## II Corinthians Chapter III

*ONT = Orthodox New Testament, Holy Apostles Convent, Buena Vista, CO, 1999*

***3:1 Do we begin again to commend ourselves? If not, do we need, as some, epistles of commendation to you or commendatory ones from you? 2 You are our epistle, which has been inscribed in our (on your RSV) hearts, known and read by all men, 3 since it is manifest that you are an epistle of Christ, ministered by us, which has not been inscribed with ink, but with the Spirit of the living God, not in stony tablets, but in fleshy tablets of the heart.***

**1. They are proof of Paul Apostleship**
"Here he testifies not only to their love, but also to their good works: since they are able to show unto all men by their own virtue the high worth of their teacher, for this is the meaning of, "You are our epistle." What letters would have done to commend and gain respect for us, you do both as seen and heard of; for the virtue of the disciples adorns and to commends the teacher more than any letter." (Chrysostom, II Corinthians, Hom. VI.)

**2. The Unity of faith and love binds them in their hearts**
"That is, which all know; we so bear you about every where and have you in mind. As though he said, You are our commendation to others, for we both have you continually in our heart and proclaim to all your good works. Because then that even to others you are our commendation, we need no epistles from you; but further, because we love you exceedingly, we need no commendation to you. (Chrysostom, II Corinthians, Hom. VI.)

***4 And we have such trust through Christ toward God: 5 Not that we are sufficient of ourselves to reckon anything as of ourselves, but our sufficiency is of God, 6 Who also made us fit ministers of a new covenant, not of the letter, (in a written code, RSV) but of the Spirit; for the letter kills, but the Spirit makes alive. (ONT)***

**1. St. Paul refers everything to God and not himself = the virtue of humility**
"For he possesses this virtue, humility I mean, in singular perfection. Wherefore whenever he says any thing great of himself, he makes all diligence to soften down extremely and by every means, what he has said. And so he does in this place also, saying, 'Not that we are sufficient of ourselves to account any thing as from ourselves:' that is, I said not, "We have confidence," as though part were ours and part God's; but I refer and ascribe the whole to Him. (Chrysostom, II Corinthians, Hom. VI.)"

**2. St. Paul is comparing the Law (Letter) with the Grace of The D=Sacrament of Baptism**
"And by 'letter' here he means the Law which punishes transgressors; but by 'spirit' the grace which through Baptism gives life to them who by sins were made dead . . . In the

Law, he that sins is punished; now, he that sins comes and is baptized and is made righteous, and being made righteous, he lives, being delivered from the death of sin. The Law, if it lay hold on a murderer, puts him to death; the Gospel, if it lay hold on a murderer, enlightens, and gives him life. . .This is the meaning of, 'the letter kills.' The Gospel takes hold of thousands of muderers and robbers, and baptizing them delivers them from their former vices. This is the meaning of, 'the Spirit gives life.' . .For in Baptism the sins are buried, the former things are blotted out, the man is made alive, the entire grace written upon his heart as it were a table. (Chrysostom, II Corinthians, Hom. VI.)"

**3. Life in the Spirit Consists consist of . . .**

"Let us then contribute, and preserve to the soul its life. . . .also the soul when it has no healthiness, though it retain a semblance of life, is dead: when it does not see gold as gold but as something great and precious; when it thinks not of the future but crawls upon the ground; when it does one thing in place of another. For whence is it clear that we have a soul? Is it not from its operations? When then it doth not perform the things proper to it, is it not dead? When, for instance, it has no care for virtue, but is voracious and transgresses the law; how can I tell that you have a soul? (Chrysostom, II Corinthians, Hom. VI.)"

**On The Death of the Soul**

". . .the rich man [in the story] of Lazarus, (illustrates) what is death in a soul; for he had a dead soul, and it is plain from what he did. For, of the works of the soul he did not one, but ate and drank and lived in pleasure only. Such are the unmerciful and cruel, for these too have a dead soul as he had. For all its warmth that flows out of the love of our neighbor has been spent, and it is deader than a lifeless body. But the poor man was not such, but standing on the very summit of heavenly wisdom shone out; and though wrestling with continual hunger, and not even supplied with the food that was necessary, neither so did he speak blasphemy against God, but endured all nobly. Now this is no trifling work of the soul; but a very high proof that it is well-strung and healthful. (Chrysostom, II Corinthians, Hom. VI.)"

**Speech - a sign of healthy to the soul**

"For when you insult, this is not the voice of the soul, but of anger; when you talk filthily, it is lewdness, and not she that spoke; when you withdraw, it is envy; when you scheme, covetousness. These are not her works, but those of the affections and the diseases belonging to her. As then corruption comes not simply of the body, but of the death and the passion which is thus in the body; so also, in truth, these things come of the passions which grow upon the soul. For if you will hear a voice from a living soul, hear Paul saying, "Having food and covering, we shall be there with content:" (1 Tim. vi. 8.) and "Godliness is great gain:" (ib. 6.) and, "The world is crucified unto me, and I unto the world." (Gal. vi. 14.) Hear Peter saying, "Silver and gold have I none, but such as I have, give I thee." (Acts iii. 6.) (Chrysostom, II Corinthians, Hom. VI.)"

***7 But if the ministration of death, which in letters was engraved in stones, came into being in glory, so that the sons of Israel were not able to look intently into the face of Moses on the account of the glory of his face, which glory is being put to an end, 8 how shall not the ministration of the Spirit be much more in glory? 9 For if the ministration of condemnation is glory, much rather the ministration of righteousness abounds in glory. (ONT)***

**1. The ministration of death refers to the Law - it revealed sin not caused it(Chrysostom)**

**2. The ministration of the Spirit refers to Baptism in Christ (Chrysostom)**

***10 Indeed, in this case, what once had splendor has come to have no splendor at all, because of the splendor that surpasses it. (RSV) 11 For if that which is being put to an end was in the midst of glory , much rather that which remains is in glory. 12 Since then we have such hope, we use much boldness; 13 and not as Moses, who used to put a veil over his face, in order that the sons of Israel should not look intently at the end of that being abolished.***

**The Law was being done away with. (Chrysostom)**
14 But their minds were hardened: For until this day, the same veil remains upon the reading of the old testament, it not being revealed that in Christ the veil is being abolished.

***15 But until today, when Moses is being read, a veil lies upon their heart. 16 But whenever it shall turn to the Lord, the veil is taken away. 17 Now the Lord is the Spirit; and where the Spirit of the Lord is, there is freedom. 18 But we all, with unveiled face, (beholding RSV) reflecting as a mirror the glory of the Lord, are being transformed (changed RSV) into the same image (his likeness RSV) from glory to glory, even as from the Lord, the Spirit.***
**{from one degree of glory to another; for this comes from the Lord who is the Spirit. RSV}**

**From Glory to Glory**
"The Logos shows that it would be a disadvantage for us not to be able to make a change for the better, as a kind of wing of flight to greater things. . .Changing in everything for the better, let him exchange glory for glory, becoming greater through daily increase, ever perfecting himself and never arriving too quickly at the limit of perfection: never to stop growing toward WHAT IS BETTER AND NEVER PLACING ANY LIMIT ON PERFECTION." (Gregory of Nyssa, On Perfection)