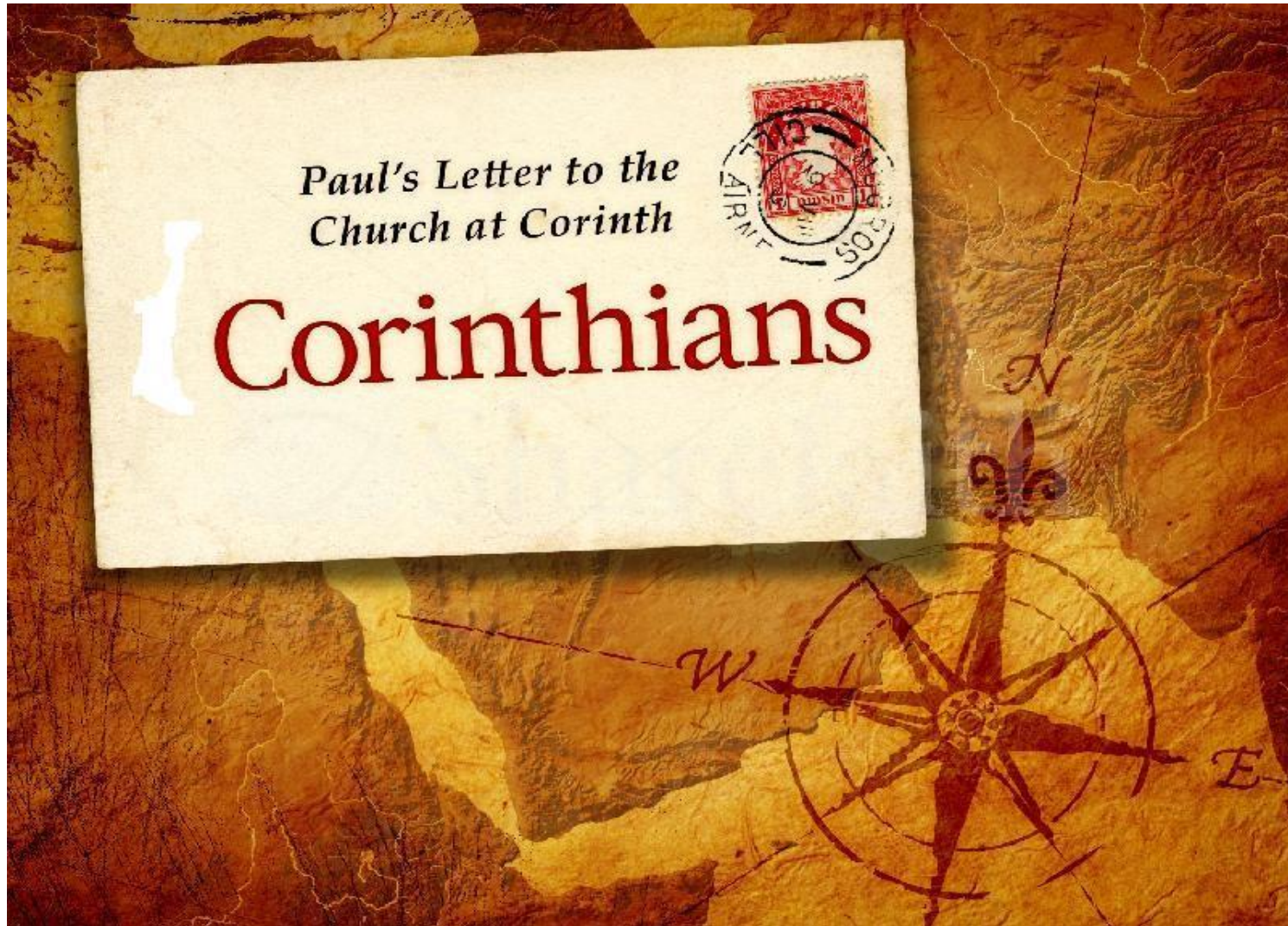


2 Cor. 3:1-3 Christ's life seen through "letters of Christ"



Outline Chp 2:14 to 3:1-16 *



Christ's life & ministry:

- is triumphant 2:14-17
- is manifested through epistles of Christ 3:1-3
- is in His sufficiency, not ours 3:4-6
- is not legal, but spiritual & glorious 3:7-11
- is the revealing of the glory of Christ 3:12-16

* Hal Molloy



¹⁵ For we are a fragrance of Christ to God among those who are being saved and among those who are perishing; ¹⁶ to the one an aroma from death to death, to the other an aroma from life to life. And who is adequate for these things?

