ministry of death” or a “ministry of condemnation”, we have to make sure we don’t misunderstand him. Both the Old and New Covenants are divine revelation. Both, rightly understood, were meant to call forth faith and invite those who hear to rely on God for salvation. People have always been declared righteous by faith. Under the Old Covenant, those who sincerely wanted to serve God dutifully kept the Law. For the most part, however, Israel missed the saving message. They saw only the dead letter of the law. They treated the OT as a word intended to stir up self-effort rather than faith. In doing so, Israel as a nation fell short.

Now, under the New Covenant, as we approach the same Scriptures in the Spirit, the believer discovers that the law points beyond itself to Christ, and calls for that complete reliance on God’s grace that constitutes saving faith.

- B. 3:12 **boldness of speech** indicates freedom, candor and clarity in our message. It’s not a vague message – or one with a bunch of fine print or strings attached.

- C. 3:13-15 While in Corinth, Paul received his most serious opposition from his fellow Jews who did not receive the message he gave them about Christ, though it was thoroughly grounded in their own Jewish Scriptures. Read this in Acts 18.

Here Paul addresses the issue of unbelief in many of his own fellow Jews. Their blindness is an issue of the heart more than the mind. It's not so much that they couldn't understand his message of the Messiah. It's that they refused to do so.

- D. 3:16-18 When anyone turns to Christ, the veil of the heart is removed. We can now experience genuine freedom of the heart, the mind and the will.

- i. A sub point Paul makes here is that the Holy Spirit is God. He is God the Holy Spirit. So as believers in Christ, the One who indwells us and works within us brings all the power of deity into our lives to do that transforming work, enabling us to reflect the actual glory of God.

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Conclusions:

- **We must depend on Christ for our sense of adequacy.** Whoever we are or aren't, whatever we have to do, whatever our responsibilities, if we view it all from the perspective of serving Christ, we can then look to Him to qualify us for the job. We don't have to feel frustrated or helpless.

This is the question Paul raised in 2:16. **Who is sufficient for these things?**

- In other words, **Can we ever feel adequate in serving Christ?**

The answer is: Our adequacy can only be and will only ever be from God.

***2 Cor 3:4-6 NLT** ⁴We are confident of all this because of our great trust in God through Christ. ⁵It is not that we think we are qualified to do anything on our own. Our qualification comes from God. ⁶He has enabled us to be ministers of his new covenant. ...*

What's more, He has already commissioned and sent us.

***Matt 28:18-20 NKJV** ¹⁸And Jesus came and spoke to them, saying, "All authority has been given to Me in heaven and on earth. ¹⁹Go therefore and make disciples of all the nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, ²⁰teaching them to observe all things that I have commanded you; and lo, I am with you always, even to the end of the age." Amen.*

God has given us the Holy Spirit to enable us to speak with Christ's power. Through the abiding presence of His Spirit, He is with us to the end of the age. Now, if we realize that it is God who makes us competent, useful or adequate – if God qualifies us – we can overcome any and all feelings of inadequacy. We can serve the Lord freely. But, serving him requires that we focus on what he can do through us, not on what we can't do by ourselves.

- **Cultivate a deeper relationship with Jesus.**
 - **The better we know Christ, the more we reflect his glory.**

***2 Cor 3:18 NLT** So all of us who have had that veil removed can see and reflect the glory of the Lord. And the Lord—who is the Spirit—makes us more and more like him as we are changed into his glorious image.*

God doesn't simply give us the bare minimum that we need to serve Him. The glory that the Spirit imparts to the believer is even better and more enduring than the glory that Moses experienced. By beholding the nature of God with unveiled minds, we become more like Him. In the Scriptures, we see the truth about Christ. In community with other believers we live out that truth. Therefore, as we seek Him prayerfully through His Word and meditating on the Scriptures, God's Word transforms us inwardly and morally as we understand and apply it. In that way we will cultivate a deeper relationship with God that we live out in our relationships with others. As our knowledge of Him deepens, the Holy Spirit helps us to change. Becoming Christlike is an ongoing, progressive experience. The more closely we follow Christ, the more we will be like him – and the more of His glory will shine through us to the world outside.