

**"The New Covenant"**

**Part 2**

**2 Corinthians 3:6-18**

**Introduction:** It has been 4 weeks since we have been in our study of 2 Corinthians so for that reason we need to do a short review to catch our minds up to where we are. We are currently in chapter 3 and the last time we were together we looked briefly at verse 6 and then we journeyed to other passages for our message. The topic which we were considering however is mentioned in 2 Corinthians 3:6.

**Notice 2 Corinthians 3:6**

Paul is writing this letter to the Corinthians to clear up the muddy waters which his critics had stirred up. Now one of the groups which plagued Paul in his ministry was a group of Jews who would often come into a church and do all they could to inject legalism. They would come into the church and they would do all they could to place the body of Christ under the Law. They were blinded to New Covenant and they were holding tightly to the Old Covenant.

Now I need to explain something that will really help you to better understand how these Judaizers operated in Paul's day. The Law was divided into two parts. One part was moral and the other part was ceremonial. So there was the moral part which would include the Ten Commandments and then there was the side that included the ceremonies and the rituals. All of the Law was by the way fulfilled in Jesus Christ. As we have talked about before I again remind you that every ceremony and ever ritual was a shadow of Jesus Christ.

**Colossians 2:16-17a**

<sup>16</sup> *Let no man therefore judge you in meat, or in drink, or in respect of an holyday, or of the new moon, or of the sabbath days:*

<sup>17</sup> *Which are a shadow of things to come;*

Now let me get back to the Law being in two parts again. The moral part of the Law included the 10 Commandments.

1. *You shall have no other gods before Me.*
2. *You shall not make idols.*

3. *You shall not take the name of the LORD your God in vain.*
4. *Remember the Sabbath day, to keep it holy.*
5. *Honor your father and your mother.*
6. *You shall not murder.*
7. *You shall not commit adultery.*
8. *You shall not steal.*
9. *You shall not bear false witness against your neighbor.*
10. *You shall not covet.*

This was the part of the Law which man was not able to keep. So the Judaizers then focused upon the ceremonial side of the Law in an attempt to make up for what they could not keep on the moral side of the Law.

We can see this in what happened at the church of Galatia for it was at that church where the Judaizers came in and taught that circumcision was a requirement for salvation. They wanted to pull the believers at Corinth into ceremonialism. We see this in many churches today where their services exist of nothing more than ceremonies and rituals. God despises ceremonialism and it accomplishes absolutely nothing. It is an attempt by man to please God by works.

Now let us get our minds back to Corinth. This is what was happening as the Judaizers had made their way in. They were attempting to put the believers at Corinth under the Law or under the Old Covenant. But the Old Covenant had been replaced with a New Covenant. If you remember the Old Covenant was a conditional covenant which means it was based upon Israel's obedience in keeping the Law.

### **Exodus 19:3-8**

<sup>3</sup> *And Moses went up unto God, and the LORD called unto him out of the mountain, saying, Thus shalt thou say to the house of Jacob, and tell the children of Israel;*

<sup>4</sup> *Ye have seen what I did unto the Egyptians, and how I bare you on eagles' wings, and brought you unto myself.*

<sup>5</sup> *Now therefore, **if ye will obey my voice indeed, and keep my covenant,** then ye shall be a peculiar treasure unto me above all people: for all the earth is mine:*

<sup>6</sup> *And ye shall be unto me a kingdom of priests, and an holy nation. These are the words which thou shalt speak unto the children of Israel.*

<sup>7</sup> And Moses came and called for the elders of the people, and laid before their faces all these words which the LORD commanded him.

<sup>8</sup> And all the people answered together, and said, All that the LORD hath spoken we will do. And Moses returned the words of the people unto the LORD.

The New covenant however is much different. It is not based upon man's faithfulness or obedience but instead it is based upon the obedience and the faithfulness of Jesus Christ. Under the New Covenant Jesus did for us what we could not do for ourselves. He fulfilled the Law, He paid our sin debt, and he has been exalted to the right hand of the Father where He intercedes as our Great High Priest. Under the New Covenant the church is not under the Law but instead we are under GRACE. GRACE is unmerited favor and under the New Covenant God has extended His GRACE to us in Christ and He has given to us what we do not deserve and that is eternal life. He can do this because Jesus Christ satisfied the righteous demands of the Father on our behalf. So as we step into 2 Corinthians 3:6-18 Paul is going to explain why the New Covenant is better than the Old Covenant. These verses are much like a mini edition of the book of Hebrews.

### I. The Life of the Spirit

#### Notice 2 Corinthians 3:6

There are several thoughts here in verse 6 that we need to look at. The word "letter" here refers to the Law and most likely to the Law which was written on the stone tablets which was the 10 Commandments. We shall consider it as the Law or Old Testament. Paul explains here that God had made him NOT a minister of the Law but instead God made him a minister of the Spirit. He then goes on and he explains why this is. He states that LETTER killeth but the Spirit giveth life. Now as I read this I raise a question, "What does Paul mean when he states that the LETTER killeth?"

Now let us remember that the LETTER here refers to the Mosaic Law. So Paul is stating that the Law is a killer. The reason he says this is because the Law condemns man in his sin. Let me give you some examples of what the Law states.

