

BLESSINGS OF THE GOSPEL

BIBLE TEXT : II Corinthians 3:1-18; 4:1-16.

LESSON 395 Senior Course

MEMORY VERSE: "What hast thou that thou didst not receive? now if thou didst receive it, why dost thou glory, as if thou hadst not received it?" (I Corinthians 4:7).

BIBLE TEXT in King James Version

2 Corinthians 3:1-18

1 Do we begin again to commend ourselves? or need we, as some *others*, epistles of commendation to you, or *letters* of commendation from you?

2 Ye are our epistle written in our hearts, known and read of all men:

3 *Forasmuch as ye are* manifestly declared to be the epistle of Christ ministered by us, written not with ink, but with the Spirit of the living God; not in tables of stone, but in fleshy tables of the heart.

4 And such trust have we through Christ to God-ward:

5 Not that we are sufficient of ourselves to think any thing as of ourselves; but our sufficiency *is* of God;

6 Who also hath made us able ministers of the new testament; not of the letter, but of the spirit: for the letter killeth, but the spirit giveth life.

7 But if the ministration of death, written *and* engraven in stones, was glorious, so that the children of Israel could not stedfastly behold the face of Moses for the glory of his countenance; which *glory* was to be done away:

8 How shall not the ministration of the spirit be rather glorious?

9 For if the ministration of condemnation *be* glory, much more doth the ministration of righteousness exceed in glory.

10 For even that which was made glorious had no glory in this respect, by reason of the glory that excelleth.

11 For if that which is done away

Bible References:

I Living Epistles

1. The Apostle has no need of letters of commendation, II Corinthians 3:1-3;

Acts 18:27

27 And when he was disposed to pass into Achaia, the brethren wrote, exhorting the disciples to receive him: who, when he was come, helped them much which had believed through grace:

2. God gives the wisdom and strength to declare the Gospel, II Corinthians 3:4-6;

1 Corinthians 3:10

10 According to the grace of God which is given unto me, as a wise masterbuilder, I have laid the foundation, and another buildeth thereon. But let every man take heed how he buildeth thereupon.

1 Corinthians 15:10

10 But by the grace of God I am what I am: and his grace which *was bestowed* upon me was not in vain; but I laboured more abundantly than they all: yet not I, but the grace of God which was with me.

II Spiritual Ministry

1. The ministry of the Law was glorious, but the New Dispensation is completely superior, II Corinthians 3:7-11.

2. Plainness of speech is the order of the Gospel, II Corinthians 3:12-14;

Galatians 4:16

16 Am I therefore become your enemy, because I tell you the truth?

3. The veil of the old dispensation is removed in Christ, II Corinthians 3:15, 16.

4. Spiritual vision in Christ produces a change, II Corinthians 3:17, 18;

Proverbs 4:18

18 But the path of the just *is* as the shining light, that shineth more and more unto the perfect day.

James 1:25

25 But whoso looketh into the perfect law of liberty, and continueth *therein*, he being not a forgetful hearer, but a doer of the work, this man shall be blessed in his deed.

III Preaching Christ

1. Truthfulness is the watchword of Christ's true ministers, II Corinthians 4:1, 2;

John 4:23

23 But the hour cometh, and now is, when the true worshippers shall worship the Father in spirit and in truth: for the Father seeketh such to worship him.

Ephesians 6:14

14 Stand therefore, having your loins girt about with truth, and having on the breastplate of righteousness;

2. Not all men are saved, but all have an equal opportunity, II Corinthians 4:3, 4;

Matthew 7:13-14

13 Enter ye in at the strait gate: for wide *is* the gate, and broad *is* the way, that leadeth to destruction, and many there be which go in thereat:

14 Because strait *is* the gate, and narrow *is* the way, which

was glorious, much more that which remaineth *is* glorious.

12 Seeing then that we have such hope, we use great plainness of speech:

13 And not as Moses, *which* put a veil over his face, that the children of Israel could not stedfastly look to the end of that which is abolished:

14 But their minds were blinded: for until this day remaineth the same veil untaken away in the reading of the old testament; which *vail* is done away in Christ.

15 But even unto this day, when Moses is read, the veil is upon their heart.

16 Nevertheless when it shall turn to the Lord, the veil shall be taken away.

17 Now the Lord is that Spirit: and where the Spirit of the Lord *is*, there *is* liberty.

18 But we all, with open face beholding as in a glass the glory of the Lord, are changed into the same image from glory to glory, *even* as by the Spirit of the Lord.

2 Corinthians 4:1-16

1 Therefore seeing we have this ministry, as we have received mercy, we faint not;

2 But have renounced the hidden things of dishonesty, not walking in craftiness, nor handling the word of God deceitfully; but by manifestation of the truth commending ourselves to every man's conscience in the sight of God.

