

# BLESSINGS OF THE GOSPEL

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

LESSON 395 Junior Course

**MEMORY VERSE:** "Ye are our epistle written in our hearts, known and read of all men" (II Corinthians 3:2).

## 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:

### Notes:

#### **Commendation**

If your father should tell you that he was glad people knew you were his boy or girl, because you were kind and obedient, and because you were a Christian, would it not make you feel good? And you would want even more than ever to be good.

That must have been the way the people in the church in Corinth felt when they received this letter from the Apostle Paul. They were his converts. He had worked and suffered and borne persecution for them. He had been daily subject to death by the enemies of the Gospel of Jesus Christ in order to bring them to salvation.

Paul did not need a letter written by any man to prove that he was an Apostle and true minister of the Corinthian church. These people were written in his heart (**2 Corinthians 3:2<sup>2</sup>** *Ye are our epistle written in our hearts, known and read of all men:*). He carried their needs, their troubles on his heart night and day. He was like a father to them. He loved them; he prayed for them; he corrected them; and when they received his reproofs he commended them.

True ministers of the Gospel are a great blessing. The Bible tells us: "Obey them that have the rule over you, and submit yourselves: for they watch for your souls, as they that must give account, that they may do it with joy, and not with grief" (Hebrews 13:17).

#### **Known and Read**

Paul said that Christians are something like a letter that Jesus might have written — not with ink as we would write a letter today, nor on tables of stone like those on which the Ten Commandments had been written, but with the Spirit of the living God. When God writes His love upon our hearts, our teachers, our parents, our friends know we are Christians. The things we do and say, the places we go, and the things we enjoy show that we are saved. We are like an open book that everyone reads.

#### **Paul's Commission**

We have learned about Paul's being saved on the road to Damascus (Lesson 301), and that he went into Arabia. We are not told what Paul did there, but it may have been that he climbed the rocky side of Mount Sinai, and felt something of the glory and majesty of God that came down on the Mount when Moses was given the Ten Commandments 1,500 years before.

When Paul was a boy he had left his home in Tarsus and had gone to Jerusalem to sit at the feet of Gamaliel, perhaps the greatest teacher of the Law of Moses at that time. It may have been at this later time that in the wilderness of Arabia Paul sat, as it were, at the feet of the Lord Jesus Himself and was trained for his work as a minister of the Gospel. Paul said: "The gospel which was preached of me is not after man. For I neither received it of man, neither was I taught it, but by the revelation of Jesus Christ."

Whatever Paul's experiences were, when he returned to

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 vail 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 vail 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 vail is upon their heart.

16 Nevertheless when it shall turn to the Lord, the vail 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

Damascus he did not push himself forward and hurry to Jerusalem to offer his services as a preacher. No. He waited God's time and God's direction, very much as David did when he waited seven years to be crowned king of Israel.

### **Paul at Corinth**

Barnabas went to Tarsus to find Paul and bring him to Antioch to help in the Gospel work there. Later, Paul was sent out by the church as a foreign missionary. From Antioch he made three journeys across land and sea.

Paul's second journey brought him to the Isthmus of Corinth, the narrow stretch of land which connects northern Greece with the peninsula in the south. There at the base of a rocky prominence, which swept up some two thousand feet above the level of the sea, lay the wealthy city of Corinth, the capital of Greece at this time.

From Corinth spread two great roads, leading to the sea. Merchant ships and traders from Egypt and Syria came to the seaport on the Aegean Sea, and to the seaport on the Ionian Sea came ships from Macedonia and Italy. People from many parts of the world came to Corinth, and at the time of Paul's sojourn there, the population was probably 400,000 — about the population of Portland Oregon, several decades ago. (Portland, is the seat of the International Headquarters of our Church).

There Paul found a fertile field for his Gospel work, but how was he to make a living? Paul was a tent-maker by trade, and it wasn't long until he found Aquila, a Jew who had lately come to Corinth from Italy, with his wife Priscilla, who were also tent-makers. With them Paul made his home while he worked and preached Jesus to all who would hear.

