

JESUS HAS MADE US A LETTER TO BE KNOWN AND READ BY ALL

2 CORINTHIANS 3:1-6

¹ Are we beginning to commend ourselves again?

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

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.

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. (ESV)

Paul tells the Corinthians they do not need a written letter of recommendation to know he is a true messenger of Christ. Rather, their church community—transformed by the Gospel and empowered by the Holy Spirit—serves as a “letter” which proves Paul’s ministry and message were truly from God.

So, what’s that mean for us?

- Like the Corinthian believers, we should see our church as being a “letter from Christ.”
- It is a loving, Christ-like community that best authenticates the Gospel message we proclaim.
- Our lives together tell a story of God’s grace to be celebrated by us and known by others.
- If any of our mission sounds intimidating, remember that our sufficiency comes from Christ.

TRANSFORMED

Jesus Has Made Us a Letter to be Known and Read by All

July 4, 2021

Open: What is something you used to doubt but have since learned to be confident of?

Read & Discuss: 2 Corinthians 2:17-3:6

1. In verse 1, Paul asks the Corinthian church a couple of rhetorical questions. How would you describe the point Paul is trying to communicate through these rhetorical questions? How do we know whom to listen to today?
2. Paul extends the idea of a letter of recommendation as a metaphor in verses 2-3. What comparisons and contrasts does Paul make between a written letter of recommendation and the metaphorical letter that the church should be?
3. What does Paul mean that this letter is written on our "hearts," referenced in both verse 2 and 3? How does what was written on our hearts become "known and read by all" (v. 2)? When others in our community observe and "read" our church, what should we want them to conclude about Christ and His Gospel? How could we do this better?
4. What does it look like to base our confidence in God, as Paul encourages in verses 4-6? Why do we so often look for things outside of God to give us confidence in our life and ministry? What has God called you to do that you still feel insufficient to accomplish, and how could you better trust Him?
5. Paul speaks in verse 6 of his team as being ministers of a new covenant. In what ways is the new covenant different from the old covenant? (*See Jeremiah 31:31-33, Ezekiel 36:26-27, or Hebrews 9:15.*) How are we to be ministers of this new covenant?
6. Three times in this passage Paul references the Holy Spirit (vv. 3, 6). How is the work of the Spirit significant for what Paul is saying to the Corinthian church? What are some ways that the Holy Spirit works in us to "give life"?

Apply: Reflect for a minute on what aspect of the Gospel you'd like to communicate with your life to one or two specific people (family, friends, neighbors, even strangers) in this upcoming week. After reflecting share as you are comfortable so others may encourage and pray for you.

Pray: Ask God to help our church more clearly and faithfully communicate truths about Christ and His Gospel to our community and world. Ask God to strengthen, empower, and embolden each of us as we seek to play our part in the letter that Christ is writing through us.

2 Corinthians 2:17-3:6

¹⁷ For we are not, like so many, peddlers of God's word, but as men of sincerity, as commissioned by God, in the sight of God we speak in Christ.

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

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. (ESV)