



II CORINTHIANS

LETTERS TO THE CHURCH: 2 CORINTHIANS 3

The letter 2 Corinthians begins by tracing Paul's continued effort to correct and encourage the believers in Corinth. The church had questioned Paul's authority and misunderstood the nature of true Christian leadership and transformation. Paul responds in 2 Corinthians 3 by contrasting life under the *Law* – “the letter that kills” – with life under the *Spirit* – who gives life.” The Corinthians themselves, Paul says, are his letter of recommendation, written not with ink but by the Spirit of the living God on human hearts. Through this, Paul introduces the profound shift from the old covenant of external rules to the new covenant of inward transformation.

Paul's teaching draws on key Old Testament promises from Jeremiah 31 and Ezekiel 36, which anticipated a day when God's law would be written on human hearts and His Spirit would dwell within His people. Unlike the glory that faded from Moses' face after meeting with God, the glory of the Spirit is lasting and ever-increasing. When people turn to Christ, the veil is removed – their hearts are opened to God's glory, and they are transformed into His image from one degree of glory to another. This transformation comes not from human effort but through divine empowerment by the Spirit.

Many of us are tempted toward one of two common misconceptions about the Law vs. the Spirit. The first is that life under the Spirit eliminates all moral or ethical boundaries, reducing faith to personal feelings “based on the Spirit”. The second is that righteousness still depends primarily on rigid rule-keeping, treating the Spirit merely as a helper for moral performance. Both miss the point. The Spirit doesn't abolish the wisdom of God's commands but animates them—giving believers both the desire and power to live according to God's heart rather than mere obligation.

Finally, be encouraged to embrace a “Gospel of *Withness*”—a life of active communion with God through the Spirit. From the Garden of Eden to Jesus' ministry and the promised Spirit in John 16, God's desire has always been to dwell *with* His people. Through the Spirit, believers experience the nearness of God in a deeper way than even the disciples knew before Pentecost. Where the Spirit of the Lord is, there is freedom, transformation, and the ongoing presence of Christ with us—empowering the church to embody His character and mission in the world.

Small Group Discussion Questions

1. Paul contrasts “the letter that kills” with “the Spirit that gives life.” In what ways do you see these two approaches—law-based vs. Spirit-led—show up in your own faith or church experience?
2. What does it mean for your life to be a “letter from Christ,” written by the Spirit and read by others? How might people “read” your life this week? Over the past month? Year?
3. How do Jeremiah 31 and Ezekiel 36 deepen your understanding of the new covenant and the role of the Holy Spirit in transforming hearts?
4. Which of the two misinformed interpretations (license under the Spirit or legalism under the Law) do you personally tend to lean toward, and why?
5. The sermon described the Spirit as God's way of restoring “Withness.” How have you experienced God's nearness in everyday life—and how might you grow in awareness of His presence? What does it mean for you to carry that same “Withness” in the way you interact with others?
6. 2 Corinthians 3:18 says we are “being transformed into the same image from one degree of glory to another.” What practices or postures help you stay open to that ongoing transformation?