3 But if our gospel be hid, it is hid to them that are lost:

4 In whom the god of this world hath blinded the minds of them which believe not, lest the light of the glorious gospel of Christ, who is the image of God, should shine unto them.

5 For we preach not ourselves, but Christ Jesus the Lord; and

leadeth unto life, and few there be that find it.

Acts 10:34

³⁴ Then Peter opened *his* mouth, and said, Of a truth I perceive that God is no respecter of persons:

Acts 10:35

³⁵ But in every nation he that feareth him, and worketh righteousness, is accepted with him.

3. Jesus Christ is the theme of Gospel preaching, II Corinthians 4:5-7.

4. Preaching Christ brings persecution, but not destruction, II Corinthians 4:8-10.

5. The early Christian ministers laboured, never knowing when martyrdom might be their lot, II Corinthians 4:11, 12.

6. Resurrection faith in Christ always brings triumph, II Corinthians 4:13-16;

2 Corinthians 2:14

¹⁴ Now thanks *be* unto God, which always causeth us to triumph in Christ, and maketh manifest the savour of his knowledge by us in every place.

Notes:

Several of the New Testament ministers had been sent out with letters recommending their integrity to the people to whom they were sent. As can be seen in this lesson, the convenience soon became a necessity, to a few, at least, in the Corinthian church. It seems they chided the Apostle for his lack of these letters; but the truth is beautifully brought forth that a man's consistent Christian life means more than anything else. A true minister's preaching of Christ will result in transformation of lives through Christ that will produce more eloquent testimony than most written epistles. "Ye are our epistle written in our hearts, known and read of all men."

Today's Ministers

The ministers of the old dispensation had to have lineal proof of their belonging to the family of Aaron or Levi before they could minister in the things of the Tabernacle. God's ministers today are called from the rank and file of Christianity. One need not come from a special family or group, but one needs to answer the call of God and have God's Spirit in the greatest possible measure in his heart and life. God will help such a one to go forth, bearing the precious seed of the Word, and Gospel results will be produced in the lives of men. All the letters of commendation in the world will not avail to save a soul, and no souls will be saved if God does not supply the grace and help.

The Apostle well knew this truth. "Not that we are sufficient of ourselves to think any thing as of ourselves; but our sufficiency is of God." The blessings of the Gospel provide this sufficiency for each saved member of Christ's Church. Becoming living epistles, each member can allow himself to be used of Christ to the salvation of other souls. Being faithful in little things brings greater duties and responsibilities until there is no limit to what the faithful man or woman may do for Christ.

Old and New

Many of the Israelites could not tolerate the thought of departing from the Law; however, in this lesson the Spirit brings forth many reasons why the old dispensation gave way to the new dispensation. Though the old was glorious, yet it was the ministration of death. "Do or die" became the edict; and without faith in God it was impossible to live up to the Law. Under the Gospel the edict is, "Look and live." Faith in God is still exercised, but the fear of death is removed because the sting of death, sin, is taken out of the heart through salvation. The

ourselves your servants for Jesus' sake.

6 For God, who commanded the light to shine out of darkness, hath shined in our hearts, to *give* the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ.

7 But we have this treasure in earthen vessels, that the excellency of the power may be of God, and not of us.

8 *We are* troubled on every side, yet not distressed; *we are* perplexed, but not in despair;

9 Persecuted, but not forsaken; cast down, but not destroyed;

10 Always bearing about in the body the dying of the Lord Jesus, that the life also of Jesus might be made manifest in our body.

11 For we which live are always delivered unto death for Jesus' sake, that the life also of Jesus might be made manifest in our mortal flesh.

12 So then death worketh in us, but life in you.

13 We having the same spirit of faith, according as it is written, I believed, and therefore have I spoken; we also believe, and therefore speak;

14 Knowing that he which raised up the Lord Jesus shall raise up us also by Jesus, and shall present *us* with you.

15 For all things *are* for your sakes, that the abundant grace might through the thanksgiving of many redound to the glory of God.

16 For which cause we faint not; but though our outward man perish, yet the inward *man* is renewed day by day.

Gospel plants the lively hope of the resurrection in the heart. Men who all their lifetime have been in bondage to the fear of death, suddenly find themselves liberated. Why should the saved man fear death, when death is the chariot by which he travels to Heaven?

God's Writing

The Law was written by the finger of God on tables of stone. The Gospel is written by the Lord in the fleshy tables of the heart. There must be a desire on man's part to have the Lord write His Word in the heart, and how surely the Lord does it. Many newly converted people have testified that in time of need the Lord gave them a Scripture passage, then later they found the passage in the Bible. However, as time and opportunity afford, we should take every advantage to study God's Word. The blessed (or happy) man is the one whose "delight is in the law of the LORD; and in his law doeth he meditate day and night" (Psalm 1:2).

