

2 Corinthians Chapter 3

Verses 1-6

The false teachers in Corinth constantly attacked Paul's competency as a minister of the gospel; these verses form his defense.

2 Corinthians 3:1 "Do we begin again to commend ourselves? or need we, as some [others], epistles of commendation to you, or [letters] of commendation from you?"

Because Paul did not want to allow the false teachers to accuse him of being proud, he began his defense by posing two questions rather than making any overt claims.

Paul is almost shaming them, in this chapter, he feels that it is necessary for him to prove himself to them.

He says, do I have to brag on my own accomplishments, or have someone else who you respect recommend me?

They had accepted the message that he brought to them originally, so then now why would they begun to doubt?

Paul's point was that he did not need any secondhand testimony when the Corinthians had firsthand proof of his sincere and godly character, as well as the truth of his message that regenerated them.

2 Corinthians 3:2 "Ye are our epistle written in our hearts, known and read of all men:"

He is saying to them, look around and see all the people who received Christ as their Savior under my ministering.

Let the Christian converts there be my recommendation.

All men can look and see the Christians in the church at Corinth.

That should speak to all men who I am.

2 Corinthians 3:3 "[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."

You yourselves are the document that you ask for.

Let the results speak for themselves.

Paul is now telling them that the Spirit of God had written the law of God on the fleshly part of their hearts.

Does not your heart washed in the blood of the Lamb and then filled with the Spirit, not witness for me?

Paul is saying that the place they are now in, with Christ, is the result of him ministering Christ to them.

He says the Christ within you is because you listened to the message Christ had given Paul that was for them.

God was writing His law on the hearts of those people He transformed.

The false teachers claimed external adherence to the Mosaic Law as the basis of salvation, but the transformed lives of the Corinthians proved that salvation was an internal change wrought by God in the heart.

2 Corinthians 3:4 "And such trust have we through Christ to God-ward:"

Paul had placed his confidence in Christ.

It had been Christ in Paul ministering to them.

The outcome was to draw them God-ward.

Paul was confident in his ministry, and that confidence resulted in his ability to stay the course and continue moving toward the goal.

2 Corinthians 3:5 "Not that we are sufficient of ourselves to think any thing as of ourselves; but our sufficiency [is] of God;"

Paul realized this more than all of them, because when he had depended on his head knowledge, he knew not Christ.

Christ stopped Paul and called him to His service on the road to Damascus.

Paul went into the desert and was taught of the Holy Spirit of God.

World training is not sufficient to serve God in the way pleasing unto Him.

We must allow Christ to minister through us.

We are to be a willing vessel.

The Lord Jesus Christ will do the rest.

Paul knew of his lack of sufficiency within himself.

He knew that his sufficiency is of God.

Paul disdained his own ability to reason, judge or assess truth.

Left to his own abilities, he was useless.

He was dependent on divine revelation and the Holy Spirit's power.

2 Corinthians 3:6 "Who 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."

The letter is speaking of the law.

Romans 7:6 " But now we are delivered from the law, that being dead wherein we were held; that we should serve in newness of spirit, and not [in] the oldness of the letter."

Testament means contract or covenant.

The New Testament means the new covenant that God has made with mankind.

Paul is speaking to many who knew the law of Moses.

He is explaining that in Jesus Christ, the Lord has provided a new agreement.

This new covenant is not by the works of the law, but by the grace of God man is saved.

The new covenant was sealed with the shedding of the precious blood of the Lamb.

All of them knew the impossibility of flawlessly keeping the law.

The law brought death to those who did not keep it.

John 3:6 "That which is born of the flesh is flesh; and that which is born of the Spirit is spirit."

To keep the law was an act of the flesh of man.

Jesus Christ is the quickening Spirit which brings everlasting life.

1 Corinthians 15:45 "And so it is written, The first man Adam was made a living soul; the last Adam [was made] a quickening spirit."

The law brought death, the Spirit brought life.

2 Corinthians 3:7 "But if the ministration of death, written [and] engraven in stones, was glorious, so that the children of Israel could not stedfastly behold the face of Moses for the glory of his countenance; which [glory] was to be done away:"

This is speaking of the fact that Moses' face shone so brightly from being in the presence of God (The Light), that the people could not look upon him.

This great Light was so bright that Moses had to cover his face with a veil to keep them from being blinded.

Paul is saying, if that Light was so great in Moses, who brought the law; why do you not understand that the Light revealed in the New Testament is so much greater?

The law brought death.

The covenant sealed in Jesus blood brings everlasting life.

2 Corinthians 3:8 "How shall not the ministration of the spirit be rather glorious?"

What a glorious awakening, when the Spirit ministers to man.

2 Corinthians 3:9 "For if the ministration of condemnation [be] glory, much more doth the ministration of righteousness exceed in glory."

By the law, all men have sinned and come short of the glory of God.

We are all condemned by the law.

Being in right standing with God comes from being washed in the blood of the Lamb who is Jesus Christ.

The difference is, that where the law condemns man, the grace in Christ brings hope of everlasting life.

Ephesians 2:5 "Even when we were dead in sins, hath quickened us together with Christ, (by grace ye are saved;)"

Romans 5:9 "Much more then, being now justified by his blood, we shall be saved from wrath through him."

Remember, that "justified" means just as if I had never sinned.

The law was good, but grace is much better.

