Ye are Our Epistle (part 1)

A two-part message given the same morning at Glad Tidings Tabernacle and Bible Training School, 1536, Ellis Street, San Francisco, California
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I want to read to you this morning the third chapter of Second Corinthians:

Do we begin again to commend ourselves? or need we, as some others, epistles of commendation to you, or letters of commendation from you? Ye are our epistle written in our hearts, known and read of all men: Forasmuch as ye are manifestly declared to be the epistle of Christ ministered by us, written not with ink, but with the Spirit of the living God not in tables of stone, but in fleshy tables of the heart. And such trust have we through Christ to God-ward: Not that we are sufficient of ourselves to think anything as of ourselves but our sufficiency is of God; Who also hath made us able ministers of the new testament; not of the letter, but of the spirit: for the letter killeth, but the spirit giveth life. But if the ministration of death, written and engraven in stones, was glorious, so that the children of Israel could not stedfastly behold the face of Moses for the glory of his countenance; which glory was to be done away: How shall not the the ministration of the spirit be rather glorious? For if the ministration of condemnation be glory, much more doth the ministration of righteousness exceed in glory, For even that which was made glorious had no glory in this respect, by reason of the glory that excelleth. For if that which is done away was glorious, much more that which remaineth is glorious. Seeing then that we have such hope, we use great plainness of speech: And not as Moses, which put a vail over his face, that the children of Israel could not stedfastly look to the end of that which is abolished: But their minds were blinded: for until this day remaineth the same vail untaken away in the reading of the Old Testament; which vail is done away in Christ. But even unto this day, when Moses is read, the vail is upon their heart. Nevertheless when it shall turn to the Lord, the vail shall be taken away. Now the Lord is that Spirit: and where the Spirit of the Lord is, there is liberty. But we all, with open face beholding as in a glass the glory of the Lord, are changed into the same image from glory to glory, even as by the Spirit of the Lord. 2 Corinthians 3:1-18

We have this morning one of those high water marks of very deep things of God in the Spirit. I believe the Lord will reveal to us these truths as our hearts are open and responsive to the Spirit’s leadings.

But let not any man think he shall receive anything of the Lord only on the lines of a spiritual revelation, for there is nothing that will profit you, or bring you to a place of blessing except that which denounces or brings to

death the natural order that the supernatural plan of God may be in perfect order in you.

The Lord of hosts camps round about us this morning, with songs of deliverance that we may see face to face the glories of His grace in a new way, for God hath not brought us into cunningly devised fables but in these days He is rolling away the mists and clouds, and every difficulty that we may understand the mind and will of God.

If we are going to catch the best of God, there must be in this meeting a spiritual desire, the open ear, the understanding heart. The vail must be lifted. We must see the Lord in that perfectness of being glorified in the midst of us. As we enter into these things of the Spirit we must clearly see that we are not going to be able to understand these mysteries that God is unfolding to us, only on the lines of being filled with the Spirit.

Even when these special meetings close, the pastor and everybody else will find that we must all the time grow in grace. We must see that God has nothing for us on the old lines. The new plan, the new revelation, the new victories are before us. The ground must be gained, supernatural things must be attained. All carnal things, and evil powers, and spiritual wickedness in high places must be dethroned. We must come into the line of the Spirit by the will of God in these days.

Let us just turn to the Word which is so beautiful and so expressive in so many ways.

Do we begin again to commend ourselves? Or need we, as some others, epistles of commendation to you, or letters of commendation from you? Ye are our epistle written in our hearts, known and read of all men: Forasmuch as ye are manifestly declared to be the epistle of Christ ministered by us, written not with ink, but with the Spirit of the living God; not in tables of stone, but in fleshy tables of the heart. And such trust have we through Christ to God-ward. 2 Corinthians 3:1-4

I want this morning to dwell upon these words for a short time: “Forasmuch as ye are manifestly declared to be the epistle of Christ.”

What an ideal position that now the sons of God are being manifested; now the glory is being seen; now the Word of God is becoming an expressed purpose in life till the life has ceased and the Word has begun to live in them.

How truly this position was in the life of Paul when he came to a climax when he said: “I am crucified with Christ: nevertheless I live; yet not I, but Christ liveth in me: and the life which I now live in the flesh I live by the

faith of the Son of God, who loved me, and gave himself for me" (Galatians 2:20).

How can Christ live in you? There is no way for Christ to live in you only by the manifested Word in you, through you, manifestly declaring every day that you are a living epistle of the Word of God. Beloved, God would have us to see that no man is perfected or equipped on any lines only as the living Word abides in Him.

It is the living Christ, it is the divine likeness to God, it is the express image of Him, and the Word is the only factor that works out in you and brings forth these glories of identification between you and Christ. It is the Word dwelling in your hearts, richly by faith.

