

2 CORINTHIANS - (Chapter 3)

Christ's Epistle (vs. 1-3)

Vs. 1 – Wherever you find the genuine...the counterfeit is not going to be far from it. No sooner did the authentic gospel of God's grace begin to spread among the Gentiles than a *counterfeit gospel* appears that was a *mixture of law and grace*. It was carried by a zealous group of people that were called Judaizers. Paul wrote his letter to the Galatians to refute the Judaizers doctrines. Additionally, some false teachers had started carrying forged letters of recommendation to authenticate their authority. In no uncertain terms, Paul stated he did not need such letters. The proof was in the ministry; the people whom Paul and his companions had preached to were enough of a recommendation. *A changed and transformed life was the proof what Paul taught was the real gospel*. Now Paul did use letters of introduction to Phoebe – ***Romans 16:1-2*** and for Timothy in ***1 Corinthians 16:10-11***; these letters helped Paul's trusted companions and friends find a welcome in various churches.

Vs. 2-3 – Again the transformed lives of the Corinthians was Paul's testimonial letters so he did not need the approval of man because he had the approval of God. The ministry of grace changes the heart. The spirit of God uses the word of God and writes it on the heart. The Corinthians were wicked

sinner when Paul came to them, but his ministry of the Gospel of God's grace completely changed their lives...this is why we should never give up on anyone or any people group. Paul showed that a purpose of his ministry was that people would come to know Jesus and enter into a life-transforming relationship with Christ. Paul sought no personal fame, fortune, or personal notoriety.

The Spirit, not the Letter (vs. 4-6)

Vs. 4-5 – Paul was not boasting; he gave God the credit for all his accomplishments. While the false teachers boasted of their own power and success. Paul expressed humility before God...he said this in **1 Corinthians 15:10** - “By the grace of God I am what I am...no one is capable or competent to carry out the responsibilities of God's calling in his or her own strength. Without the Holy Spirit's enabling...our natural talent can take us only so far. In **vs. 5** regarding the phrase “*Not that we are sufficient of ourselves*” Paul doesn't consider himself sufficient for the great task of changing lives for Jesus. Only Jesus is sufficient for such a big job. 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. We need to be obedient and available to be used by God. The reference to “the letter” in **vs. 5** is a reference to the Old Covenant – the 10 commandments written on stone.

Vs. 6 - Our sufficiency is of God; not in self. We are a branch connected to the true vine...When Paul says *“not of the letter but of the Spirit”* he is saying the letter kills because all have sin and fall short of the glory of God (Romans 3:23) and the wages of sin is death (Romans 6:23a). Also, he is showing the superiority of the new covenant over the old covenant. The book of Hebrews focusses on the superiority of the New Covenant of grace by faith in Christ Jesus over the old covenant of law. Now it is interesting to note that on the day Moses came down from the mountain with the law 3000 were killed, but on the day the church was established in Mount Zion, *3000 were saved*. The law of Moses was a law of spiritual death because nobody could keep it perfectly, but the law of Christ is a law of life because it provides for the forgiveness of our sins. **Exodus 32:28** And the children of Levi did according to the word of Moses: and there fell of the people that day about three thousand men. **Acts 2:41** Then they that gladly received his word were baptized: and the same day there were added unto them about three thousand souls. Now conversely, the Spirit and the letter are not enemies, but friends. They don't work against each other, and one is incomplete without the other. Jesus came to fulfill the law not to abolish it.

Glory of the New Covenant (vs. 7-18)

Vs. 7-11 – This phrase *ministry of death* was a reference to the Law – specifically the 10 Commandments from the Old Testament. So was it wrong to call the old covenant the ministry of death? No, because that is what the law does to us: *It slays us as guilty sinners before God so that we can be resurrected by the new covenant.* The Law was not the problem, the problem is with humanity. The sinful passions which were aroused by the law were at work in our members to bear fruit to death as stated in ***Romans 7:5***. The phrase *was glorious* refers to there was glory associated with the giving of the law and the old covenant. At that time, Mount Sinai was surrounded with smoke; there were earthquakes, thunder, lightning, a trumpet blast from heaven, and the voice of God Himself (Exodus 19:16-20:1). Most of all, the glory of the old covenant was shown in the face of Moses and the glory of his countenance.

