

2 CORINTHIANS 3

COMMENTARY

1 Are we beginning to commend ourselves again? Or do we need, as some, letters of commendation to you or from you? 2 You are our letter, written in our hearts, known and read by all men; 3 being manifested that you are a letter of Messiah, cared for by us, written not with ink but with the Spirit of the living God, not on tablets of stone but on tablets of human hearts.

ch 3 There are significant statements appearing in 2 Corinthians ch. 3, which bear understandable importance for today's Messianic movement, as they involve Jewish evangelism and common Jewish resistance to the good news of Yeshua the Messiah. 2 Corinthians 3:14 depicts the common predicament of Jewish people often being closed to the gospel: "for to this day the same veil remains over them when they read the Old Covenant; it has not been unveiled, because only by the Messiah is the veil taken away" (CJB). *Only with proper Divine intervention can many Jewish people receive a revelation of Yeshua as the Jewish Messiah.* For the Apostle Paul writing in the First Century, much of this was just the result of a stubbornness and close-mindedness which needed to be overcome. For many of us today, a close-minded obstinance has been compounded by a complicated history of relations between the Jewish Synagogue, and a largely non-Jewish Christian Church that has often wanted little or nothing to do with its faith heritage and connections to Judaism. The Messianic community has obviously emerged to help resolve some of these problems.

While there are deep emotions and experiences which can be invoked, when today's Messianic people approach 2 Corinthians ch. 3—there are also significant theological discussions and debates that one will encounter, which today's Messianic people, unfortunately, do not tend to handle very well. Many Christian readers of 2 Corinthians ch. 3 draw the conclusion that the Apostle Paul teaches that the Old Covenant—widely classified to be the Torah or the Law of Moses—was a veil of condemnation and death that was abolished by the work of Yeshua the Messiah. Thus, any one purporting to be a Believer in Jesus should not even be considering following its commandments and instructions. However, when one pays close attention to the statements made *within the text* of 2 Corinthians ch. 3, a much different picture is presented than one of the "Old Covenant law" needing to be superseded by "New Covenant grace."

Even though it is common for one to hear a great deal of talk about the differences between the New Covenant and the Old Covenant, too frequently what the "Old Covenant" specifically composes or represents is misdiagnosed. The term "old covenant" (Grk. *tēs palaias diathēkēs*, τῆς παλαιᾶς διαθήκης) only appears once in the Apostolic Scriptures, in 2

Corinthians 3:14. Most people who see Paul's assertion here, simply assume that "the reading of the old covenant" means "the reading of the Old Testament" (NKJV), either the Tanach Scriptures or perhaps just the Torah of Moses. It might be concluded or thought that people who only read these Scriptures cannot see the Messiah whose life is recorded in the so-called "New Covenant," but we have to remember that when Paul made this statement there was no "New Testament" written.¹ While today's Messianics often use terms like Old and New Testament, in piecemeal, to refer to parts of Scripture, *because these are familiar terms used by scholars and laypersons alike*—neither the Tanach nor Apostolic Writings make up a "covenant," but are simply the inspired words of God delivered through His human vessels. Furthermore, it cannot be overlooked that the terminology "old covenant" is not employed again until the late Second Century C.E., in the writing of Melito of Sardis—a gap of around 140 years.² Could the good Apostle Paul have used "old covenant" to mean something a little different than just the Tanach Scriptures?

We have to make some strong efforts to understand what the "Old Covenant" is, as *specifically defined* by Paul. It is correctly noted, in part, by J. Paul Sampley, how Paul is describing "that contemporary, non-believing Jews have hardened minds...when they read the 'old covenant,'"³ meaning that many of Paul's Jewish brethren have some kind of an inability to see the Messiah. But whether this "Old Covenant" is actually the Torah proper—God's Instruction to His people for holy living—should be disputed. Is the "Old Covenant" really the Mosaic Torah? Or, in contrast to the "New Covenant" of permanent forgiveness and reconciliation, is the "Old Covenant" the ministry of death and condemnation upon unrepentant sinners?

