

Glorious-Death/Glorious-Life

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[0:00] Okay, so anyways, take your Bibles, turn to 2 Corinthians chapter 3, or 2 Corinthians, if you're European or from the UK.

2 Corinthians chapter 3, we're going to study verses 1 through 11 this morning, trucking through this book, it's been challenging for me, I hope it's been challenging for you.

God's word always is. 2 Corinthians chapter 3, oh I'm sorry, that Bible in the chair in front of you, you pull that out, go towards the back, because they renumber the New Testament, so you go towards the back and find page 141, 141 in that black Bible.

Again, towards the back, flip towards the back of that Bible, and find page 141. You'll find 2 Corinthians chapter 3. Again, the first 11 verses, I'll read that, and then we will do our study.

2 Corinthians chapter 3, verse 1. Are we beginning to commend ourselves again? Or do we need, as some, letters of commendation to you or from you?

[1:21] You are our letter, written in our hearts, known and read by all. Manifested that you are a letter of Christ, served by us, written not with ink, but with the spirit of the living God.

Not on tablets of stone, but on tablets of fleshly hearts. And such confidence we have through Christ toward God. Not that we are adequate in ourselves, to consider anything from ourselves, but our competency is from God.

Who also made us servants of a new covenant. Not of the letter, but of the spirit. For the letter kills, but the spirit gives life. Verse 7.

But if the service of death, and letters engraved on stones, came in glory, so that the sons of Israel could not look intently at the face of Moses because of the glory of his face, abrogating as it was, how shall the service of the spirit fail to be even more with glory?

For if the service of condemnation has glory, much more does the service of righteousness unbound in glory. For yes, indeed, what had glory, in this case, has no glory on account of the glory that surpasses it.

[2:41] For if that which is abrogating is in glory, much more that which remains is in glory. I'm sure you heard the story about how in World War II, the German Air Force was coming against, they're going to bomb Coventry, and the British had figured out the code that the Germans were using, and Churchill, he found out about that, right?

And yet, they didn't want the Germans to know that they broke the code, so instead of alerting the people of Coventry, they let it bomb so that way they could save more lives in the end, right? You heard that story? It's actually a lie. It's not true. Nobody knew where the Great Raid would be. Now, they did intercept and gather info from German signals. They did do that. And they didn't want to arouse German suspicions, but Churchill did not know. So if you hear that story going around, by the way, go to winstonchurchill.org, and you'll find that there, that story, that it's actually a lie. It's not true. They fabricated that story. It sure does make a great story, though, doesn't it? Oh, Churchill knew.

[4:12] I mean, yeah, unless you're the person living in Coventry. It makes a great story. But if it's true, that'd be horrible. Death to these people so it can bring life to others?

Well, that's not right. Who would ever think such a thing? The death of a few to bring salvation, life to many. The death of a few to bring life to many.

Did you hear what I just said? I'll put it a different way. The death of one to bring life to millions. Friends, that's the heart of the gospel.

And as we've been seeing this, so to speak, let's cross this one off your list.

Windows as a service and updates are a normal part of keeping it running smoothly. We need your help installing this one. Ready? Restart now. Not ready? Pick a time that works for you. Remind me

tomorrow. How's that? That was Alexa talking in there.

[5:35] So we've been looking at this, so to speak, contrast. Boasting in our weakness, boasting in the Lord. Oh, those contrast each other. No, they actually go together. And today we'll see another one.

We've been looking at shame versus triumph. We looked at that last week. Today it's going to be glorious death, glorious life. They seem to contradict, but they actually go together.

By the way, who would even think that death would be somehow glorious? It is. Paul will unfold that for us. Glorious death, glorious life.

And I'll put in statements for you. For God to bring glorious life, there must be glorious death. In glorious death, God brings glorious life via the spirit in the heart.

In order for God to bring the glorious, spiritual, righteous, eternal, unseen life, it is necessary to have the glorious, killing, condemning, temporary, abrogated death.

[6:47] Because life comes in death. That's the whole essence of the gospel. By the way, I capitalize that word spiritual because spiritual actually comes from the word spirit having to do with the spirit.

Not this nonsense that people say, I'm spiritual, not religious. Oh, I want to slap somebody when they say that to me. Because you're stealing my word. That's my word. That's our word. But that's scriptural word.

