

# THIS WEEK'S MESSAGE

APRIL 28TH, 2024 // 2 CORINTHIANS

## LIVING LETTERS (2 CORINTHIANS 3:1-6) LETTERS OF RECOMMENDATION

In the early church, it was easy for false prophets or apostles to go from town to town claiming they were sent by Paul or one of the others and demand support. To combat this, **letters were often sent with travelers validating their claims.**

- Paul was often the one writing these letters but **who would write one for Paul?**

### "YOU YOURSELVES ARE OUR LETTER"

Paul claimed his letter wasn't written on paper but was **"written on our hearts, [and was] known and read by everyone."**

- Paul did not need a written letter to validate his ministry because there were groups of **people everywhere Paul went with changed hearts that validated his ministry**, including Corinth.

### A CALLING FROM THE LIVING GOD

A typical letter of recommendation would have been written by a man with ink or on tablets, but **Paul's recommendation came from the Spirit of the Living God.**

- Seminary and ordinations are great but a certificate itself is never a guarantee for effective ministry. **A better credential to validate one's ministry is the living letters of changed lives.**

### "YOU ARE CHRIST'S LETTER"

The author of Paul's letter is Jesus and though the Corinthians are Paul's letter of recommendation, he cannot take credit for writing it. **Paul was merely the "pen" that Jesus used to write on the hearts of men.**

- The work we are called to do is too great for us to accomplish alone. **Our competency and adequacy are from God, not ourselves.**

### "MINISTERS OF A NEW COVENANT"

The new covenant was **talked about by the prophet Jeremiah (31:31)**, where we could have a relationship with God, and was **put into place by Jesus (Luke 22:19-20).**

- A covenant is **not a negotiated settlement but a divine decree** setting terms for access to a relationship with God. **We don't get to set or alter terms, merely accept or reject them.**

### SUPERIORITY OF THE NEW COVENANT

The new covenant being "not of the letter, but of the Spirit" does not mean the written law is replaced or discarded. Instead, **the Spirit in us guides us and becomes the law written on our hearts.**

- **The letter "kills" in the sense that it exposes our guilt before God, but the Spirit gives eternal life (John 16:8; Galatians 6:8).**

## NEW COVENANT (2 CORINTHIANS 3:7-11)

### GRACE IS SUPERIOR TO THE LAW

The remainder of this chapter needs to be read with Exodus 34:29-35, where Moses is given the law (10 commandments) by God on Mt. Sinai.

- Paul was a part of seeing these two covenants overlap and refers to the law, **"chiseled in letters on stones,"** as the **"ministry that brought death"** because **the law was never meant to save but only point out our need for grace.**

### THE LAW CAME WITH GLORY

Paul points out that the law still came with glory and was evident in the way Moses' face shone after being in the presence of God.

- Paul doesn't deny that the law came with glory, but he points out that **this glory would be "set aside" for something even more glorious.** The "ministry that brought death" **would give way to the eternal "ministry of the Spirit."**

### INCREASING GLORY

To further communicate the fading glory of the law, Paul points out that Moses put a veil over his face so that the Israelites would not see the glory fade away (v. 13).

- If the law came with glory, how much more will the ministry that does not fade be glorious? **When the glory of law fades away, what remains will be even more glorious.**

### FAR SUPERIOR

Paul states that the law, **"had been glorious [but] is not glorious now by comparison because of the glory that surpasses it"** (v. 10).

- Paul is not saying the law lacked purpose. However, **in comparison to grace, which can transform, bring life, and increase in glory, it is like the law had no glory at all.**

## THE VEIL REMOVED (2 CORINTHIANS 3:12-18)

### HOPE WITHOUT END

The law restricted and separated where the covenant of grace unifies and opens access for us to boldly come to God.

- **We approach God with humility and thanksgiving (Psalm 100:4). It is because of His sufficiency and unending glory that we have "such a hope" and "act with great boldness."**

## WE ARE NOT LIKE MOSES

The veil for Moses was a barrier or something to hide behind.

- **The glory of the new covenant in Christ does not fade away**, so unlike Moses we have no reason to "veil" or to hide the glory of God. **We are to unashamedly share the gospel with "great boldness" because we have seen God's unending glory.**

### "A VEIL LIES OVER THEIR HEARTS"

Just as in the days of Moses, there is a barrier keeping the people from experiencing God's glory.

- Paul says **the veil remains and can only be lifted in Christ**, but **their unwillingness to trust in the grace of God instead of the works of man has kept a barrier between them and true freedom.**

### LIBERTY

When Moses was in the presence of the Lord, **he had the liberty to remove his veil.**

- The Spirit is God, just as the Father and the Son are God. We have been given the Holy Spirit under the new covenant and **with the Spirit comes the liberty to be "unveiled" always.**

### LIBERTY FROM THE YOKE OF THE LAW

Paul is not saying we have liberty in all things. **There is a difference between what is permissible and what is profitable.**

- Just because we have the liberty to do something, say something, or partake in something does not mean **it is beneficial to exercise that liberty, nor do we have the liberty to disobey the word of God.**

### LOOKING INTO THE MIRROR (JAMES 1:22-25)

This liberty is not just available to a few but to all who have "unveiled faces" through an **intimate and transformative relationship with God.**

- Once the veil is removed through Christ, we are given the liberty to see His glory. We can't see it perfectly yet, but **as we "behold" His glory we can be transformed.**

### LIVING LETTERS OF CHRIST

- **Have we been transformed by the work of the Spirit because of the work of the cross?**
- **Have we refused to be used by God because we think we are not ready or worthy?**
- **Are we reflecting God's glory?**
- **Are we being changed into the likeness of Christ?**