

2Corinthians – Week 7

I. Review (2Cor. 3:1-3)

- A. Paul just identified himself (and his co-workers, Timothy and Silvanus) as being the aroma of Christ to God, sent by God.
 - i. Now, is Paul patting himself on the back here? No!
 - 1. He later on says in 2Cor. 10:17-18 that those who commend themselves are not approved, but only those whom He commends!
 - ii. Did Paul need a letter of recommendation to or from them? No!
 - 1. He was their gospel father!
 - 2. The Corinthians were Paul's "letter of recommendation!"
 - a. The author of this "letter" is Christ.
 - b. Written on human hearts with the "ink" of the Holy Spirit.

II. Continuation

- A. 2Cor. 3:4-6a (ESV), "*Such is the confidence that we have through Christ toward God. ⁵ Not that we are sufficient in ourselves to claim anything as coming from us, but our sufficiency is from God, ⁶ who has made us sufficient to be ministers of a new covenant,...*"
 - i. The confidence Paul and his co-workers had was their ministry was directed by God!
 - 1. Earlier in 2Cor. 2:16b, Paul asked the question, "*who is sufficient (or adequate) for these things?*"
 - 2. The answer is "Paul and his companions"
 - a. Paul was completely confident of his in role as a minister and apostle!
 - b. Confidence is a necessary requirement to any job!
 - i. How could Paul preach the gospel if he was not confident?
 - ii. How could Paul defend his ministry if he was not confident?
 - c. However, Paul's confidence, that is, his sufficiency (or adequacy) did not come from himself, but from God!
 - i. God, not Paul, caused the increase when the gospel was preached and believed by the Corinthians!
 - ii. Paul's triumphs and ministerial successes were only made possible by God!
 - iii. Planting churches in Asia Minor and Greece was made possible by the power of God!
 - iv. Paul already said in 1Cor. 15:9-10 that it was the grace of God working in him.
 - d. Other examples of men who were made sufficient by God:
 - i. Moses, who felt he could not be God's prophet because of his lack of oratory capabilities (Ex. 4:10).
 - ii. Jeremiah, who felt he could not be God's prophet because he was just a boy (Jer. 1:6).
 - iii. These were great men of God, not because of themselves, but because of what God did through them!
 - e. God made Paul and his companions to be ministers of a new covenant (testament)...
 - ii. A new covenant
 - 1. Jeremiah 31:31 (ESV), "*Behold, the days are coming, declares the LORD, when I will make a new covenant with the house of Israel and the house of Judah*"
 - a. This new covenant was being promised to Israel, but was extended to the Gentiles as well.
 - i. Paul was a messenger of the new covenant to the Gentiles (cf. Acts 9:15; 13:47).

2. This new covenant was inaugurated through the shed blood of Jesus:
 - a. Luke 22:20 (ESV), *“And likewise the cup after they had eaten, saying, ‘This cup that is poured out for you is the new covenant in my blood.’”*
 - b. Hebrews 9:15 (ESV), *“For this reason Christ is the mediator of a new covenant, that those who are called may receive the promised eternal inheritance —now that he has died as a ransom to set them free from the sins committed under the first covenant.”*
 3. In Galatians 4:21-31, the old and new covenants are depicted as two women:
 - a. Hagar, a slave woman, producing children in slavery.
 - i. She corresponds to the Old Covenant (the Law of Moses).
 - b. Sarah, a free woman, producing children of liberty.
 - i. Sarah corresponds to the New Covenant: gospel of Jesus!
 1. This new covenant brought justification: something the Law could not do (cf. Rom. 4:25; Gal. 3:11).
 2. Her children (Isaac), unlike Hagar’s children (Ishmael), are free; born from above!
 3. They are children of the promised inheritance.
- B. 2Cor. 3:6b (ESV), *“...not of the letter but of the Spirit. For the letter kills, but the Spirit gives life.”*
- i. There are several interpretations on this passage:
 1. Some believe this passage is making a distinction between the “letter of the law” and the “spirit of the law.”
 - a. They say that the law was being perverted as in the case of the Pharisees who neglected the weightier matters of the law, like mercy and justice (Mt. 23:23).
 - b. Although it is true that adherence to mere outward codes do produce cold, lifeless, ritualistic service to the Lord, producing hypocritical attitudes, however, contextually speaking, Paul is contrasting the old and new covenants, not “letter” vs. “spirit” of the Mosaic Law:
 2. Some believe that this passage is contrasting Law and Grace.
 - a. This interpretation carries the idea that the God of the Old Covenant was about law, law, law and no grace; while the God of the New Covenant is all about grace, grace, grace and no law!
 - i. This idea is akin to the Gnostics, who believed in two beings: the vengeful and evil god (prior to the advent of Christ) and the merciful and good god revealed in Christ.
 - b. The problem with this is antinomianism (law-less)
 - i. God was gracious under the Old Covenant.
 1. He spared Nineveh from destruction when they repented.
 2. In Judaism, God established the sacrificial system as an atonement for sins committed.
 - a. The reality was Christ! (cf. Heb. 10:1-10)
 - b. The animal sacrifices pointed to Christ’s one-time sacrifice for our sins.
 - ii. The New Covenant is not a law-less testament (cf. John 14:15; Matthew 7:21; 1John 2:4-5).

3. I believe this is simply addressing two covenants with two outcomes:
 - a. The letter -- the code of Moses, written on tablets of stone.
 - i. Moses' Law brings a curse to anyone who does not keep it in its entirety (Gal. 3:10).
 1. That curse is death (condemnation).
 2. Not only death in a physical sense, as in the case of those 3000 who died the day the Law was inaugurated (Exo. 32:28) or like the man who was put to death for gathering wood on the Sabbath (Numbers 15:32-36), breaking the Law brings spiritual death.
 - ii. Now, the Law is good! It is not evil! It is from God!
 - iii. The problem was not with the Law – the problem is with us!
 1. Our hearts of stone need to be replaced with a heart of flesh!
 2. This is only done through the new covenant, by the hearing, believing and obedience to the gospel of Jesus Christ! (cf. Ex. 36:26).
 - b. “The Spirit” or “spirit” – represents the code of Christ, written on tablets of the true Christian’s heart.
 - i. The gospel imparts life (salvation) to those who trust and obey Him.
 - ii. The gospel changes our lives as it did the Corinthians...
 1. 1Cor. 6:9-11 (ESV), “*Or do you not know that the unrighteous will not inherit the kingdom of God? Do not be deceived: neither the sexually immoral, nor idolaters, nor adulterers, nor men who practice homosexuality,¹⁰ nor thieves, nor the greedy, nor drunkards, nor revilers, nor swindlers will inherit the kingdom of God.¹¹ And such were some of you. But you were washed, you were sanctified, you were justified in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ and by the Spirit of our God.”*
- ii. Why is Paul bringing up the old and the new covenants to a Gentile church?
 1. Probably because those false teachers who were criticizing his credentials and apostleship were the Judaizers.
 - a. The Judaizers taught that in order for the Gentiles to be saved, they needed to obey the Law of Moses, even circumcision (Acts 15:1-5).
 - b. In Galatians, Paul had to correct the influences these Judiazers had on the churches in Galatia.