

II Corinthians

Chapter 3:1-18

¹Are we beginning to commend ourselves again? Or do we need, as some, letters of commendation to you or from you?

Utley > The emphasis of this chapter is very similar to the emphasis of the Book of Hebrews. It is a comparison between the Old Covenant and the New Covenant. How are sinful humans made right with God?

1. performance of the Mosaic Law ... or ...
2. Faith in the atoning work of God in Christ?

This comparison is used by Paul to defend his gospel and himself against the Jewish-oriented false teachers who have arrived in Corinth.

Beginning > (Strong's) A primary verb; to be first (in political rank or power)

Commend > (Strong's) (sunistemi/sunistao from *sún* = together with + *hístemi* = set, place, stand) means literally to place one with another, to place or put together. To set in the same place, this literal meaning being found in Luke 9:32. To bring together. When one brings together a person with another person, it is a way of presenting or introducing them. This gives *sunistemi* the meaning of *commend*, which means to recommend as worthy of confidence

Beginning to commend ourselves again > (Precept Austin) In this section Paul is picking up on an earlier testimony he had given in this letter which apparently was being distorted by his opponents as an example of Paul's arrogant self-commendation...

Or ... as some > (Pulpit Commentary) *e me...os tines* > The *me* in the reading *e me* implies, "Can you possibly think that we need," etc.?

Utley > The grammatical form of both questions in 2 Cor. 3:1 expects a "no" answer. It is hard to know if Paul is being sarcastic or heart broken.

Letters of commendation > What might the writer of the letter say about the individual being recommended? Paul concludes (in vs. 2 and 3) that no written letter is needed as the actual results of their ministry is found in the Corinthians themselves

²You are our letter, written in our hearts, known and read by all men; ³being manifested that you are a letter of Christ, cared for by us, written not with ink but with the Spirit of the living God, not on tablets of stone but on tablets of human hearts.

Read > (Strong's) *anaginosko* > *ana* > *again* and *ginosko* > *to know* ... to know certainly, know again, read

Precept Austin > It came to mean to distinguish between, to know accurately and then to read. In the NT *anaginosko* is only used with the meaning of to read, especially referring to reading aloud and to public reading ... In the present context the use is clearly in a figurative sense of others "*reading*" the lives of the Corinthian saints as one would read a written letter.

(Remember who he is talking to ... a church where a number of folks had changed from their former ways.)

Spurgeon gave a message on this passage (vss. 1-3) and states > "The accessories must be provided, however, for a letter to be written, and let us briefly notice these, — **pen, ink, and paper.**" In excerpts from that sermon he writes:

- 1) "In the third verse we have the **pen**: '*Forasmuch as ye are declared to be the epistle of Christ ministered by us.*' ... But these good men were only ministers by whom they had believed, — the pens whereby God, through His Spirit, had written upon the fleshy tables of their hearts."
- 2) "Then there must be the **ink**: The sacred fluid is the Spirit of God. '*Written not with ink, but with the Spirit of the living God.*'"
- 3) "The next requisite is the **paper**: It is not written upon stone, but '*in fleshy tables of the heart.*'"

Manifested > (Strong's) to make visible, make clear

Precept Austin > *phaneroo* > *being manifested* (disclosed, revealed))

- From *phanerós* = manifest, visible, conspicuous
- From *phaino* = give light; become visible
- From *phos* = light
- Therefore is, literally, "to bring to light" and primarily means "to make visible" or to cause to become visible.

Cared for > (Strong's) *diakoneo* > to serve, minister

⁴Such confidence we have through Christ toward God. ⁵Not that we are adequate in ourselves to consider anything as coming from ourselves, but our adequacy is from God, ⁶who also made us adequate as servants of a new covenant, not of the letter but of the Spirit; for the letter kills, but the Spirit gives life.

Confidence > (Constable) Paul did not want his readers to confuse this "Spirit"-inspired confidence with the fleshly human confidence that comes from feeling adequate or self-sufficient. Our service is actually God working through us, rather than our serving Him.

