

2 Corinthians 3:1- *Do we begin again to commend ourselves? Or do we need, as some others, epistles of commendation to you or letters of commendation from you?*

Letters of commendation were written to introduce or recommend someone as trustworthy, noteworthy, or acceptable to a church or community. These letters were common in the first century and served a purpose similar to modern letters of recommendation, where a former employer, mentor, or colleague speaks to a person's character and credibility.

Paul is about to make a significant point: he did not need these letters to validate his ministry. He began this letter by identifying himself as an apostle of Jesus Christ. Likewise, in Galatians 2:6, Paul writes that those who appeared influential added nothing to him, for God shows no partiality. Paul's confidence was not rooted in the approval of religious leaders or the opinions of people but in his calling from God.

This raises an important question: Do we find our worth and value in what God says about us, or in what other people say about us? Paul was so secure in his identity in Christ and so dead to self that he did not need the Corinthians—or anyone else—to establish his credibility.

Paul was not dependent on a letter of recommendation to prove who he was. Instead, the transformed lives of the Corinthians themselves served as evidence of God's work through his ministry. Their changed lives and spiritual growth were a far greater testimony than any written endorsement could ever be.

The same principle applies today. Many people will never pick up a Bible, but they will observe the lives of those who claim to follow Christ. Our lives are meant to be living epistles.

Get this.. Every believer has a pulpit. It may not be a church platform. It may be an office desk, a garage, a classroom, a construction site, a coffee shop, or the gym where you work out. Wherever God has placed you, your life is communicating a message.

This should cause us to examine ourselves. When people observe our attitudes, words, and actions, do they see Christ reflected in us? Jesus said, "He who has seen Me has seen the Father" (John 14:9). Can people say if they have seen you, they have seen Jesus.

The strongest testimony is not what we say about ourselves but what Jesus is able to produce through a life fully surrendered to Him.

2 Corinthians 3:2- *You are our epistle written in our hearts, known and read by all men;*

Paul's description of the Corinthians as a "letter" may point to the idea of being a living testimony. People should not only be able to read about the transforming power of the gospel in a book—they should be able to see its fruit displayed in the lives of believers.

The Corinthians themselves were evidence of the message Paul preached. Their conversion, growth, and transformation served as a living letter that could be seen and observed by others.

More than any written recommendation, their changed lives testified to the authenticity of Paul's ministry and the power of the gospel.

2 Corinthians 3:3- *clearly you are an epistle of Christ, ministered by us, written not with ink but by the Spirit of the living God, not on tablets of stone but on tablets of flesh, that is, of the heart.*

The Corinthians' transformation was a direct result of Paul's ministry among them. While God alone brings salvation and spiritual growth, Paul was the instrument God used to introduce many of them to Christ and establish them in the faith.

Because of this, the changed lives of the Corinthians served as powerful evidence of the authenticity of Paul's ministry. Critics could question his motives, challenge his character, or attempt to undermine his authority, but it is difficult to dismiss the fruit that was plainly visible.

2 Corinthians 3:4- *And we have such trust through Christ toward God.*

Paul was confident that the message he preached would bear fruit because his confidence was not in himself but in God. He understood that it was not Paul working, but Christ working through him.

Throughout his ministry, Paul consistently pointed people to Jesus rather than himself. The transformation of the Corinthians was evidence of God's power at work, not Paul's ability.

This is why Paul could remain confident despite criticism and opposition. His trust was not in his own strength or wisdom (2 Corinthians 3:5) but in God, who alone changes hearts and produces lasting fruit.

2 Corinthians 3:5- *Not that we are sufficient of ourselves to think of anything as being from ourselves, but our sufficiency is from God,*

The Greek word for "sufficient" is *hikanos*, meaning worthy, competent, or adequate. Paul's point is that he was not sufficient in himself. The ministry, the fruit, and the power were not about Paul—they were about Jesus working through him.

This same attitude is seen in Peter and John after the healing of the lame man at the Beautiful Gate. When the crowd was amazed, they immediately redirected the attention away from themselves. They declared that it was not by their own power or godliness that the man was healed, but through faith in the name of Jesus (Acts 3:12–16).

