

“Ministers Of The New Covenant”

2 Corinthians 2:12-3:6

Message by Michael J. Barnard

January 30, 2022

Teaching Aim: To display the concern and care Paul demonstrated toward those who served with him in ministry. To recognize different people will respond to the gospel in different ways. To realize not everyone will want to receive Jesus Christ as Savior and Lord. To understand that we minister under the inspiration and power of the Holy Spirit today. To recognize the beauty of the New Covenant of grace as it compares to the Old Covenant of law.

DIGGING DEEPER INTO GOD’S WORD (*BIBLE STUDY*)

Part I: Paul’s concern for Titus and the church at Corinth (2 Cor. 2:12-17)

1. In **verse 12**, we find Paul traveling to the region of Troas, located some 310 miles north of Ephesus on the northeastern side of the Aegean Sea. According to **verse 12**, what was Paul’s purpose in going to Troas? What did he find when he arrived there? Has the Lord ever opened a door of opportunity in ministry for you? What was it? Did you go through the door to minister to the people God wanted you to minister to?

2. How would you explain to someone the gospel message? (See **Rom. 3:23; 1 Cor. 15:3-4; John 3:16**) Have you ever shared the gospel with another person? How did they respond? (See **Matt. 28:18-20**)

3. Even though Paul had a wide-open door to share the gospel to the people of Troas, something else was troubling him; what was it (**vs. 13**)? Titus had been Paul’s messenger to the church in Corinth carrying to them a critical letter from Paul. Why did Paul want to speak to Titus? (See Commentaries) Why was Paul concerned about the welfare of Titus? (See **2 Cor. 8:1-7**)

4. What surprising move did Paul make in Troas (**vs. 13**)? Why was this surprising? What can we learn about Paul’s care and concern for Titus from this? Are there any principles from Paul’s example that you can apply to your life and ministry? Do you demonstrate this kind of love and care for those who serve in ministry with you?

5. In **verses 14-16**, Paul expressed the joy he felt when he finally found Titus and heard that his letter had been well received by the Corinthians. (See **2 Cor. 7:5-7**) In response, Paul used the imagery of "*the Roman Triumph*" to metaphorically represent the victory parade that Christians will one day march in with Christ (**vs. 14**). What was a "*Roman Triumph*"? (Hint: Search online) How does this metaphor of the Roman Triumph relate to Christians today?
6. The Roman cultic priests waved incense as they walked in "*the Roman Triumph*" parade releasing a strong scent into the air. What did this odor mean to the victorious Romans? What did the same odor mean to those who had been conquered by the Romans? How are Christians "*the fragrance of Christ*" in this lost and dying world today (**vs. 15**)? Does your faith stink to some unbelievers, even when there is a sweetness when around other believers?
7. How can our message be an aroma of death to one group and the aroma of life to the other (**vs. 16**)? Who are people really rejecting when they reject us because we are Christians? (See **John 15:18-19; 17:14-19**) Being a minister (or servant) of Jesus Christ is a huge responsibility, are we sufficient for that task on our own merit? Have you ever felt unworthy to serve? Why? How did the Apostle Paul feel?
8. In **verse 17** we get our first glimpse of the false teachers (or Judaizers) who had infiltrated the church in Corinth. What can we learn about these false teachers from **verse 17**? Did Paul "*peddle the gospel*" for profit in Corinth, or anywhere else for that matter? (See **1 Cor. 9:11-12; 2 Cor. 11:7-9; 2 Thess. 3:7-10**) Peddling not only means "*preaching for money*," but can also mean "*watering down*" the message to make it more palatable for those who object to it. Do you see a "*watering down*" of the Word of God in our country today? If so, how? What is the average length of a sermon in the United States today? The Judaizers proclaimed a message of grace + works = salvation. Will this formula save anyone? What is the real biblical formula that leads to salvation? (See **Eph. 2:8-10**) When do the works come into it?

