

Wednesday Evening Bible Study

June 15, 2022

Series - *The Life and Writings of the Apostle Paul*

The Corinthian Letters

The Last Letter (Second Corinthians)

Chapter Three

Text – 2 Corinthians 3

Introduction

The Corinthians still had a lot of issues that needed addressing. We have already seen examples of violations of liberty. However, in chapter three Paul seems to be dealing with Judaizers that were attempting to place the Corinthian believers back under the Law. Paul seemed to fight against this from the beginning of his ministry. (Galatians 1:6 & 7; 2:1 – 16; 3:1 - 3) This is a problem in every Christian church today; but it was particularly a problem in the first century when the churches were comprised of many Jewish believers. Legalism seems to come in two main varieties:

1. Requiring something other than faith in Christ for salvation.
2. Requiring an observance of the Jewish ceremonial laws after salvation.

Ceremonial laws have to do with the observance of laws like the observance of feasts; sacrifices; holy days; etc. These have all been fulfilled in Christ. (Colossians 2:8 – 16) God's moral laws, however, are still in force; and God expects us to obey them. There were also civil laws (laws of government), which Christians are expected to obey if they are not in disagreement with the commands of God. (Romans 13)

It is not legalism, however, to have convictions and standards within a New Testament church. Standards are fine and good; but they do not save you; keep you saved; or even make you right with God. Standards should be the result of a right relationship with God.

I. Paul's Confidence Restated (vs. 1 – 6; 1:1; 1 Corinthians 4)

- A. Paul did not need a letter of recommendation from Jerusalem, Antioch, or anywhere else. He was an apostle "by the will of God"
- B. The Corinthian church was the proof of Paul's ministry. The church was an epistle in itself. Every church and every Christian should have fruit that proves their authenticity. Paul did not need a piece of paper to declare his ministry; the proof was manifest in the Corinthian church.

- C. The Church was evidence that the Spirit of God had transformed lives. These lives were not transformed by the works of the Law, but by the manifestation of the Spirit of God working through the Apostle Paul and others.
- D. Paul was not boasting of his flesh. This was not self-confidence; this was confidence in his calling and in the ability that God had given him.

II. Paul Comparison Revealed (vs. 7 – 11)

- A. Paul compares the ministry of the Spirit to the ministry of the Law. (v. 6)

Notice the language used here: ministers of the letter, ministration of death, ministration of condemnation.

- 1. The Letter (law) killeth. (Romans 3:19 – 23)

"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. But now the righteousness of God without the law is manifested, being witnessed by the law and the prophets; Even the righteousness of God which is by faith of Jesus Christ unto all and upon all them that believe: for there is no difference: For all have sinned, and come short of the glory of God;" (Romans 3:19-23)

- 2. The Spirit gives life.

The thief cometh not, but for to steal, and to kill, and to destroy: I am come that they might have life, and that they might have it more abundantly. (John 3:10)

- B. Paul compares the glory of the Law to the glory of the Spirit

Paul mentions the glory that had shone on Moses' face when he descended the mount; but he states that the glory of the ministration of the Spirit was more glorious.

- 1. The glory of the ministration of the Spirit exceeds the glory of the Law.
- 2. The glory of the ministration of the Spirit extends past the glory of the Law.

III. The Christian's Curtain (Vail) Removed (vs. 12 – 18)

Paul mentions the vail that Moses wore which kept the people of Israel from seeing the glory that reflected on his face. The Jews (as a nation) still have that vail which keeps them from seeing Christ. (Romans 11:25)

"For I would not, brethren, that ye should be ignorant of this mystery, lest ye should be wise in your own conceits; that blindness in part is happened to Israel, until the fulness of the Gentiles be come in." (Romans 11:25)

- A. To those still under the Law the veil remains.
- B. To those who are in Christ the veil is removed.
- C. To those who behold the glory there is Liberty.

Stand fast therefore in the liberty wherewith Christ hath made us free, and be not entangled again with the yoke of bondage. (Galatians 5:1)

For, brethren, ye have been called unto liberty; only use not liberty for an occasion to the flesh, but by love serve one another. (Galatians 5:13)

- D. To those who behold the glory, a transformation takes place. (Romans 12: 1 & 2; Hebrews 12:1 & 2)

"I beseech you therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God, that ye present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable unto God, which is your reasonable service. And be not conformed to this world: but be ye transformed by the renewing of your mind, that ye may prove what is that good, and acceptable, and perfect, will of God." (Romans 12:1-2)

"Wherefore seeing we also are compassed about with so great a cloud of witnesses, let us lay aside every weight, and the sin which doth so easily beset us, and let us run with patience the race that is set before us, Looking unto Jesus the author and finisher of our faith; who for the joy that was set before him endured the cross, despising the shame, and is set down at the right hand of the throne of God." (Hebrews 12:1-2)