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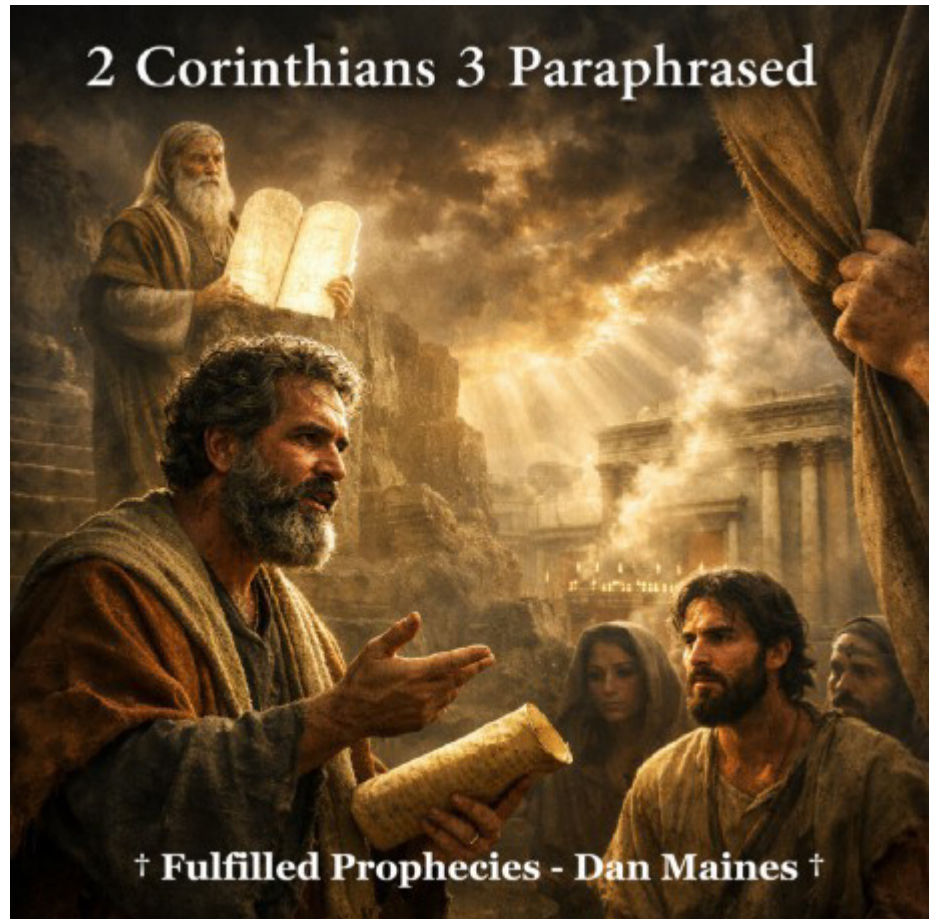
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2 Corinthians 3 Paraphrased



By Dan Maines

2 Corinthians 3 Paraphrased

Introduction

† In this chapter Paul explains the difference between the old covenant written on stone and the new covenant written on hearts.

† He's not attacking the Law itself, he's explaining its purpose and its fulfillment through Christ.

† The Law revealed sin and brought condemnation, but the Spirit brings life and righteousness through the completed work of Jesus (Romans 7:7; Galatians 3:24).

† Paul also shows that the fading glory of the old covenant pointed forward to the lasting glory of the new covenant age.
† From the fulfilled perspective, the fading glory reached its end in the first century when the temple system passed away and the new covenant stood fully revealed.

2 Corinthians 3:1

Are we starting again to recommend ourselves? Or do we need letters of approval for you or from you like some people do?

† Paul answers critics who questioned his authority. His ministry didn't depend on letters of recommendation.

† The Corinthians themselves were the proof of his work because their lives had been changed by the gospel (1 Corinthians 9:2).

† Tertullian wrote that the transformed lives of believers were the strongest testimony of the church's truth.

2 Corinthians 3:2

You yourselves are our letter, written on our hearts, known and read by everyone.

† Instead of written endorsements, Paul says the believers themselves are the visible evidence of his ministry.

† Their lives were like a living letter that the world could read.

† Clement of Alexandria explained that the conduct of believers reveals the teaching of Christ more clearly than written documents.

2 Corinthians 3:3

It's clear that you're a letter from Christ delivered through 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 contrasts two covenants here, stone tablets from Sinai and hearts transformed by the Spirit.

† This echoes Jeremiah's prophecy that God's law would be written on hearts (Jeremiah 31:33).

† The new covenant isn't about external commandments but

internal transformation.

2 Corinthians 3:4

This is the confidence we have toward God through Christ.

† Paul's confidence wasn't in himself but in the authority given through Christ.

† The gospel itself was the source of his boldness.

† Irenaeus taught that the apostles spoke with confidence because Christ had fulfilled the promises of the prophets.

2 Corinthians 3:5

Not that we're capable in ourselves to claim anything as coming from us, but our ability comes from God.

† Paul reminds us that spiritual work is never produced by human strength.

† Ministry power comes from God alone.

† This removes pride and keeps the focus on God's work.

2 Corinthians 3:6

He made us capable servants of a new covenant, not of the letter but of the Spirit, for the letter kills but the Spirit gives life.

† The letter refers to the Law written externally, which exposed sin but couldn't give life.

† The Spirit brings life because the work of redemption has been completed through Christ.

