Anchored to Stand

**STUDIES IN SECOND CORINTHIANS**

**Lesson 5**

**II Corinthians 3**

***Stand In Liberty***

***Now the Lord is the Spirit; and where the Spirit of the Lord is, there is liberty… (II Corinthians 3:17)***

Many of us are drawn to the cross of Christ for the freedom it represents; freedom from sin, guilt, shame, and freedom from the burden of the law. That is why the Bible calls it the Gospel, or *good news*. Paul had preached this Gospel in Corinth and many people responded by placing their trust in Jesus alone for salvation. Unfortunately, whenever God is doing an authentic work there are usually those who seek to gain followers through a counterfeit gospel. This was the case in Corinth. After Paul had left, these men called *Judaizers* were attempting to draw believers away from Paul’s message of grace, and on themselves, by promoting a false gospel of Christ *plus* keeping the law. This was creating a lack of trust in Paul’s message of freedom *from* the law and liberty in Christ. Our text this week contains Paul’s response to these *Judaizers* who wanted to put the Corinthians back under the bondage of the law. Paul will contrast the Old Covenant law and fading glory with the New Covenant liberty and eternal glory.

**First Day Overview: Read II Corinthians 3**

1. Read II Corinthians chapter 3. The verses we will be studying this week will empower you to be a living witness for Jesus Christ. Even though II Corinthians 3 was written to the Christians at Corinth, they apply to us today. We have divided this chapter into four sections. Write which verse in each section particularly captures your attention? Be sure to underline or highlight them in your Bible and then write them here:
	1. II Corinthians 3:1-3
	2. II Corinthians 3:4-6
	3. II Corinthians 3:7-11
	4. II Corinthians 3:12-18
2. Paul mentions the words *glory* or *glorious* 14 times in II Corinthians chapter 3.
	1. Use a Bible concordance or dictionary to define the word *glory*.
	2. Now scan through the verses of chapter 3 once more and record some of the things you see relating to *glory*: or *glorious.* Example: The law was glorious (verse 7a)
3. The amazing and powerful truth found in II Corinthians 3:17-18 is quite possibly the most amazing blessing we have been given by God (aside from the atonement of our sins on the cross). This liberty that is spoken of here refers to our "freedom" of access to the presence of God with unveiled faces to behold the glory of God. Read Hebrews 4:16. Highlight this verse in your Bible! What is your response to this amazing liberty we have?

**Anchored In –** Is there something weighing heavy on your heart today? Let’s exercise this freedom we have, in Christ, *to come boldly to the throne of grace to obtain mercy*. Spend some time with the Lord today. You don’t need an appointment, He is available!

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*My name is graven on His hands, my name is written on His heart.*

*I know that while in heaven He stands, no tongue can bid me thence depart*

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**Second Day: Read II Corinthians 3:1-3**

*Out of one hundred men, one will read the Bible; the other ninety-nine will read the Christian.*

-D. L. Moody

1. The need of a letter of recommendation was common in the first century church. Imposters were numerous and letters of introduction protected the church from most of them. However, once a person’s ministry was known there was no longer a need for these letters. Why didn’t Paul need letters of recommendation? Answer from II Corinthians 3:2.

* 1. I Corinthians 6:9-11 validates Paul’s ministry among the Corinthians. According to these verses what happened to them?

* + 1. What changes has God made in your life through the ministry of His Word?
1. Consider II Corinthians 3:2 NASB: *You are our letter, written in our hearts, known and read by all men.* Think about your life and what it means to be a living letter. What is your response to this?
2. The phrase written in our hearts from II Corinthians 3:2 means there was a confirmation in Paul’s heart of the validity of his ministry because of the Corinthians’ changed lives. They had witnessed the power of the Holy Spirit working through Paul in their own lives. Why should that be better than a letter of recommendation from another man?
3. The key thought of II Corinthians 3:3 is that only God’s Spirit could have accomplished the transformation in the lives of these worldly Corinthians. Read the New Living Translation of verse 3c: *It is not carved on stone, but on human hearts*. Link the following scriptures with verse 3 and write what you see:

* 1. Exodus 31:18
	2. Jeremiah 31:33b
	3. Ezekiel 11:19-20
	4. Hebrews 10:16b
1. How would you explain the difference between the law being written on tables of stone and the law being written by the Holy Spirit in your mind and on your heart?
	1. Meditate on Matthew 22:37-39. Why is this absolutely essential to our being an authentic living epistle of Christ?
	2. Did you ever realize that *you are a living Epistle known and read by all men*? It has been said that you may be the only Bible somebody may ever read. What do you think this means?

**Anchored In** – This idea that we are *living epistles* is an awesome one. Finish your lesson today in prayer, expressing your desire to be a good witness and reflection of God’s love. May our lives, as believers, be so transparent that the Word written in our hearts can be clearly seen.