And who is adequate for these things?

adequate - *hikanos* - when said of persons, it means competent or worthy

- And who is qualified [fit and sufficient] for [doing] these things? Amplified
- “the things” are the fragrance/aroma of Christ.
- The doing of these things is Christ’s life being lived out in the believer’s life.
- The next verse will explain how Paul can be adequate.



2 Cor 2:17 For we are not like [the] many, peddling the word of God, but as from sincerity, but as from God, we speak in Christ in the sight of God.

we are [not] – *eimi* – we continually exist not like the many

- This verse gives us a contrast between **the many** and the **we** [Paul & all true servants].

the many - *hoi polloi* – the masses - meaning :

"as the most do", referring to the
Judaizing teachers - Zodhiates

peddling - *kapēleuō* - to peddle, to hucksterize; to do
anything for sordid personal advantage

- Paul is accusing the many at Corinth of huckstering the word of God.

Merryman

2 Cor 2:17 For we are not like [the] many, peddling the word of God, but as from sincerity, but as from God, we speak in Christ in the sight of God.



we speak in Christ – present tense continuous action

- in our living union with Christ or in fellowship with Christ or as we walk by the Spirit

Three characteristics of our [Paul & true ministers] speech **in the sight of God** – as though God were physically present - speaks of responsibility

as [out] **from sincerity** [as a source] – Christ's life in us

as [out] **from God** [as a source] – from God's word

- This is in contrast to the peddlers of the word of God.

Paul's description of a faithful minister*



1. His competency is not out from himself but out from God.
2. Competency in ministry apparently comes as one rightly handles God's word.
3. Competency has nothing to do with human ability; it must come from God.
4. A true minister does not corrupt the word of God by spurious or foreign mixtures to make it palatable.
5. He does not traffic in the word of God or use it for personal gain [what a huckster does].
6. He speaks out from sincerity or purity that God is its true source.
7. He speaks always as if God were present [physically]

Today's Verses



- ¹ Are we beginning to commend ourselves again? Or do we need, as some, letters of commendation to you or from you?
- ² You are our letter, written in our hearts, known and read by all men;
- ³ being manifested that you are a letter of Christ, cared for 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.

Chapter 3 Metaphors



Paul will now build a metaphor based on the normal parts of a letter*

- The writer of the letter
- The message of the letter
- The stationary of the letter
- The ink used to write the letter

The metaphor will be as follow:

- The writer will be Paul.
- The message will be Christ.
- The stationary will be the human heart.
- The ink will be the Holy Spirit.

* McCalley



¹ Are we beginning to commend ourselves again?
Or do we need, as some, letters of commendation to
you or from you?

Are we beginning to commend ourselves again?

commend - *synistēmi* – of persons, to introduce, present
to one's acquaintance for favorable notice;
hence, to commend, present as worthy

Or do we need, as some, letters of commendation to you
or from you?

- Representatives of the Jewish authorities in Judea carried letters of commendation to the synagogues. Acts 9:2; 22:5
- The early Christians evidently continued this practice.

