

II Corinthians

A Ministry for God's Glory

Lesson 3

II Corinthians 3:1-4:6

Here we begin a long section in which Paul defends and defines his ministry and his general perspective on life as a reconciled ambassador for Christ. One evidence of the divine approval of Paul's ministry's was the conversion of the Corinthians who are described as a letter of commendation read and understood by all. Chapter 3 mainly deals with comparison and contrast of the ministry of the Spirit and the ministry of the Letter. Despite the greater glory of the Spirit, many fail to see it because a veil remains lying on their hearts. While this may seem like it would be a source of great discouragement, Paul demonstrates a confidence that finds its source outside of any human influence.

Using the attached worksheet, read and make notes on the text. *What do you see?*

II Corinthians 3:1-18

Are we beginning to commend ourselves again? Or do we need, as some do, letters of recommendation to you, or from you? ²You yourselves are our letter of recommendation, written on our hearts, to be known and read by all. ³And you show that you are a letter from Christ delivered by us, written not with ink but with the Spirit of the living God, not on tablets of stone but on tablets of human hearts.

⁴Such is the confidence that we have through Christ toward God. ⁵Not that we are sufficient in ourselves to claim anything as coming from us, but our sufficiency is from God, ⁶who has made us sufficient to be ministers of a new covenant, not of the letter but of the Spirit. For the letter kills, but the Spirit gives life.

⁷Now if the ministry of death, carved in letters on stone, came with such glory that the Israelites could not gaze at Moses' face because of its glory, which was being brought to an end, ⁸will not the ministry of the Spirit have even more glory? ⁹For if there was glory in the ministry of condemnation, the ministry of righteousness must far exceed it in glory. ¹⁰Indeed, in this case, what once had glory has come to have no glory at all, because of the glory that surpasses it. ¹¹For if what was being brought to an end came with glory, much more will what is permanent have glory.

¹²Since we have such a hope, we are very bold, ¹³not like Moses, who would put a veil over his face so that the Israelites might not gaze at the outcome of what was being brought to an end. ¹⁴But their minds were hardened. For to this day, when they read the old covenant, that same veil remains unlifted, because only through Christ is it taken away. ¹⁵Yes, to this day whenever Moses is read a veil lies over their hearts. ¹⁶But when one turns to the Lord, the veil is removed. ¹⁷Now the Lord is the Spirit, and where the Spirit of the Lord is, there is freedom. ¹⁸And we all, with unveiled face, beholding the glory of the Lord, are being transformed into the same image from one degree of glory to another. For this comes from the Lord who is the Spirit.

The Corinthians and Paul – 3.1-6

1. Why did Paul say that the Corinthians should trust him? What does he say about what the Corinthians meant to him?
2. In your own words, explain the confidence Paul had (3:4-6).
3. How are we made “sufficient” through the Spirit?

Spirit vs. Letter – 3.7-18

1. Paul talks a lot about “glory” in this section (10 times -- 3:7, 8, 9, 10, 11). What do you think the word “glory” means in this conversation? (Use an English dictionary, Greek lexicon, etc. to learn what the technical definitions are, then think about what the word could mean in this particular context.)
2. Complete the table below contrasting the ministries of the Spirit and of the Letter (3.3-18):

MINISTRY OF THE SPIRIT	MINISTRY OF THE LETTER
ON HUMAN HEARTS (V. 3)	
NEW COVENANT (V. 6)	
	KILLS (V. 6)
OF LIFE (V. 7)	
	GLORY ENDS (V. 7, 10, 11)
	GLORIOUS (V. 8)
RIGHTEOUSNESS (V. 9)	
	FROM MOSES (V. 15)

3. What does this more glorious ministry provide those who proclaimed it (3.12)?
4. Be prepared to explain the symbol of “the veil” used in 3.13-16--both the original Bible story it refers to as well as how it explains the spiritual condition of many people in Paul’s day (and ours for that matter).
5. When is “the veil” taken away?
6. What happens as a result of “the veil” being removed?
7. Into what are we being transformed?

II Corinthians 4:1-6

Therefore, having this ministry by the mercy of God, we do not lose heart. ²But we have renounced disgraceful, underhanded ways. We refuse to practice cunning or to tamper with God's word, but by the open statement of the truth we would commend ourselves to everyone's conscience in the sight of God. ³And even if our gospel is veiled, it is veiled to those who are perishing. ⁴In their case the god of this world has blinded the minds of the unbelievers, to keep them from seeing the light of the gospel of the glory of Christ, who is the image of God. ⁵For what we proclaim is not ourselves, but Jesus Christ as Lord, with ourselves as your servants for Jesus' sake. ⁶For God, who said, "Let light shine out of darkness," has shone in our hearts to give the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ.

The Light of the Gospel – 4.1-6

1. What made Paul not lose heart? How did he live and minister in such a way that demonstrated courage?
2. What was Paul's attitude toward those who reject the Gospel? Why do people reject the Gospel?
3. What is the Gospel really about? What does it reveal? What does it do for those who "unveil" their hearts to receive it?