

2 Corinthians 03 - Being a Minister of the New Covenant; Jewish Blindness

I. Paul's explanation of his ministry (2 Cor 1:1—7:16)

(3) Paul's philosophy of ministry (2:14—6:10)

(B) New Covenant is the basis of ministry (3:1—4:6)

(a) New Covenant changes lives (3:1-5)

(b) Old Covenant versus New Covenant (3:6-11)

(c) Exodus 34 versus New Covenant (3:12-18)

2 Corinthians 3

(B) New Covenant is the basis of ministry (3:1—4:6)

(a) New Covenant changes lives (3:1-5)

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1 Are we beginning to recommend ourselves again? Unlike some people, we do not need letters of recommendation to you or from you, do we?

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?

- One of the greatest trials that Paul had to meet was the opposition of false brethren; those who professed to be Christians but who were in reality Jewish legalists who had never apprehended the freeness and the liberty of the gospel.

- Rom 16 is an example of a letter of commendation written to introduce Phoebe, a member of the church at Cenchrea, to the church at Rome.

2 You are our letter, written in our hearts, known and read by all people,

2 You are our letter, written in our hearts, known and read by all men;

2 You are our letter, written in our hearts and known and read by everyone.

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

- Paul had been with them for a year and a half, and his life had been an "open book." They themselves constituted his letter of recommendation. We are Christ's "letter."

3 revealing yourselves, that you are a letter of Christ, delivered by us, written not with ink but with the Spirit of the living God, not on tablets of stone but on tablets of human hearts.

3 being manifested that you are a letter of Christ, cared for by us, written not with ink but with the Spirit of the living God, not on tablets of stone but on tablets of human hearts.

3 You are demonstrating that you are the Messiah's letter, produced by our service, written not with ink but with the Spirit of the living God, not on tablets of stone but on tablets of human hearts.

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.

4 Such *is the* confidence we have toward God through Christ.

4 Such confidence we have through Christ toward God.

4 Such is the confidence that we have in God through the Messiah.

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

5 Not that we are adequate in ourselves so as to consider anything as *having come* from ourselves, but our adequacy is from God,

5 Not that we are adequate in ourselves to consider anything as *coming* from ourselves, but our adequacy is from God,

5 By ourselves we are not qualified to claim that anything comes from us. Rather, our credentials come from God,

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

(b) Old Covenant versus New Covenant (3:6-11)

6 who also made us adequate **asservants of a new covenant**, not of the letter but of the Spirit; for the letter kills, but the Spirit gives life.

6 who also made us adequate *as* servants of a new covenant, not of the letter but of the Spirit; for the letter kills, but the Spirit gives life.

6 who has also qualified us to be ministers of a new covenant, which is not written but spiritual, because the written text brings death, but the Spirit gives life.

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.

- "...servants of the new testament":

— "new" - not *neos*, new in point of time and that alone, but *kainos*, new in quality

— Old covenant based on a written document (Ex 24:1-8). The Mosaic Law never gave life.

[Moses himself could not be saved by the law! Why? He himself was a murderer!]

- Did the representatives of Judaism go out into all the world to proclaim the glories of the Old Covenant? Not at all... (Rom 3:19)
- You can't be too literal reading your Bible

7 But if the **ministry of death**, engraved in letters on stones, came with glory so that the sons of Israel could not look intently at the face of Moses because of the glory of his face, **fading** as it was,

7 But if the ministry of death, in letters engraved on stones, came with glory, so that the sons of Israel could not look intently at the face of Moses because of the glory of his face, fading as it was,

7 Now if the ministry of death that was inscribed in letters of stone came with such glory that the people of Israel could not gaze on Moses' face (because the glory was fading away from it),

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

- "...ministry of death" - speaking of the Law, the Ten Commandments specifically

- Paul is stating that the Mosaic Law, specifically and including the Ten Commandments, is a "ministration of death"

- "...fading" - *katargeō*, when Paul uses this verb to describe the dispensation of the Law, he's saying that the Law of Moses was never intended to be a permanent fixture

8 how will the ministry of the Spirit fail to be *even* more with glory?

8 how will the ministry of the Spirit fail to be even more with glory?

8 will not the Spirit's ministry have even more glory?

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

- Note the contrast of the two ministries: of death and of the spirit.