Romans 3:20 "Therefore by the deeds of the law there shall no flesh be justified in his sight: for by the law [is] the knowledge of sin."

Ephesians 2:8 "For by grace are ye saved through faith; and that not of yourselves: [it is] the gift of God:"

2 Corinthians 3:10 "For even that which was made glorious had no glory in this respect, by reason of the glory that excelleth."

This glory spoken of here, is speaking of Moses' face was shining.

The glory of the Lord far excelled the glory of Moses.

2 Corinthians 3:11 "For if that which is done away [was] glorious, much more that which remaineth [is] glorious."

There is nothing wrong with Moses or the law.

The weakness was in man keeping the law.

Galatians 3:21 "[Is] the law then against the promises of God? God forbid: for if there had been a law given which could have given life, verily righteousness should have been by the law."

John 1:17 "For the law was given by Moses, [but] grace and truth came by Jesus Christ."

The law of Moses was glorious, but man could not live up to that law and was lost.

The grace of God, in Jesus Christ, brings life.

2 Corinthians 3:12 "Seeing then that we have such hope, we use great plainness of speech:"

The Old Testament, itself, was veiled and hard to understand, until the curtain was torn between the holy place and the holy of holies.

When Jesus sent the Holy Spirit to the Christians, He was their Teacher and Guide.

The Holy Spirit opens up our understanding to all Scriptures (Old and New Testament).

Jesus' teachings on the earth were all very simple.

The gospel message is very simple.

This plainness of speech was so that everyone could understand.

2 Corinthians 3:13 "And 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:"

The children of Israel could not look beyond the veil in the temple, or at Moses either.

The way to God was veiled to them.

2 Corinthians 3:14 "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."

A person who reads just the Old Testament cannot truly understand, until you put it with the New Testament and realize the fulfillment in Jesus.

The Old Testament cannot be understood by physically reading it.

It is understood through the revealing by the Holy Spirit of God.

2 Corinthians 3:15 "But even unto this day, when Moses is read, the veil is upon their heart."

This is speaking of the Old Testament being read in the temple, or synagogue.

Without the Holy Spirit revealing the Word, it cannot be understood.

2 Corinthians 3:16 "Nevertheless when it shall turn to the Lord, the veil shall be taken away."

The main thing to understand in this is the simple message of Salvation in the gospels.

God is revealed to man in His Son Jesus Christ.

We see so clearly, God being revealed in Jesus Christ, in the following Scripture.

John 14:9 "Jesus saith unto him, Have I been so long time with you, and yet hast thou not known me, Philip? he that hath seen me hath seen the Father; and how sayest thou [then], Shew us the Father?"

2 Corinthians 3:17 "Now the Lord is that Spirit: and where the Spirit of the Lord [is], there [is] liberty."

John 4:24 "God [is] a Spirit: and they that worship him must worship [him] in spirit and in truth."

"Spirit":

In verse 17 above, is the God Spirit.

1 John 5:7 "For there are three that bear record in heaven, the Father, the Word, and the Holy Ghost: and these three are one."

One, in this verse, is speaking of their Spirit nature.

Romans 8:9 "But ye are not in the flesh, but in the Spirit, if so be that the Spirit of God dwell in you. Now if any man have not the Spirit of Christ, he is none of his."

The Spirit of the Risen Christ within me brings me liberty.

I have liberty, because I am living in the perfect will of God.

Galatians 2:20 "I am crucified with Christ: nevertheless I live; yet not I, but Christ liveth in me: and the life which I now live in the flesh I live by the faith of the Son of God, who loved me, and gave himself for me."

There is liberty in Christ.

2 Corinthians 3:18 "But 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."

The more of Jesus in me, the less of me in me.

When I become so full of Christ that others can see Christ in me, then the Scripture above becomes more true in my life.

Christians are becoming more like Jesus every day, or they are going back into the world.

We never stand still.

True Christianity is becoming more Christ-like every day.

Christ in me, the hope of glory.

Romans 8:2 "For the law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus hath made me free from the law of sin and death."

1 John 3:2 "Beloved, now are we the sons of God, and it doth not yet appear what we shall be: but we know that, when he shall appear, we shall be like him; for we shall see him as he is."

2 Corinthians Chapter 3 Questions

1. What is Paul shaming them of in verse 1?
2. What was the best recommendation for Paul?
3. What was the document that they had asked for?

4. Where was the law of God written for these new converts to Christianity?
5. Paul had placed his confidence in _____.
6. When Paul had depended upon his own _____, he rejected Christ.
7. Who taught Paul the Christian way?
8. Paul's sufficiency was of _____.
9. If Paul was not to minister the letter, what was he to minister?
10. The _____ killeth, but the _____ giveth life.
11. What does "Testament" mean?
12. The new covenant was sealed with what?
13. Why had Moses' head shone?
14. What did Moses have to do to keep from blinding the people?
15. By the _____, all men have sinned and come short of the glory of God.
16. What brings righteousness to the Christian?
17. What does "justified" mean?
18. For by the law is the _____ of sin.
19. If there is nothing wrong with Moses and the law, what was wrong?
20. Grace and truth came by _____.
21. What was good about the plainness of speech of Paul?
22. The veil on the Old Testament was done away in _____.
23. Who must reveal the meaning of the Scriptures?
24. Where the Spirit of the Lord is, there is _____.
25. The Spirit of the _____ within me brings me liberty.