

2 Corinthians 3:2-3 in the Navajo Bible

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T'áá nihí naaltsoos yá'át'éehgo nihaa halne'ii danohł́igo, shí índa Timothy nihijéí biyi'di bee ask'e'ashchíinii danohł́i, áko éí ak'e'ashchínigíí dine t'áá ałtso dayółta'go bił béédahózin, 3 áko éí Christ bits'ájdéé' hane'ii bee nihíł hwilne'ígíí danohł́i. Bee ak'e'alchíhí éí doo bee ak'e'ashchíjí da, nidi Diyin God hináanii biNíłch'I Diyinii bee ak'e'ashchí, tsé dilkóohgo hasht'eelyaaígíí biká'a'gi doo bee bik'eda'aschíjí da, nidi ajéí biyi'di bee bik'eda'ashchí. (2 Corinthians 3:2-3)¹

You yourselves are our letter, written on our hearts, known and read by everybody. 3 You show that you are a letter from Christ, the result of our ministry, written not with ink but with the Spirit of the living God, not on tablets of stone but on tablets of human hearts. (2 Corinthians 3:2-3)²

Introduction

Paul's discussion of the law in 2 Corinthians 3 does not begin at vs. 7. The verses quoted above establish a context for his later remarks.

A Love Letter

If the analogy comparing the law to what Paul says above holds, and it must because Paul's entire discourse in this chapter is based on it, he is saying that the law also is a letter from Christ. He wants this letter not to become something hard and dry, but rather as something warm and living, so that when it becomes known and read by people everywhere – those who see it at work in our lives – it will convey the message He intended.

Inspiration

Is the law of God devoid of the Spirit? It would be hard to make that claim because Paul says, "We know that the law is spiritual; . . ." (Romans 7:14). Otherwise why would people say it is so spiritual that no one can obey it?

There are many ironies here. People say with great conviction that every part of the Bible is inspired. And yet one part of the Bible in particular is not to be obeyed. I'm

¹ Navajo Bible quotations are from *Diyin God Bizaad. The Holy Bible in Navajo*. Revised edition. New York: American Bible Society, 2000.

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talking here about the fourth commandment. Why lay such heavy stress on inspiration (many would say inerrancy) if, after making such points, we set aside what is written?

The unity of God

There is more here than an issue of inspiration. Inspiration is one thing, but beyond this there is the unity of God. Any theology which denies that Father, Son, and Holy Spirit are one risks going beyond the scope of historic Christianity. But if there really is unity among, why would there not be unity in what they require? We should not think that the Father is the God of the Old Testament and that the Son and the Holy Spirit are the God of the New Testament. It might be that no one today would say this, but our teaching about the law shows that it is an assumption which rests only slightly below the surface.

If Christ came to set us free from the law, one part of doing this would be setting us free from the God who gave us the law. There are two problems with this.

First problem. First, Moses did not write the law himself. On the contrary, assuming our focus is on the Ten Commandments, God wrote the law with His own finger on stone. We know that this is not an entirely satisfactory arrangement, because stone is so hard and cold. He would much rather write His law on humans hearts – and promises to do so.

But God found fault with the people and said: "The time is coming, declares the Lord, when I will make a new covenant with the house of Israel and with the house of Judah.⁹ It will not be like the covenant I made with their forefathers when I took them by the hand to lead them out of Egypt, because they did not remain faithful to my covenant, and I turned away from them, declares the Lord.¹⁰ This is the covenant I will make with the house of Israel after that time, declares the Lord. I will put my laws in their minds and write them on their hearts. I will be their God, and they will be my people.¹¹ No longer will a man teach his neighbor, or a man his brother, saying, 'Know the Lord,' because they will all know me, from the least of them to the greatest.¹² For I will forgive their wickedness and will remember their sins no more."¹³ By calling this covenant "new," he has made the first one obsolete; and what is obsolete and aging will soon disappear.

So the point here is that the first covenant was defective and needs replacing. There it is! No more Sabbath. But this is not He found fault with. The problem was not what the law said, but where it was written. Read the passage again and ask yourself, what changes? Not the wording. Only the place where it is preserved.

Second problem. The other thing I wanted to mention is that, if God is one, we can't really say that the Ten Commandments are the Father's law and that whatever the New Testament says is the Son's law. The Ten Commandments are the Father's law and the Son's law, and it was inspired by the Holy Spirit. Similarly, the New Testament is the Son's law and the Father's law, and it too was inspired by the Holy Spirit. So let us not split apart with is joined in the very nature of God.

Conclusion

Even if we could divide Scripture up, as I have discussed above, the Father Himself loves us (see John 16:27). So any writing that comes from Him is going to be a love letter to those who in turn love Him.

God inspires people to write things down, and miraculously preserves them down through the ages, because He loves us. We can't choose up sides such that one team takes these verses and the opposing team takes those verses. Both sides must take them all. The entire Bible is inspired and the entire Bible speaks of God's love. Even His reproof and instruction are given because He loves us.

[T]he Lord disciplines those he loves, and he punishes everyone he accepts as a son.
(Hebrews 12:6)

After saying these things, we must add that the Spirit is not opposed to Himself, nor is the Father opposed to the Son, or the Son to the Father. When God speaks, He speaks for the entire godhead, for our entire race, for our entire span of existence on Planet Earth. Even if the words are addressed to an individual, the instruction they contain is for all of us. Let us benefit from these words and do them.