



Coptic Orthodox Diocese of the Southern United States

The Second Epistle of St. Paul to the Corinthians

Chapter 3

Bishop Youssef





Introduction

- Having just begun vindicating his ministry as an apostle, St. Paul reminds the Corinthians that he needs no letter of accreditation, for they are his epistles of commendation
- Through his ministry, he had written upon their hearts with the Spirit of the living God, so they themselves have become an epistle of Christ (1-3)
- He knows that it is God who has made him sufficient as a minister of the new covenant (4-6)



Introduction

- St. Paul contrasts the new covenant with the old covenant, to illustrate the glory of his ministry
- He equates the glory of the old covenant with the glory on Moses' face that was temporary (Exodus 34:29-35)
- If the old covenant (of death and condemnation), had glory, then how much more glorious is the new covenant (of the Spirit and of righteousness) which is not passing away (7-11)!



Introduction

- Those who listen only to the Old Testament still have a veil on their hearts (12-15)
- But when we turn to the Lord, the veil is taken away and there is liberty
- Also, by beholding the glory of the Lord with unveiled face we are being transformed into the same glorious image by the Spirit of the Lord (16-18)



Jesus Christ's Epistle (3:1-3)

- St. Paul had just spoken of his triumphs. Opponents, such as were in Corinth, might insist that he was boasting
- No doubt there is a reference made to recommendation letters which the Judaizing teachers, who had come to Corinth, carried
- The church itself owed its existence to him
- He could point to his work, as his letter of commendation. He was known by his fruits



Jesus Christ's Epistle (3:1-3)

- When he looked into his heart, he saw them enshrined there, and felt that he needed no commendation to them
- Christ is the author of the letter
- St. Paul was the penman
- The message was written on the fleshly tablets of the hearts of the brethren at Corinth
- The means employed by Christ to convey the message was the Spirit which filled St. Paul



Jesus Christ's Epistle (3:1-3)

- All men who could see the transformation effected in the lives of the Corinthians could read the epistle
- Instead of naming parchment, he mentions tables of stone, because he is about to compare the Old Covenant, of which its chief part, the Decalogue, was written on stone, with the New Covenant (Ex 24:12)

The Spirit, Not the Letter (3:4-6)



- We have trust that our sufficiency as ministers of the New Testament, is through Christ, not through ourselves. All his strength was of God
- Toward God: in our relation to God and His work, the ministry committed by Him to us, for which we must render an account to Him
- The New Covenant, the Covenant of Christ. This is here contrasted with the Old Covenant, the Jewish. One is the Law; the other the Gospel

The Spirit, Not the Letter (3:4-6)



- The first, the law, was written (by letters written and engraved on stones, hence of the letter); the gospel is the dispensation of the Spirit
- The letter kills. The law condemns all who do not obey its commands, but could make no man perfect
- The law places under the sentence of death
- The gospel bestows eternal life

Glory of the New Covenant (3:7-18)



- The Old Covenant is called ministry of death, because it places under the sentence of death
- Only the Decalogue was written on stones. It was the central part of the Old Covenant
- The face of Moses was made to shine so that he had to veil his face (Ex 34:29)
- This glory was only temporary
- The gospel, the ministry of life, must have still greater glory

Glory of the New Covenant (3:7-18)



- It has a glory now, and will have a fuller glory in the day of the Lord
- The first condemns; the second justifies men with the righteousness of Christ
- With such transcendent blessings, it far exceeds in glory the Old Covenant
- For even that which was made glorious: The Old Covenant

Glory of the New Covenant (3:7-18)



- As the glory of the moon fades out before the glory of the sun, so its glory disappears before with the exceeding glory of the gospel
- If the Old Covenant which is passing away was glorious, how much more glorious is the New Covenant which abides forever
- Hope: of future glory (the blessed gospel hope)
- With such a hope he has boldness to declare the gospel truth boldly and without reserve

Glory of the New Covenant (3:7-18)



- The veil Moses put over his face (Ex 34:33) is used by St. Paul as a symbol to show that all was not made plain in the law of Moses, and that there is still blindness on the part of Israel
- The brightness with which the face of Moses shone (Ex 34:30, 35) was to be done away
- The whole law tended to, and terminated in Christ but the Israelites had only a dim sight of Him, of whom Moses spoke in an obscure, covert manner

Glory of the New Covenant (3:7-18)



- St. Paul here (2 Cor 3:13) passes from the literal fact to the truth symbolized by it, the blindness of Jews and Judaizers to the ultimate end of the law
- Stating that Moses put on the veil that they might not look steadfastly at (Christ, Rom 10:4) the end of that (law) which (like Moses' glory) is done away
- Not that Moses had this purpose; but because the Jews would not see, God justly gave them up so as not to see

Glory of the New Covenant (3:7-18)



- The veil which has been taken off to the believer is left on to the unbelieving Jew, so that he should not see (Isa 6:10; Ac 28:26, 27)
- He stops short at the letter of the law, not seeing the end of it
- The glory of the law, like the shining of Moses' face, cannot be borne by a carnal people, and therefore remains veiled to them until the Spirit comes to take away the veil (2Co 3:14-17)

Glory of the New Covenant (3:7-18)



- They are so blinded that they cannot see to this day that it has been set aside by the New Covenant, and that its types, figures and shadows find their fulfillment in Christ
- The veil is taken away in Christ: from the heart of them that truly believe on Him
- When the law is read in their synagogues, they do not understand it
- They are blinded by their prejudices

Glory of the New Covenant (3:7-18)



- When the heart turns to the Lord, then the veil of blindness will fall away so they will see clearly
- The New Covenant is of the Spirit and turning to the Lord is entering into this covenant, for the Lord is that Spirit
- Where the Spirit of the Lord is: in a man's "heart"
- Such cease to be slaves to the letter, which they were while the veil was on their heart
- They are free to serve God in the Spirit

Glory of the New Covenant (3:7-18)



- They have no longer the spirit of bondage, but of free sonship (Ro 8:15; Gal 4:7)
- "Liberty" is opposed to the letter (of the legal ordinances), and to the veil, the badge of slavery: also to the fear which the Israelites felt in beholding Moses' glory unveiled
- But we all: All Christians
- Mirror: the Gospel which reflects the glory of God and Christ

Glory of the New Covenant (3:7-18)



- To look to the glory of the Lord Jesus has a transforming power, we will become like him
- As Moses unveiled before the Lord shone with the glory of the Lord, so we shall reflect the glory of Christ, and show forth his likeness
- The person will grow from one stage of glory to a higher one
- Our glory is from the Lord the Spirit



Conclusion

- Who was St. Paul's "epistle of commendation"?
- What instrument had St. Paul used to make the Corinthians an "epistle of Christ"? And upon what had he written?
- Who made St. Paul sufficient as a minister?
- Of what is the new covenant? And what does it give?
- How is the old and new covenant described in verses 7-11?
- What happens when one turns to the Lord?
- What does one find in turning to the Lord?
- What happens when we behold the Lord's glory with unveiled face?