Don't steal that and put some new meaning on that. Spiritual means it's of the spirit. So that's why it's capitalized. Spiritual, righteous. This is of God.

Life comes in death. If the weakness of the law, which brought nothing but death, had glory, how much more glory does the new covenant have?

Which Paul and the other apostles and me, we are its emissaries. We are the servants of the gospel.

[7:51] This paradox is perfectly portrayed in the gospel, in the crucified and risen Christ. His death was necessary to bring us life because it's the only way.

The only way you can have life is in the death of Christ. That's the paradox. Once again, the paradox of glory and weakness.

The glorious death of Jesus brings glorious life to those who trust him. That's why if you're here and you don't know Jesus, you're not a follower of Jesus, you're not a Christian, etc., etc.

You need to repent and put your trust in Christ because then you will be given life. Because right now you're under the glorious death. This is what Paul is going to unpack for us.

The Corinthians needed to understand that Paul was nothing more than an emissary of Christ. An emissary of the new covenant. An ancient sent by God. Weaknesses and all.

[9:02] And the fact that they embraced Christ and their hearts have been transformed by the Spirit, that makes Paul legit. He's legitimate.

He's for real. God's work of salvation in the apostolic gospel takes place under paradoxical terms. He gives life through death. He gives glory through dishonor. He gives righteousness through condemnation. And this salvific work is done in the heart where it is unseen. What was seen was the glory of God on the face of Moses.

You could see that. But there's something more glorious here, now. But you can't see it. Because it's in the heart. It's the unseen work of God that's done in the heart.

If you miss anything, or if you didn't get a lot of sleep last night, you're going to take a nap. Get that. That statement will help you understand, this is what Paul's talking about.

[10:09] Okay, you can go to sleep now. Old and new covenants, Moses and Christ and the Spirit, they're seemingly contrasted. The outward, visible glory that is abrogated, and the eternal, unseen glory that's permanent.

So Paul begins to set up this paradox. He's going to climax, or the crescendo is going to be glorious death, glorious life. But he's going to start building upon that.

So here's points to help us go in this direction. Commending letters, relational letters. They seem to contrast each other, but they actually go together.

Verse 1 and 2, notice, he begins. Are we beginning to commend ourselves again? Or do we need some letters of commendation to you or from you? What's he talking about here?

What's he doing? Well, the Corinthians, they thought they needed to judge him to see if he's legitimate. So Paul's saying, do we need letters of commendation from you and to you?

[11:15] See, they thought Paul had wronged them. He defrauded them. He flat out swindled them. They were suspicious of his motives.

Hmm. What's up with this guy? What's the problem? They wanted commendation in their terms. So his approval, or commendation, was no commendation at all as far as they were concerned. Why? Why? Because somehow these super apostles, which we'll be getting into pretty soon, they had these letters of commendation.

What we, these were, people speculate. They really don't know. Whatever these letters were, these super apostles, they had them. They had something. They had some stamp of approval.

Regardless, Paul says this, you Corinthians, you think that you're sufficient to judge such claims. We got this, Paul.

[12:30] No. See, the problem was that they assumed apostles should be judged subject to their judgment. No.

It don't work that way. In contrast, the gospel judges apostolic authority. The gospel judges the congregation, not vice versa.

The gospel judges pastoral authority. See, you don't judge whether I'm legitimate or not. You don't judge that. Members, it's not your place. Well, wait a second.

Hold on, hold on a second there. Real young man. How do you know if I'm for real or I'm a charlatan? How do you know that? Look at verse two.

You are our letter, written in our hearts, known and read by all. See, what the Corinthians didn't understand, they thought they were in the place of judgment.

[13:41] No. It's the gospel that judges all. And that's why Paul says, you're the proof. They were the proof of God's power at work, both in them and in Paul.

You are our letter. They were the proof that he was their spiritual father and leader. See, the very existence of the church validated Paul's ministry, but not just a church, but a church with the gospel as its foundation, a faith which boasts in God's work in and through the Lord Jesus Christ, where? Written here in the heart. The gospel is a thing that judges us all. We don't put ourselves in a place where we judge the gospel.

The gospel is judging us. You can't get those things mixed up. Well, that's bad. See, this is how the gospel judges credentials.

