

# Chapter 3

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## 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

<sup>1</sup> 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? <sup>2</sup> You are our epistle written in our

hearts, known and read by all men; <sup>3</sup> 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

<sup>4</sup> And we have such trust through Christ toward God. <sup>5</sup> Not that we are sufficient of ourselves to think of anything as *being* from ourselves, but our sufficiency *is* from God, <sup>6</sup> 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

<sup>7</sup> 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, <sup>8</sup> how will the ministry of the Spirit not be more glorious? <sup>9</sup> For if the ministry of condemnation *had* glory, the ministry of righteousness exceeds much more in glory. <sup>10</sup> For even what was made glorious had no glory in this respect, because of the glory that excels. <sup>11</sup> 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

<sup>12</sup> Therefore, since we have such hope, we use great boldness of speech— <sup>13</sup> 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. <sup>14</sup> 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. <sup>15</sup> But even to this day, when Moses is read, a veil lies on their heart. <sup>16</sup> Nevertheless when one turns to the Lord, the veil is taken away. <sup>17</sup> 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