Not > (Precept Austin) *Not (ou)* signifies absolute negation. Not even a small percent of our adequacy in the supernatural realm comes from ourselves!

Adequate ... adequacy ... adequate > (Strong's) sufficient, fit (although the three words are different in the Greek ... all three have the same source word)

Consider > (MacArthur) So little trust did Paul place in his human abilities that he made the remarkable confession that he was unwilling to consider anything as coming from himself. Consider is from *logizomai*, which means "to reason," "to calculate," or "to credit to one's account." Apart from God's power and wisdom, Paul was not adequate to rightly assess or judge his ministry.

Precept Austin > *Logizomai* is related to our English term *logic* which deals with the methods of valid thinking, reveals how to draw proper conclusions from premises and is a prerequisite of all thought.

But > (Precept Austin) *But (alla)* introduces a distinct contrast

From God > (Precept Austin) Literally "out of" God

Made us adequate > (Precept Austin) The *aorist tense* signifies effective action at a point in time, past completed action ~ the act of making them fit or qualified

Servants > (Strong's) *diakonos* > a servant, minister

For the letter kills > (Precept Austin) Have you ever found what a law, a demand, does to you? Have you ever realized how it hits you? I was talking with a young man just a week ago who told me about an experience he had. He got up one morning and was thinking about his dad, how much he meant to him, how he loved him, and how aware he was suddenly, that morning, of all the things his dad had done for him. His heart was filled with a sense of gratitude, so he determined that after breakfast he would go out, without his dad having to say anything, and, out of the sheer delight of pleasing him, mow the lawn and wash the car. So he came down to breakfast, and just as he was about to leave the table, his dad said to him, "Son, before I get back today I would like to have you mow the lawn and wash the car. I really want you to do this. I don't want to come back this evening and find that you haven't done it." Then he left for work. This young man said, "It changed the whole picture. It just turned off all the incentive and motivation in my heart. I did it, but I had no further delight in it."

⁷**But if** the ministry of death, in letters engraved on stones, came with glory, so that the sons of Israel **could not look intently** at the face of Moses because of the glory of his face, fading as it was, ⁸how will the ministry of the Spirit fail to be even more with glory?

Utley > This section, 2 Cor. 3:7-18, is a rabbinical *Midrash* on Exod. 34:29-35. There is a threefold use of "the veil" metaphor:

1. Moses
2. contemporary Jews
3. believers

Exodus 34:29-35 > ²⁹ And it came about, when Moses was coming down from Mount Sinai (and the two tablets of the testimony were in Moses' hand as he was coming down from the mountain), that Moses did not know that the skin of his face shone because of his speaking with Him. ³⁰ So when Aaron and all the sons of Israel saw Moses, behold, the skin of his face shone, and they were afraid to approach him. ³¹ Then Moses called to them, and Aaron and all the rulers in the congregation returned to him; and Moses spoke to them. ³² Afterward all the sons of Israel came near, and he commanded them to do everything that the LORD had spoken to him on Mount Sinai. ³³ When Moses had finished speaking with them, he put a veil over his face. ³⁴ But whenever Moses went in before the LORD to speak with Him, he would take off the veil until he came out; and whenever he came out and spoke to the sons of Israel what he had been commanded, ³⁵ the sons of Israel would see the face of Moses, that the skin of Moses' face shone. So Moses would put the veil back over his face until he went in to speak with Him.

But if > (Strong's) forasmuch as, if, that

Could not look intently > (Precept Austin) (*dunamai*) conveys the basic meaning of that which has the inherent ability to do something or accomplish some end. Thus *dunamai* means to be able to, to be capable of, to be strong enough to do or to have power to do something. The present tense indicates that they continually were not able to look intently on Moses' face.

