

## INTRODUCTION.

- A. Scripture text: **2Corinthians 3:1-6**.
- B. Within the sixth verse of this chapter the apostle Paul contrasts the two great covenants with the words "letter and spirit."
- C. He tells us that the letter kills but the spirit gives life.
- D. This morning's lesson deals with the differences between the two covenants; how the Law kills, and how the Spirit (the new Law) gives life.

## I. THE LETTER KILLS.

- A. The Law did not speak of pardon, it produced alarm and dread.
- B. The Law was given because of transgressions and to make man aware of his sin (see Gal. 3:19).
- C. The Law had its effect in producing:
  - 1. Condemnation.
  - 2. A sense of guilt (the Levitical priesthood could not erase this).
  - 3. Danger.
  - 4. Death.
- D. Paul spoke of the Law doing three things (in Col. 2:14):  
...having canceled out the certificate of debt consisting of decrees against us and which was hostile to us; and He has taken it out of the way, having nailed it to the cross.
  - 1. It is a certificate of debt (we owe God righteousness because we sin).
  - 2. It consisted of decrees against us (no provision for forgiveness).
  - 3. It was hostile to us (consistently pointed out our sin).
- E. Even on the day of its inception, when Moses came down from the mountain with the Law written on tablets of stone, because of sin, 3,000 died (see Ex. 32:1-28).
- F. The Law brings about wrath, because with Law there will be violation (Rom. 4:13-15).  
For the promise to Abraham or to his descendants that he would be heir of the world was not through the Law, but through the righteousness of faith. **14** For if those who are of the Law are heirs, faith is made void and the promise is nullified; **15** for the Law brings about wrath, but where there is no law, neither is there violation.
- G. The Pharisees were more concerned with the 'letter' of the Law, than the spirit of it (Mt. 23:23; 15:6).  
(Mt 23:23) "Woe to you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! For you tithe mint and dill and cummin, and have neglected the weightier provisions of the law: justice and mercy and faithfulness; but these are the things you should have done without neglecting the others.  
They invalidated the word of God by observing their traditions which contracted it.  
(Mt 15:6) he is not to honor his father or his mother.' And thus you invalidated the word of God for the sake of your tradition.

## II. THE SPIRIT GIVES LIFE.

- A. Jeremiah prophesied that the New Covenant would be different (see Jer. 31:31-34).
- B. We see the new Law is different from the old, it gives:
  - 1. Pardon.
  - 2. Relief.
  - 3. Joy.
  - 4. Forgiveness.
- C. We see now that Christ is the end of the Law (Rom. 10:4; Jn. 5:29).  
(Rom 10:4) For Christ is the end of the law for righteousness to everyone who believes.  
(Jn 5:29) and shall come forth; those who did the good deeds to a resurrection of life, those who committed the evil deeds to a resurrection of judgment.
- D. What the Law could not do (forgive sin) God did (Rom. 8:3-4).  
For what the Law could not do, weak as it was through the flesh, God did: sending His own Son in the likeness of sinful flesh and as an offering for sin, He condemned sin in the flesh, **4** in order that the requirement of the

Law might be fulfilled in us, who do not walk according to the flesh, but according to the Spirit.

- E. Now, by God's actions, we can say there is no condemnation (Rom. 8:1-2).

There is therefore now no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus. [2] For the law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus has set you free from the law of sin and of death.

- F. The spirit of life sets us free from the letter of death. Truly, the letter kills but the spirit gives life.

### III. OUR RESPONSE.

- A. Our response is not to forget the letter of the new covenant and only worry about the spirit of the law.
- B. But we should strive to worship God in both spirit and in truth (Jn. 4:24).  
God is spirit, and those who worship Him must worship in spirit and truth."  
(In the CofC, we emphasize too much on the truth, as denominations overemphasize on the spirit, and both extremes are wrong.)
- C. Our benefit of studying the old Law is so that we can fuller appreciate the new one. Romans and Hebrews become very difficult without some knowledge of the old Law.

### CONCLUSION AND INVITATION.

- A. Let us close the lesson today by making the following points:
1. The old Law is a tutor or schoolmaster to lead us to X, therefore it has value (Gal. 3:24; Jn. 5:29).  
(Gal 3:24) Therefore the Law has become our tutor to lead us to Christ, that we may be justified by faith.  
(Jn 5:29) ...and shall come forth; those who did the good deeds to a resurrection of life, those who committed the evil deeds to a resurrection of judgment.
  2. The old Law was given to make us aware of the grave, and eternal consequences of our sin (Gal. 3:19).  
Why the Law then? It was added because of transgressions, having been ordained through angels by the agency of a mediator, until the seed should come to whom the promise had been made.
  3. We can better appreciate X, His sacrifice, and the entire new covenant by understanding the old (Heb. 8:7).  
For if that first covenant had been faultless, there would have been no occasion sought for a second.
- B. My admonition to you is to live a life which Paul speaks of in our scripture text (2Cor. 3:1-6) so that the world will not need physical letters of recommendation showing proof of your Xianity, but that X's Law has been written on your heart, and your life is your letter.
- C. Plan of salvation for non-Xians; erring Xians.