We may begin at Genesis, go right through the Pentateuch, and the other Scriptures, and be able to rehearse them, but without they are a living factor within us, they will be a dead letter. Everything that comes to us must be quickened by the Spirit. "The letter killeth, but the Spirit giveth life."

We must have life in everything. Who knows how to pray but as the Spirit prayeth? What kind of prayer does the Spirit pray? The Spirit always brings to your remembrance the mind of the Scriptures, and brings forth all your cry and your need better than your words. The Spirit always takes the Word of God and brings your heart, and mind, and soul, and cry, and need into the presence of God.

So we are not able to pray only as the Spirit prays, and the Spirit only prays according to the will of God, and the will of God is all in the Word of God. No man is able to speak according to the mind of God and bring forth the deep things of God out of his own mind. The following Scripture rightly divides the Word of truth:

Forasmuch as ye are manifestly declared to be the epistle of Christ ministered by us, written not with ink, but with the Spirit of the living God; not in tables of stone, but in fleshly tables of the heart.
2 Corinthians 3:3

God help us to understand this, for it is out of the heart that all things proceed. When we have entered in with God into the mind of the Spirit, we will find God ravishes our hearts.

Do ye think that the scripture saith in vain, The spirit that dwelleth in us lusteth to envy? James 4:5

I have been pondering over that for years, but now I can see that the Holy Ghost so graciously, so extravagantly, puts everything to one side that He may ravish our hearts with a great inward cry after Jesus. The Holy Spirit "lusteth to envy" for you to have all the divine will of God in Christ Jesus right in your hearts.

When I speak about the "fleshly tables of the heart," I mean the inward love. Nothing is so sweet to me as to know that the heart yearns with compassion. Eyes may see, ears may hear, but you may be immovable on those two lines without you have an inward cry where "deep calleth unto deep."

When God gets into the depths of our hearts, He purifies every intention of the thoughts and the joys. We are told in the Word it is joy unspeakable and full of glory.

Beloved, it is truth that the commandments were written on tables of stone. Moses, like a great big, loving father over Israel, had a heart full of joy because God had showed him a plan where Israel could be made to partake of great things through these commandments. But God says, "Not in tables of stone," which made the face of Moses to shine with great joy. Deeper than that, more wonderful than that: the commandments in our hearts; the deep love of God in our hearts, the deep movings of eternity rolling in and bringing God in. Hallelujah!

Oh, beloved, let God the Holy Ghost have His way today in so unfolding to us all the grandeurs of His glory.

TONGUES AND INTERPRETATION: "The Spirit, He Himself, it is He, that waketh thee morning by morning and unfolds unto thee in thy heart, tenderness, compassion and love towards thy Maker till thou dost weep before Him and say to Him, in the spirit, 'Thou art mine! Thou art mine!'"

Yes, He is mine! Beloved, He is mine!

"And such trust have we through Christ to God-ward:

"Not that we are sufficient of ourselves to think any thing as of ourselves; but our sufficiency is of God." (vv. 4, 5).

Ah, it is lovely! Those verses are to keep to pass over. Beloved, that is a climax of divine exaltation that is so much different from human exaltation.

The end is not yet, praise the Lord!
The end is not yet, praise the Lord!
Your blessings He is bestowing,

And my cup is overflowing,
And the end is not yet, praise the Lord!

We want to get to a place where we are beyond trusting in ourselves. Beloved, there is so much failure in self-assurances. It is not bad to have good things on the lines of satisfaction, but we must never have anything on the human that we rest upon. There is only one sure place to rest upon, and our trust is in God.

In Thy name we go. In Thee we trust. And God brings us off in victory. When we have no confidence in ourselves to trust in ourselves but when our whole trust rests upon the authority of the mighty God, He has promised to be with us at all times, and to make the path straight, and to make all the mountains a way. Then we understand how it is that David could say, “Thy gentleness hath made me great.”

Ah, thou lover of souls! We have no confidence in the flesh. Our confidence can only be stayed and relied in the One who never fails, in the One who knows the end from the beginning, in the One who is able to come in at the midnight hour as easy as in the noonday, and make the night and the day alike to the man who rests completely in the will of God, knowing that “all things work together tor good to them that love Him,” and trust in Him. And such trust have we in Him.

This is the worthy position where God would have all souls to be. We should find that we would not run His errands and make mistakes; we would not be dropping down in the wrong place. We would find our life was as surely in the canon of thought with God as the leading of the children of Israel through the wilderness. And we should be able to say, Not one good thing hath the Lord withheld from me (Psalm 84 : 11), and “… all the promises of God in him are yea, and in him Amen, unto the glory of God by us” (2 Corinthians 1 : 20).

The Lord has helped me to have no confidence in myself, but to wholly trust in Him, bless His name!

