

**Text: 2 Cor 3.1-18**

1 Corinthians: *“the epistle of the cross in its social application.”*<sup>1</sup>

2 Corinthians: *the epistle revealing the heart of pastoral application.*

In both epistles, Paul addresses the bad attitudes and actions of an immature church, still much affected by the world from which it is drawn.

**A Preliminary Outline of 2 Corinthians:**

Opening (1.1-11)

Addressing Corinthian Perceptions and Paul’s Ministry Philosophy (1.12-7.16)

Defending Paul’s Conduct (1.12-2.17)

**Exposition of Paul’s Philosophy (3.1-6.10)**

Appeal for Corinthian confidence (6.11-7.16)

Instructions concerning the offering (8.1-9.15)

Assertion of apostolic authority (10.1-13.10)

Conclusion (13.11-14)<sup>2</sup>

**I. A transition into Paul’s Philosophy (3.1-4)**

What do Paul’s questions in v. 1 imply about his familiarity with to the Corinthians?

**That he was already well known to the Corinthians**

**“The preceding verses could have drawn offense from the Corinthians because Paul told them things about himself that they already knew and should have remembered. He mentioned these things as though they were new.” [Constable, 2 Cor 3.1]**

Instead of letters of commendation, what does Paul says establishes the relationship between Paul and the Corinthians? (2-3)

**The Corinthians themselves are evidence of the fruitfulness and authority of Paul as an apostle**

<sup>1</sup> G. G. Findlay, “St. Paul’s First Epistle to the Corinthians,” in *The Expositor’s Greek Testament*, ed. William Robertson Nicoll (Grand Rapids, Mich: Eerdmans, n.d.), 739.

<sup>2</sup> Adapted from Tom Constable, *Tom Constable’s Expository Notes on the Bible* (Galaxie Software, 2003).

What does this suggest about the Corinthian testimony? Did Paul consider them believers or unbelievers? (3-4)

Paul saw the Corinthians as believers, though misguided

## II. The nature of new covenant ministry (3.5-11)

The change in the Corinthians was real, and Paul took some credit for it, but where does he locate the real power behind this ministry? (5)

The adequacy is from God; God does the work, though using human vessels

What contrast between Old Covenant ministry and New Covenant ministry is made in v. 6?

The external letter kills (condemns); the Spirit [new covenant] makes alive

What contrast is made in vv. 7-8?

The Old Covenant came with glory; the New Covenant has much more glory

How great was the difference between OC glory and NC glory? (9-10)

The glory of the New Covenant is such that the glory of the Old is no glory in comparison.

Finally, the Old Covenant ministry fades away, whereas the New Covenant ministry remains. (11) How does the ministry of the OC work, compared to the ministry of the NC? How does the OC ministry fade away?

The OC works by ritual performance and repeated sacrifices which only have temporary effect; the NC ministry is through the Spirit, whose work lasts

## III. The boldness of New Covenant ministers (3.12-18)

Since the ministry of the New Covenant is permanent, what kind of confidence does that give New Covenant ministers? (12)

Great boldness, since they know their work can effect lasting change

On the other hand, how did Moses have to minister in the Old Covenant? (13)

With his face veiled, so the people wouldn't see all the glory

What was the consequent spiritual condition of those in the Old Covenant? (14-15)

**Their hearts were veiled, unable to fully understand truth**

How is the veil removed from human hearts? (14)

**Through Christ alone**

What makes the difference when the veil is taken away from a heart? (16)

**They turn to the Lord [note who is acting here]**

The Spirit is identified as the Lord in v. 17. What does the alternating use of the terms “Christ” (14), “Lord” (16, 17), and Spirit (17) suggest?

**That the Trinity is involved in conversion and enlightening souls**

Instead of bondage to ritual, what does the religion of the New Covenant bring? (17)

**Liberty (but not license)**

The section closes with a general principle for all believers. What is the result of focusing your attention on the glory of the Lord? (18)

**You are changed into his image — become more like Christ.**

“Do you want to be Christlike? Then spend time looking at Jesus. I recall that Dr. Lewis Sperry Chafer at the Dallas Theological Seminary used to stop us when we would sing the song, ‘Take time to be holy, speak oft with thy Lord’ by William D. Longstaff. He would say, ‘Change that first line. Let us sing “Take time to *behold* Him.”’ Do you want to be holy? Then behold Him.

Turn your eyes upon Jesus;  
 Look full in His wonderful face;  
 And the things of earth will grow strangely dim  
 In the light of His glory and grace.

“I need this. I hope you, too, sense a need of seeing Jesus Christ on the pages of the Word of God so that you might grow more like Him.”<sup>3</sup>

---

<sup>3</sup> J. Vernon McGee, *Thru the Bible Commentary*, v. 5, electronic ed., vol. 5 (Nashville: Thomas Nelson, 1997), 100.