

2 Corinthians

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HG Bishop Youssef

Chapter 3

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HE Metropolitan Youssef ~ فسوي ابن الالهة فاي ن تاطع • 2 CORINTHIANS 3 _ HG Bishop Youssef

Introduction

- Many people attacked and questioned the apostleship of St Paul because he was not one of the 12. Most of these attackers were teachers from a Jewish background who were teaching that you need to keep the Law in order to be saved and that salvation is through the Law
 - Christ said "I did not come to destroy the Law but to fulfill it" but we need to understand that the Law, in itself, cannot save you. Otherwise, Christ died for no reason.
 - If there is salvation by the Law, then there was no need for the Lord Jesus Christ to die on the Cross...
 - Through the death of the Lord Jesus Christ on the Cross, and through His Resurrection, He gave us the grace of the Holy Spirit and now by the grace of the Holy Spirit, we can keep the Law, keep the commandments and fulfill the Law
 - Those teachers were called Judaizers
- St Paul attacked the Judaizers and their teachings when he taught that salvation is through the Lord Jesus Christ, so in return, they attacked his apostleship.
- In Chapter 2, St Paul started to defend his ministry
 - They were questioning whether St Paul was sufficient to be an apostle or not
 - St Paul said "who is sufficient for these things?" - no body is sufficient to be an apostle
- In Chapter 3, St Paul will continue to defend his apostleship
 - Do I need a letter of recommendation to you? Do I need a letter of recommendation from you?
 - If I need a letter, YOU are my letter because my ministry is written in you; read by all people
 - Nobody is sufficient, but all thanks be to God who made us sufficient of the new covenant
 - Then he compares the Old Covenant, which was based on Law "do this and you shall live," and the New Covenant, which is based on the grace of God that empowers me to fulfill the Law.

Christ's Epistle

¹ Do we begin again to commend ourselves? Or do we need, as some *others*, epistles of commendation to you or *letters* of commendation from you? ² You are our epistle written in our hearts, known and read by all men; ³ clearly you are an epistle of Christ, ministered by us, written not with ink but by the Spirit of the living God, not on tablets of stone but on tablets of flesh, *that is*, of the heart.

- Letters of Commendation
 - Do I need to boast and praise myself and my service to you, in order to prove to you that yes, I am an apostle of Christ?
 - Do I need a letter of recommendation from the Church in Jerusalem?
 - This was a custom e.g. Acts 15 when the Council of Jerusalem decided on the issue of circumcision, they sent a letter by the hand of Paul and Barnabas
 - St Paul preached Christ to them and established the Church for them, so there is no reason to need a letter of commendation
- You are our epistle written in our hearts, known and read by all men
 - The letter that recommends me, is YOU because you are my work in Christ. The Church in Corinth owes its existence to St Paul
 - St Paul clarifies that they are an epistle of Christ, lest anyone think that he WROTE this epistle. St Paul is simply a pen in the hand of God
 - In the Old Testament, the commandments were written on tablets of stone to indicate that the hearts of the people were hardened, like stone. In Ezekiel, God said "I will remove the heart of stone and give you a heart of flesh" (referring to the New Covenant)
 - If I shoot an arrow at a piece of stone, it will break the arrow
 - If I shoot an arrow at a piece of flesh, it will pierce the flesh
 - The word of God is like an arrow; so the arrow hit the hearts of the people and it was broken; that's why they broke the commandments of God. But as we read in Acts 2, when the people heard the word of God, they were "cut to the heart" and the word of God pierced their heart

The Spirit, Not the Letter

⁴ And we have such trust through Christ toward God. ⁵ Not that we are sufficient of ourselves to think of anything as *being* from ourselves, but our sufficiency *is* from God, ⁶ who also made us sufficient as ministers of the new covenant, not of the letter but of the Spirit; for the letter kills, but the Spirit gives life.

