

**Ministry of The Holy Spirit**  
**Epistles and Reflections of Christ**  
**2 Corinthians 3**

Last time...2 Cor 2, the sweet fragrance of repentance, forgiveness, and restoration of fellowship  
In a world that reeks of death, smell like Jesus!

This time...we are the epistles of Christ and reflections of Jesus in a world stumbling in the  
blinding darkness of unbelief

v1     The very first issue Paul addressed in his first letter to the church at Corinth was that of  
divisions...anti-unity, different-mindedness, and strife in the Body  
“I am of Paul...I am of Apollos...I am of Peter...I am of Christ.”

These different “camps” in the church were very unhealthy  
Some of the camps challenged Paul’s authority/office of an apostle, which he  
addressed in 1 Cor 4

Now, early in his second letter to the church at Corinth, Paul again addresses his  
“credentials” as an apostle of Jesus Christ by the will of God” (2 Cor 1:1a)

“Do I need to present to you a letter of introduction/recommendation for you to  
receive me?

Am I another itinerant preacher whom you do not know that needs a letter  
of recommendation?”

Do I need a letter of recommendation from you to do my ministry?”

Letters of introduction/recommendation were asked for by early churches

- “the Apostle’s doctrine” (NT) was not widely available yet
- false teachers (e.g. Simon Magnus of Acts 8 and Gnosticism) were on the  
roam/hunt from the very beginning
- unknown preachers were asked to present “credentials” to be received

Not a practice in play today

We have the entire counsel of God readily available

- Bible is best selling book in history – over 5 billion
- 2<sup>nd</sup> best selling is *Don Quixote* at 500 million (1/10<sup>th</sup> of the Bible)
- Printed in nearly 2200 languages

But false teachers abound to this day...and will be increasing in these days

- make merchandise of the people of God...  
fleece the flock vs feed the flock
- prey on the weak
- wolves in sheep’s clothing, as warned by Jesus the Good Shepherd

Matt 7:15-16a Beware of false prophets, which come to you in sheep's clothing, but inwardly they are ravening wolves. Ye shall know them by their fruits.

This week, a pastor in Florida with a mega-ministry (486 employees and a monthly payroll of \$2.7 million) fleeced the nation's taxpayers and was arrested for stealing \$8.4 million of Covid Payroll Protection funds, which he distributed to family members and used to buy a \$3.7 million, 4700 sq ft house on Disney World property

How do false teachers...fleecers and wolves in sheep's clothing...prosper?  
Because the people of God do not

- know the Word of God
  - not taught it
  - not taught it rightly  
(Context, Scripture interprets Scripture)
  - don't want to be taught it, wanting instead to be entertained and "tickled" about themselves
  - want milk and not meat
- inspect the fruit
  - too lazy to Acts 17:11 (time and effort)
  - unwisely trust man and don't vet his words with God's words

They and the false teachers they follow are accountable to the Lord!

v2-3 Paul does present his indisputable credentials – them!

The followers of Jesus Christ in Corinth are the epistles of Christ  
Living letters of Jesus Christ's words to

- His followers...each other
- the lost people in the darkness of the world

God's words of supernatural love, mercy, grace, reconciliation, and eternal life are not written with ink on paper only but also on the new and living hearts of His children

Hearts/lives changed by the grace of God proclaim Jesus Christ is Lord

Gal 2:20 I am crucified with Christ: nevertheless I live; yet not I, but Christ liveth in me: and the life which I now live in the flesh I live by the faith of the Son of God, who loved me, and gave himself for me.

In turn, Paul's "letter of recommendation" in other cities...they themselves...is written on his heart, on display for all to read

Family, look at yourself as the Lord Jesus Christ sees you:

His living letter to His own and to the lost, on display for all to read

That which was dead has now been made alive by God (Ch 1:9-10) Who raises  
the dead and has delivered us from so great a death (eternal)...  
in God we trust!

Whose we are and what we are is to govern our entire lives, before God and man

And such was Paul's confidence of the followers of Jesus in Corinth...

v4-5 Paul's confidence is in...Christ, His finished work and His faithfulness

Neither Paul nor the Corinthians...nor us...have confidence in our flesh

None are sufficient/able in and of ourselves to

- make reconciliation with God Whom we have offended with our sin and  
from Whom we have been separated because of our sin
- make ourselves righteous before the holy and perfect God  
Our righteousness is like a filthy rag  
We know what to do but don't do it  
We know what not to do but that is what we do  
There is no good thing in our flesh
- make alive that which was dead – our Spirit, born again of the Spirit of God  
whereby we are made once again “in the image of God”...Jesus-kind
- cleanse the stain of sin and make new our darkened-by-sin hearts
- conquer death eternal, the wages of sin

The answer to Ch 2:16: Our sufficiency for eternal life and redemption from eternal  
death is of God!

