

## 2 Corinthians 3:1-6 “Written Upon Our Hearts”

**1** Do we begin again to commend ourselves? Or do we need, as some *others*, epistles of commendation to you or *letters* of commendation from you?

- **Jewish travelers** often carried letters of recommendation indicating that Jewish householders could trust them and give them lodging on their journey.
- In Greco-Roman society, higher-class patrons would write letters recommending their subordinates; such recommendations naturally carried more weight than the person's own claims. Anyone who was trusted could write letters on someone else's behalf (Acts 15:25–27; 18:27; 1 Cor 16:3), and by such letters a sender could also authorize a messenger (Acts 9:2).
- **Self-commendation** was considered acceptable when necessary to defend oneself or to make a point (see comment on 5:12).<sup>1</sup>
- As if anticipating the taunt so often repeated, that he had no commendatory letters, and therefore was forced to commend himself by self-laudation and by dishonest means.<sup>2</sup>
- **Isn't it sad when men must resort to the man's validation**  
**Romans 12:2** **And do not be conformed to this world**, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind, that you may prove what *is* that good and acceptable and perfect will of God.

### **2 Corinthians 10:12-17**

**12** For we dare not class ourselves or compare ourselves with those who commend themselves. But they, measuring themselves by themselves, and comparing themselves among themselves, are not wise.

**13** We, however, will not boast beyond measure, but within the limits of the sphere which God appointed us—a sphere which especially includes you.

**14** For we are not overextending ourselves (as though *our authority* did not extend to you), for it was to you that we came with the gospel of Christ;

**15** not boasting of things beyond measure, *that is*, in other men's labors, but having hope, *that* as your faith is increased, we shall be greatly enlarged by you in our sphere,

**16** to preach the gospel in the *regions* beyond you, *and* not to boast in another man's sphere of accomplishment.

**17** **But “he who glories, let him glory in the LORD.”**

**2** You are our epistle written in our hearts, known and read by all men;

**3** clearly *you are* an epistle of Christ, ministered by us, **written not with ink** but by the Spirit of the living God, **not on tablets of stone** but on tablets of flesh, *that is*, of the heart.

**Exodus 31:18** And when He had made an end of speaking with him on Mount Sinai, He gave Moses two tablets of the Testimony, tablets of stone, **written with the finger of God.**

- **But they knew a New Covenant was to come**

### **Jeremiah 31:31-34**

**31** “Behold, the days are coming, says the LORD, when I will make a new covenant with the

patrons \***Patron**. The social superior in the Roman patron-client relationship, who granted favors to and acted as political sponsor for his clients, or social dependents. The obligations in the relationship were viewed as reciprocal; clients were to grant the patrons honor as their benefactors.

<sup>1</sup>Keener, C. S., & InterVarsity Press. (1993). *The IVP Bible background commentary : New Testament* (2 Co 3:1). Downers Grove, Ill.: InterVarsity Press.

<sup>2</sup>Vincent, M. R. (2002). *Word studies in the New Testament* (Vol. 3, Page 1-301). Bellingham, WA: Logos Research Systems, Inc.

house of Israel and with the house of Judah—

**32** not according to the covenant that I made with their fathers in the day *that* I took them by the hand to lead them out of the land of Egypt, My covenant which they broke, though I was a husband to them, says the LORD.

**33** But this *is* the covenant that I will make with the house of Israel after those days, says the LORD: I will put My law in their minds, and write it on their hearts; and I will be their God, and they shall be My people.

**34** No more shall every man teach his neighbor, and every man his brother, saying, 'Know the LORD,' for they all shall know Me, from the least of them to the greatest of them, says the LORD. For I will forgive their iniquity, and their sin I will remember no more."

### **Ezekiel 11:17-21**

**17** Therefore say, 'Thus says the Lord GOD: "I will gather you from the peoples, assemble you from the countries where you have been scattered, and I will give you the land of Israel." '

**18** And they will go there, and they will take away all its detestable things and all its abominations from there.

**19** Then I will give them one heart, and I will put a new spirit within them, and take the stony heart out of their flesh, and give them a heart of flesh,

**20** that they may walk in My statutes and keep My judgments and do them; and they shall be My people, and I will be their God.

**21** But *as for those* whose hearts follow the desire for their detestable things and their abominations, I will recompense their deeds on their own heads," says the Lord GOD.