Look intently > **Precept Austin** relays some wonderful passages where the phrase *look intently* is found in the New Testament. Here are just a few of them:

- Luke 22:56 > The servant girl looking intently at Peter warming himself by the fire
- Acts 1:10 > The disciples looking intently up into heaven as Jesus departs
- Acts 3:4 > Peter and John telling the beggar to look intently at them
- Acts 3:12 > Peter addressing the crowd who were looking intently at them for healing the beggar
- Acts 6:15 > The Council looking intently at Steven and seeing the face of an angel

MacArthur > The Old Covenant is good in that it *commands* righteousness. The New Covenant is better in that it *confers* righteousness.

⁹For if the ministry of condemnation has glory, much more does the ministry of righteousness abound in glory. ¹⁰*For indeed what had glory, in this case has no glory because of the glory that surpasses it.*

For if the ministry of condemnation ... > Consider this comparison > the purpose of the Old covenant vs. that of the New

Wuest (vs 10) > *For even that which has been made glorious has not been made glorious in this respect, namely, on account of the glory, which glory super-abounds.*

Comparative illustration of the moon and stars vs. the sun

¹¹*For if that which **fades away** was with glory, much more that which **remains** is in glory.*

Fades away > (Strong's) to render inoperative, abolish

Remains > (Precept Austin) (*meno*) means to abide and the present tense indicates the glory of the New Covenant is permanent.

¹²*Therefore having such a hope, we use great boldness in our speech, ¹³and are not like Moses, who used to put a veil over his face so that the sons of Israel would not look intently at the end of what was fading away.*

Wuest > *Having therefore such a hope, we use great freedom and boldness of speech, and not even as Moses put a covering over his face to the end that the sons of Israel should not fix their gaze upon the termination of that which is passing away*

Precept Austin > Keep the context of this chapter in mind - Paul is defending himself against accusations that he is a false teacher (see 2Co 3:1 2 3 4). As he defends himself by identifying himself with the New Covenant (2Co 3:5,6), he then launches into an explanation regarding the superiority of the New Covenant over the Old Covenant because (as inferred from the context) false teachers were promoting the Old Covenant as necessary for salvation.

¹⁴***But their minds were hardened;*** *for until this very day at the reading of the old covenant the same veil remains unlifted, because it is removed in Christ. ¹⁵But to this day whenever Moses is read, a veil lies over their heart; ¹⁶**but whenever a person turns to the Lord, the veil is taken away.***

But > (Precept Austin) (*alla*) introduces a contrast

Hardened > KJV has “blinded” but this is a better translation (Strong’s) to petrify, to harden

Precept Austin (*poroo* from *poros* = small piece of stone, a kind of marble, and thence used of a callus on fractured bones) means to make hard as stone and used figuratively to describe that which has become callous or insensitive to touch.

But their minds were hardened > (Utley) This is an *aorist* (once and done), *passive* (the action happened from the outside), *indicative* (facts, statements, opinions, or questions)

But whenever a person turns to the Lord, the veil is taken away > Can you just imagine how the scriptures just came alive to Paul when he placed his trust in Christ?!?

Wiersbe > In each of the three churches I have pastored, it has been my joy to baptize Jewish people who have trusted Jesus Christ. It is amazing how their minds open to the Scriptures after they have been born again. One man told me, “It’s like scales falling from your eyes. You wonder why everybody doesn’t see what you see!” The veil is removed by the Spirit of God and they receive spiritual vision.

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

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 from the Lord, the Spirit.*

Wiersbe > "This verse is the climax of the chapter, and it presents a truth so exciting that I marvel so many believers have missed it—or ignored it. You and I can share the image of Jesus Christ and go “from glory to glory” through the ministry of the Spirit of God!”

Transformed > (Strong’s) *metamorphoo* > to transform (literally or figuratively, "metamorphose")

Matthew 17: 1-2 > ¹*Six days later Jesus took with Him Peter and James and John his brother, and led them up on a high mountain by themselves. ²And He was transfigured before them; and His face shone like the sun, and His garments became as white as light.*

Romans 12:2 > ²*And do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind, so that you may prove what the will of God is, that which is good and acceptable and perfect.*

Wuest > *are having our outward expressions changed into the same image from one degree of glory to another according as this change of expression proceeds from the Lord*