**MINISTERS OF A NEW COVENANT**

2 Corinthians 3:1-18

Key Verse 6

He has made us competent as ministers of a new covenant—not of the letter but of the Spirit; for the letter kills, but the Spirit gives life.

**Introduction**

 Some people in Corinth criticized Apostle Paul’s gospel ministry by saying that he didn’t have a letter of recommendation to practice ministry. They also claimed that their ministry was superior because they were teaching the law of Moses. In this passage Paul says why he didn’t need such letters of recommendation, and why his ministry was superior and glorious. It was because his letters were from the Spirit, written on human hearts. These are eternal. They are most trustworthy. Some people think that to do the work of God we need a formal certificate or seminary degree. Without this they say, we should do nothing. However, Paul put no confidence in these things (Php 3:4-6). All that mattered to Paul was that the Holy Spirit had worked through his faith in Christ Jesus. To Paul, that was the one and only criteria that validated God's servants. May God help us to have strong confidence in the ministry of preaching the gospel, the ministry of the Spirit, and to see the glory of this ministry which we’ve been given.

1. **Read verses 1-6. Why did Paul call the Corinthian believers ‘our letter’ and ‘a letter from Christ’? (1-3) On what basis did Paul have confidence as a minister of Christ? (4-5) What is the meaning of ‘a new covenant of the Spirit’? (6)**

**1-1. Read verses 1-6.**

 Are we beginning to commend ourselves again? Or do we need, like some people, letters of recommendation to you or from you? **2** You yourselves are our letter, written on our hearts, known and read by everyone. **3** You show that you are a letter from Christ, the result of our ministry, written not with ink but with the Spirit of the living God, not on tablets of stone but on tablets of human hearts.**4** Such confidence we have through Christ before God. **5** Not that we are competent in ourselves to claim anything for ourselves, but our competence comes from God. **6** He has made us competent as ministers of a new covenant—not of the letter but of the Spirit; for the letter kills, but the Spirit gives life

**1-2. Why did Paul call the Corinthian believers ‘our letter’ and ‘a letter from Christ’? (1-3)**

 ***Are we beginning to commend ourselves again? Or do we need, like some people, letters of recommendation to you or from you?***

- Some people who opposed Paul criticized Paul that Paul commended (praised) himself and that he was not qualified to preach the gospel. They complained that he hadn’t received letters of recommendation, especially from the Jerusalem church.

- These opponents were known as the people who came from Jerusalem with recommendation letters. They argued for the necessity of observing the law of Moses for salvation.

- Paul said that he didn’t need a recommendation letter to preach the gospel.

 ***You yourselves are our letter, written on our hearts, known and read by everyone.***

- You yourselves are our letter : Corinthian believers were themselves Paul’s letter of recommendation. They were the fruit of Paul’s ministry.

***Even though I may not be an apostle to others, surely I am to you! For you are the seal of my apostleship in the Lord.( 1Co 9:2)***

- God worked on the Corinthians through Paul’s ministry and teaching. God approved his work. The Corinthians themselves were God’s true recommendation letter.

- If God doesn’t work in and through a person, even a thousand recommendation letters would be useless.

- The work of the Holy Spirit through Paul revealed that the gospel He preached was true and from God.

 ***written on our hearts, known and read by everyone***

- The recommendation letters that many people had was written on paper, which can be lost and ruined. But, the letter written on a person’s heart cannot be lost or destroyed. It’s the weightier evidence of God’s work because it was written by God and received through personal experience.

- Paul’s recommendation letter was made be known and read by everyone because people could clearly see the work of God in and through the Corinthian believers.

- Someone’s change and confession of faith is the best recommendation.

 ***3 You show that you are a letter from Christ, the result of our ministry, written not with ink but with the Spirit of the living God, not on tablets of stone but on tablets of human hearts.***

- Paul made a comparison between the letter from Christ and the letter of Moses’ law.