If the pure gospel is being proclaimed, in all its shame and suffering, it will be shown in the lives of people. Or in the fact that there's no heart change at all.

[15:04] And notice, again, he says, written in our hearts, which means it's not just his love for them, but it's the work that God has done in his own heart through the gospel word.

It's about a relationship. It's not some cold, hard letter. It's just words.

It's about people, relationships, a heart change. Notice he says, known and read by all. His love for them was open, public knowledge, which asserted not just his integrity, but the fact that he did all this for free.

He didn't demand any payment from them at all. No, he could have. I mean, he says in 1 Corinthians 9, a pastor, those that are working for the gospel, you should pay them.

But Paul intentionally did this for free for the Corinthians. He had every right to demand certain things from them, but he didn't.

[16:17] Because it's not about, what did we say in weeks past? It's not so that he benefits. He's there to benefit them. How can I benefit them?

How is he going to gain in anything by doing this stuff for them? Nothing. Nothing. Nothing. So now he starts to move more in this direction.

We go to another point, which it continues us in this trajectory. First now, excuse me, second you have this ink letters, heart letters. They seemingly contrast, but Paul is trying to put these together. A heart letter really is going to show that there's true change. Verse 3, be manifested that you are a letter of Christ, New America Standard says cared for.

The word is just served. That word there in verse 3, it's used throughout the text. You see the word ministry in New America Standard? That's the same word, service. Servants.

[17:19] It's in the noun form here in verse 3, and then service later on in the verses. It's the same word. Diakonos. Serve by us.

So they display, they were the letter of Christ, administered or served by us. Who's the us? Paul and the apostles. He's saying, I'm only God's agents.

I'm Christ's emissary. They're made to share in Christ. They have Christ among them. So he goes farther. He says, you're not just my letter, now you're a letter of Christ. Christ is among you. Written not with ink, he says, but with the spirit of the living God, not on tablets of stone, but on tablets of fleshly hearts, how it should read.

So this letter is not written with ink, and yet it's permanent. It won't go away, but it's in the spirit of the living God.

[18:25] Notice, God had remade them. He rewrote them. They were new creations. Chapter 5, verse 17. If anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation.

The old has passed away. The new has come. You're a new person. God has changed you. There are works in progress, as most of us here.

But it's been completed. God has done a work in their hearts by the spirit. It was the spirit of God who was actively at work in their hearts and lives, so this letter is fixed in Christ who saved them. See, this is why he's going to bring up these tablets of stone or tablets of fleshly hearts. Why is he bringing this up? He's challenging their terms of commendation or their insistence on them validating Paul's apostleship.

See, they thought they were in place to judge Paul. They had it all wrong. Why? This applies to us.

[19:38] Insofar, as they believed the gospel, they showed themselves to be God's work. His spirit wrote Christ on their hearts through the emissary, through Paul.

Letters can be an impersonal way to communicate. In contrast, God's spirit does his work on the heart. That's a true heart change. I mean, we even experience that today.

He sent a text message. Well, what does she mean by that? What does he mean by that? Did he mean this? I can't believe he said this. What do you mean he said this? And then you call and you say, did you mean this?

Oh, no, I meant this. Oh. Why'd you ask that? Oh, I don't, no reason. I just was wondering. Why? Because it can come across the wrong way.

Letters are, they're an impersonal way to communicate. But in contrast, God's spirit has done a work in the heart. Friends, you can read the Bible as much as you want.

[20:44] Big deal. It's the spirit of God that needs to work in your heart to change you. There's plenty of guys and I've studied them, at least some of them, that they know more about the Bible than all of us put together in this room.

They know more about manuscripts and when those manuscripts came about and blah, blah, blah, blah, gobble, gobble, gobble, gobble. They're like, oh my goodness, can these guys just stop talking? But they're totally unrepentant.

They want nothing to do with Jesus Christ. Oh, but they can, they can tell you the Prashida. They can talk to you about the Syriac translation.

Oh, they can tell you what's in Papyrus 46 and what's in Sinaiticus and how Vaticanus does things so differently than Alexandrianus. Oh, they can do all that but they want nothing to do with the Jesus that you love.