John 15:5b **without Me ye can do nothing.**

1 Tim 2:5

John 14:6

John 11:25-26 **I am the resurrection, and the life: he that believeth in Me, though  
he were dead, yet shall he live: And whosoever liveth and  
believeth in Me shall never die.**

Salvation from eternal death

- is by grace thru faith, the gift of God
- is by the perfect work of Jesus Christ, NOT by our imperfect works
- impossible for man, but all things are possible for God

Good News!!!

(the only Good News; all other “gospels” are Bad News)

v6 God, Who alone is able to save, has made His children, the disciples of Jesus Christ,  
able ministers of the new testament  
He by His Spirit has enabled/empowered us to preach Good News to those who are as  
we once were – lost in darkness and dead in our sin

The false teachers that abound?

Self-made ministers or man-made ministers...NOT God-made ministers  
Ministers of the world, not ministers of Life

What is the New Testament?

Jer 31:31-34

Good News of eternal Life is not the letter/Law given to Moses on Mount Sinai  
The Law kills...dead-in-sin man remains dead-in-sin if the Law is the “platform” upon  
which we stand before God i.e. the Law cannot make us stand

Deut 27:26 Cursed *be* he that confirmeth not *all* the words of this law to do  
them

James 2:10 For whosoever shall keep the whole law, and yet offend in one  
*point*, he is guilty of all.

Rom 3:19-20 Now we know that what things soever the law saith, it saith to  
them who are under the law: that every mouth may be stopped, and  
all the world may become guilty before God. Therefore by the  
deeds of the law there shall no flesh be justified in his sight: for by  
the law *is* the knowledge of sin.

Rom 4:15a the Law worketh wrath

Good News of eternal Life is in Christ, by His indwelling Spirit, Who is able to make us  
stand

John 1:1, 4, 14

John 3:3-6

John 3:14-18

1 Cor 15:45 The first man Adam was made a living soul; the last Adam *was*  
*made* a quickening spirit.

If the Law was not Good News, was it “no good”?

v7-8 No, the Law was glorious!

The Law made known to me and revealed in me the sin that deceived and killed me  
(Rom 7:7, 11)

Therefore the Law is holy, just, and good (Rom 7:12)

The Law showed me the death in me and led me to Life in Christ

Gal 3:21-24

The Law, the ministration/ministry of death, was written by the finger of God in tables of stone

It was glorious – honorable and praise worthy – for God so loved man-kind (fallen image of God) that He showed them the sin that “turned the Light out” (spiritual death)

As evidenced by the shining face of Moses who received the Law from God to give to the children of Israel (Ex 34:29-35)

Yet that glory was to be...in the fulness of time...done away with, vanish, abolished... by the far more glorious ministration/ministry of the Spirit

Heb 7:22 Jesus was made a surety/pledge of a better testament

Heb 8:6-8 *ff*

Heb 9:11-28

1 Peter 3:18 For Christ also hath once suffered for sins, the just for the unjust, that he might bring us to God, being put to death in the flesh, but quickened by the Spirit:

v9-11 The ministry of condemnation/death (Law) was glorious!

The Love of God in word/revelation

So much more glorious is the ministry of righteousness/(Spirit)!

The Love of God in word/revelation and deed/work (death conquered by Life)

How glorious is Rom 10:4?!

The end/completion/fulfillment/satisfaction of the Law by Jesus!

Matt 5:17

How glorious is Rom 8:31-34?!

What shall we then say to these things? If God *be* for us, who *can be* against us? He that spared not his own Son, but delivered him up for us all, how shall he not with him also freely give us all things? Who shall lay any thing to the charge of God's elect? *It is* God that justifieth. Who *is* he that condemneth? *It is* Christ that died, yea rather, that is risen again, who is even at the right hand of God, who also maketh intercession for us.

How glorious is 1 John 2:1b?!

And if any man sin, we have an advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous:

How glorious is the simplicity of the Good News that is in Christ?!

- v12 And so enlivened, enabled, and empowered by such wonderful Good News,  
our blessed hope/assurance/joy/certainty of God's promise,  
we as living epistles of Christ speak this Good News
- plainly
  - simply
  - boldly
  - with child-like directness and bluntness (out of the mouths of babes)
- v13-14 We are not to "cover" or obscure the glory invested in us...the Light of the world  
Rom 8:12  
Matt 5:14-16 *Ye are the light of the world. A city that is set on an hill cannot be hid. Neither do men light a candle, and put it under a bushel, but on a candlestick; and it giveth light unto all that are in the house. Let your light so shine before men, that they may see your good works, and glorify your Father which is in heaven.*
- as did Moses
- The children of Israel could see the glory of God in Moses/the Law, but they could not see the end/conclusion/satisfaction of the Law...  
God's Personal and Perfect work and not their imperfect works/keeping...  
because of the blindness of unbelief in the promised Messiah Who would,  
by His keeping/fulfilling/satisfying the Law, make reconciliation between  
God and man-kind
- The Jews could not see the promised Messiah while camped around Mount Sinai  
The Jews could not see the promised Messiah throughout their history prior to His coming
- Is 6:9-10 And he said, Go, and tell this people, Hear ye indeed, but understand not; and see ye indeed, but perceive not. Make the heart of this people fat, and make their ears heavy, and shut their eyes; lest they see with their eyes, and hear with their ears, and understand with their heart, and convert, and be healed.
- Because of unbelief in the testimony of the God of AI&J