Everyone who has come to faith in Messiah Yeshua, being cleansed of his or her sins and spiritually regenerated, has partaken of the New Covenant—a reality that has clearly dawned in this post-resurrection era, and is accessible to all who cry out to the Lord. It indeed involves a permanent forgiveness and cleansing from sins *and* a supernatural transcription of God's Instruction on a redeemed heart and mind. It would be most pointless to argue that the New Covenant, which has presumably been enacted within the lives of redeemed persons in the Messiah—is something completely divorced from the Torah. The expressed intention of the New Covenant as prophesied and anticipated in the Tanach (Jeremiah 31:31-34; Ezekiel 36:25-27) is that the Lord will "put [His] laws into their minds, and write them on their hearts" (Hebrews 8:10, RSV), speaking of inscribing His Instruction onto the hearts of saved men and women **by the power of the Holy Spirit** so that they might *keep and obey* it. This in no way describes an abolition of the Law of Moses, but a re-emphasis of its importance for those who intend to be holy.

¹ Witherington, 379 fn#12 points out, "Paul is not claiming to be a minister of the New *Testament*, which did not yet exist."

² Martin, 69 describes, "Paul evidently coined the expression," yet has to note, "its next occurrence is as late as Melito of Sardis, *On the Passion* (before A.D. 190)."

Witherington, 381 fn#21 similarly confirms, "The next" usage of this terminology "seems to be from Melito of Sardis late in the second century."

³ Sampley, in *NIB*, 11:68.

Furthermore, a steadfast component of the good news or gospel message is that the reality of the New Covenant can *only be enacted* in the lives of those who receive Yeshua (cf. Luke 22:20). The New Covenant is a **significant spiritual condition or force to be reckoned with**. While people commonly associate the terminology “New Covenant” with the Apostolic Writings and the terminology “Old Covenant” with the Tanach Scriptures—if a person has not partaken of the New Covenant promises of reconciliation with God and permanent forgiveness, now accessible by the sacrificial work of Yeshua, then what would such unregenerated people be affected by? The spiritual condition or force they would logically be affected by would be the condemnation pronounced upon unrepentant sinners, or the ministry of death. This is a spiritual condition of hostility toward, and exile from, God.

The position represented by this commentary, and will be defended from the text of 2 Corinthians 3, is that what we actually see in terms of the comparison and contrast of the Old Covenant and New Covenant are **two different functions** of Moses’ Teaching, which either manifest in the lives of the unredeemed **or** in the lives of the redeemed:

- **The Old Covenant:** The ministry of death/condemnation is how the Torah functions for those who are not in the Messiah, who have a veil lying over their hearts, and who fail to have God’s Spirit transcribe His Instruction on their hearts.
- **The New Covenant:** The ministry of the Spirit/righteousness is how the Torah functions for those who are in the Messiah, who have the veil over their hearts removed, and who live according to the freedom from condemnation they have in Him.

Within Paul’s discussion in 2 Corinthians, he will compare and contrast what he labels as “the ministry of death” (v. 7) or “condemnation” (v. 9a), with “the ministry of the Spirit” (v. 8) or “righteousness” (v. 9b). Those who are born again Believers, and have recognized Yeshua as the Messiah of Israel, are those who are obvious beneficiaries of the latter; those who are not spiritually regenerated and are condemned as sinners, are subject to the effects of the former.

Much of the Torah’s Instruction undeniably regards what will happen to people who break the Law. For many people who read the Torah, and realize that they stand as condemned sinners before a holy and righteous God—this causes them to turn toward Him, *utterly broken because of their human failures*, and claim the covering of Yeshua the Messiah (Jesus Christ) so that they can be reconciled and redeemed. Those who hear the Old Covenant ministry of death/condemnation read and are convicted of their sin *should* turn to the Lord, and as a result of receiving salvation will have the New Covenant ministry of the Spirit/righteousness enacted within them. The veil, that is to be removed, is the barrier that exists between an unredeemed sinner and a Perfect God. Unfortunately for many people, be it Paul’s First Century Jewish brethren, or various persons identifying as “Christians” today—they can be so stubborn and obstinate, that they remain unconvinced that they need Yeshua

the Messiah in their lives, so that the Old Covenant ministry of death/condemnation can be nullified.⁴

3:1 Paul's discussion, about comparing and contrasting the Old Covenant and the New Covenant, is actually based in the ongoing interaction that 2 Corinthians includes about Paul defending his apostleship to the Corinthians. As he inquires of his audience, "Are we beginning to commend ourselves again? Or do we need, as some do, letters of recommendation to you or from you?" (TLV). The REB has, "Are we beginning all over again to produce our credentials? Do we, like some people, need letters of introduction to you, or from you?"

