

***“Paul's Second Letter to the Corinthians —  
Paul the Man, the Messenger, and His Message, All of Grace”***

***Review: Grace Revealed As the Spirit Writes on Human Hearts***

- ***In Spite of Our Humanity, the Spirit of God Has Written in Our Hearts***
- ***Paul Was Made A Servant of A New Covenant, Not of Letters but of Spirit***
- ***Our Great Hope Is Secured, Because We All Possess Eternally the Spirit***
  
- ***In Spite of Our Humanity, the Spirit of God Has Written in Our Hearts***

***2 Cor. 3:1-3, 6***

***1 Do we begin again to commend ourselves? or need we, as some others, epistles of commendation to you, or letters of commendation from you?***

***2 Ye are our epistle written in our hearts, known and read of all men:***

***3 Forasmuch as ye are manifestly declared to be the epistle of Christ ministered by us, written not with ink, but with the Spirit of the living God; not in tables of stone, but in fleshy tables of the heart.***

***...***

***6 Who [God] also hath made us able ministers of the [a] new testament; not of the letter, but of the spirit: for the letter killeth, but the spirit giveth life.***

- ***What a remarkable introduction to a chapter we have here. Paul writes here that he does not need any letters of introduction or “commendation” like other teachers might and in particular the false gnostic teachers who apparently had such references in abundance, perhaps from Athens or even Jerusalem. Why not? Because, he boldly writes here, the Corinthian believers were themselves individually his letters of authentication, and that those letters were written on the heart and “known and read by all”!***
  
- ***So not ink as in the writing on a page but the spirit of the living God himself was the “instrument” in this “scribal work”. As he writes in several places (See for example, Rom. 1:5; 1 Cor. 3:10; 2 Cor. 5:18; Eph. 3:7; 4:11-12; Col. 1:25-29; 1 Tim. 1:11-12; 2 Tim. 1:11), it was the Lord God that had made him competent or able as here as such a minister. It was not Paul himself in his own amazing natural abilities who had simply changed his message for human reasons.***

***An amazing and wonderful analogy this is. Is it transforming to us who have cast all of our hope and trust in him and his super-abundant grace.***

- *Now the apostle compares the two glorious revelations, one through Moses and the other through Paul. Both were glorious, both described the working of God, the one under law and the other under grace. One, he writes, had not endured, while the other had. One brought bondage and death, the other liberty and life. Such contrasts indeed. Let's read again those words that so well describe this contrast:*

**[READ ] 2 Cor. 3:7-11**

**7** But if the ministration of death, written *and* engraven in stones, was glorious, so that the children of Israel could not stedfastly behold the face of Moses for the glory of his countenance; which *glory* was to be done away:

**8** How shall not the ministration of the spirit be rather glorious?

**9** For if the ministration of condemnation *be* glory, much more doth the ministration of righteousness exceed in glory.

**10** For even that which was made glorious had no glory in this respect, by reason of the glory that excelleth.

**11** For if that which is done away was glorious, much more that which remaineth *is* glorious.

- *Paul now writes of how he was made a servant of a new covenant, not of letters but of spirit. Letters on a page or carved in stone [writing] are being compared here with spirit. There is of course no real comparison that may be made except the one, that the true author is God, God Almighty in both cases, of course, but the place of writing is so very different:*
  - *“... that was glorious [the Law], much more that which remained [the revelation of grace through Paul] is glorious”: The one has ended, the other continues with its inestimable glories upon glories!*
  - *The contrasts in the language here between the two workings of Almighty God are so important and we must take this teaching to heart:*
    - *“ministration of death”, “ministration of condemnation”, “ministration of spirit”, “ministration of righteousness”*
- *We must conclude, therefore, that there is a great gulf between the covenant Paul was made a minister or servant of and the Mosaic — and it is insurmountable though many would like to deny this and seem always to want to place the saints of God back under a legal standard of good works. That conflicts directly with the working of God's abundant grace.*

***Yes, the early one was glorious, no doubt. But the new one (new in quality) is so much more glorious that there is not even a means of comparison between them ("that which was made glorious had no glory in this respect, by reason of the glory that excelleth"). The one was on dead stone or papyrus, while the new one is in human hearts! This analogy is so powerful and the contrast is so absolute, for the one covenant was written on what was inherently dead while the other on what was dead but has now been made alive by the power of Almighty God. Amen.***

- ***So the writings stand in the analogy for the two covenants. The one was terminated while the other continues on and on, he writes here, and it is under the terms of and under the power of the latter where we dwell today, under grace.***

***We need to apply this to our lives. The consequences of this teachings are extensive and relevant to every aspect of living today. Have we fully received it for ourselves?***

- ***This was all by way of introduction to what we now will read here in the next verses. Our outline is a simple one:***

***Our Outline Today: Paul the Man, the Messenger, and His Message, All of Grace***

- ***Paul, the Man, A Sinner Redeemed By God's Grace, Had An Eternal Hope!***
- ***Paul, the Messenger of God's Transforming Grace, Has Been Sent Forth***
- ***Paul's Message, The Truth that Is Now Unveiled, Alone Offers God's Grace***