Paul understood this principle well. Any effectiveness in his ministry came from God, not from his own ability. His confidence was not in himself but in Christ.

The moment we come to the end of ourselves is where we begin to experience the power of God. As long as we are trusting in our own strength, wisdom, or ability, we will struggle to depend

fully on Him. But when we recognize our insufficiency, we become positioned to receive His sufficiency.

2 Corinthians 3:6- *who also made us sufficient as ministers of the new covenant, not of the letter but of the Spirit; for the letter kills, but the Spirit gives life.*

What is Paul speaking about in this verse? He is contrasting the Old Covenant of the Law with the New Covenant of grace.

The "letter" refers to the Law given to the nation of Israel (Romans 3:19). The Law revealed God's standard and exposed sin, but it could not give life. It operated on a performance-based system in which blessings were tied to obedience and curses to disobedience. If Israel obeyed, they were blessed; if they rebelled, they experienced the consequences of breaking the covenant.

In contrast, the New Covenant is built upon God's grace and is empowered by His Spirit. God is the initiator, and man responds by faith. Rather than merely giving commands from the outside, God now works within the believer through the indwelling Holy Spirit.

Paul summarizes this contrast by saying, "the letter kills, but the Spirit gives life." The Law revealed man's inability to meet God's perfect standard, while the Spirit brings the life, righteousness, and transformation that the Law could never produce (Romans 8:33).

A powerful illustration of this contrast is seen in Scripture. When the Law was given at Mount Sinai, about 3,000 people died as a result of Israel's rebellion. On the Day of Pentecost, after the Holy Spirit was poured out, roughly 3,000 people were saved. One event highlights the ministry of death; the other highlights the ministry of life.

Paul's purpose is not to say that the Law was evil (Romans 7:12), but to show the superiority of the New Covenant. Under the New Covenant, believers are not merely given instructions to follow; they are given the Holy Spirit to empower them. God now dwells within His people, producing the very life and righteousness that He desires.

The focus is no longer on what we can do for God through our own efforts, but on what God has done for us in Christ and what He now does through us by His Spirit.

2 Corinthians 3:7- *But if the ministry of death, written and engraved on stones, was glorious, so that the children of Israel could not look steadily at the face of Moses because of the glory of his countenance, which glory was passing away,*

Here Paul describes the Law as the "ministry of death." The Law was never intended to make anyone right with God. Rather, it was given to reveal how far humanity had fallen and to expose the sinful nature within us. The Law showed God's perfect standard, but it could not give man the power to meet that standard.

The Law served as a tutor to lead us to Christ (Galatians 3:24). It was added temporarily until the coming of Jesus Christ (Galatians 3:19). Its purpose was not to save but to reveal our need for a Savior.

Jesus came to fulfill what the Law could never accomplish. He said it was fitting for Him to fulfill all righteousness (Matthew 3:15). What the Law could not do because it was weak through the flesh, God accomplished by sending His own Son in the likeness of sinful flesh and for sin (Romans 8:3). Jesus did for us what we could never do for ourselves.

Under the Old Covenant, Moses served as the mediator between God and the people of Israel. He spent forty days and forty nights on Mount Sinai without eating bread or drinking water while receiving the covenant from God (Exodus 34:28). When Moses came down from the mountain, his face reflected the glory of God. Yet this glory was temporary and fading.

Jesus, however, is far greater than Moses. Moses reflected God's glory, but Jesus is God's glory revealed. He is not merely a reflection of God—He is the exact representation of His nature.

It is vital for believers to understand the difference between the Old Covenant and the New Covenant and to rightly divide the Word of Truth (2 Timothy 2:15). If we fail to understand that we are no longer under the Law or a performance-based covenant, we will continually judge our relationship with God based on our behavior rather than on Jesus' finished work.

When believers fall into a law-based mindset, they often live with insecurity, constantly measuring God's acceptance by their successes and failures. The New Covenant teaches us that our acceptance before God is founded upon Jesus Christ, not our performance.

We must see ourselves as new creations in Christ. When we place our faith in Jesus, we are made righteous because of what He has done, not because of what we do. As Romans 5:19 teaches, through the obedience of One, many are made righteous. Our standing before God rests in Christ's obedience, not our own.