Who also hath made us able ministers of the new testament; not of the letter, but of the spirit: for the letter killeth, but the spirit giveth life. But if the ministration of death, written and engraven in stones, was glorious, so that the children of Israel could not stedfastly behold the face of Moses for the glory of his countenance; which glory was to be done away: How shall not the ministration of the spirit be rather glorious? For if the ministration of condemnation be glory, much more doth the ministration of righteousness exceed in glory. 2 Corinthians 3:6-9

Let us enter into these great words on the line of holy thoughtfulness. If I go on with God He wants me to understand all His deep things. He doesn't want anybody in the Pentecostal church to be novices, or to deal with the Word of God on natural grounds. We can understand the Word of God only by the Spirit of God.

We cannot define, or separate, or deeply investigate and unfold this holy plan of God without we have the life of God, the thought of God, the Spirit of God, and the revelation of God. The Word of Truth is pure, spiritual, and divine. If you try to divide it on natural grounds you will only finish up on natural lines for natural man, but you will never satisfy a Pentecostal Assembly.

The people who are spiritual can only be fed on spiritual material. So if you are expecting your messages to catch fire you will have to have them on fire. You won't have to light the message up in the meeting. You will have to bring the message red-hot, burning, living. The message must be direct from heaven. It must be as truly, "Thus saith the Lord," as the Scriptures which are, "Thus saith the Lord," because you will only speak as the Spirit gives utterance, and you will always be giving fresh revelation. You will never be stale on any line, whatever you say will be fruitful, elevating the mind, lifting the people, and all the people will want more.

To come into this we must see that we not only need the baptism of the Spirit but we need to come to a place where there is only the baptism of the Spirit left. Look at the first verse of the fourth chapter of Luke and you will catch this beautiful truth:

And Jesus being full of the Holy Ghost returned from Jordan, and was led by the Spirit into the wilderness.

But look at Mark 1: 12 and you will find He was driven of the Spirit into the wilderness:

And immediately the Spirit driveth him into the wilderness.

In John's gospel Jesus says He does not speak or act of Himself:

…the words that I speak unto you I speak not of myself: but tbe Father that dwelleth in me, he doeth the works.
John 14:10

We must know that the baptism of the Spirit immerses us into an intensity of zeal, into a likeness to Jesus, to make us into pure, running metal so hot for God that it travels like oil from vessel to vessel. This divine line of the

Spirit will let us see that we have ceased and we have begun. We are at the end for a beginning. We are down and out, and God is in and out.

There isn't a thing in the world can help us in this meeting. There isn't a natural thought that can be of any use here. There isn't a thing that is carnal, earthly, natural, that can ever live in these meetings. It must only have one pronouncement, it has to die eternally because there is no other plan for a baptized soul, only dead indeed.

God, help us to see then that we may be filled with the letter without being filled with the Spirit. We may be filled with knowledge without having divine knowledge. And we may be filled with wonderful things on natural lines and still remain a natural man. But you cannot do it in this truth that I am dealing with this morning. No man is able to walk this way without He is in the Spirit. He must live in the Spirit and he must realize all the time that he is growing in that same ideal of his Master, in season and out of season, always beholding the face of the Master, Jesus.

David says, "I foresaw the Lord for He was on my right hand that I should not be moved. Then my tongue was glad." Praise the Lord!

For even that which was made glorious had no glory in this respect, by reason of the glory that excelleth. For if that which is done away was glorious, much more that which remaineth is glorious.
2 Corinthians 3:10,11

I notice here that the one has to be done away, and the other has to increase. One day I was having a good time on this chapter. I had a lot of people before me who were living on the 39 Articles and Infant Baptism, and all kinds of things. The Lord showed me that all these things had to be done away. I find there is no place into all the further plan with God without you absolutely putting them to one side. "Done away."

Is it possible to do away with the commandments? Yes and no. If they are not so done away with you that you have no consciousness of keeping commandments, then they are not done away. If you know you are living holy, you don't know what holiness is. If you know you are keeping commandments, you don't know what keeping commandments is.

These things are done away. God has brought us in to be holy without knowing it, and keeping the whole truth without knowing it, living in it, moving in it, acting in it, a new creation in the Spirit. The old things are done away. If there is any trouble in you at all, it shows you have not come to the place where you are at rest.

“Done away.” God, help us to see it. If the teaching is a bit too high for you, ask the Lord to open your eyes to come into it. For there is no man here has power in prayer, or has power in life with God if he is trying to keep the commandments. They are done away, brother. And thank God, the very doing away with them is fixing them deeper in our hearts than ever before. For out of the depths we cry unto God, and in the depths has He turned righteousness in, and uncleanness out. It is unto the depths we cry unto God in these things. May God lead us all every step of the way in His divine leading.