

2 Corinthians 3:5 - 4:1

Day 1

Paul's Competence for Ministry. Read 2 Corinthians 3:5-6

1. How was Paul made adequate/competent? 3:5 (See 1 Corinthians 3:6,7)

FYI: "Paul and the apostles were not merely being modest. They knew for a fact that they did not have the power to cause the church to spread so rapidly in such a short span of time. It could only be the power of God working through them."
- Ray Stedman (294)

2. What does God make us competent for? 3:6a (CR 5:20)

- How does He enable us? 3:6b

3. Underline how Paul described God's work in his life.

- Ephesians 3:7-8 I became a servant of this gospel by the gift of God's grace given me through the working of his power. NIV
- Ephesians 3:20 Now to Him who is able to do far more abundantly beyond all that we ask or think, according to the power that works within us, NAS
- Colossians 1:29 To this end I labor, struggling with all his energy, which so powerfully works in me. NIV
- 1 Corinthians 15:10 But by the grace of God I am what I am, and his grace to me was not without effect. No, I worked harder than all of them - yet not I, but the grace of God that was with me. NIV
- Philippians 2:13 for it is God who works in you to will and to act according to his good purpose. NIV
- 1 Timothy 1:14 And the grace of our Lord was exceedingly abundant, with faith and love which are in Christ Jesus. NKJV
- 2 Peter 1:3 His divine power has given us everything we need for life and godliness through our knowledge of him who called us by his own glory and goodness. NIV

4. Write out the contrast in 3:6b.

The letter _____ but the Spirit gives _____.

Digging Deeper
For an understanding
of how the law "kills,"
see Romans 7:5-11.

FYI: "Under the old covenant, God's law was an external demand. Under the new covenant, God's law becomes an internal desire. The new covenant transforms the way we live our lives. Instead of living by the letter of the Law, we live by the Spirit."
- Ray Stedman (295)

5. Underline why the law is inadequate for salvation:

- Hebrews 7:18-19 The former regulation is set aside because it was weak and useless (for the law made nothing perfect), and a better hope is introduced, by which we draw near to God. NIV
- Hebrews 10:1-4 The law is only a shadow of the good things that are coming-not the realities themselves. For this reason it can never, by the same sacrifices repeated endlessly year after year, make perfect those who draw near to worship. 2 If it could, would they not have stopped being offered? For the worshipers would have been cleansed once for all, and would no longer have felt guilty for their sins. 3 But those sacrifices are an annual reminder of sins, 4 because it is impossible for the blood of bulls and goats to take away sins. NIV
- James 2:10 For whoever keeps the whole law and yet stumbles at just one point is guilty of breaking all of it. NIV
- Romans 3:20-23 Therefore no one will be declared righteous in his sight by observing the law; rather, through the law we become conscious of sin...23 for all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God,

6. If the law couldn't save, what benefits were there to keeping the law?

- Exodus 19:5-6 "Now then, if you will indeed obey My voice and keep My covenant, then you shall be My own possession among all the peoples, for all the earth is Mine; 6 and you shall be to Me a kingdom of priests and a holy nation.' These are the words that you shall speak to the sons of Israel." NAS
- Proverbs 6:23 For the commandment is a lamp and the teaching is light; And reproofs for discipline are the way of life NAS
- Psalm 19:7-11 The law of the LORD is perfect, reviving the soul. The statutes of the LORD are trustworthy, making wise the simple. 8 The precepts of the LORD are right, giving joy to the heart. The commands of the LORD are radiant, giving light to the eyes. 9 The fear of the LORD is pure, enduring forever. The ordinances of the LORD are sure and altogether righteous. 10 They are more precious than gold, than much pure gold; they are sweeter than honey, than honey from the comb. 11 By them is your servant warned; in keeping them there is great reward. NIV

7. How was the problem of the limitation of the law solved? Romans 8:3,4

8. In a letter to the Galatians, Paul argued against bringing any part of the law in as a requirement for salvation. (*The Galatians were adopting the position that a person must at least be circumcised to be saved.*) Underline what Paul called that or what it does to our relationship with Christ.

Galatians 5:1-6 Stand fast therefore in the liberty by which Christ has made us free, and do not be entangled again with a yoke of bondage. 2 Indeed I, Paul, say to you that if you become circumcised, Christ will profit you nothing. 3 And I testify again to every man who becomes circumcised that he is a debtor to keep the whole law. 4 You have become estranged from Christ, you who attempt to be justified by law; you have fallen from grace. 5 For we through the Spirit eagerly wait for the hope of righteousness by faith. 6 For in Christ Jesus neither circumcision nor uncircumcision avails anything, but faith working through love. NKJV

- Underline how we live a godly life in keeping with God’s Word.

