**2 CORINTHIANS 3**

**WHERE THE SPIRIT OF THE LORD IS THERE IS FREEDOM v17**

Like anybody experiencing success and growth, Paul had his detractors. He had hecklers, critics, imitators, and downright enemies. Just as Paul would spend a year or two starting a new church… as soon as he moved on to the next city to begin a work his critics would move right in and try to convert the Gentile Christians into Jewish Christians…

They would expound upon all of the Apostle’s faults. (And he had some.) When questioned his faultfinders would produce letters of recommendation to prove their credentials. Paul will mock this practice.

He will call upon the Corinthians to use his behavior as his credentials.

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

* Like the song from the 70’s Paul is saying, “If you don’t know me by now… You will never know me.”

**YOU ARE MY LETTER OF RECOMMENDATION**

2 You are our epistle written in our hearts, known and read by all men; 3 clearly *you are* an epistle of Christ, ministered by us, written not with ink but by the Spirit of the living God, not on tablets of stone but on tablets of flesh, *that is,* of the heart.

* Changed hearts are what were Paul’s criteria for true ministry.
* The Christians at Corinth were repenting and growing in the Lord, and that was all the confirmation that the Apostle wanted!

4 And we have such trust through Christ toward God.

* NLT - We are confident of all this because of our great trust in God through Christ.
* Paul knew – AS DO I – That only Jesus can change hearts. We share the word, the Holy Spirit does the convicting, and people choose to change.

**GOD’S GRACE IS ENOUGH**

5 Not that we are sufficient of ourselves to think of anything as *being* from ourselves, but our sufficiency *is* from God, 6 who also made us sufficient as ministers of the new covenant, not of the letter but of the Spirit; for the letter **(of the law)** kills, but the Spirit gives life.

* Paul knew that the success was the Lord’s doing, NOT his.
* It was the Spirit doing the convicting of sin, NOT Paul.
* The Holy Spirit was leading people to new life. Paul was taking no credit.
* If we at CCSV can help you stay in the Word thus allowing the Holy Spirit to speak into your hearts… we have done our job!
* SO… Like us leaders do – Stay in the Word!

**NEW & IMPROVED COVENANT**

7 But if the ministry of death, **(NLT – the old way)** written *and* engraved on stones, **(IE, The Law)** was glorious, so that the children of Israel could not look steadily at the face of Moses because of the glory of his countenance, **(EX 34)** which *glory* was passing away, 8 how will the ministry of the Spirit not be more glorious?

* The glory of the law was the presence of God when He gave the Law to Moses… Moses’ face was sunburned from being that close to God… But the glow on his face faded away…
* The Law came engraved on cold stone… The grace of God is written on soft hearts… NOT hardened hearts… Soft hearts!
* He continues the comparisons…

9 For if the ministry of condemnation **(IE, The Law)** *had* glory, the ministry of righteousness **(Grace)** exceeds much more in glory.

* Imagine how school would have gone for you if missing one question would have given you an “F” on your test.
* How many of us would have a driver’s license if missing one question on THAT test failed you? Let’s see…
* **If you are on a two-way street, stopped at an intersection, can you legally turn left on a red light into a one-way street? How many say Yes? No?**
	+ **The answer is \_\_\_\_\_\_\_. If you got the wrong answer please pass your CDL to the Isle for collection ☹**

**THIS WAS THE PROBLEM WITH THE LAW… Nobody could keep it**

10 For even what was made glorious had no glory in this respect, because of the glory that excels. **CEV - In fact, the new agreement is so wonderful that the Law is no longer glorious at all.**

* Here is what I think… As the face of Moses reflected the glory of God… There should be something about us that reflects HIS glory as well.
	+ **PEACE** should make its way to our countenance somehow…
	+ **GRACE** should be apparent in our attitude.
	+ **MERCY** should flavor our words and behavior.
	+ **LOVE** is what people should receive from us.
	+ IF like me, you don’t always have Peace, Grace, Mercy & Love to offer – That’s OK, just reflect the Lord’s. He is never in short supply.

**FADING vs PERMANENT**

11 For if what is passing away *was* glorious, ***(Talking about the face of Moses)*** what remains *is* much more glorious. ***(Talking about Jesus!)***

* Let us NOT be Christians who are talking about other people’s sins…
* Let us be Christians who are always talking about how God saved us FROM OUR sins.
* Let’s stop reminding people of our past and tell them about our future with THE LORD!
* When Jesus met sinners along his way, He did not berate them about their past, He forgave them and told them to “Go and sin no more.”
* Whom DID Jesus berate along the way? Hypocrites. Let us not be one of those.

**VEILED vs UNVEILED**

12 Therefore, since we have such hope, we use great boldness **(Plain)** of speech—13 unlike Moses, *who* put a veil over his face so that the children of Israel could not look steadily at the end of what was passing away.

* Why did Moses keep wearing the veil that covered the glow on his face?
* Paul thinks it was to keep the people from seeing it fade.
* SELF righteousness fades away, doesn’t it?
	+ If we start to say things like, “I would never do that… on my worst day, I wouldn’t… Never have I… You will never see me doing that…” **BE CAREFUL**

**Your self-righteousness is starting to fade!**

**Better wear a mask! (sorry)**

14 But their minds were blinded. **(By self-righteousness)** For until this day the same veil remains un-lifted in the reading of the Old Testament, because the *veil* is taken away in Christ.

* NLT - But the people's minds were hardened, and to this day whenever the old covenant is being read, the same veil covers their minds so they cannot understand the truth. And this veil can be removed only by believing in Christ.

**THE VEIL OF SELF-RIGHTEOUSNESS**

15 But even to this day, when Moses is read, a veil lies on their heart.

* SO SAD!
* To be spiritually blind is the saddest handicap I can think of.

16 Nevertheless when one turns to the Lord, the veil is taken away.

* Hallelujah! **Romans 11:25** speaks of the day that the veil will be removed from all of Israel…
* **NOW… What else is taken away when we turn to the Lord?**
	+ Hopelessness… Despair disappears… Misery melts away… Spiritually speaking we have everything we need in the Lord.
	+ Physically, we might need healing… Encouragement… a million dollars… (would you settle for half?)
	+ But if the Lord is your Shepherd, **PSALM 23** you want for nothing in the spiritual world!

17 Now the Lord is the Spirit; and where the Spirit of the Lord *is,* there *is* liberty. **(Freedom from sin)**

* **Adam Clarke** - Wherever this Gospel is received, there the Spirit of the Lord is given; and wherever that Spirit lives and works, there is liberty, not only from Jewish bondage, but from the slavery of sin - from its power, its guilt, and its pollution.
* **ROMANS 8:1** - T*here is* therefore now no condemnation to those who are in Christ Jesus, who do not walk according to the flesh, but according to the Spirit. 2 For the law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus has made me free from the law **(bondage)** of sin and death.

18 But we all, with unveiled face, beholding as in a mirror the glory of the Lord, are being transformed into the same image from glory to glory, just as by the Spirit of the Lord.

* **CEV** - So our faces are not covered. They show the bright glory of the Lord, as the Lord's Spirit makes us more and more like our glorious Lord.

Ah… This transformation is both an event… AND A JOURNEY!

As we suffer, as we mature… As we endure, He is making us what He wants us to be.

I love the Casting Crowns song that says, “Your life isn’t falling apart – it’s falling into place…. So, just be held.”

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