Lownes Free Church Sunday Morning – July 22, 2018

The Apostle Paul’s Second letter to the Corinthians

how the Cross changes everything

Text: 2 Corinthians 2:14–3:18 What’s new in the New Covenant?

The Background: How can you look so weak, but be so bold?

Second Corinthians is like a legal brief, an attorney presenting a case. First was a short, conciliatory introduction (1:1-11) expressing common interests, then a section on what caused the misunderstanding (1:12–2:13). The lion’s share of the book (2:14–9:15) is “The Apology,” an explanation of why Paul and the true apostles do things the way they do. The answer is in their message. In contrast to the ways of the world and claims of false teachers, the New Covenant assures victory. This means we can keep an eternal perspective, serve with abandon, and sacrifice generously because God, and not man, is validating their work. The Cross changes everything.

“Confidence”: The Cross guarantees we can not lose.

Paul subtly contrasts himself with the false teachers who had beguiled the Corinthians and caused them to question his legitimacy. First, he needs no letter of recommendation, nor does he work for money (peddle God’s Word). The proof of his ministry lies in the gospel product: the grace-transformed lives of the Corinthians themselves. The soul-stabilizing reality of the glorious New Covenant assures total victory in each and every hearer, converted or not. How can he despair when he can not lose?

The Narrative: (Reading 2 Corinthians is like hearing one side of a phone conversation. But we don’t really have to guess much, since Paul is both explicit and passionate. That said, we’ll be paraphrasing each section to sort out the argument and the not- so -hidden assumptions the Corinthians were making about Paul and his actions.)

(14) Regardless of how our work *seems* to be going, ultimately God is glorified and we are doing our job, whether this or that person receives or rejects us. It is an eternal life and death ministry, so who is up to this? I say that because this is a supernatural endeavor, not a manmade thing. While many are out there for the approval of others, we are sent by God Himself.

(1) So we aren’t about to request or use “letters of recommendation” as others do. YOU are our letter, the validation of our work. The Spirit’s work in your hearts is proof of the power of God’s Word in the gospel, and this is what makes us “competent” to do our job (rather than someone’s approval or cash).

(7) And you can see why we are so bold! Think about it. . .

While the Old Covenant brought condemnation, bondage, and death, the New brings righteousness, freedom, life!

While the Old Covenant came by law, written on stone, the New Covenant comes by Spirit treasured in the heart.

While the Old Covenant glory was fading and temporary, New Covenant glory is permanent and ever growing.

Above all, the Old Covenant left people unchanged; the New Covenant transforms them.

The Challenge: Am I confident and bold in my faith?

***Memory Verse: John 1:14***

1. Do I realize that the gospel alone is the path to salvation, as proclaimed by Jesus Himself and His apostles? John 14:6

2. Am I living by law or grace? Am I being transformed by looking to Jesus? Do I fear man rather more than God? John 12:31-43

3. Why is faith strong in some, but weak in others? Possibly because some see glory in Jesus while others do not? Isaiah 53:1-3