***I. Paul, the Man, A Sinner Redeemed By God's Grace, Had An Eternal Hope!***

***[READ ] 2 Cor. 3:12-18***

***12 Seeing then that we have such hope, we use great plainness of speech:***

***13 And not as Moses, which put a vail over his face, that the children of Israel could not stedfastly look to the end of that which is abolished:***

***14 But their minds were blinded: for until this day remaineth the same vail untaken away in the reading of the old testament; which vail is done away in Christ.***

***15 But even unto this day, when Moses is read, the vail is upon their heart.***

***16 Nevertheless when it shall turn to the Lord, the vail shall be taken away.***

***17 Now the Lord is that Spirit: and where the Spirit of the Lord is, there is liberty.***

**18 But we all, with open face beholding as in a glass the glory of the Lord, are changed into the same image from glory to glory, even as by the Spirit of the Lord.**

- ***This is the teaching here in summary:***
  - ***Regarding Moses:***
    - ***On Mt. Sinai Moses was presented tablets of stone and commanded to write on them the Law of God as given by Almighty God to him for his people.***
    - ***While Moses was in the presence of Almighty God his face shone with the glory of God which continued when he came out of the Lord's presence and into the presence of the nation of Israel. He did not see the face of God (see Ex. 33:20, 23) but he was intimately present with him and he was changed visibly by that.***
    - ***Moses put on a mask so that the visible glory of God shining from him would not be seen. Paul tells us the real reason for that in our verses here. There were two reasons, one of which is found in Exodus and the other which is found here in our verses.***
    - ***That glorious influence of God's presence on him was quickly passing away indicating as Paul teaches that the Law itself would also lose its power and authority or be terminated.***
  - ***Similarities and contrasts when considering Paul and the revelation given thorough him (not all found here in these verses but revealed elsewhere in the Acts or in Paul's letters):***
    - ***In heaven's glory and though the teaching of the risen and ascended Lord Jesus Christ, Paul was given on behalf of the church which is his body the teachings of the dispensation of grace including the gospel of the grace of God.***
    - ***Rather than his face shining after his initial presence with the risen Lord his face was marred and his eyesight was seriously harmed.***

- *Paul in his ministry to the people of God wore no masks and spoke and wrote with simplicity and power the unveiled glory of God under grace.*
- *The glory revealed through Paul's revelation has not diminished and continues on and on while the Law has been annulled and is no longer in effect.*
- *Final conclusions of this teaching by analogy is found in the final verses of this chapter:*

**2 Cor. 3:17-18**

**17** Now the Lord is that Spirit: and where the Spirit of the Lord is, there is liberty.

**18** But we all, with open face beholding as in a glass the glory of the Lord, are changed into the same image from glory to glory, even as by the Spirit of the Lord.

- *“The Lord is that spirit...”: **The one writing the letters on and in the hearts of all of God's dear children as mentioned earlier. That spirit is in fact the same Lord of glory that had been with Moses and had given the Law of Commandments to him to be written on the tablets of stone.***
- *“... and where the Spirit of the Lord is, there is liberty”: **But now instead of the bondage of the Law, we have the astounding and freely given liberty of grace by the same spirit. Indeed, the dispensational plan of God has changed entirely! Praise and thanks be to Almighty God.***
- *“But we all, with open face beholding as in a glass the glory of the Lord, are changed into the same image from glory to glory, even as by the Spirit of the Lord”: **Now the final and equally important part of the teaching. This is the ongoing work of the spirit in us all, as we behold the glory of the Lord as displayed in the word of grace (not in the word of the law), we see as in a mirror ourselves as God sees us, are being changed into the same image or reality the Lord has ordained for his people. This process will be completed in heaven's glory, of course, not here. Here it is a life long process. But the key to our understanding is in these words:** “But we all, with open [unveiled or uncovered] face beholding as in a glass the glory of the Lord,*

are changed into the same image from glory to glory, even as by the Spirit of the Lord...”!

- ***So, the bottom line is this: Moses had his face veiled so the glory of God could not be clearly seen by the people. We are wearing no veil so the glory of God’s working in us under grace may be well seen and known when we look into the mirror and see ourselves being glorified by the almighty power of God the spirit of liberty under grace working in us all, “from glory ... to glory...”. Amen.***
- ***What a beautiful and transforming message this is. “Free from the Law O Happy Condition” as the hymn well expresses this most fundamental truth of God’s redeeming grace. This hymn as well as others offered together with Ira Sankey’s melodies, were written during the decade following the civil war. That was such blessed message indeed for those days of much suffering for the citizens of this beloved land, so divided by slavery and war and then under “reconstruction”.***

**“Free from the law, O happy condition”, P. P. Bliss**

1 Free from the law, O happy condition,  
Jesus hath bled, and there is remission;  
Cursed by the law and bruised by the fall,  
Grace hath redeemed us once for all.