v15-16 The Jews could not see the Messiah when He was ministering to them in their very midst

Jesus quoted Is 6:9-10 while teaching the kingdom parables (Matt 13:14-15)

He repeatedly told them He was sent by God to do God's work

John 1:1, 14...I AM, as foretold in Hebrew Scriptures ala Micah 5:2

John 5:37-47...as foretold in Hebrew Scriptures ala Ps 40

1 John 5:11-12

Matt 18:3      **Verily I say unto you, Except ye be converted, and become as little children, ye shall not enter into the kingdom of heaven.**

The Jews, mostly, could not see the Messiah Who had come even as Paul was inspired to record these words of God

Acts 3:19      Repent ye therefore, and be converted, that your sins may be blotted out, when the times of refreshing shall come from the presence of the Lord;

The Jews, mostly, still cannot see the Messiah who had come to this very day

Rom 11:25b    blindness (a heart condition of unbelief) in part is happened to Israel, until the fulness of the Gentiles be come in.

The vail of unbelief still blankets their hearts

But the blindness will be removed...when they repent of their unbelief and turn to the Lord!!!

And there will be a great revival of the Life-giving Holy Spirit among the Jews... and thru the ministry of the Jews in the entire world!

When?!

After

- Israel is re-gathered for the second time in the land promised to AI&J, a sign to the nations of the coming judgment of God (Is 11:11-12)  
STATUS: It is done
- Jerusalem is in the hands of the Jews  
STATUS: It is done
- The Land is divided by the Gentiles  
STATUS: It is done in part
- The Rapture/snatching away of the Bride of Christ  
STATUS: Luke 21:28

- v17 The Lord Jesus Christ is that Spirit  
v3 Spirit of the living God  
v6 the Spirit that gives life  
v8 the Spirit ministering to man-kind and Jesus-kind to this day

And where the Spirit of the Lord is, there is liberty/freedom

- from the bondage of sin and death (Heb 2:14-15)...free to NOT sin
- from the curse of the Law (Gal 3:13)
- from condemnation (Rom 8:1)

For Jew and Gentile...whosoever believes/trusts

John 8:31-32 continue!

Acts 15:10-11 Now therefore why tempt ye God, to put a yoke upon the neck of the disciples, which neither our fathers nor we were able to bear? But we believe that through the grace of the Lord Jesus Christ we shall be saved, even as they.

Hab 2:4 like pre-Law believers like Seth, Enoch, Noah, AI&J, Job

- v18 John 20:29 with Heb 11:1 (evidence: the epistles of Christ)

So now,

until 1 John 3:2-3 Beloved, now are we the sons of God, and it doth not yet appear what we shall be: but we know that, when he shall appear, we shall be like him; for we shall see him as he is. And every man that hath this hope in him purifieth himself, even as he is pure.

we, with unveiled faces looking in a mirror, see the reflection of Jesus Christ...

Light, Life, and Love...

in the faces of God's children,  
in our faces!

When?

- as we walk by faith and not by sight
- as we walk in the Spirit and not in the flesh
- as we are conformed into the image of Jesus Christ
- as we deny insatiable and insufficient Self, pick up our cross, and follow Jesus
- abide in Christ and bear fruit (of the Spirit) pleasing to the Father
- as we are transformed by the renewing of our mind (the mind of Christ)
  - from the likeness of the first Adam to the likeness of the Last Adam
  - from the image of fallen man to the image of God once again!

Why we gather and study the entire counsel of God verse-by-verse

## **Application**

Gal 2:20      I am crucified with Christ: nevertheless I live; yet not I, but Christ liveth in me:  
and the life which I now live in the flesh I live by the faith of the Son of God, who  
loved me, and gave himself for me.

Our life, governed by the Spirit of God and by the Word of God, is

- the epistle of Christ...in a willingly “illiterate” world
- the reflection of Christ...in a dark, unbelieving world

Yet those “illiterate” darkness dwellers...as were we...are drawn by the Father unto the Son

- by the simplicity of the Good News that is in Christ
- by the Light shining before them

May we live as

- a “good read”...simple and plain/direct/bold (an audio book)
- a bright light