

Fact Sheet for “Into His Image” 2 Corinthians 3:12-18

Pastor Bob Singer
10/11/2015

I have been saying that the book of 2 Corinthians is Paul's defense of his ministry to the church at Corinth in the face of criticism on the part of some. You will see that clearly today. But this is much more than Paul defending himself. He also presents some great and memorable truths that can help us in our Christian walk. The best way to explain this passage is to expand the number of verses we will look at this morning. I will interpret them on the fly.

Pay attention to Paul's words that speak of his commendation, confidence, sufficiency, and boldness. These speak of how Paul ministered to the Corinthians, and why he ministered that way. Be sure also to catch the word “image”.

^{1a} ¶ Are we beginning to commend ourselves again?

You can see the criticism directed against Paul here.

^{1b} Or do we need, as some do, letters of recommendation to you, or from you?

This was a common practice in the 1st century.

² You yourselves are our letter of recommendation, written on our hearts, to be known and read by all. ³ And you show that you are a letter from Christ delivered by us, written not with ink but with the Spirit of the living God, not on tablets of stone but on tablets of human hearts.

There is a hint here that the criticism directed against Paul came from those who continued to hold to the Mosaic Law for their salvation. Look at the hints of this in the OT (Jeremiah 31:33; Ezekiel 11:19; 36:26).

⁴ ¶ Such is the confidence that we have through Christ toward God. ⁵ Not that we are sufficient in ourselves to claim anything as coming from us, but our sufficiency is from God, ⁶ who has made us sufficient to be ministers of a new covenant, not of the letter but of the Spirit. For the letter kills, but the Spirit gives life.

This is a clear reference to the Mosaic Law.

⁷ ¶ Now if the ministry of death, carved in letters on stone, came with such glory that the Israelites could not gaze at Moses' face because of its glory, which was being brought to an end, ⁸ will not the ministry of the Spirit have even more glory?

“ministry of death” – No one can be righteous with the Law (Matthew 5:48; Galatians 2:16; 3:11).

⁹ For if there was glory in the ministry of condemnation, the ministry of righteousness must far exceed it in glory. ¹⁰ Indeed, in this case, what once had glory has come to have no glory at all, because of the glory that surpasses it. ¹¹ For if what was being brought to an end came with glory, much more will what is permanent have glory.

Salvation by faith in Christ will never be superseded, as was the Mosaic Law (Galatians 3:24).

¹² ¶ Since we have such a hope, we are very bold, ¹³ not like Moses, who would put a veil over his face so that the Israelites might not gaze at the outcome of what was being brought to an end. ¹⁴ But their minds were hardened. For to this day, when they read the old covenant, that same veil

remains unlifted, because only through Christ is it taken away. ¹⁵ Yes, to this day whenever Moses is read a veil lies over their hearts. ¹⁶ But when one turns to the Lord, the veil is removed.

Consider the current Messianic movement. Their message must be that salvation is only found in Christ, not in the Law.

¹⁷ Now the Lord is the Spirit, and where the Spirit of the Lord is, there is freedom.

This is freedom from the Mosaic Law's requirement to be perfect in order to be righteous before God (Romans 3:21-25).

¹⁸ And we all, with unveiled face, beholding the glory of the Lord, are being transformed into the same image from one degree of glory to another. For this comes from the Lord who is the Spirit.

"image" – Christians are being progressively transformed into Christ's likeness (Romans 12:1-2).

¹ ¶ Therefore, having this ministry by the mercy of God, we do not lose heart. ² But we have renounced disgraceful, underhanded ways. We refuse to practice cunning or to tamper with God's word, but by the open statement of the truth we would commend ourselves to everyone's conscience in the sight of God. ³ And even if our gospel is veiled, it is veiled to those who are perishing. ⁴ In their case the god of this world has blinded the minds of the unbelievers, to keep them from seeing the light of the gospel of the glory of Christ, who is the image of God.

Paul's opponents held to the Law, not the gospel.

Christ is the "image" of the Father.

⁵ For what we proclaim is not ourselves, but Jesus Christ as Lord, with ourselves as your servants for Jesus' sake. ⁶ For God, who said, "Let light shine out of darkness," has shone in our hearts to give the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ.

I want to go back now to one verse in chapter 3.

¹⁸ And we all, with unveiled face, beholding the glory of the Lord, are being transformed into the same image from one degree of glory to another. For this comes from the Lord who is the Spirit.

"unveiled face" – We have accepted Christ as our Savior. We have believed the gospel.

"beholding the glory of the Lord" – We have to get to know Christ better.
You have to get to know God's Word better.

"being transformed into the same image" – We should progressively be transformed into Christlikeness.

Daily devotions

Bible

Prayer

Application of the truth of Scripture

Local church involvement

Attendance

Personal ministry

Mutual encouragement and accountability

For this comes from the Lord!