

The Second Letter of Paul to the Corinthians

Lesson 3

The New Covenant Ministry

Physically and materialistically Paul had suffered terribly in his missionary journeys. He had left behind his previous life, his previous religion, and his previous old covenant ministry for something he viewed as better. Jesus had called him to the New Covenant ministry of grace.

1. Compare Paul's previous ministry, education, heritage, and accomplishments to his new found belief in Christ (Philippians 3:4-8). Based on the new covenant inaugurated by Christ, where does our righteousness come from (Phil 3:9, 2 Cor 5:21)?
2. Paul uses the image of incense burned during a Roman victory parade in 2 Corinthians 2:14-16. How does the incense smell to those being saved, and how does it smell to those perishing (v 16)? How do you transfer this concept to Paul's ministry?
3. Paul recognizes that God is doing great things in this new covenant ministry of grace. What question does Paul ask at the end of 2 Cor 2:16? How does he answer in 2 Cor 3:5? What descriptive title does he give himself (2 Cor 3:6)? What type of covenant does he serve (v6)?
4. Read Exodus 34:29-30. Moses had been in the presence of God's glory which was still reflecting off his face when he came down. Paul uses this to compare the glory of each covenant in 2 Cor 3:7-18. Which covenant has the most glory?
5. The false teachers at Corinth were holding on to the old Covenant of laws, works, rituals, and ceremonies as the means to salvation. How does Paul refer to the ministry of each covenant (2 Cor 3:7-9)? What do you think he means by "the letter kills" and "the ministry of condemnation" (Galatians 3:10-13, 22; James 2:10)?

6. How did the prophet Jeremiah describe the New Covenant of grace (Jeremiah 31:31-34)? What is the blessing in Jer 31:34? What does Ezekiel say will differentiate the old and new covenant (Ezekiel 36:26-27)?

7. The New Testament author of Hebrews quotes Jeremiah to emphasize the superiority of the New Covenant. He is saying, "Look what your own prophet says about the advantage of the New Covenant." What does he conclude in Hebrews 8:6-13?

8. Ritual, ceremonial, sacramental Christianity poses a serious threat to the authentic biblical gospel because the religious institution becomes a surrogate Christ, displacing the true Christ. In 2 Cor 3:6-18, what are 8 distinctives of the new covenant of grace?

9. Paul uses the image of the veil of Moses to express that everyone bound up by a covenant of works and laws is blinded to God's grace (2 Cor 3:14-15). Ironically, how was Paul's "veil" taken away (Acts 9:8-9)? What happens to us when the "veil" is taken away (2 Cor 3:18)?

10. Was there anything wrong with the law (Matt 5:17-18)? If the law was not given for salvation, why was it given (Rom 3:19-20; 5:13; 7:7; Gal 3:21-24)? Because we are prone to sin, what impact does the law have on us (Romans 7:22-25)? What is the answer to this dilemma (Gal 3:24, Romans 3:21-26; 8:1-3)? How can the requirement of the law (righteousness) be fulfilled in us (Rom 8:4, 2 Cor 5:21)?