This is Paul's point. God does the work in the heart. See, this is the reason for this link to the tablets of stone. Giving the law was a sign of Israel's rebellious heart and their distance from God.

[22:03] Even the veil was another signal of their distance. They could not handle God's glory which is really his goodness. We'll talk about this a little bit more in a moment. Israel was unwilling to follow God not only in their grumblings and disobedience in the wilderness but also in their inability to hear God's voice.

We read from Exodus chapter 20, remember? Oh, Moses, you speak to God. We're gonna die. That was a rebellious heart. It wasn't.

They weren't victims here, friends. No, no, no, no. Don't put 20th century culture, don't read that back into the text. No, no, no, no, no. Israel was being rebellious by them just saying that.

God didn't have to speak to them. But even in this they were being rebellious. Letters of commendation, tablets of stone, they don't change hearts.

The apostolic service is a service of the spirit whereby emissaries of the new covenant proclaim the good news in Christ which affects true obedience within rebels.

[23:22] That's the apostolic mission. That's the apostolic goal. And this is my mission. My mission that God's word may affect a change in you whereby all of you by the spirit of God live lives that show true obedience from the heart.

Guess what? You're my letter. You're my letter. So upon hardened rebellious sinners, God inscribes the truth of the gospel by the power of the spirit which makes us anew. Upon tablets of fleshly hearts, the spirit writes God's salvation in the crucified Christ. That's why Paul says this. Look at verse four.

He says, and such confidence we have toward God. Through Christ toward God. The object of Paul's trust is God through Christ who works in and through the apostle to rewrite sinful hearts. And so must I. And so must I. I must trust in God's work in Christ who gives life in and through death to your rebellious heart.

[24 : 44] No. To our rebellious hearts. Now remember who Paul's talking to here. This is a church. They become wayward. They've forgotten the gospel. They think it's all about super apostles, right? That's what they thought.

It's all about power, performance, prowess, yeah. And Paul's like, no. That's why he says the next part of verse, there in verse five, not that we're adequate in ourselves or competent to consider anything as from ourselves, but our competency is from God.

What's he saying? I'm not adequate. I'm not sufficient. I'm weak. I'm a loser. It doesn't come from me because he didn't have confidence in his abilities.

He didn't have confidence in his powers. His confidence was in God, which now leads us to the next part. Commending letters, ink versus written, those hearts, right?

[25 : 57] Now the next one. Killing letters versus life-giving spirit. This is what he says here in verse six. God who made us adequate, not in the text, I don't know why they put it there, made us servants of a new covenant, not of the letter but of the spirit, for the letter kills but the spirit gives life.

Notice he's, now he's moving about to climax to this part of glorious death, glorious life. But here he says, God made me an emissary of the new covenant.

I'm just an agent of God. I'm his representative. I'm on a mission from God. They stole that, the Blues brothers. That's true. Paul was, that is.

Listen, stewards, underlings, emissaries, representatives, agents, blah, blah, blah, blah, blah. They're examined, not for their adequacy, but for their faithfulness.

Wake up from your nap and read that statement. You should also take that statement too. If you miss anything, that first part I told you about earlier in the service, take that.

[27 : 08] And then this message, this part, take this too. Paul was trying to show the glorious nature of his ministry with which he's been entrusted. This was why he didn't lose heart, despite the difficulties, the hardships, the struggles, and even the fact that the church in Corinth was a pain in his rear end.

See, I'm not examined as an adequate pastor, or how you may brand me to be an adequate pastor. You don't do that, nor should you.

What matters is that I've directed you to the gospel, the Lord Jesus Christ faithfully and consistently. That's what matters. The gospel judges all.

You take the gospel and you make sure that's what you're getting, because the gospel judges you. The gospel judges me. The gospel judges all of us. And yet it's your responsibility as members to make sure that's happening.

And if I've done that, if I've done that well, my job is complete. I've fulfilled it. You don't examine me for my adequacy, because I'm not adequate.

[28 : 21] Examine me for my faithfulness to give you the gospel. And notice, he says, we're emissaries of the new covenant. This was inaugurated by our Lord. We're going to celebrate that in a few moments, about 15 minutes or so.

The last supper with his disciples, in fulfillment of Jeremiah chapter 31. And this new covenant is the unseen, eternal work of God, which creates a new heart by the Spirit to the crucified Son of God, the Lord Jesus Christ.