- Corinthian believers were a recommendation letter from Christ because God changed them through the gospel that Paul preached. One person’s change through the gospel is more powerful than any other letter or words.

- Corinthian believers were the result of Paul’s ministry.

- Paul’s recommendation letter was written by Jesus Christ, not by man.

- Through the work of the Holy Spirit in a believers’ heart, Christ revealed

His love, power, and glory.

- We believers are a letter from Christ. People can know the power of the gospel and Jesus Christ through the evidence of the Spirit working in us. Through God’s work in us, they can trust the gospel message in the Bible and put their trust in Jesus as well.

- We should be a good recommendation letter from Christ that people may be encouraged to believe in Jesus through us.

  ***Not Written with ink but the Spirit of the living God.***

- People who brought physical letters of recommendation preached the law of Moses. Now Paul compared these men’s recommendation letters to the Law of Moses and the letter written by Holy Spirit to the gospel of Jesus Christ and the work of Holy Spirit.

- Letters written with ink by men would fade away. It shows that the Law of Moses is temporary and fading, not eternal.

- But Paul’s recommendation letter, the believers were a result of the work of the Holy Spirit, which is far superior to Moses’ law.

- The law of Moses was written on tablets of stone. It should be taught, remembered, and followed, but it doesn’t have power to change people’s hearts. Instead of empowering people, it ends up judging it.

- But the gospel of Jesus is written on tablets of the human heart through the work of the Holy Spirit.

- The gospel works directly on the human heart and has power to fundamentally change people’s hearts and lives.

*“This is the covenant I will make with the people of Israel after that time,” declares the Lord.“I will put my law in their mind and write it on their hearts.I will be their God, and they will be my people.****34*** *No longer will they teach their neighbor, or say to one another, ‘Know the Lord,’because they will all know me, from the least of them to the greatest,”declares the Lord.“For I will forgive their wickedness and will remember their sins no more.” (Jeremiah 31:33-34)*

***19*** *I will give them an undivided heart and put a new spirit in them; I will remove from them their heart of stone and give them a heart of flesh. (Ezekiel 11:19)*

- The gospel gives salvation to sinners and empowers them to be changed and live a completely new life.

- Paul’s ministry was a life-giving ministry through the work of the Holy Spirit by God’s own recommendation.

**1-3. On what basis did Paul have confidence as a minister of Christ? (4-5)**

 ***Such confidence we have through Christ before God. 5 Not that we are competent in ourselves to claim anything for ourselves, but our competence comes from God.***

- Competence means the ability to do something successfully. Competence is translated as "sufficient" (KJV), "adequate" (NAS), or "capable" (TEV).

- God gives us everything we need to do his work. It is not inherent; it is given(acquired) by God.

- Some think only qualified Christians can do God’s work. But that’s not true. Since our competence comes from God, anyone can do God's work. Whoever trusts in God can be made competent by God to be a gospel worker.

- Paul had confidence about the gospel and his ministry through Jesus Christ before God. Jesus gave confidence to Paul in his heart through the work of Holy Spirit and deep revelation. When Paul experienced the power of the gospel he gained confidence of the power of the gospel.

- He was not competent or confident in himself as one might be for their ability or knowledge. He was humble, knowing what kind sinner he was and how weak he was.

- But God gave him such confidence in the gospel that he could continue to preach the gospel of Jesus.

- We need to ask God to help us preach the gospel of Jesus with the confidence that Paul had. Also when we preach the gospel we can experience the power of the gospel and have more confidence in the gospel.

- The more we preach the gospel the more we can have confidence in it.

- When we have the confidence from God we can preach the gospel no matter what happens or what kind opposition we might have to face. The confidence of the gospel made Paul work like a spiritual bulldozer.

**1-4. What is the meaning of ‘a new covenant of the Spirit’? (6)**

 ***He has made us competent as ministers of a new covenant—not of the letter but of the Spirit; for the letter kills, but the Spirit gives life***

· Minister of a new covenant : a new covenant is the gospel of Jesus. Those who preach the gospel of Jesus are the ministers of new covenant.