Galatians 5:13-19 For you, brethren, have been called to liberty; only do not use liberty as an opportunity for the flesh, but through love serve one another. 14 For all the law is fulfilled in one word, even in this: "You shall love your neighbor as yourself." 15 But if you bite and devour one another, beware lest you be consumed by one another!

16 I say then: Walk in the Spirit, and you shall not fulfill the lust of the flesh. 17 For the flesh lusts against the Spirit, and the Spirit against the flesh; and these are contrary to one another, so that you do not do the things that you wish. 18 But if you are led by the Spirit, you are not under the law. NKJV

9. What does this say about the kind of death vs. life (3:6) Paul is talking about? Romans 7:6

Applying the Word: Do you see any area in which you still cling to your own strength and devices rather than turning to and trusting in the Lord? Where has that led?

Day 2

The Glory of the Covenants. Read 2 Corinthians 3:7-16

10. Record the titles and phrases that describe the new and old covenants. 3:7-12

"Old Covenant" (see 3:14)	"New Covenant" (see 3:6)
3:7 ministry _____ engraved on _____ was/came with _____ glory was _____	3:8 ministry of _____ even more _____
3:9 ministry of _____	3:9b ministry of _____
3:11 what/that which _____	3:11b what/that which _____

FYI: "Under the Old Covenant...known as the Mosaic Law, God’s truth was external - etched in tablets of stone...After Jesus died, however, fulfilling every iota of the Law, His life-giving Spirit was placed in our hearts. Since then, truth has been internal, not external. Where the Law only produced guilt and conflict and death, the Spirit now produces peace, life, light help, joy and purpose....We come to Christ and let Him live His life through us."
 - Charles Swindoll (46)

11. How do the adjectives describing the glory of the ministry of righteousness build?

(3:8) “*more glorious*” → (3:9)

→ (3:10)

- Compared to the New Covenant, how does the glory of the Old seem? 3:10

FYI: “Paul calls the old covenant ‘the *ministry that condemns* men, ...The result of trying to meet God’s standards by our own resources is condemnation.

Righteousness means being fully accepted by God. It means that God has given us a standing of worth. We don’t have to earn our sense of worth; God gives it to us by His grace. God tells us, ‘I love you. I forgive you. I have cleansed you. I have adopted you as my beloved child.’”
- Ray Stedman (296)

“Though the Old Covenant of law-keeping had its glory, it was only a temporary one and fading at that, owing to the fact that it was weak on account of the flesh” (Rom. 8:3). It showed a standard of conduct far above that which failing and sinful human nature could reach. [see Romans 3:19,20] The New Covenant, on the other hand, being all of God’s doing in grace, replacing condemnation and death by imputed righteousness and life, had a glory which far outshone the Old Covenant so much so that by comparison it scarcely appears to be glorious at all (3:10).”
- Stuart Allen (211)

12. Underline how we stand under the law.

- Galatians 3:10 All who rely on observing the law are under a curse, for it is written: “Cursed is everyone who does not continue to do everything written in the Book of the Law.” NIV
- Romans 3:19-20 Now we know that whatever the law says, it says to those who are under the law, so that every mouth may be silenced and the whole world held accountable to God. 20 Therefore no one will be declared righteous in his sight by observing the law; NIV

13. Underline how we stand “in Christ.”

- Romans 5:1 Therefore, having been justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ, NAS
- Romans 8:1 Therefore, there is now no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus NIV
- 1 Corinthians 6:11 But you were washed, you were sanctified, you were justified in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ and by the Spirit of our God. NIV
- Colossians 1:22 But now he has reconciled you by Christ’s physical body through death to present you holy in his sight, without blemish and free from accusation- NIV

14. Underline how this “righteousness” is achieved or not achieved.

- Romans 3:21-24 But now a righteousness from God, apart from law, has been made known, to which the Law and the Prophets testify. 22 This righteousness from God comes through faith in Jesus Christ to all who believe. There is no difference, 23 for all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God, 24 and are justified freely by his grace through the redemption that came by Christ Jesus. NIV
- Titus 3:5-7 He saved us, not because of righteous things we had done, but because of his mercy. He saved us through the washing of rebirth and renewal by the Holy Spirit, 6 whom he poured out on us generously through Jesus Christ our Savior, NIV
- Philippians 3:9 And be found in him, not having a righteousness of my own that comes from the law, but that which is through faith in Christ-the righteousness that comes from God and is by faith. NIV

15. How did this understanding influence Paul? 3:12 (See an example in Acts 4:13.)

- How did Paul describe this hope in Hebrews 6:19?