This new covenant is not of the letter, but of the Spirit. Why? Because the letter kills. The old covenant works transgression and condemnation.

You'll see that. the old demands, but the new gives life. It's a gift from God whereby he recreates a rebellious human heart.

The Spirit gives life only to that which the letter has put to death. Look, the letter has glory, but only the letter of Christ with the ink of the Spirit of the living God writes upon a rebellious heart, making it

new.

[29:34] And that's what we're going to celebrate, that God has done that work in our hearts. This letter has the glory to condemn you, written in ink, no communication, no relationship whatsoever.

It's just killing. And yet there's glory in that. We'll see that in a moment. Remember, remember who Paul's writing to.

They had lost sight of the gospel. Their hearts had wandered from the gospel because they're questioning if Paul was legitimate. He said, I've given you the gospel and you're questioning me? Really? See, the letter or the law, the old covenant, it has living power. It kills, it executes all of rebellious humanity.

It also bears God's glory. But it's through this sin and death of the letter that creator God works life and righteousness by the spirit in a fleshly rebellious heart.

[30:39] He changes us. That's what he does. God's in the business of changing hearts. Which now, here's the crescendo.

Here's the climax of where he's going. Here in verse 7, the glorious death versus glorious life. He says here in verse 7, but if the ministry, which again, that's the word service, service of death in letters engraved on stones came with glory or in glory so that the sons of Israel cannot look intently at the face of Moses because of the glory of his face being abrogated.

Verse 8, how shall the service of the spirit fail to be even more with glory? What's he saying? When the law arrives in all its glorious death, one is ready to hear the gospel rightly.

the mission of Moses had glory but only to kill. It's being abrogated. You have that word fade away? Nah.

Better would be being rendered idle or rendered powerless or abrogated. It's being abrogated by the new covenant, the gift of the spirit who works life and righteousness.

[31:59] there's greater glory in the new covenant than in the covenant that kills. See, the attesting letters they sought from Paul were found in Moses' service of death.

The abiding, more glorious gospel is hidden and grasped by faith alone working in the heart. God's glory. So now what's he saying about this whole came with glory, Moses' face and all that?

Let me unpack that for you, okay? The glory spoken here was God's goodness is revealed to Moses in Exodus chapter 34. Remember when in chapter 33 Moses says, show me your glory? And God says, I'm going to show you my goodness. So God let all his goodness pass before Moses. Moses. And so he's here talking with Moses. He comes down off the mountain and the people couldn't handle it.

Which is why he put a veil over his face. See the mission of death came in glory. Moses administered or served as an emissary of the letter, the law, which brought death.

[33:12] This communication of death came in glory. So the sons of Israel, they could not look at Moses' face. They could not endure God's voice when he spoke.

And they could not endure his nearness reflected in Moses' face. So the veil was really an act of judgment upon them. They didn't want to know. Instead of being fearful, they should have embraced it.

But their hearts were hard. And as I said, being abrogated, what has been abrogated in Christ, Moses' face, his mission of death, the old covenant.

Why? Because the glory of the new covenant, it eclipsed the old covenant. The mission of the Spirit also came in glory, but there's greater enduring glory.

And guess what? Paul's saying, this is my mission. Just as there was glory in Moses' service, there's more glory in gospel service, but you need the eyes of faith to see it.

[34:19] One needs the letter of glorious death to be given the spirit of glorious life. Because that's what the law does, it directs you to death. It directs you to the death of Jesus.

Because up on that cross, there's death, there's the glorious death of the Son of God, and in that death comes glorious life. because the law kills, right?

It killed Jesus. But we get glorious life. That's the gospel. That's what he's trying to get through their heads. This spiritual, notice how it's capitalized again, folks, spiritual life giving new covenant inward unseen glory transcends the killing death given old covenant outward visible glory.

That was on those in his face. How? The apostolic gospel. See, that's how these two glories have come together. They come together in the crucified, shameful, horrible, despicable death of Jesus, which we'll celebrate in a few moments.

This glorious apostolic gospel word is not seen in performance. It's not seen in power. That cross, you see it in shame, suffering, weakness, failure.

