

## PAUL'S SECOND LETTER TO THE CORINTHIANS CHAPTER 3

### What you will learn:

1. Paul makes an apology for seeming to defend himself. Paul does not need any recommendation (verses 1-3)
2. Paul's sufficiency comes from God (verses 4-6)
3. God has made Paul a minister of the new testament which is to be found in Christ. This new testament is far more glorious than that given to Moses with the ten commandments (verses 7-11)
4. Paul's ministry needs no veil upon his face unlike Moses, who had to wear one, after meeting with God on Mt Sinai (verses 12-13)
5. To this very day in March 2020, the Jews still have darkened hearts toward Christ because they are still under the veil of Moses (verses 14-15)
6. However one day this veil shall be removed off Israel (verses 16-18)
7. **Paul's purpose in this chapter is to compare the bondage that Moses stood for against the freedom found in Christ. Paul's critics and opposition in Corinth was coming from some Jews there. They were trying to bring the Christians back under obeying the law like worshipping on Saturday, not eating certain foods, washings and rituals, the feast and celebrations, and all the laws, rituals and ceremonies found in the books of Leviticus and Deuteronomy that governed the whole lives. Paul said "Christ has done all them on your behalf. You have been set free. There is liberty and freedom in Christ."**

1. Paul makes an apology for seeming to defend himself.  
Paul does not need any recommendation (verses 1-3)

### **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?**

Paul doesn't have to commend himself to them. He thought it necessary to protest his sincerity to them, because there were some at Corinth who were trying to undermine him and his reputation. Generally when strangers come into a church they have with them letters and credentials from others that recommend them. Paul treats this as absurd to suppose that he or Timothy should need such letters from them or from those at Jerusalem. Paul defends himself by his being sincere toward them.

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

But Paul says if they wanted any such letters, they should look at themselves. The very name and existence of the Corinthian church was sufficient proof enough. Indeed they were written on Paul's heart and he could appeal and refer to them whenever he wanted to in conversation with others. In fact, they were known among all men. Nothing is so satisfying or delightful for a minister or Pastor, than the success of their ministry with the changed lives of those in the church and who work with them.

### **3:3 Forasmuch as ye are manifestly (obviously) 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.**

The Corinthians were themselves were the letters of recommendation. They were written on his heart. Christ was the founder and Paul was the minister who looked after them. The Corinthians were the letters themselves, not written on paper with ink, or engraved upon stone, but were written on Christ's heart and Paul's heart. They were not written upon stone like the laws of Moses, but written by the finger of God, as it were, upon Paul's heart. He utterly refuses to take any credit for this but gives all the glory to God.

2. Paul's sufficiency comes solely from God (verses 4-6)

### **3:4 And such trust have we through Christ to God-ward:**

Paul says that the trust he has in all this is toward God through Christ. That is in the direction to God all because of Jesus Christ.

### **3:5 Not that we are sufficient of ourselves to think any thing as of ourselves; but our sufficiency is of God;**

All true pastors, teachers and preachers know that their strength, effectiveness and success is all of God and his grace and his mercy. Only what God can give will make us sufficient.

**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 new testament is to be found in Christ. The letter refers to the letters on the table of the two stones that Moses brought down from the mountain. These had the law on them. These were the ten commandments. Trying to act out the ten commandments to impress God can't be done. You see, the law was given not to save us, or indeed the Jews under the old testament, but to show we are sinners and cannot keep God's high standards. God did this deliberately to show how pathetic we really are in his sight. *Knowing that a man is not justified by the works of the law, but by the faith of Jesus Christ, even we have believed in Jesus Christ, that we might be justified by the faith of Christ, and not by the works of the law: for by the works of the law shall no flesh be justified. Galatians 2:16*

*Wherefore the law was our schoolmaster to bring us unto Christ, that we might be justified by faith. But after that faith is come, we are no longer under a schoolmaster. Galatians 3:24-25*

Do you know what a schoolmaster says all the time? "You are not good enough! You can do better!" So the law says "You can't be good enough. You are not good enough. You need the goodness of Christ". Now when we believe on the Lord Jesus Christ to be our Saviour, we have the Spirit put into us in the form of the Holy Ghost. So the Spirit gives life.

3. God has made Paul a minister of the new testament which is to be found in Christ. This new testament is far more glorious than that given to Moses with the ten commandments (verses 7-11)

**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:**

The two tables of stone with the laws of God written on them, were God's way of ministering to Israel under the old testament. Now because God is pure, sinless and perfect, his laws are pure, perfect and glorious. No-one can possibly keep them. They couldn't even stand the glory of them. That's why when Moses came down off Mt Sinai after having spent time with God alone, Moses' face shone like a very bright light that blinded the eyes. That's why he had to put a cloth (veil) over his face, because they could not bear to look on his face. The countenance of Moses was his face. But this glory of God's laws that were reflected in Moses' face was to be replaced by the glory of Christ. Why? Christ was better than the law because he fulfilled every demand of it. He beat it. He conquered it. He subdued it as a man of flesh. Christ came to fulfil the law in the flesh, such that we can have his victory of 'beating/fulfilling' the law, put into our account.