**4** And we have such trust through Christ toward God.

**5** Not that we are sufficient of ourselves to think of anything as *being* from ourselves, but our sufficiency is from God,

- **Maxwell Maltz**, who wrote Psycho-Cybernetics, estimates that **95 percent** of people in our society have a strong sense of inadequacy.
  - **Who are the 5% that think they are adequate?**
- **What can we say is truly our own creation?**
  - **Sin**
  - **Stephen W. Hawking** telling a computer convention that computer viruses represent the only life form wholly created by humans. (Christianity Today, Vol. 39, no. 1)  
*"I think it says something that the only form of life that we have created so far is purely destructive. Talk about creating life in our own image."*

**6** who also made us sufficient as ministers of the new covenant, not of the letter but of the Spirit; for the letter kills, but the Spirit gives life.

- **How does God make us sufficient?**
  - **Weakness:**  
**2 Corinthians 12:9-10**  
**9** And He said to me, "**My grace is sufficient for you**, for My strength is made perfect in weakness." Therefore most gladly I will rather boast in my infirmities, that the power of Christ may rest upon me.  
**10** Therefore I take pleasure in infirmities, in reproaches, in needs, in persecutions, in distresses, for Christ's sake. For when I am weak, then I am strong.

- **Power**

**Luke 24:49** I am going to send you what my Father has promised; but stay in the city until you have been clothed with power from on high.”

- **Qualified only in Christ**

**1 Corinthians 1:26-31**

**26**For you see your calling, brethren, that not many wise according to the flesh, not many mighty, not many noble, *are called*.

**27**But God has chosen the foolish things of the world to put to shame the wise, and God has chosen the weak things of the world to put to shame the things which are mighty;

**28**and the base things of the world and the things which are despised God has chosen, and the things which are not, to bring to nothing the things that are,

**29**that no flesh should glory in His presence.

**30**But of Him you are in Christ Jesus, who became for us wisdom from God—and righteousness and sanctification and redemption—

**31**that, as it is written, *“He who glories, let him glory in the LORD.”*

**Joshua 1:2-9**

**2**“Moses my servant is dead. Now then, you and all these people, get ready to cross the Jordan River into the land I am about to give to them—to the Israelites.

**3**I will give you every place where you set your foot, as I promised Moses.

**4**Your territory will extend from the desert to Lebanon, and from the great river, the Euphrates—all the Hittite country—to the Great Sea on the west.

**5**No one will be able to stand up against you all the days of your life. As I was with Moses, so I will be with you; I will never leave you nor forsake you.

**6**“Be strong and courageous, because you will lead these people to inherit the land I swore to their forefathers to give them.

**7**Be strong and very courageous. Be careful to obey all the law my servant Moses gave you; do not turn from it to the right or to the left, that you may be successful wherever you go.

**8**Do not let this Book of the Law depart from your mouth; meditate on it day and night, so that you may be careful to do everything written in it. Then you will be prosperous and successful.

**9**Have I not commanded you? Be strong and courageous. Do not be terrified; do not be discouraged, for the LORD your God will be with you wherever you go.”

**Isaiah 6:5-9**

**5**“Woe to me!” I cried. “I am ruined! For I am a man of unclean lips, and I live among a people of unclean lips, and my eyes have seen the King, the LORD Almighty.”

**6**Then one of the seraphs flew to me with a live coal in his hand, which he had taken with tongs from the altar.

**7**With it he touched my mouth and said, “See, this has touched your lips; your guilt is taken away and your sin atoned for.”

**8**Then I heard the voice of the Lord saying, “Whom shall I send? And who will go for us?” And I said, “Here am I. Send me!”

**9**He said, “Go and tell this people: “‘Be ever hearing, but never understanding; be ever seeing, but never perceiving.’”

**Jeremiah 1:6-10**

**6**“Ah, Sovereign LORD,” I said, “I do not know how to speak; I am only a child.”

**7**But the LORD said to me, “Do not say, ‘I am only a child.’ You must go to everyone I

send you to and say whatever I command you.

8Do not be afraid of them, for I am with you and will rescue you,” declares the LORD.

9Then the LORD reached out his hand and touched my mouth and said to me, “Now, I have put my words in your mouth.

10See, today I appoint you over nations and kingdoms to uproot and tear down, to destroy and overthrow, to build and to plant.”

- **Ray Stedman:** “Ministries that genuinely touch the world all can be traced to movement of the Holy Spirit. This is a truth that seems lost to today's church.”  
-- Ray Stedman in a private conversation. Christianity Today, Vol. 33, no. 7.
- **“A Christian worker is one who perpetually looks in the face of God and then goes forth to talk to the people.”** (Oswald Chambers) <sup>3</sup>

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<sup>3</sup>Chambers, O. (1993, c1935). *My utmost for his highest : Selections for the year* (April 22). Grand Rapids, MI: Discovery House Publishers.