[35 : 58] But it's not shame, it's triumph. But it's not weakness, it's strength, it's power, power to change lives, power to bring about the salvation of millions of people.

people. This is what he's saying. And notice here in verse 9, he continues, it's the same thing, he's just reinforcing it.

But the paradox is now between condemnation and righteousness, verse 9. For if the service of condemnation is glory, that's the mission of Moses, that's the letter, much more does the service of righteousness, of the spirit, abound in glory.

But notice what he says in verse 10, for indeed what had glory in this case has no glory on account of the glory that surpasses it. Well, what's he saying by this? First, righteousness is the reality of the new creation, wrought by the spirit in the heart, present in the risen Christ, because in Christ we become the righteousness of God.

He'll say that in chapter 5. But see, the gift of righteousness is greater glory. The glory of the service of righteousness and the spirit, so outshines Moses' ministry that it looks like it had no glory at all.

[37 : 23] The glory of the spirit eclipses the former glory and it meets in the crucified son of God. This is probably like, oh, I don't know, 12, so you're talking like maybe 15 years ago, I went hiking with a friend of mine who was up in Sedona, and he wanted to go hiking and this was like 4 o'clock, 4.30, maybe 5 o'clock in the afternoon to the evening.

Well, you know, it starts getting dark early, right? So we're out there hiking and I'm thinking, it's starting to get dark out here. This is kind of creepy.

I'm like, hey, Rand, we got to turn around? He's like, oh, no, we keep going. We got to go up to there. I'm like, okay, I don't know what we're doing here. So we keep going. Well, then we turn around. We get to some point and then we turn around and it's dark out, okay?

So it's dark. It's like 6 o'clock, something like that. It was dark at that time. But you didn't even notice that because the moon was at its full brightness and it was amazing to me because as we're coming down off there, soldiers past trail, we're coming down, the light of the moon just shines so we could see where we were going.

But when the sun comes out, what happens to the glorious lesser light of the moon? It goes away. That's what Paul is trying to say.

[38 : 57] When the sun shines, all of the lights give way. That's why he says here in verse 11, for if that which, he says, fades away or is being abrogated, because the former glory is temporary, much more that which remains.

The latter glory is eternal. It's permanent because it's hidden in the gospel because it's about God working in our hearts by the gospel through the power of the spirit.

That gives life. That's the sun. Going hiking in the sun is probably a lot better than going hiking by the light of the moon. I can attest to that. Even though it gives light, when you're there with the sun, you can see everything.

The gospel is much more glory than that of the letter. Again, for God to bring glorious life, there must be glorious death.

In glorious death, God brings glorious life through, excuse me, via the spirit in the heart. And that's exactly what we're going to celebrate. In the Lord's Supper, we'll think about and consider what Christ has done in his glorious death so that we can have glorious life.

[40 : 17] And just by way of reminder, this is for Christians. If you're here, you're not a follower of Jesus or you'll proclaim yourself to be a Christian, this is not for you. If you say, well, I'm not really from this church, I'm just visiting or whatever, hey, if you come from a church of like faith and practice, our conviction is that you're baptized by immersion, since we're Baptists, we encourage you to partake of the Lord's Supper with us, okay?

We also want to encourage you, if you have something against someone, Christian or non-Christian, whatever that is, we think it would be best for you not to partake of the Lord's Supper. Wait for the following month after you try to reconcile with him, and you've tried and you can't reconcile, but at least you've tried, well then partake of the Lord's Supper.

But if you haven't tried to reconcile, don't partake of the Lord's Supper. Wait. Take it next time with us. But this is a way to remind you physically, tangibly, with your hands, with your mouth, with your smell, you tangibly remind yourself of the gospel.

You remind yourself of the glorious death of Christ so you can have glorious life. His death brought life to you. So take a few moments if you would.

Please bow your heads. Take this time to ponder. Take this time to think about the gospel, to think about what we've seen in God's word this morning.

[41 : 47] And after a few moments of you reflecting upon the gospel, upon the scriptures, what we've read, maybe just going through your notes that you've taken, we'll have the men come and they'll distribute the bread to us.

And then we'll partake of that bread together. But just take these few moments. There'll just be some silence for you to reflect upon the gospel.

And to think about the glorious Christ who died for us.