**3:8 How shall not the ministration of the spirit be rather glorious?**

Our soul gets saved and our spirit becomes born again by God's Spirit. So God's Spirit (God's Spirit always has a capital "S") ministers to our spirit (our spirit always has a small "s"). See the difference?

Yes, God's Spirit that ministers to us in the form of the Holy Ghost, comes inside of us and attends and cares for our little human spirit. "This is a glorious thing" says Paul.

**3:9 For if the ministration of condemnation be glory, much more doth the ministration of righteousness exceed in glory.**

Paul says the law was glorious. Paul says that the law which was given to condemn us and show us we are sinners, was glorious. Why? It shows that we are not God. God's law are glorious. The mere fact that we can't keep them doesn't mean they aren't glorious.

Now, Paul says that having Christ's right standing with God, his righteousness, is more glorious than the law. Why? Christ was better than the law. It couldn't and didn't defeat him. Christ not only defeated the law. We say he fulfilled it. Christ did everything that the law wanted of him. So Christ's righteousness in fulfilling the law is more glorious than the law.

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

God's law had no glory compared to Christ's glory. Christ glory exceeded and surpassed what the law demanded.

**3:11 For if that which is done away was glorious, much more that which remaineth is glorious.**

The law was put aside or done away with when Christ fulfilled it. The law was glorious, but what was left was Christ's glory of fulfilling the law. The condemnation of the law (which was glorious) was done away with when Christ did what it demanded. Therefore what Christ did was more glorious than the law.

4. Paul's ministry needs no veil upon his face unlike Moses, who had to wear a veil over his face after meeting with God on Mt Sinai (verses 12-13)

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

So Paul doesn't have to cover up like Moses. Paul speaks very plainly. Good ministers do this. Bad ministers don't. They talk in complicated ways and no-one can understand them. Because what Christ has done is open to all and very plain to see, we can tell people exactly where they will be after they die. God's love is Jesus Christ. Have him as Saviour and you will go to heaven. If you don't, then God must send you to hell because you have unforgiven sins that have not been washed away by the blood of Christ.

**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:**

No matter how hard they tried in keeping the law, they could only have temporary forgiveness of sins by the blood of animals. The old testament Jew could not see Jesus Christ in the future. They could not see a time when they would have eternal security once and for all, by the blood of Christ. Their eyes were blocked. Moses face blocked out the light of the law that made his face shine. Christ is called the Light that lighteth every man that comes into the world (John 1:9).

5. To this very day in March 2020, the unsaved Jews still have darkened hearts toward Christ because they are still under the veil of Moses (verses 14-15)

**3:14 But their minds were blinded: for until this day remaineth the same vail untaken away in the reading of the old testament; which vail is done away in Christ.**

As the saying goes "The old is in the new revealed and the new is in the old concealed." Jesus Christ is hidden in the old testament but is revealed in the new testament.

The modern day Jew still have blocked and blinded minds. The old veil of trying to impress God with their keeping the law (which they could never do) needs to be removed from them. It is a spiritual blindness.

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

Because most Jews today have not accepted Jesus Christ as their Saviour, a veil is on their heart and they have blinded minds that will not accept the fact that they need Jesus Christ's perfect keeping of the law put into their account, so that they may get to heaven. They are still with Moses who has a veil over his face.

6. However one day this veil shall be removed off Israel (verses 16-18)

**3:16 Nevertheless when it shall turn to the Lord, the vail shall be taken away.**

Now sometime in the 7 year tribulation, Israel will have their blindfold over their eyes and minds, taken away by God himself. It won't be the result of their efforts either. It will be by remote control from God. He will just do it one day when the time is right. *And I will pour upon the house of David, and upon the inhabitants of Jerusalem, the spirit of grace and of supplications: and they shall look upon me whom they have pierced, and they shall mourn for him, as one mourneth for his only son, and shall be in bitterness for him, as one that is in bitterness for his firstborn. Zechariah 12:10*

An all Israel shall be saved in that day.

**3:17 Now the Lord is that Spirit: and where the Spirit of the Lord is, there is liberty.**

The Lord Jesus Christ is God. God the Father is God. The Holy Ghost, which is the indwelling Spirit of God, God as well. We are no longer under the bondage and the curse of the law to keep it. We are set free. The law has done it's work. Without the law, we would not know we are sinners and we could not be saved by Christ. So the law was wonderful to reveal sin in us that Christ could save us and set us free. Give us liberty.

**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 we clean up our lives by obeying what God wants from us today, the more we see clearly who Christ was, is and shall be. We are being changed every day from glory to glory and hopefully becoming more like Christ. The Jew in the old testament in the desert only saw the glory of God in the cloud that led them around and the fire at night. But we have, as it were, a more clear picture of Christ as in a mirror. The more we examine ourselves and prove we are in the faith, we are changed from glory into more glory (2 Corinthians 13:5; Philippians 2:12).

Question: "What did you learn from this chapter?"