· Minister of the letter : the letter refers to the Law of Moses that was written on tablets of stone and written in a book.

· The minister of Spirit : The Holy Spirit works through the gospel of Jesus. When we preach the gospel of Jesus, the Holy Spirit works to save sinners and change them.

· The letter kills : The Law of Moses kills people by judging them with the law.

· The Spirit gives life : The Holy Spirit give life to sinners through the gospel of Jesus.

- The old covenant was given to Israel but the new covenant was given to all people who become spiritual Israel through faith. The old covenant was based on observing the law and animal sacrifice but the New covenant is based on Jesus’ sacrifice on the cross. The old covenant is based on man’s work and flesh but the New covenant is based on faith and Spirit.

· Paul had strong confidence in preaching the gospel because it was the minister of new covenant and of the Spirit that gives life.

· We should have strong and absolute confidence in the ministry of preaching the gospel. It is really a life-giving ministry. We should participate in this ministry diligently in season and out of season with great thanks and joy.

2. **Read verses 7-11. Why does the ministry engraved in letters on stone bring**

**death? (7a) Why is the ministry of the Spirit more glorious than the ministry**

**engraved in letters on stone? (7b-11)**

**2-1.** **Read verses 7-11.**

**7** Now if the ministry that brought death, which was engraved in letters on stone, came with glory, so that the Israelites could not look steadily at the face of Moses because of its glory, transitory though it was, **8** will not the ministry of the Spirit be even more glorious? **9** If the ministry that brought condemnation was glorious, how much more glorious is the ministry that brings righteousness! **10** For what was glorious has no glory now in comparison with the surpassing glory. **11** And if what was transitory came with glory, how much greater is the glory of that which lasts!

2-2. Why does the ministry engraved in letters on stone bring death? (7a)

 ***Now if the ministry that brought death, which was engraved in letters on stone, came with glory, so that the Israelites could not look steadily at the face of Moses because of its glory, transitory though it was***

- The law was good and given to people that they may live by obeying the law but the law brought death because people couldn’t observe the law due to their sinful nature and weakness*.*

*I found that the very commandment that was intended to bring life actually brought death.* ***11*** *For sin, seizing the opportunity afforded by the commandment, deceived me, and through the commandment put me to death. (Romans 7:10,11)*

- Even though the law brought death to people, the ministry of the law was still glorious.

- People couldn’t see Moses’ face because of its glory (Exodus 34:29-35).

- But the glory of Moses was temporary glory that disappeared soon.

**2-3. Why is the ministry of the Spirit more glorious than the ministry engraved in letters on stone? (7b-11)**

 ***will not the ministry of the Spirit be even more glorious? 9 If the ministry that brought condemnation was glorious, how much more glorious is the ministry that brings righteousness! 10 For what was glorious has no glory now in comparison with the surpassing glory. 11 And if what was transitory came with glory, how much greater is the glory of that which lasts!***

· The ministry of the Spirit, the gospel-preaching ministry is far more glorious because of several reasons;

- The ministry of the law brings condemnation but the ministry of the Spirit brings righteousness.

- The ministry of the law has no glory now in comparison with the surpassing glory of ministry of Spirit. Since the ministry of the Spirit appeared, the ministry of the law had to fade away. The glory of the ministry of the law doesn’t have glory anymore.

- The glory of the ministry of the law was temporary but the glory of the ministry of Spirit lasts forever.

- We participate in a glorious ministry of the Spirit by preaching the gospel of Jesus. We have great privilege in Jesus. It is worthy to serve the ministry, investing all things that we have. Thank God for calling us to participate in the glorious ministry in Jesus!