The Christian life is not about striving to earn God's acceptance. It is about living from the acceptance that has already been provided through Jesus Christ (Ephesians 1:6).

2 Corinthians 3:8- *how will the ministry of the Spirit not be more glorious?*

The previous verse reveals that the Old Covenant was glorious. The problem was never with the Law itself, for it was given by God and reflected His holiness and righteousness. Yet despite its glory, Paul argues that the New Covenant possesses a far greater glory.

The New Covenant is a better covenant established on better promises (Hebrews 8:6). While the Law is described as the ministry of death and condemnation because it exposed sin and pronounced judgment upon it, the New Covenant is described as the ministry of the Spirit because it imparts life and transformation.

The Law could reveal the problem, but it could not provide the solution. It could identify sin, but it could not remove it. The Holy Spirit, however, not only reveals God's will but empowers believers to walk in it.

Paul's point is not that the Law was bad, but that the New Covenant is superior. If the ministry that brought condemnation came with glory, how much more glorious is the ministry of the Spirit that brings righteousness, life, and reconciliation with God?.

2 Corinthians 3:9- *For if the ministry of condemnation had glory, the ministry of righteousness exceeds much more in glory.*

Why does Paul refer to the Law as the "ministry of condemnation"? Because the Law exposes sin and reveals humanity's inability to achieve righteousness before God through personal effort. Its purpose was to make people aware of their sinful condition and their need for a Savior.

The Law consisted of commands that reflected God's holy standard. However, no one could keep that standard perfectly. As James 2:10 teaches, whoever keeps the whole law yet stumbles in one point becomes guilty of all of it. The Law demanded perfection, and therefore it continually revealed mankind's failure to meet God's standard.

Romans 3:20 says that through the Law comes the knowledge of sin. The Law was never designed to make a person righteous; it was designed to reveal sin and remove any confidence people might have in their own goodness. It showed that no one could stand before God based on their own performance.

For example, a person may never commit murder, yet if they steal, lie, covet, or break any part of God's Law, they stand guilty before the Law. The Law exposes the fact that no one is righteous enough to be accepted by God on their own merits.

God's standard is perfection because He Himself is perfect. Anything less falls short of His glory. This is why Jesus came. What we could never accomplish through our own obedience, He accomplished for us. He fulfilled the Law perfectly and offers His righteousness to all who place their faith in Him.

When we trust in Jesus, we are no longer relying on our own righteousness but on His. Because of Jesus, we are accepted by God and are seen as holy and blameless before Him (Ephesians 1:4).

This is why the New Covenant is called the ministry of reconciliation, while the Law is called the ministry of condemnation. The Law reveals the problem; Jesus provides the solution.

For the believer, this also means there is a difference between conviction and condemnation. The Holy Spirit convicts us when we are wrong and leads us toward repentance tells us that there is now no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus. The Spirit may correct us, but He does not condemn those who belong to Christ.

2 Corinthians 3:10- *For even what was made glorious had no glory in this respect, because of the glory that excels.*

The Law is not made for those who have come to Jesus, and believers are no longer under the Law but under grace (Romans 6:14). The purpose of the Law was never to produce righteousness in those who are born again, but to reveal sin and point man to the need for a Savior.

Grace does not give permission to sin; rather, it gives power to change (Romans 6:2). It is not a license for rebellion, but the empowering presence of God that transforms the heart and enables believers to live differently than they did before.

The glory of the Old Covenant cannot compare to the glory of the New Covenant. The Old Testament contained shadows—pictures and types that pointed forward to what was coming. The New Covenant, however, reveals the substance, which is Christ Himself.

What was once anticipated has now been fulfilled. What was once written on stone is now written on hearts by the Spirit of God. We could say it this way, the New Covenant does not merely show us the standard; it provides the life and power to walk in it.

Because of this, the believer does not relate to God through striving under the Law, but through the transforming work of grace.

2 Corinthians 3:11- *For if what is passing away was glorious, what remains is much more glorious.*

This is confirmation that the Law has reached its fulfillment for those who are in Christ.

