

LIVING EPISTLES OR LIVING LETTERS

2Cor 3:1-5

INTRODUCTION:

- A. Do you like to get letters? Today we have "email" which most like to receive.
- B. Paul said these Corinthians were "living letters"
- C. Being a "living letter" involves living as a Christian, a follower of Christ, an adherent of Christ's will
- D. Christ lives in a Christian Gal 2:20
- E. Obedient lives in Christ, Christ lives in the obedient 1Jhn 3:24
- F. Think about this idea from the standpoint of beginning this new year. What are people going to read in our lives?

DISCUSSION:

I. TO BE A LIVING EPISTLE ONE MUST BE IN THE CHURCH

- A. Morality will not save a person Acts 10:1,2; 11:14
- B. God can only be glorified in the church Eph 3:21
- C. We glorify God if we suffer as a Christian 1Pet 4:16

II. "LIVING EPISTLES" SHOWS CHRISTIANITY MUST BE DEMONSTRATED

- A. However, not just for personal glory 1Pet 4:16
- B. Christianity is expressed in action Jas 1:22-27
- C. Christians cannot love the world 1Jhn 2:15-17
 - 1. In the world but not of the world Jhn 15:19
 - 2. Cannot practice works of flesh Gal 5:19-21
 - 3. God and the world are estranged Jas 4:4
- D. Christians are an open book
 - 1. Living epistles (letters) 2Cor 3:1-3
 - 2. Shining lights Matt 5:16
- E. Our life is our greatest contribution
 - 1. To be great one must serve Matt 20:26,27
 - 2. The way up is down - humility is the key

III. THERE MUST BE A STANDARD TO GO BY

- A. Letters have standards (rules of grammar, etc)
- B. Many occupations, sports, etc have official rule book
 - 1. Christian life compared to a race Heb 12:1
 - 2. Athletes must abide by rules to receive crown 2Tim 2:5
 - 3. To be in some secular professions one must follow certain rules

- C. Christ and His word is our standard
 - 1. Walk as he walked 1Jhn 2:6
 - 2. Follow his example 1Pet 2:21-23
 - 3. Conform to his image Rom 8:29
 - 4. His word will judge us Jhn 12:48
 - 5. His word is truth Jhn 17:17; Truth makes free Jhn 8:32

IV. LIFE IS AN EXPRESSION OF THE HEART Lk 6:45

- A. The heart is life's laboratory
 - 1. Out of the heart comes evil thoughts Mk 7:21
 - 2. Good heart brings good Lk 6:45
 - 3. Evil heart brings evil
 - 4. Spoken word and deeds come from the heart
- B. What kind of treasures does your heart have
 - 1. Attitude toward God and His word Jhn 17:17
 - 2. Attitude toward brethren Phil 1:3
 - 3. Attitude toward religious error in the church Rom 16:17
 - 4. Attitude toward sin in general Rom 12:9
 - 5. Attitude toward work 1Cor 15:58; 2Tim 2:15

CONCLUSION:

- A. Being a Christian or a follower of Christ involves our whole way of life Phil 1:27
- B. We are known by our actions 2Cor 3:2 which is what makes us "living epistles". So, what do people see or "read" in our lives?
- C. Our lives must conform to the standard of Christ and His word, that is we must show by our lives what this standard teaches Jhn 12:48
- D. Our speech and actions are outward expressions of the thoughts and attitudes of our hearts Lk 6:45
- E. But remember you cannot glorify God, be a living epistle outside the church Eph 3:21; 1Pet 4:16.
- F. You can and will be an "epistle" but not a "living" one outside the body of Christ.