Exodus 34:29-35 describes how Moses put a veil over his face after speaking to the people. As glorious as the radiant face of Moses was, it was a fading glory: a glory that was passing away. The glory of the old covenant shining through the face of Moses was a fading glory, but the glory of the new covenant endures without fading. This text also alludes to the fact when we spend time with the Lord...His glory will shine on us...people will be able to tell when you have spent quality time with the Lord. In **vs. 8** regarding the question “*how will the ministry of the Spirit not be more glorious*” - if the old covenant,

which brought death still had some glory because although it condemned, it also pointed the people to Jesus, we should expect greater glory in the new covenant which brings the ministry of the Spirit and life. The old covenant was a ministry of condemnation, but the new covenant is the ministry of righteousness and life for the Holy Spirit produces eternal life. The old covenant is passing away, but the new covenant remains. No wonder the new covenant is much more glorious! Christianity is far superior to Judaism and any other religion. The book of Hebrews highlights this perhaps better than any other book in the Bible. *John 3:17* sums up verses 7-11 (**read John 3:17**).

Vs. 12-13 – The phrase “*great boldness of speech*” means frankness or freedom of speech. We should have a glorious freedom and openness of the Christian belief and life under grace to share everywhere we go...this little light of mine I am going to let it shine (because it was given to us by Jesus). We should not be ashamed of the Gospel of Jesus Christ for it is the power of God to salvation for everyone who believes, for the Jew first and also for the Greek as stated in *Romans 1:16*. Regarding the phrase in **vs. 13** that says “*could not look steadily at the end of what was passing away*” - the word end refers to 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. The Law was preparing the people for something greater that was not going to be made known to Jewish people until Jesus comes and institutes grace by faith in Him alone – He would become the ultimate sacrifice for humanity and the church would evolve – Jew and Gentile coming together to form one body called the church (*Ephesians chapter 3*).

Vs. 14-17 – In these verses Paul is expressing a special love for Israel and a burden to see his people saved (Romans 9:1-3). The Jewish people were rejecting their Christ but as Paul shared the gospel with the group of people God sent him to (the Gentiles) they accepted the Lord by faith and had their lives transformed. Paul says the primary reason there was a *spiritual veil* over their minds and hearts was because their “*spiritual eyes*” were blinded. When the Jews read the Old Testament they did not see the truth about their Messiah (even John the Baptist was temporarily blind to this fact). Even though the Jews read the Scriptures systematically in the synagogues the Jewish people did not grasp the spiritual message. It is no different today, for people come to church and simply go through the motions; they hear the word but do not become doers of the word...*the hardest thing to do in the church is to get the people to come pray together, study the Bible together, and go witness together although God calls the church a house of prayer and we are*

commanded to go and make disciples. Vs. 16 was the hope then as it is today...when we repent and turn to God our spiritual eyes will be open to Him and the spiritual veil removed. But we must realize no sinner – Jew or Gentile can turn to Christ apart from the ministry of the Holy Spirit. In vs. 17 when it says “*Now the Lord is that Spirit*” that is a bold declaration of the deity of the Holy Spirit as being the 3rd member of the Holy Trinity – He is God the Holy Spirit. The Judaizers who invaded the church at Corinth were depending on the Law to change men’s lives, but only the Spirit of God can bring about transformation (Read *Romans 8:15*). We are indebted to the Jewish people for salvation...salvation is of the Jews according to *John 4:22*. Of course this does not mean all of Israel is saved; actually most of Israel is unsaved – a primary reason for the 7 year tribulation is for the Jews to be saved...today’s modern church must continue to pray for the peace and safety of Jerusalem and pray and evangelize the Jewish people.

Vs. 18 – The glory that the Spirit imparts to the believer is more excellent and lasts longer than the glory that Moses experienced. By gazing at the nature of God with unveiled minds, we can be more like him. In the Good News, we see the truth about Christ and it transforms us morally as we understand and apply it. Through learning about Christ’s life, we can understand how

wonderful God is and what He is really like. *As our knowledge deepens, the Holy Spirit helps us change. Becoming Christ-like is a progressive experience.*