As Paul says in Romans 10:4, “Christ is the end (*telos*) of the Law for righteousness to everyone who believes.” This does not mean the Law is meaningless or erased, but that Christ is its fulfillment and goal.

2 Corinthians 3:12- *Therefore, since we have such hope, we use great boldness of speech—*

The only true hope we have is our faith in Christ. Hope is grounded in the Scriptures, which were written to give us confidence in God’s promises (Romans 15:4).

Paul’s mission was to preach the gospel. He did not count his own life as something to be preserved at all costs. Instead, his desire was to finish his race with joy and complete the task of proclaiming the good news of God’s grace (Acts 20:24).

This reveals the depth of Paul’s devotion to Jesus. His focus was not self-preservation or comfort, but obedience to the calling God had given him. His life was fully surrendered to the assignment of the gospel. While visiting Cape town South Africa, I told members of a leadership conference that when God called Paul, he did not check into the One and Only Cape town Hotel, he checked into a desert.

Understanding who you are in Christ, and who lives within you, produces a boldness that is not rooted in self-confidence but in Christ Himself. Paul consistently said that this confidence did not come from him, but from God working through him.

When a believer is secure in Christ, fear loses its control. Boldness is not the result of personality or natural strength, but of knowing that Christ is at work within us and that our lives are held by Him.

2 Corinthians 3:13- *unlike Moses, who put a veil over his face so that the children of Israel could not look steadily at the end of what was passing away.*

In Exodus 34:29–35, Moses comes down from Mount Sinai after being in the presence of God, and his face is shining with the reflected glory of the Lord. Because of this, Moses places a veil over his face when speaking to the people of Israel.

The veil served a practical purpose, but it also becomes a powerful picture of spiritual truth. Israel could not fully behold the glory that was being reflected through Moses. In a similar way, the Law could not fully reveal or impart the fullness of God's life and goodness to the people.

The glory that shone on Moses was real, but it was fading and external. It pointed beyond itself to something greater that was still to come. The Law, like the veil, revealed something of God's holiness, but it also demonstrated the separation between God and man under that covenant.

In the New Covenant, this veil is removed in Christ. What was once partially seen and reflected is now made known through the person of Jesus and the indwelling Holy Spirit. Believers are no longer kept at a distance from God's glory but are invited into direct relationship with Him through Christ.

This passage prepares the way for Paul's later teaching in 2 Corinthians 3, where he contrasts the fading glory of the Old Covenant with the surpassing and lasting glory of the New Covenant in Christ.

2 Corinthians 3:14- *But their minds were blinded. For until this day the same veil remains unlifted in the reading of the Old Testament, because the veil is taken away in Christ.*

The word "blinded" in Greek is *pōroō*, which carries the idea of becoming hardened, calloused, or covered with a thickened layer—similar to skin that becomes tough and desensitized over time through repeated pressure or use.

In this sense, Paul's description is not only about physical sight but about spiritual perception. A hardened or calloused mind is one that has become dulled to spiritual truth, unable to perceive or respond to what God is revealing.

Just as a person's hands can develop callouses from repeated physical work, the heart and mind can become spiritually desensitized through repeated resistance to God's voice. Over time, what once felt sensitive becomes numb.

Paul contrasts this spiritual condition with the truth that in Christ the veil is removed. What was once hidden is now revealed through Christ. The physical veil on Moses' face (Exodus 34:29–35) reveals a deeper spiritual reality: under the Old Covenant there was a limitation in seeing the fullness of God's glory, but in Christ that barrier is removed.

This is why Paul says in 2 Corinthians 3 that a veil lies over the heart when people turn away from Christ. Likewise, in Ephesians 4:18 he explains that apart from Jesus the understanding is darkened, and people are separated from the life of God.

Jesus Himself opened the understanding of His disciples so they could comprehend the Scriptures, showing that spiritual insight ultimately comes from God removing blindness and revealing truth.

Are there areas in our lives where we have become spiritually calloused—less sensitive to God's conviction, less responsive to His Word, or more comfortable with things that once troubled us? The call is to remain soft, responsive, and open before the Lord so that our hearts do not become hardened, but continually receptive to His truth and leading.