It should be recognized from v. 1 that Paul is not condemning the practice of letters of recommendation being provided by First Century ministers of the gospel from some central authority. Providing a letter of recommendation was something present within Second Temple Judaism (Acts 9:2; 22:5), and the practice was employed by the First Century *ekklēsia* (Acts 18:27; Romans 16:1), with the Epistle of 3 John possibly being a letter of recommendation. In the case of what Paul is confronting throughout the letter of 2 Corinthians, for a congregation so tied to him already, Paul hardly needed a letter of recommendation to legitimately serve the Corinthians.

That a figure like the Apostle Paul would need a letter of recommendation or endorsement for his activity among the Corinthians—as Paul was the major founder of the Corinthian assembly, and spent eighteen months in the region seeing them be established (Acts 18:1-18)—is generally thought to be the result of some kind of a countermission to that of Paul having arisen (cf. 10:12-18; 11:4, 12-15). Paul's main detractors, who had arrived in Corinth, were most probably Jewish (cf. 11:22-23), and could have raised the point whether or not Paul had a formal letter of support from the Jerusalem congregation, or at least some of the congregations of Judea (cf. Galatians 1:22). Paul's discussion in ch. 3 is based in how he did not need a letter of recommendation to validate his ministry; the Corinthians, having been changed by the New Covenant, were all the validation he needed.

For some of the discussion that follows, the purpose of invoking the life-changing power of the New Covenant, is so that Paul can emphasize to the Corinthians how *they themselves are his letter of recommendation* (v. 2). Some, such as Murray J. Harris, consider Paul's major detractors who have arrived in Corinth, to likely have been "from the Pharisaic wing of the Jerusalem church, those Judaizers who insisted on the scrupulous observance of the Mosaic Law as essential for salvation (Acts 15:5) and were unable to distinguish between the Law-abiding conduct of the Twelve and legalistic teaching."⁵ It might have been that some of those who had stirred controversy against Paul, portrayed him as being less-than-loyal to Moses, with them being more loyal to Moses. Paul and his colleagues, on the other hand, were "servants of a new covenant" (v. 6), representatives of a further stage of salvation history.

That the anticipated New Covenant has a Tanach background and positive expectations as they involve the relationship of redeemed persons to God's Law, has been too often

⁴ If necessary, do consult the author's article "What is the New Covenant?", appearing in his book *The New Testament Validates Torah*.

⁵ Harris, 260.

overlooked and underplayed. Paul was not disloyal to God's Torah, but he was a minister of the mission of seeing that people be redeemed from the condemnation and penalties pronounced by the Torah upon unregenerated sinners.

3:2 Paul directs his Corinthian audience how they and their transformed lives were to serve as the letter of recommendation, and all the real evidence of Paul's genuine apostleship, needed: "You yourselves are our letter of recommendation, written on our hearts, to be known and read by all" (ESV). In spite of the panoply of problems which were addressed in previous letters like 1 Corinthians, and here with Paul's apostolic service in question, v. 2 is actually reflective of something very positive about the Corinthians. As he had previously written, "but you were washed, but you were sanctified, but you were justified in the name of the Lord Yeshua the Messiah and in the Spirit of our God" (1 Corinthians 6:9). Many of the Corinthians serve as a positive testimony of Paul's ministry work for the Lord Yeshua, as they would be read by all people like a letter of recommendation, as their lives were observed by others. Paul's use of language, while it invokes the terminology of the prophesied New Covenant (Jeremiah 31:31-34; Ezekiel 36:25-27), immediately addressed in v. 3, is employed to convey how important the Corinthians were to Paul and his associates.

