

Where the Spirit of the Lord Is

2:1 So I made up my mind that I would not make another painful visit to you. 2 For if I grieve you, who is left to make me glad but you whom I have grieved? 3 I wrote as I did so that when I came I should not be distressed by those who ought to make me rejoice. I had confidence in all of you, that you would all share my joy. 4 For I wrote you out of great distress and anguish of heart and with many tears, not to grieve you but to let you know the depth of my love for you.

5 If anyone has caused grief, he has not so much grieved me as he has grieved all of you, to some extent-not to put it too severely. 6 The punishment inflicted on him by the majority is sufficient for him. 7 Now instead, ***you ought to forgive and comfort him, so that he will not be overwhelmed by excessive sorrow. 8 I urge you, therefore, to reaffirm your love for him.*** 9 The reason I wrote you was to see if you would stand the test and be obedient in everything. 10 If you forgive anyone, I also forgive him. And what I have forgiven-if there was anything to forgive-I have forgiven in the sight of Christ for your sake, 11 in order that Satan might not outwit us. ***For we are not unaware of his schemes.***

12 Now when I went to Troas to preach the gospel of Christ and found that the Lord had opened a door for me, 13 I still had no peace of mind, because I did not find my brother Titus there. So I said good-by to them and went on to Macedonia.

14 But thanks be to God, who always leads us in triumphal procession in Christ and through us spreads everywhere the fragrance of the knowledge of him. ***15 For we are to God the aroma of Christ among those who are being saved and those who are perishing. 16 To the one we are the smell of death; to the other, the fragrance of life.*** And who is equal to such a task? 17 Unlike so many, we do not peddle the word of God for profit. On the contrary, in Christ we speak before God with sincerity, like men sent from God.

3:1 Are we beginning to commend ourselves again? Or do we need, like some people, letters of recommendation to you or from you? 2 You yourselves are our letter, written on our hearts, known and read by everybody. 3 ***You show that you are a letter from Christ, the result of our ministry, 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 confidence as this is ours through Christ before God. 5 Not that we are competent in ourselves to claim anything for ourselves, but our competence comes from God. 6 He has made us competent as ministers of ***a new covenant-not of the letter but of the Spirit; for the letter kills, but the Spirit gives life.*** 7 Now if the ministry that brought death, which was engraved in letters on stone, came with glory, so that the Israelites could not look steadily at the face of Moses because of its glory, fading though it was, 8 will not the ministry of the Spirit be even more glorious? 9 If the ministry that condemns men is glorious, how much more glorious is the ministry that brings righteousness! 10 For what was glorious has no glory now in comparison with the surpassing glory. 11 ***And if what was fading away came with glory, how much greater is the glory of that which lasts!***

12 Therefore, since we have such a hope, we are very bold. 13 We are not like Moses, who would put a veil over his face to keep the Israelites from gazing at it while the radiance was fading away. 14 ***But their minds were made dull, for to this day the same veil remains when the old covenant is read. It has not been removed, because only in Christ is it taken away. 15 Even to this day when Moses is read, a veil covers their hearts. 16 But whenever anyone turns to the Lord, the veil is taken away. 17 Now the Lord is the Spirit, and where the Spirit of the Lord is, there is freedom.*** 18 And we, who with unveiled faces all reflect the Lord's glory, are being transformed into his likeness with ever-increasing glory, which comes from the Lord, who is the Spirit.

Ex 34:29-35

29 When Moses came down from Mount Sinai with the two tablets of the Testimony in his hands, he was not aware that his face was radiant because he had spoken with the LORD. 30 When Aaron and all the Israelites saw Moses, his face was radiant, and they were afraid to come near him. 31 But Moses called to them; so Aaron and all the leaders of the community came back to him, and he spoke to them. 32 Afterward all the Israelites came near him, and he gave them all the commands the LORD had given him on Mount Sinai.

33 When Moses finished speaking to them, he put a veil over his face. 34 But whenever he entered the LORD's presence to speak with him, he removed the veil until he came out. And when he came out and told the Israelites what he had been commanded, 35 they saw that his face was radiant. Then Moses would put the veil back over his face until he went in to speak with the LORD.

Jer 31:33

33 "This is the covenant I will make with the house of Israel after that time," declares the LORD.

"I will put my law in their minds and write it on their hearts.

I will be their God, and they will be my people.

Ray Stedman

I have often wondered how the Apostle Paul would rate in ecclesiastical circles, whether he would be considered a success or not, if he were carrying on his ministry today. It is hard to believe that a man

Who spent most of his ministry in jail,
Who never made enough salary to buy a home of his own,
Who never built a church building,
Who never spoke on television, or even had a radio broadcast,
Who ran around so much that he had no permanent residence of his own,
Who frequently had to get a job to support himself,
Who admitted that he was a poor speaker and had a very unimpressive appearance,

could be a successful pastor or minister. He just does not fit the accepted scheme of what makes for success in the ministry today. No wonder they had trouble with him in Corinth, and had difficulty believing that he was a real apostle.

Ray Stedman

When I read the New Testament I am always impressed at the absolute lack of word in the book of Acts and in the letters of Paul concerning the church and its ministry. Those early Christians did not go around, as we do today, talking about what the church can do for you, or about the value of becoming a member of a church. We talk about that all the time in our day, but they did not even mention it because they understood that the church does not do anything for anybody. It is Christ who changes lives. It is Jesus who heals a hurting heart, or touches a lonely spirit, or restores someone burdened with a terrible sense of guilt for all the wretchedness and evil of his past. It is the Lord who forgives and changes, and this great apostle states that very strongly. He wants them to understand that Christ has written this letter, not him, but they are the witnesses, their changed lives are all the testimony, all the recommendation he needs that what he is doing is authentic Christianity.

If we applied that test to our churches across this country today, I wonder how many would have a recommendation in the eyes of the community around? The ones who would read this letter were the whole watching world, "known and read of all men," Paul said; "everybody can see that Christ has done something to you." That is the only effective witness the church has in the world today: the change that Christ has made so that the people you work with, rub shoulders with, the tradesmen you do business with, the people you talk to in the normal course of carrying out your daily affairs ought to see that change. That is the point. There ought to be such visible evidence of God at work in you that people will say, "What is this? What's going on? I know your name is Bill, or Jane, or Mary, but somehow I get the feeling I'm talking to Jesus." That is what these early Christians exemplified.