Silas and Timothy followed Paul to Corinth and stayed there with him for a year and a half as he preached and persuaded the people that Jesus was the Christ, and many of the Corinthians, hearing the preaching, believed, and were saved. So they were truly Paul's children in the Lord, for it was through the ministry of Paul and his helpers that they had been born into the family of God.

### **The More Glorious Way**

Most of the Jews believed that in order to be saved they still had to bring a lamb or a bullock or a turtledove to the Temple and sacrifice it as the Law of Moses commanded. The slaying of an animal at the brazen altar, the presenting of the blood and the perpetual incense at the golden altar, and the presenting of the blood and incense in the Holy of Holies were all instituted to point the people to Christ; but when Jesus came and made the great sacrifice of Himself, the forms and ceremonies were no longer needed.

Paul showed them a simple, humble way to be saved. He said it was a glorious way. The giving of the Law on Mount Sinai was attended by the majesty and glory of God when the Mount "was altogether on a smoke, because the LORD descended upon it in fire: . . . And when the voice of the trumpet sounded long, and waxed louder and louder, Moses spake, and God answered him by a voice." But this simple way of faith in the shed Blood of Jesus is even more glorious. It brings the glory of the Spirit of the living Christ to dwell in the hearts of His people.

### **Blinded Minds**

The minds of the majority of the Israelites who saw God's glory on Mount Sinai were blinded. They did not understand. Did you ever close your mind when Mother asked you to do something? She explained just how she wanted it done, but you wanted to do it another way, so you did not understand. Many people do not

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.

appreciate and believe God's plan of salvation through Jesus' death and resurrection. They want to be saved in their own way, so they do not understand God's way of salvation.

But we who have a deep longing to know God and love and serve Him, are glad when we read the clear instructions: "If thou shalt confess with thy mouth the Lord Jesus, and shalt believe in thine heart that God hath raised him from the dead, thou shalt be saved" (Romans 10:9). And if we continue to obey the sweet voice of the Holy Spirit when He calls us to prayer, when He tells us to speak a word for Jesus to a friend, or invite someone to church, He will give us liberty, or freedom, to walk in the straight and narrow way that Jesus walked before us. It is the way to Heaven.

### God's Looking Glass

When we are saved we continually look with clear conscience and open face into a glass, Paul writes. We read in the Book of James that the writer likens the Word of God to a looking glass: "For if any be a hearer of the word, and not a doer, he is like unto a man beholding his natural face in a glass: for he beholdeth himself, and goeth his way, and straightway forgetteth what manner of man he was. 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" (James 1:23-25).

As we prayerfully look into this looking glass of the Word of God day by day, the Spirit of the Lord enables us to bring our lives into conformity with His will, and we become more and more like Jesus.

### Paul's Hope

The simple preaching of salvation through the shed Blood of Jesus did not suit the Jews nor the worldly-minded Gentiles, and many times Paul was in distress and was persecuted. But though he was in danger of even death day by day, he rejoiced because of those who did believe his preaching and were saved.

He looked forward to the time when his converts would share with him the glory of being forever with the Lord, for he said, "Knowing that he which raised up the Lord Jesus shall raise up us also by Jesus, and shall present us with you."

### QUESTIONS

1. What was Paul's letter of commendation?
2. Upon what was it written?
3. By whom was it read?
4. Under whose ministration did God begin to reveal the Old Testament?
5. Under whose ministration is the New Testament revealed today?
6. Why is the Gospel of Christ as revealed in the new Testament spoken of as being more glorious than under the Old?
7. Who gives us liberty to be followers of Christ Jesus?
8. By what means are we changed into the image of Christ?
9. What encouraged Paul to endure persecutions and distresses?
10. With whom did Paul hope to share the glory of the First Resurrection?