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*What others most need is to see in you a reflection of what God is like*

*and of the transforming power of the Gospel.*

*Your life can create hunger and thirst for God in others' lives*

*and can be a powerful instrument in the hand of the Holy Spirit*

*to draw their hearts to Christ.* - Selected

**THIRD DAY: Read 2 Corinthians 3:4-6**

1. *Such confidence as this is ours through Christ before God* (2 Corinthians 3:4 NIV). The word trust as used in the NKJV version can be translated “confidence” or “reliance”. Read Philippians 3:4-6 and record the many things Paul could have placed his *confidence* in.

* 1. Continue reading verses 7 and 8 of Philippians 3. How important were these “accomplishments” in comparison to the *knowledge of Christ Jesus*?

1. Paul knew that it was God who was really doing the work. Paul was simply a vessel through which God worked. Although man can preach the gospel, what can he not do?
2. The principle in these verses is not limited to those who are employed in the ministry but includes all who serve Jesus Christ. The word *sufficiency* (*hikanotes*) in II Corinthians 3:5 is derived from a Greek word that means *competence, fitness, or capability*. God always equips us with the ability to do whatever He requires. How does this minister to you?

* 1. How does the encouragement found in Philippians 4:13 confirm this truth?
	2. When we recognize that God is the source of all of our ability, He receives the praise and glory. Why is this important?
1. II Corinthians 3:6 concludes the paragraph on the subject of the believer’s sufficiency in Christ. Notice the phrase *hath made us* is in the past tense. This means that He already has made us sufficient ministers because He is our sufficiency. How does this encourage you as you His servant today?
2. He prepares us for the work and He prepares the work for us. How do the following verses confirm this: Ephesians 2:10 Philippians 2:13 Cite an example of this from your life.

1. We have been made able ministers of the gospel. How does this dismiss any fears of inadequacy in sharing His Good News?

**Anchored In –** Let’s acknowledge the Lord’s sufficiency in our own lives by creating an acronym for the word *sufficient.* Think of ten words or phrases that express your confidence and trust in Jesus Christ today. Example: S = Supplies my needs, U = unfailing love

**S**

**U**

**F**

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***It is better to trust in the LORD than to put confidence in man.***

***Psalm 118:8***

**Fourth Day – Read II Corinthians 3:7-12**

The ministry of the old covenant was obedience to an external standard, but this obedience could not change human character. The ministry of the new covenant is Christ-likeness, a change brought about from the inside by the Holy Spirit. The old covenant was us trying to do our very best on behalf of God. The new covenant is God giving His very best through us.

1. Both the ministry of death/condemnation (the law) and the ministry of the Spirit/righteousness are from God. They are both glorious. Which exceeds much more in glory?
2. According to verses 11 the old covenant is passing away. What does Hebrews 8:13 say about this?
	1. II Corinthians 3:11 also tells us that the new covenant remains. What does Hebrews 13:20 say about this?
		1. How long is everlasting?
		2. What does it mean to you that God will never change His mind about promising to save those who come to Him by faith in Jesus?
3. Some of those in the church in Corinth were considering the claims of the Judaizers – that they must add the law to grace. The church in Galatia was experiencing the same problem. Read Galatians 3:2-5. Record Paul’s challenge as you might say it to someone who has fallen into believing that salvation is achieved in some way by their own efforts; that Christ’s work on the cross was not sufficient.

1. Read II Corinthians 3:8-11 and record the phrase in each verse that depicts the greater glory of the new compared to the old:

* 1. verse 8

* 1. verse 9
	2. verse 10
	3. verse 11
1. Why do you think people sometimes follow doctrines of legalism, which put the burden of being right with God on man?
2. Read I Corinthians 11:24-25. What does it mean to you today to be in the new covenant relationship with God through Jesus Christ?
3. Read II Corinthians 3:12 NLT: *Since this new covenant gives us such confidence, we can be very bold.* It is a privilege to share the gospel with others – the Good News of God’s New Covenant with man. The old covenant was based on what man should do for God; the new covenant is based on what God has done for man. How does this give you greater confidence and boldness to be His witness?

**Anchored In** – Praise the Lord for this glorious new covenant we have in Jesus Christ! We no longer have to strive and struggle to measure up in order to please God. He has accepted us and considers us righteous. Can you believe it? This is such good news! Take some time to express thanksgiving for the cross and this amazing grace today.

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***It is for freedom that I am set free***

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**Fifth Day – Read II Corinthians 3:13-18**

1. In II Corinthians 3:13 Paul was given a deeper revelation of the meaning of the veil worn by Moses (Exodus 34:29-35). Why did Moses put a veil over his face?
2. The word *veil* appears four times in II Corinthians 3:14-16. This veil is not sheer like a bridal veil, but is more like a thick curtain that you cannot see through at all. The Jews clung to the Law as a means of salvation not understanding or accepting Jesus as the fulfillment of the Old Testament. Write what you learn about the veil from the following verses:
	1. verse 14b
	2. verse 15
	3. verse 16
		1. According to these verses where is this veil?
		2. How does this help explain the resistance to the gospel when witnessing?
	4. What does Galatians 2:16 declare about trying to gain righteousness through the Law?
3. The Law is described as a yoke of bondage in Galatians 5:1. Consider the contrast to this as you write II Corinthians 3:17 here.
4. Christians are not only free from the bondage of the Law but are also free from spiritual blindness when reading the scriptures. Write down one thought you have when you think about the veil of blindness being taken from you?
5. II Corinthians 3:18 should inspire and motivate every believer. *What a mirror sees, it reflects, and it can only reflect what it receives*. When we spend time beholding the Lord we can’t help but reflect His glory to the world around us. This glory is displayed not so much outwardly in the face, but inwardly in our character.
	1. With this in mind suggest a few practical ways of beholding the glory of the Lord. Print the promise in II Corinthians 3:18.
	2. Is there anything that can block our view and hinder us from beholding Him?