- Our Sufficiency
 - We have trust through Christ that we are sufficient for our ministry
 - This trust is toward God, not in ourselves
 - You cast doubts to my sufficiency; I told you that no one is sufficient; but we have trust through Christ that He has given us the Holy Spirit - the Spirit of Grace - that makes us sufficient for the ministry
 - No one can claim that they are sufficient to be a servant or to serve God, but if there is sufficiency, this sufficiency is from God
- Ministers of the New Covenant

- God enabled and empowered us to be ministers and servants of the New Covenant
 - The New Covenant is far more excellent than the Old Covenant
 - The Old Covenant was based on human efforts, but the New Covenant is based on the grace of God
 - St Paul is comparing himself to the Judaizers - they want to be servants of the Old Covenant, to bring people back to the Law and salvation through the Law; through human effort without the grace of God.
- The Old Covenant is of the Letter, but the New Covenant is of the Spirit
 - In the Old Covenant, the Holy Spirit was not abiding in the people and working in them for their salvation - this only came after salvation was fulfilled on the Cross. So when they read the commandment to "Love the Lord your God" - the burden is on them to fulfill this commandment.
 - In the New Covenant, when I read the Scripture - which was written by the Holy Spirit, I am not just reading words, but the Holy Spirit is piercing my heart and working in me to fulfill the words that I am reading. So when I read "Love the Lord your God," the Holy Spirit is working in me to fulfill this commandment by empowering and enabling me, and giving me Grace.
- The Letter kills, but the Spirit gives life
 - Why does the letter kill? Because if you don't keep the commandment, "you shall surely die."
 - There was not a single person who was able to keep the commandments of the Old Covenant without breaking it
 - But with the grace of God the Holy Spirit, I can keep the commandment and live

Glory of the New Covenant

⁷ But if the ministry of death, written *and* engraved on stones, was glorious, so that the children of Israel could not look steadily at the face of Moses because of the glory of his countenance, which *glory* was passing away, ⁸ how will the ministry of the Spirit not be more glorious? ⁹ For if the ministry of condemnation *had* glory, the ministry of righteousness exceeds much more in glory. ¹⁰ For even what was made glorious had no glory in this respect, because of the glory that excels. ¹¹ For if what is passing away *was* glorious, what remains *is* much more glorious.

- Old Covenant
 - Letter
 - Ministry of Death
 - Written on Stone
 - Ministry of Condemnation
 - What is Passing Away
- New Covenant
 - Spirit
 - Ministry of the Spirit
 - Written on Flesh
 - Ministry of Righteousness
 - What Remains
- The Glories of the Covenants

- The Old Covenant is a Ministry of Death because all of those (prophets, kings, judges, etc) who ministered and served: died and went to Hades
 - The Old Covenant had glory, and this is evidenced by Moses in Exodus 34:29 whose face shown
 - If that Old Covenant (Ministry of Death, written on stones) had glory, how much more excellent will the glory of the New Covenant (Ministry of the Spirit) be?
- "will" - future tense
 - The Ministry of the Gospel has glory now, but it will have even more glory at the Second Coming of Christ
- Ministry of Condemnation because if you did not fulfill the Law, which no one did, you were under condemnation; compared with the Ministry of Righteousness
 - When we baptize someone, we dress them in white because their starting point is perfection and righteousness (and not condemnation)
 - If even the Ministry of Condemnation had glory, then the Ministry of Righteousness would have more glory
- If you compare the glory of the Old Covenant with that of the New Covenant, it is as if the Old Covenant had no glory.
 - The glory of the moon and stars disappears in comparison with the glory of the sun

¹² Therefore, since we have such hope, we use great boldness of speech— ¹³ unlike Moses, *who put a veil over his face so that the children of Israel could not look steadily at the end of what was passing away.* ¹⁴ But their minds were blinded. For until this day the same veil remains unlifted in the reading of the Old Testament, because the *veil* is taken away in Christ. ¹⁵ But even to this day, when Moses is read, a veil lies on their heart. ¹⁶ Nevertheless when one turns to the Lord, the veil is taken away. ¹⁷ Now the Lord is the Spirit; and where the Spirit of the Lord *is*, there *is* liberty.

