

II CORINTHIANS 3:1-18

INTRODUCTION...

- **OVERVIEW ...**
 - Paul had 2 main purposes in writing his epistle to the church....
 - 1st - To express his joy at how they had obeyed the first epistle to them...
 - 2nd - In defense against the false teachers flooding into Corinth...
- **I CORINTHIANS 1:1-2:16 - PAUL'S JOY AT THE REPENTANCE OF THE CHURCH...**
 - An Apostle of Jesus - Paul established his authority over the church...
 - Greeted the saints - with a message of comfort and deliverance...
 - The purpose of Paul's letter - not to give rules / but to impart grace / point to Jesus
 - A change in plans - Paul did not come when he said he would to spare the church
 - Working together in Christ - Paul just wanted to encourage the church in their walk!
 - The Sorrowful letter - in tears Paul had written to the church - as a Father to a child...
 - Concerning the man in **I Corinthians 5** - he repented so receive him back...
 - Just as Paul now received back the church because they had repented!
 - Fragrance of Christ - the Victory Parade of Jesus - he conquered sin and death!
 - To those who are saved we carry with us the fragrance of life...
 - To those who are perishing - we carry with us the fragrance of death!

LIFE IN THE SPIRIT... (3 THINGS)

- **1ST - LIVING EPISTLES... VS. 1-5**
 - Paul asks the church if they thought he needed 'letters of recommendation'... vs. 1
 - There were many false teachers who had come into the church of Corinth...
 - They were men who wanted to bring the church under the bondage of the Law...
 - Almost immediately they began to bring into question the reputation of Paul...
 - Was he really a Godly teacher - was he really an Apostle - did he have authority...
 - Paul was not one to boast - he did not like to 'toot his own horn'...
 - So he asks the church if they needed a letter to verify Paul's authority...
 - Like a reference letter when you are applying for a new job...
 - A piece of paper validating your character / your qualifications...
 - A letter from the leaders of the church in Jerusalem - man's recommendation
 - Men tend to look for the diploma on the wall - the letter from 'important' people...
 - But the proof of the calling of God is not in the commendation of men...
 - I know a lot of men who have the 'pastoral degree' - who are not pastors...
 - And I know a lot of men who have no degree - no diplomas - who are pastors!
 - The calling of God - is shown through the work of God through someone's life!
 - Paul does the church one better - they were his letter of commendation... vs. 2-3
 - Not a letter written in ink - or on stone - but a letter written on the heart...
 - The proof of Paul's apostleship was that there was a church in Corinth!
 - The fact there was a church should have removed any doubt...

- The whole world could see the work God had done through the Apostle Paul...
- It is not very difficult to figure out what purpose/calling God has on your life...
- All we really need to do is look at how God is using us - where is the fruit...
- If you are called to kids - you will enjoy and be good with them...
- If you are called to be a teacher - then you will enjoy and be good at teaching...
- It will not just be you who recognize the calling - it will be obvious to everyone!
- We are living epistles - the only Bible someone may ever read...
 - I was on a missions trip to Kazakhstan - I had a muslim roommate...
 - His 1st words to me were - 'I don't want to hear about your God' - wasted trip...
 - God told me to let him see Jesus in me - be his Bible - **II Corinthians 3:3**
 - 4 weeks later he opened the conversation - accepted Jesus as his savior!
 - Many people will not take the time to read their Bible - but they do read you...
 - Your life / your example - has the power to show them the Gospel of Jesus...
- o Not that it was about Paul... vs. 4-5
 - Paul recognized that it had nothing to do with Him - it was all about Jesus...
 - Many people make the mistake of thinking they are 'something special'...
 - We like - the world would try and teach us - it is all about 'me'!
 - In truth it has nothing to do with us at all - we are just clay pots - **II Corinthians 4:7**
 - A clay pot has not intrinsic value - it all about what is inside the pot...
 - If we are full of ourselves - we are not going to be a good epistle for others to read...
 - If we are full of Jesus - then we are going to be an incredible witness for God...
 - So then how do we be fill up with Jesus - how can we be living Bibles!
- 2ND - LIVING BY THE SPIRIT - NOT THE LAW... vs. 6-11
 - o Ministers of the New Covenant... vs. 6
 - Paul did not go out to teach the letter of the Law - the Old Covenant...
 - Paul draws a contrast between himself and the 'false ministers'...
 - o The only thing that comes from the Law is death...
 - o On the day the God's Law was given - 3000 people died Law - **Exodus 32:28**
 - Not that the Law is the problem - we are the problem - we can't keep the Law...
 - o Like a measuring tape - it can tell us how tall you are - but can't make us taller
 - o The Law points out to us all our failures - showed us all our flaws...
 - o The problem is it does nothing / can do nothing - to help us change...
 - o There is only the ability to show us what we do is wrong - not to make it right...
 - o I could tell you all day long to read your Bible - go to church - be 'good'...
 - o You might even ascent that what I am saying is true - they 'Laws' were good...
 - o But no matter how many 'laws' I gave - I could not make you follow them...
 - o It all comes down to the heart - you are going to do what you want to!
 - The Law only stirs in us the desire for sin - sin that leads to judgment/death...
 - o Have you ever seen a sign that says 'wet paint' - and felt the need to touch it...
 - o Why is it the only toy a child wants - is the one they do not have...
 - o Why is it the moment we are given a 'rule' / 'law' we want to disobey it...
 - o Because we are sinners - and the Law 'stirs' up our sinful desires...