- ✓ A person who cursed their parents was to be put to death.
- ✓ A person who practiced witchcraft was to be put to death.
- ✓ Anyone who broke the Sabbath was to be put to death.
- ✓ Anyone who was a kidnapper was to be put to death.
- ✓ Anyone who gave a false testimony in a capital case was to be put to death.

- ✓ Many sexual sins carried the death penalty.

This is just a few examples but we can see that the Law was a killer. Then we read the words of James.

**James 2:10**

<sup>10</sup> *For whosoever shall keep the whole law, and yet offend in one point, he is guilty of all.*

As we read this verse we can see that there is NO ONE who would be able to escape the condemnation of the Law.

Now there is something else which we need to understand. This does not mean that the Law was a "bad thing". The Law was a good thing for it had a very important purpose.

**Romans 7:7**

<sup>7</sup> *What shall we say then? Is the law sin? God forbid. Nay, I had not known sin, but by the law: for I had not known lust, except the law had said, Thou shalt not covet.*

**Romans 3:19-20**

<sup>19</sup> *Now we know that what things soever the law saith, it saith to them who are under the law: that every mouth may be stopped, and all the world may become guilty before God.*

<sup>20</sup> *Therefore by the deeds of the law there shall no flesh be justified in his sight: for by the law is the knowledge of sin.*

The Law brought the knowledge of sin so the Law was not a "bad thing". The problem was not with the Law the problem is with man because man is not able to keep the Law.

So for anyone to put man under the Law is to put him under that which condemns him to death and that which he is not able to keep. Let me show you something from Acts.

**Acts 15:1**

*And certain men which came down from Judaea taught the brethren, and said, Except ye be circumcised after the manner of Moses, ye cannot be saved.*

Here were the Judaizers trying to place the believers under the Law. Then Peter stands up and makes a powerful statement.

**Acts 15:7-10**

<sup>7</sup> And when there had been much disputing, Peter rose up, and said unto them, Men and brethren, ye know how that a good while ago God made choice among us, that the Gentiles by my mouth should hear the word of the gospel, and believe.

<sup>8</sup> And God, which knoweth the hearts, bare them witness, giving them the Holy Ghost, even as he did unto us;

<sup>9</sup> And put no difference between us and them, purifying their hearts by faith.

<sup>10</sup> Now therefore why tempt ye God, to put a yoke upon the neck of the disciples, which neither our fathers nor we were able to bear?

Now let us get back to 2 Corinthians 3.

### Notice 2 Corinthians 3:6 again

In contrast to the "letter" Paul tells us that he was made a minister of the Spirit for it is the Spirit that gives life. To place someone under the Law is to place them under the death penalty but to place them under the Spirit is to give them life.

Under the Old Covenant the people were required to keep God's moral Law which was impossible. But under the New Covenant we are told that Jesus did for us what we could not do in that He kept the Law, He paid the penalty for our sins and therefore He satisfied the demands of the Father. We are told that our responsibility is to repent and place our faith in the finished work of Jesus Christ. It is by grace through faith that we are given eternal life.

### Ephesians 2:1-6

And you hath he quickened, who were dead in trespasses and sins;

<sup>2</sup> Wherein in time past ye walked according to the course of this world, according to the prince of the power of the air, the spirit that now worketh in the children of disobedience:

<sup>3</sup> Among whom also we all had our conversation in times past in the lusts of our flesh, fulfilling the desires of the flesh and of the mind; and were by nature the children of wrath, even as others.

<sup>4</sup> But God, who is rich in mercy, for his great love wherewith he loved us,

<sup>5</sup> Even when we were dead in sins, hath quickened us together with Christ, (by grace ye are saved;)

<sup>6</sup> And hath raised us up together, and made us sit together in heavenly places in Christ Jesus:

**Romans 8:2-10**

<sup>2</sup> For the law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus hath made me free from the law of sin and death.

<sup>3</sup> For what the law could not do, in that it was weak through the flesh, God sending his own Son in the likeness of sinful flesh, and for sin, condemned sin in the flesh:

<sup>4</sup> That the righteousness of the law might be fulfilled in us, who walk not after the flesh, but after the Spirit.

<sup>5</sup> For they that are after the flesh do mind the things of the flesh; but they that are after the Spirit the things of the Spirit.

<sup>6</sup> For to be carnally minded is death; but to be spiritually minded is life and peace.

<sup>7</sup> Because the carnal mind is enmity against God: for it is not subject to the law of God, neither indeed can be.

<sup>8</sup> So then they that are in the flesh cannot please God.

<sup>9</sup> But ye are not in the flesh, but in the Spirit, if so be that the Spirit of God dwell in you. Now if any man have not the Spirit of Christ, he is none of his.

<sup>10</sup> And if Christ be in you, the body is dead because of sin; but the Spirit is life because of righteousness.

**Conclusion:**

In Paul's day there was a constant danger of legalism getting within the church. Today in society there is the big concern among fundamental churches about the danger of liberalism getting into the church. This is a danger today but we must be sure that while we are guarding the front door against liberalism that Satan does not come in the back door with legalism. Both of these are extremely damaging within a church. Legalism will take the joy and the liberty which we have in Christ and strip it right from our lives.

**Notice 2 Corinthians 3:17**