Acts 18:7; Rom. 16:1

Constable



¹ Are we beginning to commend ourselves again?
Or do we need, as some, letters of commendation to you or from you?

letters of commendation (cont.)*

- The good news ! - The Lord is the one who commends us (presents us worthy). 2 Cor. 10:18 For not he that commends himself is approved, but whom the Lord commends.
 - The results of His ministry through us is the proof of His commendation. (next verse)
 - Paul, nor we, representing the Lord need such a letter to minister.
 - We share in Christ's authority since we are identified with Him. Rom 6:3-6, Eph 2:6
- * Molloy

² You are our letter, written in our hearts, known and read by all men;



- Now Paul will answer the question in verse 1 by using the following metaphors of a letter, stationary, ink, the writer and the message.

subject: **you** - Corinthians

verb: **are** - *eimi* – the state in which someone or something continuously exist
(present, indicative, active)

subj comp: **our letter**

- “our letter” identifies the subject: Corinthians believers
- You Corinthians continuously exist as our letter in our hearts.
- This is in contrast to “the some” that need physical letters of commendation.

² You are our letter, written in our hearts, known and read by all men;



written [having been written] in our hearts

having been written - *engraphō* - denotes "to write in"
(perfect, passive)

- It was written in the past and remains written into the present [permanently written] in our hearts.
- You are our letter which has been permanently engraved in our hearts. Wuest

[being] known and [being] read by all men

- Both known and read are present tense continuous action.
- It is all men [none excluded] that perceive this.

³ being manifested that you are a letter of Christ,
cared for 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.



- Paul now adds more details about these letters written in the hearts of the Corinthians and all believers.

being manifested - *phaneroō* - (present, passive, participle)

- to be manifested, become or be made manifest, known [openly shown] Zodihiates
- to be manifested is to be revealed or made known in one's true character (Christ's character)
- a participle gives additional information of who we are
- passive voice: the subject (you) is being acted upon
- Christ is manifesting His glory through you - you are not trying to imitate Him. Molloy

³ being manifested that you are a letter of Christ,
cared for 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.



that – *hoti* – because

you are – *eimi* - the state in which someone or something
continuously exists [permanent condition]

- present tense: continuous action, i.e moment by moment
- active voice: the action is through you
- indicative mood: it's a reality in your life

Molloy

³ being manifested that you are a letter of Christ,
cared for 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.



a letter of Christ

letter – *epistole* - a written message, a letter

- a predicate nominative - which identifies the subject:
this is who you are, an epistle of Christ*
- As a letter you give a message (spoken or unspoken) to
those reading us.*
- The content of the message is about Christ & His glory.*
- You are those who are openly shown to be a letter
which exhibits Christ. Wuest

* Molloy

³ being manifested that you are a letter of Christ, cared for 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.



cared for by us

- Paul and Timothy and others with Paul

written not with ink but with the Spirit of the living God

- The “letter of Christ” will be a letter written by the Spirit of God [The Holy Spirit].

not on tablets of stone but on tablets of human hearts

- The “letter of Christ” will be written on the human hearts of believers.

³ being manifested that you are a letter of Christ, cared for 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.



Why the distinction between ink/tablets of stone & man's heart?*

- The difference is between objective truth & subjective truth.
- **Objective truth:**
 - Definition: It is God's word (in ink & on tablets) which is factual, concrete, real, impartial, unbiased, and unaffected by emotions.
 - A person can read about God's objective truth & have knowledge of it but it may not be written on his/her heart.
 - Objective truth is the glory of Christ [who He is].

* Molloy

³ being manifested that you are a letter of Christ, cared for 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.



Subjective truth:*

- Is God's objective truth (in ink or tablets) of the glory of Christ which you behold and believe (trust).
- Upon believing, the Holy Spirit writes the glory of Christ in your heart; it dwells there permanently. This is full knowledge or subjective truth. - John 16:13-16
- The Holy Spirit will manifest the glory of Christ through you as an epistle of Christ.
- We may be the only epistle (letter) that someone may read about Christ and His glory.

* Molloy

Final Thoughts *



- The Corinthians, too, were such letters that God had written. God's method of commending the gospel to others is through the supernatural change that he writes on the lives of believers by His Holy Spirit.
- In this instance the transformation of the Corinthians' lives was the strongest proof of the genuineness of Paul's apostleship.
- For Paul to have offered other letters written on paper would have been insulting and superfluous.
- What God had said about Paul by blessing his ministry with fruit in Corinth spoke more eloquently than any letter that he could have carried on his person. * Constable