**Anchored in** –*When one turns to the Lord, the veil is taken away*. What a marvelous promise! There is nothing hindering our view and access to God. Take advantage of the opportunity you have been given and spend some time with the Lord to behold His glory.

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***So we may boldly say:***

***“The LORD is my helper;***

 ***I will not fear. What can man do to me?”***

**Hebrews 13:6**

**Sixth Day- STAND in Liberty**

Perhaps the most remarkable yet least utilized privileges we have been given in Christ is the liberty and freedom of access to God. Unfortunately, many of us are so busy and occupied with the cares of this life that we don’t take advantage of this incredible blessing. Sure, we may glance here or there, but how often do we really spend some time beholding Him either in the study of the Word or in prayer? There appears to be a direct correlation between our sanctification and our spending time with our eyes fixed on Jesus. II Corinthians 3:18 says, *But we all, with unveiled face, beholding as in a mirror the glory of the Lord, are being transformed into the same image from glory to glory, just as by the Spirit of the Lord*. The more we spend time, not in mere glances, but truly beholding the glory of the Lord the more we will become like Jesus. This is the missing piece for many of us who struggle to have victory in our faith. Did you realize we have something that will change our perspective of trials and persecution? We have a clear view of our Savior, our sufficiency, who loves us and will enable us to *stand* in the midst of life’s storms.

1. Most of have heard of Pastor Saeed Abedini who is a current prisoner of Jesus Christ in Iran. He was put in prison for simply being a Christian in a Muslim dominant country. Have you wondered what is sustaining Saeed in the midst of the brutal physical beatings and harsh ridicule from the abusive prison guards? This is a portion of a letter that Pastor Saeed wrote to his wife, Naghmeh:

*It is during these harsh conditions, that I deeply need God's Saving Grace so that I can be the fragrant scent of Christ in the dark house of Evin prison. I have often seen the Shining Morning Star in the darkness of this prison and I have seen His amazing and supernatural works. Oh, how beautiful is seeing the light of the Shining Morning Star of Christ in such evil darkness*.

* 1. Which words, in Pastor Saeed’s statement, can you relate to our study in II Corinthians?
	2. How does this minister to you personally?
1. Stephen was an early church saint who was known for being both full of faith and filled with the Holy Spirit. He was so bold and confident in his faith in Christ that he stood before the Jewish counsel, who were still blinded in their self-righteousness, and Stephen declared that Jesus is God.
	1. Paul wrote*, we are being transformed into the same image from glory to glory.* Read Acts 6:15 and record what you see:
	2. The Jewish council members were so bothered by Stephen’s words that the Bible tells us they were cut to the heart and actually gnashed their teeth. Are you wondering how Stephen was able to have the *countenance of an angel* in the midst of such persecution? Read Acts 7:54-60.
		1. What do you notice about Stephen’s statements in Acts 7:55-56?
		2. How does this encourage you today?
2. Lilias Trotter, born in 1853, was a brilliant artist whose talent opened the doors to wealth and influence. Her other love was missions. After struggling in prayer for two years, Trotter came to the conclusion that she must lay down her love of art in order to fix her eyes solely on Jesus, and on His calling to the mission field. She subsequently served for more than 38 years as a missionary to Muslims of Algeria. Below is a remarkable quote from Ms. Trotter that show her absolute devotion to Jesus::

*It is easy to find out whether our lives are focused, and if so, where the focus lies. Where do our thoughts settle when consciousness comes back in the morning? Where do they swing back when the pressure is off during the day? Dare to have it out with God, and ask Him to show you whether or not all is focused on Christ and His Glory. Turn your soul's vision to Jesus, and look and look at Him, and a strange dimness will come over all that is apart from Him.*

These words of devotion written by Lilias Trotter served as the inspiration for Helen H. Lemmel, who wrote the famous hymn, *Turn Your Eyes Upon Jesus*

**Anchored In –** When we spend time away from our worries and cares and behold the glory of the Lord, our countenance changes and we are no longer consumed by our circumstances. If we are to *stand*, it is important that we are facing the right direction. *Turn your eyes upon Jesus Look full in His wonderful face, and the things of earth will grow strangely dim, In the light of His glory and grace*. Journal your thoughts:

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***The LORD is near to all who call upon Him, to all who call upon Him in truth***

**Psalm 144:18**