- Now do you know why I am attacking the Judaizers, speaking with boldness, and telling you that they are false teachers?
 - Because we have such hope and confidence and trust that we are ministers of the New Covenant which has FAR MORE glory than the Old Covenant!
 - With this confidence, I will preach the gospel with all boldness, without reservation, and without fear of the Judaizers
- Moses' Veil
 - Moses had to cover his face with a veil because of the weakness of the people.
 - If you believe in Christ, then the glory will be revealed to you and you can see the glory of the New Covenant.
 - But if you don't believe in Christ, and you want to abide by the Jewish Law in which salvation is based on human effort without grace, then you will be looking through a veil and a veil will be covering your understanding, your mind and your heart, and you will not be able to see the goal of the Old Covenant (which is Christ).
 - St Paul uses the veil of Moses as a symbol to show that nothing was made plain in the Law of Moses. Christ was hidden in the Old Covenant (in the sacrifices, the typology, the prophecies, etc.) but there was a blindness in the Israelites
 - The whole Mosaic Law points to and ends with the Lord Jesus Christ

- The lack of grace in the Old Covenant was the veil that blinded the people from seeing Christ in it
- As St John says "and we beheld His glory, the glory as of the only-begotten of His Father full of grace and truth."
- Until now, the Jewish people read Moses but the true meaning is veiled; they are blinded by not accepting the grace of God. But when you turn to the Lord by your heart and by your repentance, the veil is taken away
 - St Paul before believing in Christ, he became blind; but after he was baptized and believed in Christ, scales fell from his eyes. Believing in Christ is moving from darkness to light. Baptism is the Mystery of Enlightenment.
- Turn to the Lord = Liberty
 - Who is the Lord? The Spirit
 - Where is the Lord? In your heart - the Spirit of God dwells in you
 - There is Liberty - freedom to serve God in the Spirit and rejoice in the Lord Jesus Christ
 - "For you did not receive the spirit of bondage again to fear, but you received the Spirit of adoption by whom we cry out, 'Abba, Father'"
 - We are free from the fear of death

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 by the Spirit of the Lord.

- "We all" - the Christians; the Believers; those who received the Holy Spirit
 - In the commandment to parents after Chrismation, the priest says: "Your children, on the day in which they were born, they were slaves; but now they are free"
- "as in a mirror"
 - The mirror is the Scripture
 - The mirror is the Church
 - This glory, we will see more clearly in the Second Coming of Christ. For now, we see it as if through a mirror
- What happened to Moses when he beheld the glory of God?
 - His face shone
 - Looking at the Lord has a transforming power
 - That's why He said that "you are the light of the world" because you will reflect the Light of God
 - The more you behold the glory of the New Covenant (through the Scripture, through the Church), you will be transformed into the same image from glory to glory through the Spirit of the Lord
- What's the difference between looking at a veil, or looking at a mirror?
 - There is no comparison - looking at a veil you see almost nothing; looking at a mirror you see a reflection
 - But at the Second Coming, and when we are in heaven, we will behold the full glory

Chapter 4

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<http://www.suscopts.org/diocese/bishop/bible-study/second-epistle-to-the-corinthians/session-04/>

