

2 Corinthians: Encouragement in Troubling Times
"Who is Sufficient?" # 8
2 Cor. 2:16b-3:6
6-5-16 Sun AM

The legalists [Judaizers] who caused trouble in both Antioch and Jerusalem had come to Corinth and enticed some of the believers into living by the Law of Moses. Paul refuted their position by showing the glory and wonders of the new covenant ministry.

Paul identifies the key issue between false teachers and true teachers. One teaches a false gospel and puts people under the bondage of the Law. True teachers proclaim liberty by faith in Christ.

Notice what he says about the false teachers (2:17).

- They peddle or adulterate the Word of God. They corrupt the Word of God. They market the Word for profit.
- They use worldly wisdom and persuasive methods [man-made techniques].
- These Judaizers promote the superiority of the old covenant to the new covenant. They live by Law and not grace, they depend on works and not faith.

Q- Who is sufficient or adequate for these things? Who is adequate to preach the gospel of Jesus Christ the glory of God?

How is the proclaimer of the gospel able to teach with clarity and simplicity without using deceptive methods or human manipulation?

No lost person has the ability to accept the message because they are in a dead fallen state and blindness by Satan. Human means can't open their heart, it must be supernatural.

The New Covenant...

I. Changes Hearts (3:1-3).

Letters of commendation were used in the early church to commend Christians to other Christians.

In **Rom. 16:1** Paul wrote a letter of commendation to the church at Rome on behalf of Phoebe. When saints moved or traveled it was important to recommend their faith or character.

We must do our part to protect and warn about false teachers or those under church discipline.

Paul does not need such a letter because he is their spiritual father and they are his commendation. They were written on Paul's heart to authenticate his ministry. They were Paul's letter of commendation.

2 Cor. 11:4, For if he that cometh preacheth another Jesus, whom we have not preached, or if ye receive another spirit, which ye have not received, or another gospel, which ye have not accepted, ye might well bear with him.

Paul did not preach a legalistic message of law-keeping but of God's grace. His message was not chiseled on stone tablets but written on hearts of flesh.

Jer. 31:31-34, Behold, the days come, saith the LORD, that I will make a new covenant with the house of Israel, and with the house of Judah: (32) Not according to the covenant that I made with their fathers in the day that I took them by the hand to bring them out of the land of Egypt; which my covenant they brake, although I was an husband unto them, saith the LORD:

(33) But this shall be the covenant that I will make with the house of Israel; After those days, saith the LORD, I will put my law in their inward parts, and write it in their hearts; and will be their God, and they shall be my people. (34) And they shall teach no more every man his neighbour, and every man his brother, saying, Know the LORD: for they shall all know me, from the least of them unto the greatest of them, saith the LORD: for I will forgive their iniquity, and I will remember their sin no more. See Ezek. 11:19-20.

Paul's imagery of a letter states that the Corinthian believers are his letter. They are fruit of the Holy Spirit's work in their hearts.

1 Thess. 1:4-7, "Knowing, brethren beloved, your election of God. (5) For our gospel came not unto you in word only, but also in power, and in the Holy Ghost, and in much assurance; as ye know what manner of men we were among you for your sake. (6) And ye became followers of us, and of the Lord, having received the word in much affliction, with joy of the Holy Ghost: (7) So that ye were ensamples to all that believe in Macedonia and Achaia.

Q- Why does Paul mention commendation?

Many things that give one status in the unbelieving world do not give us status or authority in the church.

A man's degree does not accredit him to ministry in the local church. Seminaries are full of false teachers who later depart from the faith.

Q- So what does commend a Christian's ministry?

- A servants heart (3:3a) "*Ministered by us*"

- Integrity in their message and methods (2:17). They proclaim God's word simply, boldly, and truthfully to draw men to depend on Christ rather than upon the messenger.
- Changed lives by conviction and conversion by the Word of God and the Spirit of God (v. 3).

The New Covenant...

II. Gives Life (3:4-6).

v. 5: Paul shares where the minister's sufficiency comes from, we are adequate in God thru Christ.

Our confidence in sharing the gospel is not in ourselves, but in God, through Jesus Christ.

v. 6: It is God who makes us able servants of proclaiming the New Covenant that gives life and not death.

Do you want to depend on the letter of the law that condemns, or the Spirit that gives you life?