3. **Read verses 12-18. Why does Moses’ veil become useless? (12, 13) How can the veil be taken away? (14-16) What will happen to us through the Spirit of the Lord? (17-18)**

**3-1. Read verses 12-18.**

**12** Therefore, since we have such a hope, we are very bold. **13** We are not like Moses, who would put a veil over his face to prevent the Israelites from seeing the end of what was passing away. **14** But their minds were made dull, for to this day the same veil remains when the old covenant is read. It has not been removed, because only in Christ is it taken away. **15** Even to this day when Moses is read, a veil covers their hearts. **16** But whenever anyone turns to the Lord, the veil is taken away. **17** Now the Lord is the Spirit, and where the Spirit of the Lord is, there is freedom. **18** And we all, who with unveiled faces contemplate[[a](https://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=2+Corinthians+3&version=NIV#fen-NIV-28860a)] the Lord’s glory, are being transformed into his image with ever-increasing glory, which comes from the Lord, who is the Spirit.

**3-2. Why does Moses’ veil become useless? (12, 13)**

 ***Therefore, since we have such a hope, we are very bold.***

 – Because of his great hope and confidence of the ministry of the Spirit, Paul preached the gospel boldly despite all kinds of opposition, persecution, and difficulties.

* Serving campus ministry is a difficult task but we should keep preaching the gospel boldly with strong confidence in the ministry of the gospel.

 ***We are not like Moses, who would put a veil over his face to prevent the Israelites from seeing the end of what was passing away.***

- Moses didn’t want people to see the glory on his face because he knew that this glory was passing and would fade away. He didn’t want people to put too much value on visible and temporary glory.

- The glory that we have in serving the ministry of Spirit is everlasting glory even though people don’t see this glory on our face now. God will give us eternal glory when Jesus comes again.

3-3. How can the veil be taken away? (14-16)

 ***But their minds were made dull, for to this day the same veil remains when the old covenant is read. It has not been removed, because only in Christ is it taken away.***

- Some people still had dull minds when they sought the old covenant based on the Law of Moses.

- The veil refers to people’s spiritual ignorance and misunderstanding, their unbelief, and legalism. They could not understand or accept the gospel because of this veil.

- The veil can be taken away only in Jesus Christ who gives light to our darl minds.

 ***Even to this day when Moses is read, a veil covers their hearts. 16 But whenever anyone turns to the Lord, the veil is taken away.***

- As long as people hold the Law of Moses, they are still under the veil. The veil covers their hearts so they remain ignorant.

- Only when they turn to Jesus with humble and believing hearts, the veil will be taken away and we can see the glory of the gospel.

- Turning to Jesus means to repent of our sins and to accept him as the Lord, believing in him.

- When we turn to Jesus with believing hearts, the darkness that velis our hearts is taken away and we can have true freedom, seeing God’s glory.

- Jesus fulfilled all the requirements of the law and gives us true righteousness.

3-4. What will happen to us through the Spirit of the Lord? (17-18)

 ***Now the Lord is the Spirit, and where the Spirit of the Lord is, there is freedom.***

· The Lord is Spirit : God works on our spirit through the gospel and we experience true freedom.

- The Holy Spirit is the Spirit of freedom who sets us free from sin and death. Jesus sets us free from everything that binds us, including the law.

 ***And we all, who with unveiled faces contemplate[***[***a***](https://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=2+Corinthians+3&version=NIV#fen-NIV-28860a)***] the Lord’s glory, are being transformed into his image with ever-increasing glory, which comes from the Lord, who is the Spirit.***

- All believers will see Jesus’ glory and be transformed into Jesus’ image with ever-increasing glory.

- Not only will our faces shine like Moses but all of us will be transformed into Jesus’ image and His shining glory. This is the hope that we have as we participate in the ministry of the Spirit, serving people with the gospel of Jesus.

**Conclusion**

We are letters from Christ, written with the Spirit of living God through the gospel of Jesus. God called us to serve the ministry of Spirit. To serve people with the gospel of Jesus is a life-giving ministry. The glory of this ministry is everlasting and we will be transformed into Jesus’ image with ever increasing glory. May God help us to serve such a glorious ministry with great confidence and the hope of glory!

**One word: The glory of the ministry of the Spirit.**