Applying the Word: How do you keep the hope of all that you have in Christ alive and active in your life?

Day 3

Liberty and Transformation. Read 2 Corinthians 3:13-18

16. Why would Moses put a veil over his face? 3:13 (See Exodus 34:29-34)

17. What did Moses' veil symbolize? (record the phrases)

- 3:14a "their minds _____"
- 3:15b "a veil _____"

FYI: "Paul could say of his fellow Jews that **a veil lies on their heart**, but he could also say that the veil can be taken away in Jesus. Paul knew this well because he was once veiled to the glory and superiority of Jesus."
- David Guzik

18. Underline what Paul said about the error made by the nation of Israel as a whole.

- Romans 9:31-32 but Israel, who pursued a law of righteousness, has not attained it. Why not? Because they pursued it not by faith but as if it were by works. They stumbled over the "stumbling stone." NIV
- Romans 10:1-3 Brothers, my heart's desire and prayer to God for the Israelites is that they may be saved. 2 For I can testify about them that they are zealous for God, but their zeal is not based on knowledge. 3 Since they did not know the righteousness that comes from God and sought to establish their own, they did not submit to God's righteousness. NIV

19. How did Paul feel about this? Romans 9:2,3

20. How is that veil removed?

- 3:14b
- 3:16

21. Instead of bondage to the law, what does the Spirit give us? 3:17 (CR Romans 8:2)

- What kind of liberty *doesn't* it mean? Romans 6:1,2,11

FYI: "The ministry of the Spirit brings *freedom* from the power of sin and death - those things that the law could not free people from."
- NIV Faithlife Study Bible (1907)

22. Underline the way to knowing God.

- John 14:6 Jesus said to him, "I am the way, and the truth, and the life; no one comes to the Father but through Me. NAS
- Acts 4:10-12 by the name of Jesus Christ of Nazareth... Salvation is found in no one else, for there is no other name under heaven given to men by which we must be saved." NIV
- 1 John 2:23 No one who denies the Son has the Father; whoever acknowledges the Son has the Father also. NIV
- 2 John 8-9 Anyone who runs ahead and does not continue in the teaching of Christ does not have God; whoever continues in the teaching has both the Father and the Son. NIV

23. What does unveiling lead to? 3:18 (CR 4:6)

- How freely can we approach the Lord? Hebrews 4:16

FYI: "We (like Moses) can begin to reflect His own image in our lives ...and just as we are changed "from glory to glory," we also receive "grace for grace" (John 1:16). Thus we are gradually being restored to the full image of God in which we were created (Genesis 1:26-27), being "renewed in knowledge after the image of Him that created him" (Colossians 3:10), for we indeed are predestined "to be conformed to the image of His Son" (Romans 8:29)."
- Henry Morris

24. What does Romans 12:2 say about transformation? (*How does transformation differ from trying hard to be better on your own? See Philippians 2:13*)

25. Underline phrases that describe this renewal process.

- Ephesians 4:21-24 Surely you heard of him and were taught in him in accordance with the truth that is in Jesus. 22 You were taught, with regard to your former way of life, to put off your old self, which is being corrupted by its deceitful desires; 23 to be made new in the attitude of your minds; 24 and to put on the new self, created to be like God in true righteousness and holiness. NIV
- Colossians 3:9-10 Do not lie to each other, since you have taken off your old self with its practices 10 and have put on the new self, which is being renewed in knowledge in the image of its Creator. NIV

26. What does scripture say about the ultimate *glory* we will experience?

- Colossians 3:4 When Christ who is our life appears, then you also will appear with Him in glory NKJV
- Philippians 3:21 who, by the power that enables him to bring everything under his control, will transform our lowly bodies so that they will be like his glorious body. NIV
- 1 Corinthians 13:12 For now we see in a mirror dimly, but then face to face; now I know in part, but then I will know fully just as I also have been fully known. NAS
- 1 John 3:2 Dear friends, now we are children of God, and what we will be has not yet been made known. But we know that when he appears, we shall be like him, for we shall see him as he is. NIV

