

Christians: “Letters from Christ” (1-3)

- After speaking of triumphant work in Christ (2:12-17), Paul implicitly denies lifting himself up in the work (1)
- The only “letter of recommendation” he (and the other inspired men) needed were those who showed themselves to be a letter of recommendation (2-3)
 - The Corinthians were “our letter of recommendation...to be known and read by all”
 - This letter is “from Christ” and delivered by the apostles
 - It is written with the Spirit of the living God on tablets of human hearts

God’s power in the apostles’ work (4-6)

- *Such is the confidence that we have through Christ toward God* (4)
 - “Such” looks backward and forward
 - “We are confident about your being a letter from Christ because God’s power is behind it.”
- *Not that we are sufficient in ourselves...* (5)
 - Sufficient – able, fit to accomplish a work (see G2425)
 - These men do not claim the power or the message as coming from themselves
 - Their ability to do these things does not come from them!
- *...but our sufficiency is from God* (5-6)
 - It is **God** who has **made** them **able**
 - That they might be “ministers of a new covenant, not of the letter but of the Spirit”
 - Paul then contrasts the Old Covenant with the New Covenant

Letter vs. Spirit (6-11)

Letter	Spirit
Ministry of death, carved in letters – kills (6-7)	Ministry of the Spirit – gives life (6-7)
Carved in letters on stone (3, 7)	Written on human hearts (3)
Being brought to an end (7, 11)	Permanent (11)
Ministry of condemnation (9)	Ministry of righteousness (9)
Came with glory (7, 9, 11)	<i>MORE</i> glorious (8-11)

“Letter vs. Spirit” does not mean that we are not under law

- This text (alongside some parallel passages) has been misused and misapplied to justify misinterpretations the New Testament
 - Some argue that we must keep “the Spirit of the law” and not “the letter of the law” because “the letter kills.”
 - This is to say: You don’t have to do *exactly* what the Word says; just keep the spirit behind what the Word says
- This misses the very important point that Paul is not contrasting the Spirit with law
 - He is contrasting the Spirit with the Law of Moses
 - This is very clear in vv. 3, 7 (cf. Exodus 34:29-35)—“...carved in **letters** on stone...”
- We are under law (1 Corinthians 9:21)

We are able to view this glory (12-18)

- *Since we have such a hope, we are very bold, not like Moses...* (12-15)
 - *Such a hope* – the hope of great glory as revealed in the New Covenant (cf. Colossians 1:5)
 - **Boldness and the placing of the veil**
 - **Moses** – put the veil over his face and covered up the glory (v. 13)
 - **The apostles** – would not put the veil over the glory (vv. 12-13)
 - **The hearers of the apostles** – put a veil over themselves to not see the glory (vv. 14-15) and fail to see the fulfillment of Scriptures (cf. Matthew 5:17)
- *Now the Lord is Spirit, and where the Spirit of the Lord is, there is freedom* (16-17)
 - This does not mean freedom from law (cf. 1 Corinthians 9:21)!
 - It is freedom from the veil, that we might behold the Lord's glory (vv. 14, 16, 18)!
- *And we all...are being transformed...* (18)
 - This transformation occurs **now** as our faces are unveiled and we behold as in a mirror the glory of the Lord (cf. Matthew 5:16; 2 Corinthians 4:16; Colossians 3:10)
 - There is also a **future** element to this transformation when glory is ultimately revealed (Romans 8:18) and we receive the glory of a heavenly body (1 Corinthians 15:40; 1 John 3:2)