The skin of Moses' face was shining when he returned from God after receiving the tables of stone. Mighty men of God appeared from time to time under the old dispensation, but too often godliness in the hearts of many of the people was at a low ebb. Under the Gospel dispensation the Lord has designed that each Christian should be a bright and shining light. Jesus is the Light of the world, the true Light, "which lighteth every man that cometh into the world" (John 1:9). Jesus said of His disciples: "Ye are the light of the world. A city that is set on an hill cannot be hid" (Matthew 5:14). Gospel blessings provide sufficient grace for the whosoever will; "That ye may be blameless and harmless, the sons of God, without rebuke, in the midst of a crooked and perverse nation, among whom ye shine as lights in the world" (Philippians 2:15).

Unveiled

The Children of Israel were afraid to come near Moses when the skin of his face was shining. That the people might come near and listen to the commandments of God, Moses put a veil over his face; but the Scriptures tell us that the veil was not done away with the death of Moses. The reading of the Old Testament became veiled; the minds of the people were blinded. Jesus Christ has removed that veil for all who believe the Gospel. The experiences of men have proved this truth. Many have tried to read and understand the Old Testament and Law before they were saved, but they found it was a closed Book to them. When Jesus comes and brings salvation, men find that the Spirit opens their hearts and gives them an understanding of the Old Testament as well as of the New Testament. Why is this? Jesus is the fulfilment of the types and shadows of the Old Testament. The promises of the Old became the realities of the New.

As the light of the moon and stars is not needed during the full light of the sun, so the light of the Law, however glorious and needed in its time, is not very noticeable under the brilliant light of the Gospel. The Law was the schoolmaster to bring men to Christ, and Jesus is the great Teacher who shows the way to eternal life. Jesus gives enabling grace to follow Him, "the way, the truth, and the life." All may be "more than conquerors through him that loved us" (Romans 8:37).

Liberty

"Stand fast therefore in the liberty wherewith Christ hath made us free, and be not entangled again with the yoke of bondage" (Galatians 5:1). Bondage? Yes, for it is written: "Cursed is every one that continueth not in all things which are written in the book

of the law to do them" (Galatians 3:10). Under the old dispensation men were bound to the Law, but they longed for deliverance. (**Romans 7:22-24** ²² For I delight in the law of God after the inward man: ²³ But I see another law in my members, warring against the law of my mind, and bringing me into captivity to the law of sin which is in my members. ²⁴ O wretched man that I am! who shall deliver me from the body of this death?) The Gospel of the Lord Jesus Christ has brought this deliverance. Deliverance from Judaistic bondage, deliverance from the bondage of sin, deliverance from the fear of death by the removal of sin, all are made possible by the liberty that comes through Christ. When men believe, obey, and love the Saviour, immediately they are made partakers of the great Gospel blessings. It is not difficult to determine that the Gospel is much better than the Law and all its ceremonies.

The Christian life should not be a shallow life. Ample provision is made in the Lord's Gospel for the deep spiritual life. As with open face (unveiled heart) one earnestly views the glory of the Lord, he is changed into the same image of the Lord, from glory to glory. This is what the Lord does for His people, making them more and more like Him.

Hidden Gospel?

In spite of the diligent, unfainting efforts of God's true ministers of the Gospel, in spite of the faithfulness of God and His unwillingness that any should perish, not all people will be saved. How can this be true? God enlightens every man who comes into the world. The true Light has come into the world, but men love darkness rather than light, because their deeds are evil. Living in darkness and filled with evil deeds, men are easy prey to the devil who blinds the minds of them who believe not, lest the light of the glorious Gospel should shine unto them. "If our gospel be hid, it is hid to them that are lost."

Aluminium is the most abundant metallic element found in the earth, yet one must mine it and process it to gain the benefit of it. So with the Gospel: if one desires to possess it he must seek for it, then live by its precepts in order to gain the full blessings of the Gospel. No, the Gospel is not hidden to anyone who really desires to find it.

Triumph

God's people are not always travelling the smoothest road, but travelling with Christ always produces blessings. The Apostle admitted suffering, yet he was able always to end with a triumphant note. One great confidence of utmost value dwells in the heart of the true Christian: the hope of the resurrection. Regardless of what might happen to these mortal bodies, all will be well in the resurrection when mortality gives place to immortality. "For which cause we faint not; but though our outward man perish, yet the inward man is renewed day by day."

QUESTIONS

1. Why did not the Apostle need letter of commendation?
2. Upon what substance were the Ten Commandments written?
3. Upon what substance is the Gospel written?
4. Why did Moses put a veil on his face? How is this similitude used to describe the reading of the Law of Moses?
5. In what way is it possible for the Old Testament to become an open Book?
6. If the Gospel be hid, to whom is it hid? Why?
7. What should be the theme of Christian preaching?
8. What place does the hope of the resurrection have in a Christian's heart?