9 For if the **ministry of condemnation** has glory, much more does the **ministry of righteousness** excel in glory.

9 For if the ministry of condemnation has glory, much more does the ministry of righteousness abound in glory.

9 For if the ministry of condemnation has glory, then the ministry of justification has an overwhelming glory.

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

- "...ministry of condemnation" - the Mosaic Law

- "...ministry of righteousness" - the righteousness which we have in Christ Jesus

10 For indeed what had glory in this case has no glory, because of the glory that surpasses *it*.

10 For indeed what had glory, in this case has no glory because of the glory that surpasses *it*.

10 In fact, that which once had glory lost its glory, because the other glory surpassed it.

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

- The glorious gospel of the blessed (happy) God. Why? Because He Himself has found a way whereby His love can go out to guilty sinners and make them fit for His presence. God is a lover of mankind. He delighteth in mercy (Micah 7:18). He hath "no pleasure in the death of the wicked; but that the wicked turn from his wicked way and live" (Ezek 33:11).

11 For if **that which fades away** was with glory, much more that which remains *is* in glory.

11 For if that which fades away *was* with glory, much more that which remains *is* in glory.

11 For if that which fades away came⁴ through glory, how much more does that which is permanent have glory?

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

- "...that which fades away" - the Mosaic Law

Contrasts Between the Old and New Covenants (2 Cor 3:6-11)		
Verse	Old Covenant	New Covenant
6	Old	New
6	Letter	Spirit
6	Death	Life
7	Stone	Spirit
7,8,10	Some glory	Greater glory
9	Condemnation	Righteousness
11	Temporary	Permanent

(c) Exodus 34 versus New Covenant (3:12-18)

12 Therefore, having such a hope, we use great boldness in *our* speech,

12 Therefore having such a hope, we use great boldness in *our* speech,

12 Therefore, since we have such a hope, we speak very boldly,

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

13 and *we are* not like Moses, *who* used to put a veil over his face so that the sons of Israel would not stare at the end of what was fading away.

13 and *are* not like Moses, *who* used to put a veil over his face so that the sons of Israel would not look intently at the end of what was fading away.

13 not like Moses, who kept covering his face with a veil to keep the people of Israel from gazing at the end of what was fading away.

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:

- This reference is to the second giving of the Law...

— When Moses came down from the Mount the first time, they had already broken the First commandment (Ex 20:3-5). Moses broke the two tablets, came down empty handed, and became their intercessor.

— He went up the mount a second time for 40 days, and this time God gave the law tempered with mercy, providing a system of sacrifices whereby the penitent could draw nigh to God with that which typified His Blessed Son. The Law tempered by grace. Moses' face was beaming from his association with God (Ex 34:30,33).

— Moses put a veil over his face until he was done speaking with them, and when he went before the Lord again he took it off. Paul tells us why he did that.

— He knew that the glory was fading and passing, and he did not want the people to see the glory disappear. The glory of that covenant could not last because too much of it depended upon sinful men.

— Veils: Prejudice, wishful thinking, disobedience, an unteachable spirit.

14 But their minds were hardened; for until this very day at the reading of the old covenant the same veil remains unlifted, because it is removed in Christ.

14 But their minds were hardened; for until this very day at the reading of the old covenant the same veil remains unlifted, because it is removed in Christ.

14 However, their minds were hardened, for to this day the same veil is still there when they read the old covenant. Only in union with the Messiah is that veil removed.

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.

15 But to this day whenever Moses is read, a veil lies over their hearts;

15 But to this day whenever Moses is read, a veil lies over their heart;

15 Yet even to this day, when Moses is read, a veil covers their hearts.

15 But even unto this day, when Moses is read, the vail is upon their heart.

16 but whenever *someone* turns to the Lord, the veil is **taken away**.

16 but whenever a person turns to the Lord, the veil is taken away.

16 But whenever a person turns to the Lord, the veil is removed.

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

- "...turns" - *epistrepho*, aorist active subjunctive meaning to turn to, oftentimes in faith for salvation (Cf. Matt 13:15; Mark 4:12; Luke 1:16; Acts 3:19; 9:35; 11:21; 14:15; 15:19; 26:18,20; 1 Thess 1:9; 1 Peter 2:25)

- "...to the Lord" - who they turn to; 3x in the NT we see what they turn from (Acts 14:15; 26:18; 1 Thess 1:9)

— They turn from the wrong object of trust to trusting in the Lord

- "...taken away" - *periarireo*, present passive indicative meaning "is removed"
- For Paul, this happened in Acts 9 (Cf. 2 Cor 5:16)

17 **Now the Lord is the Spirit**, and where the Spirit of the Lord is, *there* is freedom.

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

17 Now the Lord is the Spirit, and where the Lord's Spirit is, there is freedom.

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

- "Now the Lord is that Spirit" - Jesus is the Spirit of the OT

18 But we all, with unveiled faces, looking as in a mirror at the glory of the Lord, are being **transformed** into the same image from glory to glory, just as from the Lord, the Spirit.

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 from the Lord, the Spirit.

18 As all of us reflect the glory of the Lord with unveiled faces, we are becoming more like him with ever-increasing glory by the Lord's Spirit.

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.

- "...transformed" - "transfigured" in the Gospels