Part II: The Corinthians new lifestyle was Paul's letter of commendation (2 Cor. 3:1-3)

1. It appears the Judaizers (or false teachers) had arrived with letters of commendation from the Pharisaic wing of the mother church in Jerusalem. How do you see Paul's frustration boiling over in **verse 1**? What question was he really asking the Corinthians?
2. Paul didn't bring letters written in ink with him like the false teachers did. What did Paul bring according to **verse 2**? What did Paul mean when he wrote, "*You are our epistle written in our hearts, known and read by all men?*" Is there ever a time when it is appropriate to ask someone for a letter of commendation? Why? (See **Rom. 16:1-2; 1 Cor. 16:10; Col. 4:10**)
3. What are some ways that your life has changed since coming to Christ? Do your family and friends notice the difference? Has anyone ever made a comment to you about the change that has taken place in your life since coming to faith in Jesus?
4. What is an "*epistle?*" (**vs. 3**)? (See Dictionary) How can a person's life make them "*an epistle of Christ?*" Ink is temporary in nature and fades with time. How is the writing of the Holy Spirit on the human heart different from ink? (See **Jer. 31:33-34; Ezek. 11:19-20; 36:26-34**) Why is stone (which represents "*the Law*") a good metaphor of the unregenerate human heart? Does the law have within itself the power to enable people to follow it? What does the law do? (See **Rom. 3:19**) What is necessary for the Holy Spirit to indwell us? (See **John 3:3,5; 1 Pet. 1:23**)

Part III: Our sufficiency to be ministers of the New Covenant is found only in God (2 Cor. 3:4-6)

1. In **verse 4**, Paul indicated that he could fully trust Christ to complete the work that He had previously begun with the Corinthians believers. (See **Phil. 1:6**) What are some ways that you've seen the Lord working in your life as you have developed spiritually?

2. The false teachers based everything around the works of their hearers. Who did Paul rest upon for his success in ministry (**vs. 5**)? Do you get the feeling from reading **verse 5** that Paul felt insufficient on his own merit to complete the task God called him to perform? Do you feel insufficient to move up to a higher level of ministry? According to Paul, what is the only way that we can become sufficient to do the ministry God has called us to? What would your dream position in ministry be if you could do it? What is stopping you?

3. Was Paul a minister of the New Covenant or was he still ministering under the Old Covenant (**vs. 6**)? Which covenant are we ministering under today? The Old Covenant is also known as "*the Law of Moses*"; the New Covenant is the "*covenant of grace*" through faith in Jesus Christ. Under the Old Covenant, who is responsible to fulfill the terms of the covenant? What is the end result 100% of the time (**vs. 6**)? (See **Rom. 2:10-18; 3:19-23; Gal. 2:16; 3:10**) Under the New Covenant, who is responsible to fulfill the terms of the covenant? What is the end result 100% of the time for those who are born-again believers in Christ? (See **John 3:16; Rom. 5:8-9; 6:23**) If someone asked you, "*Why is the New Covenant better than the Old,*" what would you say?

4. Have you repented of your sin and received Jesus Christ as Savior and Lord? If not, why not do so in prayer right now? If you have wandered away from Jesus and need to get back right with Him, why not confess your sin and take it to the Lord in prayer?

MINER'S CORNER – Manna to live by!

- Paul cared deeply for the welfare of his ministry co-workers, so should we.
- Christians are "*the fragrance of Christ among those who are being saved and among those who are perishing.*" To one we are the aroma of death, to the other we are the aroma of life.
- Christians are never to water down God's Word for money or for political correctness.
- The changed life of a believer and the manifestation of the fruit of the Spirit in his or her life is the best indicator that a person is a true servant of God.
- The Old Covenant of the law simply convicts us of our sin and points to our need for Christ; it gives us no power to obey the law of God, it only leads the unrepentant sinner to death.
- Christ personally fulfilled the covenant stipulations of the New Covenant as our substitute.
- At regeneration, God indwells us with His Holy Spirit and empowers us to live the Christian life.