

- Q5. In what true sense do the laws and commandments of Moses in the Old Testament “condemn” the hearer? (verse 9; Romans 3:20, 7:7-12)
- Q6. Describe the characteristics of someone you think ministers “by the letter” in their leadership in the church today. What does Paul say the fruit of such ministry is?
- Q7. What does Paul say was the reason Moses put a veil over his face (verses 13-16)? How does this differ from the Old Testament version of events? (see Exodus 34:29-35)
- Q8. Describe in your own words what Paul means concerning the veil covering “their” hearts, but being removed in Christ (verses 15,16). How does this increase your motivation to share the Gospel with others?
- Q9. Paul applies his own bible study to his own day and age in chapter 4:3-6. What examples of spiritual hard-heartedness or blindness to God’s mercy can you give: in your own past? In the example of others?
- Q10. In verses 16-18 what do you think it means to say that the “the Lord is the Spirit” and “where the Lord is, there is freedom”? How does this reinforce his earlier arguments comparing the “letter” to the “spirit”? How are Christians being transformed into Christ's likeness? Consider the following references:
- Romans 8:29-30
  - Romans 12:2
  - Galatians 5:22-23
  - 2 Peter 1:3-11



# Ministry Matters

## Study Notes

### #3 Freedom & the New Covenant

#### 2 Corinthians 3:1-18

*“Now the Lord is the Spirit, and where the Spirit of the Lord is, there is freedom.”*

**2 Corinthians 3:17**

#### Warm Up

When did you last have to prepare a C.V. or resume? Did you have to include a letter of reference with a job application? What did your referee say about you?

Now imagine that someone was asked to write a reference (letter of recommendation) to a church community about your integrity as a Christian– what things would you hope they might write about you?



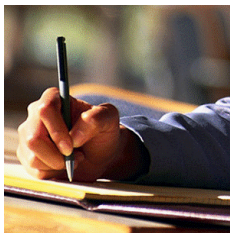
#### Introduction READ 2 Corinthians 3:1—4:6

The Apostle Paul towards the end of chapter 2 implied that as well as being under pressure from one who attacked his credentials and integrity as an apostle (2:5), there were others in ministry at Corinth driven by false motives (2:17). Later in the letter he will address the issue of such leaders in more detail. Judaistic, triumphalist intruders such as those he writes about in chapters 10-13 sought to arrest authority from Paul and lead the Corinthians in another direction. He defends his team as workers who are sincere and commissioned by God. He goes on in chapter 3 to show how important his Gospel is by comparison to his opponents.

2nd letter to the corinthians

## Getting into the text—2 Corinthians chapter 3:1-18

Q1. What do you think prompted Paul to bring up “letters of recommendation” in verse 1?



Q2. Paul uses an illustration in which he depicts the Corinthian Church as his “letter”, Christ as the author, himself as the scribe and the Holy Spirit as the ink (see vs. 3). How does this correspond to his claim that his competence for apostolic ministry is from God and not from himself (vs. 5)?

Q3. In verse 6 Paul states: “...the letter kills, but the spirit gives life”. Do you think Paul is simply saying, “Don’t be legalistic about the Laws of Moses” or is there something more to his statement? Consider the following references:

- Romans 15:17-19
- 1 Corinthians 2:4-5
- Galatians 5:13-26

Q4. What do you know about the term “new covenant”, of which Paul says he is a minister? See the following references:

- Jeremiah 31:31-34
- Ezekiel 36:24-32
- Luke 22:20
- Hebrews chs. 9 & 10

Paul changes his metaphor from a letter written on paper to a tablet of stone in vs. 3. This introduces his bible study in verses 7-18 based on Exodus 34:25-29: the events of Moses meeting with God on Mt. Sinai to receive God’s commandments for the people. Paul argues from the lesser to the greater in two sections as follows:



**Verses 7-11** When Moses returned from his divine encounter, Exodus 34:29-32 tells us his face was shining with the glory of God. Such a sight made the ancient Israelites afraid, because to see God was understood to be a fearful thing. Moses had to wear a veil on his face to hide the brightness when he was with the people. Paul says that the glory seen on Moses’ face was of great splendour indeed, but it faded away. How much more splendid, he says, is the glory of God in Christ. One faded, but the other, is as glorious as it is everlasting. In other words he says, why would you Corinthians be interested in a religion that was only a fading foretaste of something still to come, and is now with us in the Gospel of Jesus Christ? (verses 9 & 11; see also Rom. 7:10, 10:4; Lev. 18:5; Gal. 3:19-25)



**Verses 12-18** Secondly, Paul argues from Exodus 34:33-35 that if the ancient Israelites had dull minds and could not perceive what God’s message through Moses was about, how much more are those today who choose a burdensome religious system dull and hard of heart; blind and ignorant (verses 15,16; see also Rom. 4:6-8, 8:1-4, 8:15-16).

Paul’s was not denouncing Moses, nor the Old Testament Scriptures (Rom. 3:2). The Law of Moses pointed forward to Christ (Gal. 3:11-14), however, some insisted on returning to obedience to the Law of Moses. In-so-doing they made the Law to be an end in itself and diminished the significance of Christ. Paul believed that such a misunderstanding of the Scriptures (or misrepresentation e.g. 2 Cor. 4:2; 11:20) enslaves people and does not transform the human condition of spiritual ignorance & blindness.

OLD COVENANT	NEW COVENANT
• dead letters on stone	• living letters on hearts of flesh
• leading to death, condemnation	• leading to life & friendship with God
• temporary glory intended to point to the future	• unlimited glory; the goal of all things past
• spiritual blindness	• sight & insight
• no change to the heart	• transformation of the heart to reflect God’s glory to others