Introduction

- In 2 Corinthians 3, St Paul compared the Ministry of the Old Covenant with that of the New Covenant and explained how that of the New Covenant is much more glorious
- The Old Covenant brought a curse, was according to the Letter; but the New Covenant is based on grace and gave life
- In Chapter 4, St Paul continues his defense of his ministry
 - In Verse 1-2, he says that because we have this ministry, we don't get discouraged. Instead, we renounce deceitful practices and openly proclaim the Gospel of Christ.
 - In Verse 3-4, he says that for some people the gospel is veiled, they don't understand the message of the Gospel; but it's only veiled to those whom Satan blinded their hearts.
 - In Verse 5-6, he says that we are not preaching ourselves, but we are preaching Christ and we are the servants of Christ because God has shone light in his heart and he wants to share this light of the Gospel with everybody, that all may enjoy the life with Christ
 - In verse 7-15, he speaks about this ministry as a treasure. This treasure is an earthly vessel. The treasure is the message of salvation and we are the weak vessels - that we experience suffering, pain, persecution, etc. in our ministry but God uses this that His might and His power may be manifested in us. I am not preaching by my words, but when people see how the Light of Christ is working in my weak body, they will give thanks to God
 - In verse 16-18, he says that's why we do not lose heart
 - This chapter is a very important chapter in the life of Hope
 - Even if the outward man is perishing, the inward man is renewed daily
 - The suffering that is here on earth cannot compare with the glory in heaven
 - What we see is temporary, but what is unseen is eternal

The Light of Christ's Gospel

¹ Therefore, since we have this ministry, as we have received mercy, we do not lose heart. ² But we have renounced the hidden things of shame, not walking in craftiness nor handling the word of God deceitfully, but by manifestation of the truth commending ourselves to every man's conscience in the sight of God. ³ But even if our gospel is veiled, it is veiled to those who are perishing, ⁴ whose minds the god of this age has blinded, who do not believe, lest the light of the gospel of the glory of Christ, who is the image of God, should shine on them. ⁵ For we do not preach ourselves, but Christ Jesus the Lord, and ourselves your bondservants for Jesus' sake. ⁶ For it is the God who commanded light to shine out of darkness, who has shone in our hearts to *give* the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ.

- We do not lose heart
 - Although there are many hardships, persecutions and troubles facing him on a daily basis, he does not lose heart for two reasons.
 - We have this ministry - a glorious ministry!
 - We have received mercy - I am not serving by my own words, my own power, etc. but I am serving because of His mercy. St Paul would say "I , myself, was a persecutor and a blasphemer, but God had mercy on me. So I will not lose heart."
- Renouncing the hidden things of shame
 - The servants of Christ must turn away from all dishonest preaching and practices, trickery, etc. Some people try to win others to their religion with dishonest practices
 - I am not ashamed of this ministry; to say that Christ was crucified; to say that God became man; to say that sin is evil and wrong
 - St Paul is rebuking the false teachers who were trying to bring the Corinthians under the old Jewish Covenant by perverting the word of God (e.g. by introducing elements of Jewish tradition to the Torah)
- Those whose conscience is inspired by the Holy Spirit, they will know that I am a true Apostle of the Lord Christ
- 17:00

Cast Down but Unconquered

⁷ But we have this treasure in earthen vessels, that the excellence of the power may be of God and not of us. ⁸ *We are* hard-pressed on every side, yet not crushed; *we are* perplexed, but not in despair; ⁹ persecuted, but not forsaken; struck down, but not destroyed— ¹⁰ always carrying about in the body the dying of the Lord Jesus, that the life of Jesus also may be manifested in our body. ¹¹ For we who live are always delivered to death for Jesus' sake, that the life of Jesus also may be manifested in our mortal flesh. ¹² So then death is working in us, but life in you.

¹³ And since we have the same spirit of faith, according to what is written, "I believed and therefore I spoke," we also believe and therefore speak, ¹⁴ knowing that He who raised up the Lord Jesus will also raise us up with Jesus, and will present *us* with you. ¹⁵ For all things *are* for your sakes, that grace, having spread through the many, may cause thanksgiving to abound to the glory of God.

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Seeing the Invisible

¹⁶ Therefore we do not lose heart. Even though our outward man is perishing, yet the inward *man* is being renewed day by day. ¹⁷ For our light affliction, which is but for a moment, is working for us a far more exceeding *and* eternal weight of glory, ¹⁸ while we do not look at the things which are seen, but at the things which are not seen. For the things which are seen *are* temporary, but the things which are not seen *are* eternal.

