

A LETTER FROM GOD

If I live a godly life, it is an epistle (a letter) from God which proclaims to a skeptical world the Holy Spirit's power to change lives.

KEY POINTS

- ❖ After the apostle Paul's Damascus road experience (see Acts 9:1-18), he was faced with a host of skeptics who believed someone like him could not be truly converted; that his "conversion" was nothing more than a ploy to get on the "inside" and gain knowledge about those who were followers of "The Way."
- ❖ So as Paul wrote to the Corinthian church, he made a very simple argument concerning his integrity and the validity of his ministry and apostleship. Paraphrasing, he said, "Everyone sees you. They know the reality of the change that has taken place in you. You are my living, breathing reference letter, and you validate my ministry by the life you live" (2 Corinthians 3:2).
- ❖ Then Paul takes a big leap forward in verse 3. Basically, he says, "You are God's letter telling the world that the gospel works and has the power to deliver sinners from Satan's kingdom."
- ❖ Our lives should have the same impact on those around us.
- ❖ Exodus 19 and 20 speak about Israel's experience as God came descended upon Mount Sinai and spoke the Ten Commandments to them.
- ❖ Paul explained that Moses delivered a set of laws, rules and commandments to Israel, which was totally impossible for a human being to perfectly fulfill; therefore, all stand guilty before God as lawbreakers.
- ❖ The final outcome of this condemnation is death and separation from God (Rom. 5:20, 6:23a).
- ❖ The deliverance of this Law, coming directly from the mouth of God, required that the people consecrate themselves for two days and wash their clothes in preparation to receive it. They could not venture close and touch Mount Sinai, on pain of death.
- ❖ There was thunder, lightning, a thick cloud enveloping the mountain and the sound of a blaring trumpet as the Lord descended on the mountain with fire, smoke and an earthquake.
- ❖ Moses met with God and then had to cover his face, in which the glory of God was now shining.
- ❖ All of this glory was displayed to usher in a Law that had no other outcome than to confirm Israel in their sin and condemnation.
- ❖ Paul made an interesting comparison: "...if the ministry of death...was glorious...how will the ministry of the Spirit not be more glorious? (See 2 Cor. 3:7-8.)
- ❖ And the obvious rhetorical answer is.....the ministry of the Spirit is much more glorious! "For if what is passing away was glorious, what remains is much more glorious" (2 Cor. 3:7-8; also read Romans 5).
- ❖ Although this awe-inspiring Spirit life is so much more glorious than life under the Law, it became available through an incredibly simple and inauspicious birth.

KEY SCRIPTURES: 2 Corinthians 3; Romans 8:9a, 5:1-2, 5-10, 15, 17, 20-21

- ❖ A baby—Jesus—was born to Mary and Joseph, an unknown young couple from Nazareth just starting out in life.
- ❖ "Emmanuel, God with us" (Matthew 1:23) was born in Bethlehem, wrapped in swaddling clothes and laid in a manger.
- ❖ No trumpet, thunder, lightning, earthquake or fire this time – just a little baby in a manger heralding a glorious new life in the Spirit.
- ❖ The 'Spirit life' we are privileged to live today can't be compared to the lives of those under the old covenant. We have Christ in us, the hope of glory (Colossians 1:27). We are, individually and collectively, the temple of the Holy Spirit (1 Corinthians 6:19).
- ❖ The power of God through the gifts of the Spirit has been graciously given to us (see 1 Cor. 12). Truly, we are blessed and highly favoured!
- ❖ The letter of our lives must be easily read and understood by all we encounter, with no ambiguity or confusion. Our lights must shine before men so that they see our good works and glorify our Father in heaven (Matt. 5:16).
- ❖ The beauty of Jesus must be clearly seen in us, never hidden by the manners and make-up of the world. It must be clear to all who read our lives that we live in God's kingdom of light, not the devil's kingdom of darkness.
- ❖ Moses' face had to be veiled, "but we all, with unveiled face, [behold] as in a mirror the glory of the Lord" (2 Cor. 3:18a).
- ❖ This glory will not fade as the glory of the Law faded, but it increases as we are "transformed into the same image from glory to glory, just as by the Spirit of the Lord" (2 Cor. 3:18b).
- ❖ This is how we live as God's letter to the world.

DISCUSSION/REFLECTION TOOLS

1. Describe what anticipating/receiving the First Covenant would have been like (see Ex. 19, 20).
2. How were the Ten Commandments recorded and remembered?
3. Take 5-10 minutes and share as many First Covenant laws as you can recall. Over the years, how well were they observed? Explain.
4. What are the commandments of the New Covenant (according to Jesus)? How are they recorded and remembered?
5. Do you think they are generally well-observed? Explain.

Prayer Time

Lord, please let the letter that is 'my life' clearly tell others about You. In Jesus' name, amen.

Start-up: When was the last time you received a personal (social) letter via the postal service? From whom/where and for what purpose was it sent?

WEEK OF SUNDAY, DECEMBER 15, 2019

NOTES

Meditate as you read through/listen to this week's message. If it helps, use symbols for your notes.

- ✓ (Reminds me/Confirms) 💡 (New idea) 🤔 (Think about)
- 👉 (Do this) ❤️ (Speaks to my heart) ↔️ (Must share)

PRAYER NEEDS/THANKSGIVINGS

Go deeper with your Life Group family.
CONNECT-REFLECT-DISSECT THE WORD
Your Life Group ~ Your Lifeline