- o Those sins inevitably lead to death – physical death / spiritual death!
- Paul came preaching the New Covenant of the Spirit...
 - Jesus - set us free from the Law - so we can live by the Spirit...
 - On the day of Pentecost – the Holy Spirit was given – 3000 people were saved
 - The giving of the Law brought death – but the giving of the Spirit brought life
 - We were set free from the Law – so we could bear the fruit of the Spirit....
 - Only though the power of the Spirit – can we have a change our heart!
 - Jesus changes our desires so we don't want to do the things that are wrong...
 - Instead we want to do those things that please the Lord - a living epistle!
- o The fading glory of the Law... vs. 7
 - If the ministry of death written on stones (*speaking of the Law*) was glorious...
 - The Law was glorious - God appearing on Mt. Sinai to give Israel His Laws...
 - Engraving the 10 commandments on stone and giving them to Moses...
 - When he came down - his face glowed - from the presence of the Lord - **Exodus 34**
 - When the people of Israel saw it - they were afraid to come near him...
 - Moses put a veil over his face - until he went back into the tent to speak with God...
 - The reason for the veil - so the people could not see the glow fade away!
 - Moses face only 'glowed' for a short time - then it faded away...
 - The law can only change things for a time – it can only change the outside...
 - It can make you look good for a time - in the end it does not change who you are!
 - * **Colossians 2:21-23** - "Don't handle, don't eat, don't touch. Such rules are mere human teaching about things that are gone as soon as we use them. These rules may seem wise because they require strong devotion, humility, and severe bodily discipline. But they have no effect when it comes to conquering a person's evil thoughts & desires."
 - If we try and follow the Law it may change us for a while - but it does not last....
 - We end up with a list of rules - that we are only able to keep some of the time...
- o The everlasting glory of the Spirit... vs. 8-11
 - If the Law - which could only condemn us - was glorious - how much more the Spirit...
 - The Spirit which can make us right with God - perfect us in Jesus Christ!
 - The New Covenant that came to replace the Old - **Hebrews 10:9**
 - In fact the Law pales in comparisons to the overwhelming glory of the Spirit!
 - A flashlight might look bright - till you bring it out into the light of the Sun...
 - In the same way the Law might seem good - until it comes into the light of Christ!
 - Only Jesus can bring lasting change - a transformed heart and new life...
 - As we look to Jesus - we are changed from the inside out!
 - Then we have the 'glow' of the joy of the Lord radiating out from us!
- **3RD - BEING BOLD FOR CHRIST... vs. 12-17**
 - o Because we have this New Covenant - we can be VERY bold... vs. 12
 - In contrast to those who taught the Law - they should be ashamed...
 - If we were stuck to teaching the Law - we would not have much confidence...
 - How excited would you be to tell someone they had to keep 613 Laws...

- Every time you sin - you have to go down to the Temple and offer an animal...
- You cannot eat pig / shrimp / blood - have are not allowed to work on Saturday...
- And only if you kept these rules perfectly would God accept you...
- That's not good news - that's a heavy burden/weight to carry around...
- I am not sure I would want to tell anyone - they would hate me for it!
- But we have a better/ more glorious message to share - the Gospel...
 - We don not have go to tell others what they have to do to get to heaven...
 - We get to go and tell them what God did for them - the Good News...
 - That should make us VERY bold to share - we have the answer everyone needs...
 - **Romans 1:16** - "For I am not ashamed of the gospel of Christ, for it is the power of God to salvation for everyone who believes..."
- o Do not be like Israel... vs. 13-16
 - Israel did not want to see Moses face - because they did not want to understand...
 - The Law was not the answer - they did not want to see the fading glory...
 - Even to this day when a Jew reads the Bible - a veil covers their eyes...
 - That is why they cannot understand the truth - that the Law cannot save you!
 - Those who think they can get to heaven by their own works - keeping the Law...
 - They put a veil over their eyes so they cannot understand the Word...
 - The only way that veil is taken away from their eyes - is when they believe in Jesus!
- o The Spirit brings freedom... vs. 17-18
 - We have been set free to worship God - set free by the Law of the Spirit...
 - According to the Law - we could not go beyond the veil into the presence of God...
 - The Temple was divided into 4 – Outer Court/Inner Court/Holiest/Holiest of All...
 - The Outer court was for the Gentiles – those who did not believe – look from afar...
 - The Inner court had the altar of sacrifice – closer to God – but still far...
 - The Holiest was the 1st room inside the Temple – only the priest were allowed...
 - The Holiest of all was the inner room – Ark of the Covenant – presence of God...
 - The Veil separated the Holiest – from the Holiest of All...
 - Only the High priest could enter there – only once a year – the Day of Atonement...
 - Bells on his robe / rope on his feet – if he made any mistake – he was dead...
 - God did this to show that the way into God's presence was closed – **Hebrews 9:8**
 - The Veil was not a small curtain – 60' x 30' x 4" – weighed an incredible 4 tons!
 - We have had the veil removed - we can see Jesus face to face...
 - When Jesus died – God tore open the veil that separated man from God!
 - No longer is the way to God closed – it was opened up through the Cross!
 - **Hebrews 4:16** – "Let us therefore come boldly to the throne of grace, that we may obtain mercy and find grace to help in time of need."
 - The Holiest of all – is now our family room – where we can boldly enter...
 - Coming to our Father for mercy and Grace whenever we need it!
 - No longer bound to the Law - but free in the Spirit to be a Living Epistle!