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Chapter 5

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<http://www.suscopts.org/diocese/bishop/bible-study/second-epistle-to-the-corinthians/session-05/>

Introduction

- St Paul, in 2 Corinthians, is defending his apostleship and explaining the nature of his service.
- In Chapter 4, he told them that in spite of the suffering, false accusations, hardships, etc. he will not lose heart. He will not lose hope. He will continue to be hopeful. Why?
- In Chapter 5, he gives some reasons:
 - Even if they killed me, they will kill the body (earthly house, earthly tent) and I will be raised with the glorious body (house not made with hands). He says he is longing for this - he has a desire to depart and be with Christ. He is confident that we will have this glorious body and go to heaven, and this confidence is given by the Lord who gave us the Holy Spirit as a guarantee.
 - Here, we do not see God by our eyes but by our faith - but when we go there, we will see Him face to face. That's why we walk by faith here because we will stand before the throne of God and give an account of our deeds whether good or bad.
 - The fear of God, which is the beginning of wisdom, motivated St Paul to preach and to persuade men
 - He is serving God in such a way that he doesn't need to defend himself, but he wants the Corinthians, by seeing the fruit that God is making under his hand, to defend him and respond to those who falsely accuse him
 - He is also motivated by the love of Christ, and because of this love, he is not living for himself but for God
 - He does not judge people according to their appearance because he knows that those who were baptized are born anew
 - He describes the ministry as Ministry of Reconciliation because God reconciled to man through Jesus Christ

Assurance of the Resurrection

¹ For we know that if our earthly house, *this* tent, is destroyed, we have a building from God, a house not made with hands, eternal in the heavens. ² For in this we groan, earnestly desiring to be

clothed with our habitation which is from heaven, ³ if indeed, having been clothed, we shall not be found naked. ⁴ For we who are in *this* tent groan, being burdened, not because we want to be unclothed, but further clothed, that mortality may be swallowed up by life. ⁵ Now He who has prepared us for this very thing *is* God, who also has given us the Spirit as a guarantee.

⁶ So *we are* always confident, knowing that while we are at home in the body we are absent from the Lord. ⁷ For we walk by faith, not by sight. ⁸ We are confident, yes, well pleased rather to be absent from the body and to be present with the Lord.

- 6:01

The Judgment Seat of Christ

⁹ Therefore we make it our aim, whether present or absent, to be well pleasing to Him. ¹⁰ For we must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ, that each one may receive the things *done* in the body, according to what he has done, whether good or bad. ¹¹ Knowing, therefore, the terror of the Lord, we persuade men; but we are well known to God, and I also trust are well known in your consciences.

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Be Reconciled to God

¹² For we do not commend ourselves again to you, but give you opportunity to boast on our behalf, that you may have *an answer* for those who boast in appearance and not in heart. ¹³ For if we are beside ourselves, *it is* for God; or if we are of sound mind, *it is* for you. ¹⁴ For the love of Christ compels us, because we judge thus: that if One died for all, then all died; ¹⁵ and He died for all, that those who live should live no longer for themselves, but for Him who died for them and rose again.

¹⁶ Therefore, from now on, we regard no one according to the flesh. Even though we have known Christ according to the flesh, yet now we know *Him thus* no longer. ¹⁷ Therefore, if anyone *is* in Christ, *he is* a new creation; old things have passed away; behold, all things have become new. ¹⁸ Now all things *are* of God, who has reconciled us to Himself through Jesus Christ, and has given us the ministry of reconciliation, ¹⁹ that is, that God was in Christ reconciling the world to Himself, not imputing their trespasses to them, and has committed to us the word of reconciliation.

²⁰ Now then, we are ambassadors for Christ, as though God were pleading through us: we implore *you* on Christ's behalf, be reconciled to God. ²¹ For He made Him who knew no sin *to be* sin for us, that we might become the righteousness of God in Him.

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