*DAILY DEVOTIONAL*

August 27 – September 1

*The Holy Spirit*

**Monday, August 27 2 Corinthians 3:1-3**

*“Written with the Spirit of the Living God”*

Letters of recommendation were important in the days of the early church. This was the only way a young congregation had of knowing whether a new teacher who appeared on the scene had the right credentials and could be trusted. In the case of the church in Corinth, some strangers had shown up with an impressive letter of introduction from someone in Jerusalem and had been received into the confidence of the church on the basis of the letter. After ingratiating themselves with the members, they had begun to be critical of Paul and his ministry, and had even asked the church if Paul had come to them with a letter of introduction such as they had, implying that Paul was a man without proper credentials.

Paul’s response was that he didn’t need a letter of recommendation written with ink on paper. His credentials were the Corinthian Christians themselves upon whose hearts the Holy Spirit had written a “letter” from Christ himself. Their commitment to Christ was evidence of the work of God’s Spirit through the ministry of Paul.

*Spirit of the Living God, continue to work the Father’s will in my heart. Amen.*

**Tuesday, August 28 2 Corinthians 3:4-6**

*“Ministers of a new covenant”*

The word “testament” and “covenant” are fundamentally the same word in the Hebrew and Greek. So in the simplest understanding, the Bible is divided between two covenants: the old covenant and the new covenant. The old covenant was enacted by God through the law and Moses. The new covenant was enacted by God through the person and work of Christ. Jesus states this explicitly while meeting with his disciples in the Upper Room on the night before his crucifixion: “This cup is the *new covenant* in my blood for the forgiveness of sin.”

Paul’s early life had been devoted to trying to keep every aspect of the old covenant’s written law code, and he had zealously persecuted those who had given their life to Christ and, in his view, turned their back on the old covenant. But after his Damascus Road experience with the living Christ everything was changed because the new covenant was written in his heart by the Spirit of God. When he wrote, “The letter kills, but the Spirit gives life” (verse 6), he was reflecting on his own experience.

*You have given me life, Holy Spirit, and you live in me today. Amen.*

**Wednesday, August 29 2 Corinthians 3:7-11**

*“Will not the ministry of the Spirit be even more glorious?”*

While Paul recognized that there was glory in the giving of the Law through Moses in the old covenant, he felt that the ministry of the Spirit in the new covenant was even more glorious. He saw every effort to mix certain elements of the old covenant with the new covenant, such as requiring Gentiles to be circumcised (an old covenant requirement) before they could become Christians (a new covenant reality), as a misrepresentation of the gospel of Jesus Christ and an undermining of the ministry of the Spirit. Instead of freedom and liberty he felt that this mixing introduced death (verse 7) and condemnation (verse 9).

The old covenant became the religion of struggling to impress God with one’s goodness, of endless rules and regulations governing every conceivable area of one’s life, of outward conformity and worrying about appearance, and of spiritual pride and competitiveness. The new covenant freed one from the struggle and, through the ministry of the Spirit, applied the death and resurrection of Christ to every believer. Salvation is in Christ; it is no longer in the law.

*Your ministry in me is glorious, Spirit of God, for it has saved me. Amen.*

*DAILY DEVOTIONAL*

August 27 – September 1

*The Holy Spirit*

**Thursday, August 30 2 Corinthians 3:12-15**

*“Only by believing in Christ is the veil removed”*

Paul illustrates the difference between the old and the new covenant, the ministry of the law and the ministry of the Spirit, with the story of the giving of the Law on Mount Sinai by God to Moses. He reminds his readers of the true reasons for Moses’ putting a veil over his face after coming down the mountain from the presence of the Lord. The veil was to keep the Israelites from seeing that the glory of the old covenant was fading. There would come a day when it would be superseded by a new covenant. In Christ, and through the ministry of the Spirit, that day had come for the Corinthian Christians, and it has come for us.

But, as is the case with so many people in our world today, the majority of the Jews in Paul’s day refused to believe in Christ. And so, the veil remained, causing them to continue to put their hope in an old covenant which led to death. Only faith in Christ causes the veil to be removed, leading to a new covenant understanding of God’s mercy and grace, and bringing the believer into an eternal relationship with our Heavenly Father.

*We praise you for lifting the veil, Holy Spirit, that we may see Christ clearly. Amen.*

**Friday, August 31 2 Corinthians 3:16-18**

*“Changed into his glorious image”*

Paul is teaching that when the Spirit of Christ comes into a life the “veil is taken away” (verse 16), and he or she is now able to understand God’s message with his or her heart. Such understanding leads to the freedom he speaks of in verse 17, a freedom that is ours through the Spirit of the Lord who dwells within us. This is an application of what Jesus declared, “And you will know the truth, and the truth will set you free . . . So if the Son sets you free, you will be free indeed” (John 8:32, 36). The new covenant has set us free from the ceremonies, restrictions, and limitations of the old covenant.

The consequence of the veil being removed, leading to understanding and freedom, is found in verse 18 which promises that every believer is being transformed into the likeness of Christ by the power of the Spirit who lives within. The Spirit is God in us, changing us from the inside-out so that we are becoming more and more like Christ, thereby reflecting Christ’s glory in the world in which we live.

*Transform me, Holy Spirit, into the likeness of Christ that I may reflect his glory. Amen.*

**Saturday, September 1 2 Corinthians 4:1-7**

*“His light shinning in our hearts”*

The transforming presence of Christ in us through the Holy Spirit enables our ministry in the world and keeps us from losing heart (verse 1). We are empowered to sincerely declare and live the truth of Christ in a way that deeply affects the conscience of those who do not believe (verse 2). Our ministry to the spiritually blind involves a shining forth of the “light of the gospel of the glory of Christ.” Christ is ministering in and through us by his presence within us (verses 3-4).

In keeping with the Spirit’s foundational purpose, which is to bring glory to Christ, we are empowered to die to self and declare Christ as Lord while living as humble servants. We decrease and Christ increases (verse 5). God’s power and light now reside in our hearts, making us agents of the “light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ.” Impact in the lives of those around us proceeds from our intimacy with God (verse 6). Being that we are fragile, like jars of clay, it is clear that the power which emanates from within is from God (verse 7).

*Shine Christ’s light through me, Holy Spirit, that others may see him. Amen.*