

II CORINTHIANS: MINISTERING TO BELIEVERS FACING FALSE TEACHERS

I. Paul's Relationship With The Church, 2 Corinthians 1-7

E. The Supernatural Basis Of Godly Christian Ministries (2 Corinthians 3:1-18)

I. Introduction

- A. False teachers, claiming to be apostles, had entered the Church at Corinth, and tried to promote their own views while discrediting the person and message of the Apostle Paul. (Bible Know. Com., N. T., p. 552)
- B. This was a difficult situation for Paul: his readers were immature believers who had been saved out of corrupt backgrounds in a city known for its vice, so they were easy prey for false teachers, and Paul had to be careful how he handled the situation lest his readers think he was being unjustly defensive and thus discredit himself.
- C. 2 Corinthians chapters 1-7 deal with Paul's relationship with the church, and 2 Corinthians 3:1-18 gives the supernatural basis of godly Christian ministries. We view it for our insight and application (as follows):

II. The Supernatural Basis Of Godly Christian Ministries, 2 Corinthians 3:1-18.

- A. Paul and his ministry team had no need to take letters of recommendation like false apostles evidently did in order to prove their ministry credibility to the Corinthians, for the changed lives of the regenerated Corinthian believers testified before all men that credibility, 2 Corinthians 3:1-2; *Ibid.*, p. 560.
- B. Indeed, Paul's readers comprised a far more credible letter of recommendation for Paul and his ministry team than what the false apostles could ever hope to provide for themselves, 2 Corinthians 3:3:
 - 1. Paul's readers with their changed lives showed the credibility of Paul and his team from Christ, v. 3a.
 - 2. That letter of recommendation was not written with ink, but with the Spirit of the living God, 3b.
 - 3. That letter was not even written on tablets of stone like God had written the Ten Commandments on the tablets He gave to Moses in Exodus 31:18, but it was written on the tablets of human hearts, v. 3c.
- C. Paul expressed total confidence in the godly credentials of the ministry of him and his team (v. 4) but he quickly added that he and his team did not view themselves as sufficient so as to claim any credit for discipling others as having come from themselves, but that their sufficiency was from the Lord, 2 Cor. 3:5.
- D. The apostle added that God had made him and his team competent to be ministers of a new covenant as opposed to the old covenant under Moses, not a covenant of the letter of the Mosaic Law but of the Holy Spirit, for the letter of the Mosaic Law could only condemn man as it exposed his sin where the Holy Spirit gives life by the grace of God through the redemption of Jesus Christ on the cross, 2 Corinthians 3:6.
- E. Paul then contrasted the ministry of Moses with that of him and his ministry team under Christ, 2 Cor. 3:7-18:
 - 1. Moses' ministry was a ministry of death, for the stone tablets God gave him with the Ten Commandments could only expose man's sin, leading to his condemnation and death, but even that ministry was glorious since Israel's people could not gaze at Moses' face when it shone though it was a temporary ministry, v. 7.
 - 2. Paul added that the ministry of the Holy Spirit in the Church era will have even greater glory than that of Moses' ministry, for if the ministry of condemnation under Moses was glorious, so much more would be the ministry of God's righteousness imputed to sinners by grace be glorious, 2 Corinthians 3:8-11.
 - 3. Also, Moses veiled his face that Israel might not gaze at it, for its radiance would fade, 2 Cor. 3:12-13. He likely thought that Israel might be less motivated to heed the Law if they saw that the glory of its ministry was fading, so he veiled his face to hide the fact that the radiance of his face was fading; *Ibid.*, p. 561.
 - 4. Israel to this day, like their forefathers in the wilderness, is hardened against the truth, so in a sense, a veil lies over their hearts today that is removed only when they believe in Jesus Christ, 2 Corinthians 3:14-16.
 - 5. The Holy Spirit's ministry today along with Christ's work, unlike in Moses' era, produces liberty from the condemnation of the Law when people trust in Christ, and believers today, beholding the glory of God in their walk, are being spiritually transformed into the ever-increasing degrees of the glory of Christ (to be revealed at the rapture) versus the fading glory that Moses experienced under the Law, 2 Cor. 3:17-18.

Lesson: *Godly Christian ministries that function in the power of the Holy Spirit are far more glorious than even the ministry of Moses at Mount Sinai, for unlike Moses' ministry of fading glory that only condemned man for sin, Christ's gracious ministry of the Spirit today saves, edifies and keeps intensifying God's glory in human hearts.*

Application: *(1) May we who minister God's Word recognize the glorious supernatural basis of a godly ministry today so as to minister in reliance on the Holy Spirit. (2) If we sit under the ministry of another who ministers in the Holy Spirit's power, may we heed it that God might keep on building His glory in us through that ministry!*