

“WHICH IS SUPERIOR?”

(2Corinthians 3:1-18)

May 28, 2017

Paul will address two of the great BENEFITS every Christian has. First:

I. The Unwritten GRACE of God

1. The legalist's WRITTEN letters of recommendation

Some legalistic teachers have presented their credentials (whatever they were) and try to belittle Paul by asking if he had presented credentials to the church when he FIRST arrived in Corinth. What church?

Paul knows the Christians there owe their ETERNAL lives to him, yet are now questioning his credentials. Unbelievable!

2. The apostle's LIVING letters of recommendation

THEY are his letter of recommendation, his proof of biblical authority. The TRANSFORMED lives of his converts literally shout about his effectiveness and God's grace.

He shows a powerful CONTRAST between the legalist's defense of the laws they hold dear, written on “tablets of stone” vs. what Christians have: a love letter from Christ, written on their very hearts by the Spirit of God.

Paul differentiates himself, and ALL Christian ministers, from the legalists. Christian ministers are ministers of a NEW covenant.

Which is superior – the letter (law) which kills, OR the life giving Spirit of God?

All who rely on observing the law are under a curse, for it is written: Cursed is everyone who does not continue to do everything written in the Book of the Law.”

Galatians 3:10

... through Christ Jesus the law of the Spirit of life set me free from the law of sin and death.

Romans 8:2

Paul describes this new covenant further as:

II. The Unveiled GLORY of God

Paul contrasts the two ways God has graced his chosen people:

1. The law of MOSES

We sometimes forget the GREATNESS and importance of the law of Moses.

God brought Moses up on the mountain and gave him 10 direct, uncomplicated laws that he could teach the people so that they could get along with God AND one another.

The problem was that they couldn't OBEY. SIN kept rising up in their hearts. They disobeyed and suffered the CONSEQUENCES both individually and corporately.

Man often thinks he knows BETTER than God. So, the legalists added to God's law to the tune of 620 MORE laws that must be obeyed.

The Old Covenant became a religion of struggling to IMPRESS God with one's goodness, of endless rules and regulations governing every area of life, of outward conformity and focus on appearance, of spiritual pride and competitiveness. And that route to God is a DEAD end. The only way is by:

2. The gospel of GRACE

Paul always preached a LIBERATING gospel. Those "in Christ" are free from the POWER and PENALTY of sin in their lives.

The ministry of grace through the Spirit was superior. Reread 7 & 8.

Paul illustrates with the well known story of Moses's return from his mountaintop visit with the Lord. Paul adds a new twist here. The Old Covenant would not LAST.

The veil became a BARRIER to understanding God.

One of the greatest challenges to the human mind is the grace of God. We find it incredibly difficult to fathom. Law is rigid, definable, easy to UNDERSTAND even if not always easy to keep.

Grace, on the other hand, is often COMPLEX, not easily defined and sometimes hard to see. It is God's Spirit who shines the light, illuminates the heart, opens one's S[OROTIA]; eyes. The Christian, the individual "in Christ," has the veil removed and begins to truly see.

While the Bible is the final WRITTEN authority for every believer, it is the Living Word, Jesus Christ, who gives it its AUTHORITY. It is the Spirit of the Living God who ADMINISTERS its grace and forgiveness.

Only those who have REJECTED the legalism found in one's own heart and turned over the Lordship of their lives to JESUS and the guidance of their minds and hearts to his SPIRIT can smile knowingly at those words, "Amazing Grace."

Can YOU?