Chorus:

Once for all, O sinner, receive it,  
Once for all, O friend, now believe it;  
Cling to the cross, the burden will fall,  
Christ hath redeemed us once for all.

2 Now we are free, there's no condemnation,  
Jesus provides a perfect salvation;  
"Come unto Me," O hear His sweet call,  
Come, and He saves us once for all. [Chorus]

3 "Children of God," O glorious calling,  
Surely His grace will keep us from falling;  
Passing from death to life at His call,  
Blessed salvation once for all. [Chorus]

## **II. Paul, the Messenger of God's Transforming Grace, Has Been Sent Forth:**

### **[READ ] 2 Cor. 4:1-2**

1 Therefore seeing we have this ministry, as we have received mercy, we faint not;

2 But have renounced the hidden things of dishonesty, not walking in craftiness, nor handling the word of God deceitfully; but by manifestation of the truth commending ourselves to every man's conscience in the sight of God.

- ***Paul now turns to his own testimony. For he had received directly from the risen and ascended Lord Jesus a new life and a ministry as we see written here. He begins with the mercy which he can never forget, for he had been the chief of sinners as he writes in 1 Timothy:***

### **[READ ] 1 Tim. 1:15-16**

15 This *is* a faithful saying, and worthy of all acceptance, that Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners; of whom I am chief.

16 Howbeit for this cause I obtained mercy, that in me first Jesus Christ might shew forth all longsuffering, for a pattern to them which should hereafter believe on him to life everlasting.

- ***And so having received so much “he faints not” even though he had given up his former life with all of its human and earthly glories and now had become “the offscouring of all things” ( 1 Cor. 4:10-13).***

### **1 Cor. 4:10-13**

10 We are fools for Christ's sake, but ye are wise in Christ; we are weak, but ye are strong; ye are honourable, but we are despised.

11 Even unto this present hour we both hunger, and thirst, and are naked, and are buffeted, and have no certain dwellingplace;

12 And labour, working with our own hands: being reviled, we bless; being persecuted, we suffer it:

13 Being defamed, we intreat: we are made as the filth of the world, *and* are the offscouring of all things unto this day.

- ***For the apostle, there were trials on every side and his life was often in danger, but he now had TRUTH and the God of Truth and that was enough. So he had the ministry of preaching that truth and it was more than sufficient. Amen.***

***Do we feel the same? What is our ministry is a valid question for each of us?***

### ***III. Paul's Message, The Truth that Is Now Unveiled, Alone Offers God's Grace:***

#### ***[READ ] 2 Cor. 4:3-6***

3 But if our gospel be hid, it is hid to them that are lost:

4 In whom the god of this world hath blinded the minds of them which believe not, lest the light of the glorious gospel of Christ, who is the image of God, should shine unto them.

5 For we preach not ourselves, but Christ Jesus the Lord; and ourselves your servants for Jesus' sake.

6 For God, who commanded the light to shine out of darkness, hath shined in our hearts, to give the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ.

- ***The contrast between the old and the new is Paul's central focus here. That was everything. No doubt this had to do with what the false teachers were promoting.***
- ***Moses had hidden his face because he did not want the people to know that the Law which he had just delivered would be only temporary. So no one could see to the "end" of the law. But perhaps there was more that he did not want them to see. What might that have been?***

***Well, has he not already explained that so well in those earlier verses. The contrasts in the language there between these two workings of Almighty God are so important and we really must know well this teaching or a constant confusion is likely to grip our minds and hearts to our own loss. The contrasts are these:***

- ***The ministration of death and the ministration of condemnation, and darkness on the one hand, and on the other, the ministration of spirit, the ministration of righteousness, and life and light.***
- ***But in the ministry of the Law through Moses much about the Law and its purpose were hidden. In contrast, today, under grace, all is revealed. There are no masks today nor were there any for Paul. The full revelation of God's glory through his grace in Christ Jesus has been revealed with nothing to obscure it. Paul's words are direct, concrete, and simple indeed. The power is there in his words for all who will receive them. But, he writes, there are many who will not receive them. They are those sadly in whom the God of this world is working a blindness that is so complete that the light of the***



***glory of God cannot reach into the inner man for, he writes here, even their minds are darkened.***

- ***Paul preached Christ, his glory and his gospel with a power to save even the most reprobate of sinners, even one such as Paul! So he preaches the gospel that alone is the power of God unto salvation to all who will believe. And it is to that gospel and that message that the apostle is a bond-slave. And, he adds appropriately to this letter, he has also been made by God to be the minister of these life transforming truths to those who must hear including these Corinthians. Amen and amen.***
- ***What about us? To what are we bound is a question to be answered daily.***

**Application / Conclusions:**

- ***Praise God for his ever abundant grace. May his grace and peace so capture your hearts and minds that you also may be shining with his glory to all that they may also come in God's good timing into his abundance and salvation through grace. Amen.***