



shift

SHIFT – 2 Corinthians Series

## Letters of Reference

### Main Truth

As believers in the work of Christ, we have an unfading glory, a new covenant of the Lord's spirit, superior to the law, able to impart life. As we mature in Christ we are being transformed so others should increasingly see the righteousness of God mirrored in us.

### Scripture

2 Corinthians 3:1–18

### Background

*Exodus 34:29–35*

When Moses descended Mt. Sinai with the “ten words” of God's covenant engraved in stone, he had no idea his face was radiant, gleaming with God's glory. All Israel looked on as he repeated the letters of the law just as he had gotten them, enveloped in the light of God.

Yet in time the radiance would fade and Moses would cover his face when he talked with them. The glory of the law (the letters chiseled in stone), reflected on Moses' face, was slowly being nullified. How? Perhaps it was through Israel's inability to keep the law. Its potency no longer conferred blessing but brought condemnation. “For without law,” the Apostle would say, “sin is not taken into account.”

Even from the early days emerging from Egypt, Israel's resolve to keep God's commands deteriorated almost at every turn. From complaints about the cuisine to the golden calf, they were a stiff-necked people.

Moses had brought them a new message, a new covenant, a new way of doing things and needed the authority of God behind him demonstrated in the vast destruction of Egypt, the miracle rescue through the Red Sea and His very words on physical tablets arriving in glory. Even so they questioned and complained and challenged Moses, “Who are you to rule over us?”

Paul and Timothy brought a new message, a new covenant, a new way of doing things without the visibility and notoriety of Moses. Paul depended on the living evidence of those he mentored into Christ. They were his letters of recommendation, the proof of his authority and sincerity and most of all of the truth of his message. He could proclaim the message with boldness because his message was not engraved on breakable temporary stone but on their hearts by the spirit of God.

Just as Moses' face remained covered so also Israel's heart is covered from the knowledge of Christ and the greater glory of the new covenant in His blood. We are privileged to approach Christ with uncovered faces reflecting this new and greater glory that doesn't fade but produces life.

## Reflect

With the letter of Christ written on my heart, does my face mirror the Lord's glory?

Do people see me walking boldly with unashamed confidence in the life-giving spirit and speaking a message of righteousness in Christ?

Does my life reflect well on those who mentored me and disciplined me? Am I their letter of recommendation?

Can I shift from my own law and own standards that measure whether I am good or bad, righteous or sinful, worthy or unworthy to letters of salvation written on my heart?

## Going Deeper

*"Look at that face, just look at it.*

*Look at that fabulous face of yours.*

*I knew first look I took at it,*

*This was the face that the world adores."*

The face. A theme that traces through 2 Corinthians is recognized in this song from a popular musical. There is something important and honorable and majestic about the face. It is where glory shows.

Have the seven mentions of the face in this book ever caught your notice? Paul says that he has dealt graciously "because of you in the face of Christ..." (2:10).

Moses' face was illuminated with glory but then covered (3:7). We view the Lord's glory with an "uncovered face" (3:18). "...for the God Who says that, out of darkness light shall be shining, is He Who shines in our hearts, with a view toward the illumination of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ (4:6)." That is the face the world will one day adore.