† Early writer Barnabas explained that the new covenant brings life because forgiveness and transformation come through Christ.

2 Corinthians 3:7

Now if the ministry of death, carved in letters on stone, came with glory so that the sons of Israel couldn't look steadily at Moses' face because of its glory, fading though it was,

† The Law had glory because it came from God, but it was temporary.

† The shining face of Moses showed the glory of that covenant.

† Yet even that glory was already fading, showing it wasn't the

final covenant.

2 Corinthians 3:8

how much greater will the ministry of the Spirit be in glory?

† If the old covenant had glory, the new covenant must have far greater glory.

† The Spirit reveals the completed work of Christ and the righteousness now available to believers.

† The contrast shows movement from temporary glory to lasting glory.

2 Corinthians 3:9

If the ministry that brought condemnation had glory, the ministry that brings righteousness overflows with even greater glory.

† The Law condemned because it exposed sin but couldn't remove it.

† The gospel brings righteousness because Christ fulfilled the Law and removed sin.

† This righteousness is given through faith in Christ.

2 Corinthians 3:10

What once had glory has now lost its glory because of the greater glory that has appeared.

† Compared to the glory of Christ and the new covenant, the old covenant glory fades away.

† This doesn't mean the Law was bad, it means its role was temporary.

† The greater glory of Christ fulfilled what the Law pointed toward.

2 Corinthians 3:11

If what was fading away came with glory, how much greater is the glory of what remains.

† Paul emphasizes permanence.

† The old covenant faded, but the new covenant remains.

† The destruction of the temple in AD 70 marked the final

removal of that fading system.

2 Corinthians 3:12

Since we have such a hope, we speak with great boldness.

† Because the new covenant is secure, Paul speaks openly and confidently.

† The hope he's referring to is the full unveiling of the new covenant age.

† This hope strengthened the early church during persecution.

2 Corinthians 3:13

We aren't like Moses, who covered his face with a veil so the Israelites wouldn't see the fading glory.

† Moses' veil symbolized that the old covenant glory was temporary.

† The people couldn't fully see what was fading away.

† The veil represents spiritual blindness under the old covenant system.

2 Corinthians 3:14

But their minds were hardened. Even today when the old covenant is read, the same veil remains because it can only be removed through Christ.

† Paul explains that many still couldn't understand the Law's purpose.

† The veil remains whenever people read the Law without seeing Christ as its fulfillment.

† Only Christ removes the veil and reveals the true meaning of the scriptures.

2 Corinthians 3:15

Even now whenever Moses is read, a veil lies over their hearts.

† This describes spiritual blindness when the Law is read without recognizing Christ.

† The problem wasn't the scripture but the hardened heart.

† The gospel reveals what the Law was pointing toward.

2 Corinthians 3:16

But whenever someone turns to the Lord, the veil is removed.

† Turning to the Lord brings understanding.

† The gospel opens the scriptures and reveals Christ throughout the Law and prophets (Luke 24:27).

† Faith removes the blindness caused by relying on the old system.

2 Corinthians 3:17

Now the Lord is the Spirit, and where the Spirit of the Lord is, there is freedom.

† The Spirit brings freedom from the condemnation of the Law.

† This freedom isn't lawlessness but freedom from the old covenant system.

† Believers now live under the completed work of Christ.

2 Corinthians 3:18

But we all, with unveiled faces, seeing the Lord's glory as in a mirror, are being transformed into the same image from glory to glory, just as from the Lord, the Spirit.

† Believers now see clearly what earlier generations could only see dimly.

† Transformation happens through the Spirit as we understand Christ's finished work.

† Eusebius wrote that the gospel reveals the full light that earlier ages only anticipated.

Historical References

† Josephus recorded the destruction of Jerusalem and the temple in AD 70, marking the end of the old covenant system.

† Irenaeus explained that Christ fulfilled the Law and brought the new covenant reality.

† Clement of Alexandria taught that the law prepared the world for the coming of Christ.

† Eusebius described the fall of Jerusalem as the closing of the old covenant age.

How It Applies To Us Today

† We don't live under a fading covenant system but under the completed new covenant through Christ.

† The Spirit now writes God's truth on our hearts instead of stone tablets.

† The veil has been removed, so we can understand the scriptures through Christ.

† Our confidence comes from God's work, not our own ability.

† We live in the full light of the covenant that earlier generations were waiting to see.

Q & A Appendix

Q: Why does Paul call the Law the ministry of death?

A: Because the Law revealed sin and brought condemnation but couldn't remove sin (Romans 7:10).

Q: What does the veil represent?

A: Spiritual blindness when people read the Law without seeing Christ as its fulfillment (2 Corinthians 3:14).

Q: What removes the veil?

A: Turning to the Lord removes the veil and reveals the true meaning of scripture (2 Corinthians 3:16).

Q: What is the ministry of the Spirit?

A: The ministry of the Spirit brings life and righteousness through Christ (2 Corinthians 3:6).

Q: Why does Paul compare Moses' glory with the new covenant?

A: To show that the old covenant glory was temporary but the new covenant glory remains (2 Corinthians 3:11).

† This is the fulfilled perspective we proclaim at Fulfilled Prophecies †

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Source Index

- † 2 Corinthians 3
- † Josephus, Wars of the Jews
- † Irenaeus, Against Heresies
- † Clement of Alexandria, Stromata
- † Eusebius, Ecclesiastical History

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