

**I. Read II Corinthians 3:1-5**

- A. In verses 1-3 the Apostle Paul refers to “letters of commendation” (NAS). The commentators of the *New Geneva Study Bible* explain that “apparently Paul’s opponents had brought some misleading letters of commendation to the church at Corinth, letters that the bearers were not worthy of.” By contrast, Paul refers to the Corinthian believers as “epistle(s) of Christ,” and consequently as his “letters of commendation” (NAS). Paul viewed the faith and witness of the Corinthians as the fruit of his ministry. Read Matthew 7:17-20 and discuss the truth that men may be known by their fruits. Relate this truth to Paul’s ministry in Corinth.
- B. In II Corinthians 3:3, Paul states that the Corinthian believers “are a letter of Christ.” The idea that believers are a sort of *living epistle* to the grace of God is a powerful one. Discuss this statement: “*If you are a Christian, you may be the only gospel the unbeliever ever hears,*” keeping in mind what Paul said in verse 3.
- C. Paul refers to the cause behind the believer’s sanctification in II Corinthians 3:3-5. From verse 3, it is clear that the Corinthian believers were saved and are being sanctified by:

Read Philippians 1:6 and comment on how it supports the answer above.

Does the truth expressed above negate the work and value of Paul's ministry to the Corinthians?

D. In verse 4, Paul writes that his "confidence" is "through Christ toward God" (NAS). What do you suppose he means?

E. What does Paul mean in verse 5 when he writes, "Not that we are adequate (NAS) (sufficient – KJV; competent – NIV) in ourselves?"

What are the practical (functional) implications for the last part of verse 5 – "our adequacy (NAS) or competence (NIV) is from God?" (Read 1 Corinthians 12:1, 4-7; Romans 12:3-8.)