2 Corinthians 3:15- *But even to this day, when Moses is read, a veil lies on their heart.*

Paul explains that even in his time, there were still Jews who remained spiritually veiled when the Law of Moses was read. In 2 Corinthians 3:15, he says that “a veil lies over their heart” when the Scriptures are read.

Paul is describing a continued condition among those who cling to the Law as the basis for righteousness instead of recognizing its fulfillment in Christ. As long as the heart turns to the Law without turning to Christ, there remains a covering that limits spiritual perception.

2 Corinthians 3:16- *Nevertheless when one turns to the Lord, the veil is taken away.*

The word “turn” comes from the Greek *epistrephō*, which carries the idea of turning back, returning, or being converted. It describes a genuine turning of the heart toward the Lord. When a person turns to Christ, the veil is removed because Christ becomes the fulfillment of what the Law was pointing toward.

In that sense, the Law's purpose was never meant to remain as a covering over understanding, but to lead people to Christ. When someone understands the intent of the Law and responds in faith to Jesus, the blindness is removed and spiritual sight is restored.

This truth is powerfully illustrated at the death of Jesus. In Matthew 27:51, the veil of the temple was torn in two from top to bottom. This veil separated the Holy Place from the Holy of Holies, symbolizing the separation between God and man under the Old Covenant.

The veil itself was thick and heavily constructed, designed to restrict access into the presence of God. Under the Law, only the high priest could enter the Holy of Holies, and only once a year,

not without blood (Hebrews 9:7, 9:22). This system emphasized both the holiness of God and the inability of man to approach Him on his own terms.

The tearing of the veil at the moment of Jesus' death was not a human act—it was torn “from top to bottom,” indicating that it was an act of God. It signified that through the sacrifice of Jesus, the barrier between God and man had been removed.

In Christ, access to God is no longer restricted by ritual or distance. The separation has been dealt with through the blood of Jesus, and those who turn to the Lord now enter into direct relationship with Him. The removal of the veil is both a spiritual reality and a fulfillment of what the physical temple veil symbolized.

2 Corinthians 3:17-Now the Lord is the Spirit; and where the Spirit of the Lord is, there is liberty.

There is now liberty and freedom to enter into God's presence because of Jesus. We can boldly come to the throne of grace and find help in our time of need (Hebrews 4:16). We now have access to the Father through one Spirit (Ephesians 2:18) and can approach Him with freedom and confidence (Ephesians 3:12).

Why is this possible? Because the barrier that once stood between God and man was sin (Isaiah 59:2). But Jesus dealt with sin completely. He Himself became the atoning sacrifice for our sins (1 John 2:2) Jesus' finished work, there is no longer a barrier for those who are in Him. Access to God is through the person of Jesus Christ alone.

It is for this reason that we are warned not to return to a system that places us back under external mediation or repeated religious works as a means of approaching God.

Paul is clear that if righteousness could come through the Law, then Christ's death would not have been necessary (Galatians 2:21). The cross is not an addition to religious effort—it is the complete foundation of our access to God.

2 Corinthians 3:18- But we all, with unveiled face, beholding as in a mirror the glory of the Lord, are being transformed into the same image from glory to glory, just as by the Spirit of the Lord.

There is no veil for the believer. Under the Old Testament, the mysteries concerning Christ were hidden (1 Corinthians 2:8–9). God spoke through the prophets, who understood only a portion of what was to come. They faithfully proclaimed what God revealed to them, but they did not see the full picture of His redemptive plan.

Now, however, Jesus has come and has given us understanding. Hebrews 1:1 says that God, who at various times and in different ways spoke in times past to the fathers by the prophets, has now spoken to us by His Son. Through Christ, the mystery that was once hidden has been revealed.

First John 5:20 declares, "And we know that the Son of God has come and has given us an understanding, that we may know Him who is true." Because of Christ, the veil has been removed for those who believe. We are no longer looking at the promises from a distance but have received the revelation of God's plan fulfilled in Jesus. What was once concealed has now been made known, and every believer has access to the knowledge of God through His Son.