Applying the Word: *What are some of the most significant transformations that the Lord has performed in your life? How would you describe the process? Does this usually tend to be an overnight or a lifelong process? How can you make yourself more available and accepting of His transforming power?*

Day 4

Paul's Steadfastness. Read 2 Corinthians 4:1

27. What did Paul connect with receiving his "ministry?" 4:1 How did he feel about having this ministry?

Digging Deeper
For Paul's description of the mercy he had received, see 1 Timothy 1:12-16

Lose heart/faint NT:1457 *egkakeo*: to be afraid, to become discouraged, to become weary or tired, to despair

[Paul]"had been called not to communicate the law but to dispense grace...Paul regarded this divine commission to serve under the new covenant as more than compensating for all the trials he endured for being true to his calling."
- Expositor's Bible Commentary

28. List other words Paul used to describe the effects of this message.

- 2:14 *triumph/victory*
- 3:4
- 3:6
- 3:12
- 3:17
- 3:18

Endurance/Perseverance

29. Underline what Paul connected with not losing heart/persevering in the following:

- Galatians 6:9 And let us not lose heart in doing good, for in due time we shall reap if we do not grow weary. NAS
- Ephesians 3:13 Therefore I ask you not to lose heart at my tribulations on your behalf, for they are your glory. NAS
- 2 Thessalonians 3:13 And as for you, brothers, never tire of doing what is right. NIV
- Philippians 4:12-13 I know what it is to be in need, and I know what it is to have plenty. I have learned the secret of being content in any and every situation, whether well fed or hungry, whether living in plenty or in want. 13 I can do everything through him who gives me strength. NIV

30. From Hebrews 12:1-3:

Therefore, since we are surrounded by such a great cloud of witnesses, let us throw off everything that hinders and the sin that so easily entangles, and let us run with perseverance the race marked out for us. 2 Let us fix our eyes on Jesus, the author and perfecter of our faith, who for the joy set before him endured the cross, scorning its shame, and sat down at the right hand of the throne of God. 3 Consider him who endured such opposition from sinful men, so that you will not grow weary and lose heart. NIV

- What do we need to throw off/lay aside (*apotithemi* "to put off from oneself")? Vs. 1
- How are we to run our "race"? (What race are we to run?) vs. 1b
- What do you think are some of these hindrances/encumbrances/weights or sins?
- What focus will encourage us? 2:2a
- What was Christ's focus? How did He feel about the cross? 2:2b
- What did Christ face? 12:3a (How well does He understand what we face? Hebrews 2:18; 4:15)
- What should knowing this do for us? 12:3b

Digging Deeper

From Isaiah 40:27-31:
What concern is addressed?
(vs. 27)

Why do you think Isaiah first reminded them about the attributes of God? (vs.28,29)

What focus did Isaiah point to and what does it give?

31. Underline what we need to do with past present and future worries, burdens and sins.

Past:

- Philippians 3:13 But one thing I do: Forgetting what is behind and straining toward what is ahead, NIV
- Isaiah 43:25 "I, even I, am he who blots out your transgressions, for my own sake, and remembers your sins no more. NIV

Present:

- Psalm 46:1 God is our refuge and strength, A very present help in trouble. NAS
- 1 Peter 5:7 Cast all your anxiety on him because he cares for you. NIV
- John 14:27 Peace I leave with you; my peace I give you. I do not give to you as the world gives. Do not let your hearts be troubled and do not be afraid. NIV
- Philippians 4:6 Do not be anxious about anything, but in everything, by prayer and petition, with thanksgiving, present your requests to God. NIV

Future:

- Matthew 6:34 "So do not worry about tomorrow; for tomorrow will care for itself. Each day has enough trouble of its own. NAS
- Psalm 139:16 All the days ordained for me were written in your book before one of them came to be. NIV
- Hebrews 13:5b ...God has said, "Never will I leave you; never will I forsake you."
- Romans 8:28 And we know that God causes all things to work together for good to those who love God, to those who are called according to His purpose. NAS

Applying the Word: *What helps you to persevere? What things tend to discourage you the most? Who is someone whom you can encourage and in what ways can you help them to persevere?*

Memory Verse:

2 Cor. 3:5 Not that we are adequate in ourselves to consider anything as coming from ourselves, but our adequacy is from God NAS

Or

2 Cor. 3:18 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. NIV