

THIS WEEK'S MESSAGE

APRIL 27TH-28TH, 2024 // 2 CORINTHIANS

CONFIDENCE (2 CORINTHIANS 3:1-6) COMMENDATION AND RECOMMENDATION

Paul asks two questions to which he expects to receive a "no." First, he asks the Corinthians if he is guilty of arrogance. Secondly, he asks if he needs official letters of recommendation to vouch for his character.

- It was common in the early church to have letters of recommendation when traveling.

EVIDENCE OF OUR CHARACTER

Paul answers his own questions by telling them he had letters of recommendation, not written on paper, but on "hearts." He was referring to the fruit of his work for Christ.

- **"A tree is known by its fruit." Character is defined by action over time. How we live, not just what we say, establishes reputation.**

CONFIDENCE THROUGH JESUS

Paul makes it clear that a humble confidence comes "through Christ before God." He also reminds us that we are not "competent in ourselves...but our adequacy is from God."

- **Through Jesus we're able to live fruitful lives and walk in a humble confidence that we are living in our proper identity.**

DEEPER THAN PAPER OR STONE (JEREMIAH 31)

God spoke through the prophet Jeremiah that He would create a covenant not on paper, but on the hearts and minds of His people.

- Simply put, **the principles and promises of God through Jesus** go beyond written law. They actually become **our desire and drive our thoughts and actions.**

"FOR THE LETTER KILLS, BUT THE SPIRIT GIVES LIFE"

The new covenant was made possible through the life, death, and resurrection of Christ.

Through Jesus we receive the Spirit that "gives life."

- The law (10 Cs) defines morality but has no power to save. We're also incapable of following it perfectly, so **trying to follow the law without the Spirit's help "kills."**

HOW DO WE PRACTICALLY LIVE THIS OUT?

The 10 Cs (Exodus 20) are the guardrails of the road we walk with God. Jesus and Paul make it clear we cannot perfectly follow them all the time, so **we depend on the Spirit for grace and the power to do better over time.**

- **We're to strive to live out the 10 Cs and genuinely repent when we inevitably fail.**

CONTRAST (2 CORINTHIANS 3:7-11)

MOSES AND THE OLD COVENANT

The old covenant was a promise given to Moses and the Jews by God that if they followed His laws He would save and protect them.

- **If one truly followed the 1st command from a sincere heart, they would live in God's grace and establish a lasting relationship with Him.**

THE PROBLEM WASN'T THE LAW

The commands of God were good and guided people to Him. Unfortunately, many Jews turned from the true intent of the law and reduced it to a legalistic system to be good.

- They also **manipulated, added to, and subtracted from God's Word, which led to an increasing distance from God.**

TEMPORARY GLORY VS. ETERNAL GLORY

The Law of Moses was always intended to be a precursor to a greater promise. Though the old covenant (OT) "was glorious, what endures will be even more glorious."

- Paul is basically saying the road to Jesus was great, but experiencing Jesus is much greater and will last forever.

UNVEILED (2 CORINTHIANS 3:12-18)

CONFIDENCE THROUGH HIS ABILITY

Through Jesus, our hope and ability to be bold in our faith comes from His perfection and not ours. The law is good, and through Jesus we can honor God's laws even though we periodically fail.

- **If we're humble and sincere, our walk with God will be filled with growth and grace!**

GLORY THROUGH HUMAN EFFORT ALWAYS FADES

On the other hand, if we try to achieve goodness on our own, it, and we, quickly fade. Paul tells a story about Moses covering his face after his encounter with God to conceal that the "glory" of that experience was fading.

- The Jews wanted to depend on human ability, but **our ability always comes up short.**

"A VEIL LIES OVER THEIR HEARTS"

Many Jews read the law, but their **refusal to acknowledge and trust Jesus limited their understanding.** The Corinthians had either reduced Jesus to simple do's and don'ts or turned from His teachings altogether.

- The fact is simple yet profound, **when we submit to Jesus, He opens our eyes.**

NEW SIGHT TAKES SOME ADJUSTING

"...whenever a person turns to the Lord, the veil is removed." When one does this, it starts a transformation process that may take some time to adjust to.

- Christianity both removes and adds things to our lives. **Sometimes that transition is difficult, but it is always beneficial.**

THERE IS FREEDOM IN NEW SIGHT

When we turn to Christ, we are no longer slaves to sin and its influence over our behavior. Instead, we are able to withstand sin, do good, and have joy and fulfillment.

- **Freedom from sin and its ramifications doesn't mean freedom from righteousness. True freedom is only through holy living.**

"FROM GLORY TO GLORY"

When we have "unveiled" faces, our lives reflect God's glory (honor and magnificence). Through His Spirit, we're transformed in this life to be more like Him (from glory) until we're one day literally in His presence (to glory).

- **The true Christian is being sanctified. This reflects God's glory now and forever.**

CHARACTER

- Reputation is determined less by what one says of oneself and more by what one does with oneself. If "a tree will be known by its fruit," the seeds we plant and their inevitable results allude to a person's identity. Remember, character is defined by action over time.

CONFIDENCE

- Ironic fact: **in order to be confident about living righteously and being wise, we must acknowledge that we are incapable.**
- The 10 Cs cannot save, but they create the guardrails for, and point the way to, the **One who can save and enable us to live in a way that honors God and others.**

WRITTEN ON OUR HEARTS

- We should want to reach a place where living correctly is more than just do's and don'ts written on paper, but a strong desire "written on our hearts" to live in a way that honors God and draws us closer to Him.
- **Only through a desire to know truth and see the things of God, can we see God.**

NEW SIGHT LEADS TO A NEW DIRECTION

- **With the true pursuit of God comes freedom and change.** It is not always easy to let things go and pick other things up, but the sanctification process is for our benefit.
- Though this change can be difficult, **God not only helps us, but He starts to change us to be more like Him.**

HONEST INVENTORY

- Do our words match our actions?
- Are we trying to achieve "goodness" by our own means? Are we confident it's working?
- Do we have a desire to know the truth? What if it is a costly pursuit?
- Are we being sanctified? What progress are we seeing in our daily lives?