George H. Guthrie usefully interjects, "The fruit of genuine ministry, initiated by God, is that it is transparently authentic before the world and understood for what it truly is."⁶ David E. Garland also appropriately indicates, "Today most people in churches recognize that it is not the degrees earned that truly commend a ministry but rather the degree of concern for the lives of others and the willingness to sacrifice for them."⁷ Paul's manner and style of ministry were different from those who would try to dismiss or discredit him. **But Paul had the Corinthians' changed lives as proof of his authentic service.**

3:3 The Apostle Paul lauds the spiritual condition of the Corinthians, asserting that they are a letter or epistle of Messiah—a letter which has been written resultant of his ministry, and should serve as genuine evidence of him being a servant of the Lord (vs. 5-6). The Holy Spirit has written on the Corinthians' hearts of flesh, an indication of them being spiritually regenerated and born again via the good news. As v. 3 appears in the American Standard Version, "being made manifest that ye are an epistle of Christ, ministered by us, written not with ink, but with the Spirit of the living God; not in tables of stone, but in tables *that are* hearts of flesh." The key activity, which has taken place to the Corinthians, has been by the Holy Spirit's activity *ouk en plaxin lithiniais all' en plaxin kardiais sarkiniais* (οὐκ ἐν πλαξίν λιθίναις ἀλλ' ἐν πλαξίν καρδίαις σαρκίνοις), "not in(on) tablets of stone but in(on) tablets [which are] hearts of flesh" (Brown and Comfort).⁸

Most commentators and examiners on 2 Corinthians correctly recognize that Paul's language is to be associated with the New Covenant prophecies of Jeremiah 31:31-34 and Ezekiel 36:25-27 for sure, and likely also Ezekiel 11:19-20. These prophecies, originally given within the context of the restoration of Israel's Kingdom, not only promise forgiveness for past sins of idolatry and rebellion against the Lord—but the promise of God's Instruction to

⁶ Guthrie, *2 Corinthians*, 189.

⁷ Garland, 157.

⁸ Brown and Comfort, 628.

be supernaturally written on a new heart. For a figure like the Apostle Paul, this redemptive work has been present among the Corinthians by their reception of the good news. The following chart has compiled a number of significant quotations from 2 Corinthians commentators, on how Jeremiah’s and Ezekiel’s prophecies play some role in what Paul is communicating:

2 CORINTHIANS 3:3 AND THE NEW COVENANT	
TANACH (OT) BACKGROUND	EXAMINERS WHO RECOGNIZE JEREMIAH 31:31-34 AND EZEKIEL 36:25-27 AS SIGNIFICANT
<p>“Behold, days are coming,’ declares the LORD, ‘when I will make a new covenant with the house of Israel and with the house of Judah, not like the covenant which I made with their fathers in the day I took them by the hand to bring them out of the land of Egypt, My covenant which they broke, although I was a husband to them,’ declares the LORD. ‘But this is the covenant which I will make with the house of Israel after those days,’ declares the LORD, ‘I will put My law within them and on their heart I will write it; and I will be their God, and they shall be My people. They will not teach again, each man his neighbor and each man his brother, saying, “Know the LORD,” for they will all know Me, from the least of them to the greatest of them,’ declares the LORD, ‘for I will forgive their iniquity, and their sin I will remember no more” (Jeremiah 31:31-34).</p> <p>“And I will give them one heart, and put a new spirit within them. And I will take the heart of stone out of their flesh and give them a heart of flesh, that they may walk in My statutes and keep My</p>	<p>“This language [of v. 3] echoes Jer. 31.33, where under the new covenant Yahweh will write his law on his people’s hearts, and Ezek. 11.19; 36.26, where he promises to give them ‘a heart of flesh’ in place of their ‘stony heart’....Paul and his colleagues [are] effective ministers of a new covenant. The gospel covenant is new (cf. 1 C. 11.25) by contrast with the covenant established between Yahweh and Israel at the foot of Sinai (Exod. 24.3-8); that was based on a written code, ‘the book of the covenant’ (Exod. 24.7), but this is fulfilled in the Spirit (cf. Rom. 8.3f. where the ‘just requirement of the law’ which the old order was powerless to translate into action, is ‘fulfilled in us, who walk not according to the flesh but according to the Spirit’).”⁹ F.F. Bruce</p>
	<p>“[I]t is Jer 31 (38):33 which alone, in the OT, mentions a ‘new covenant,’ with the law placed ‘in their minds’ (διάνοιαν [<i>dianoian</i>]) and written ‘on their hearts’ (ἐπὶ καρδίας αὐτῶν [<i>epi kardias autōn</i>])...”¹⁰ Ralph P. Martin</p>
	<p>“Here Paul leaves behind the contrast between the work of a scribe using pen and ink and the work of an apostle ministering in the power of the Spirit, and introduces another contrast, that between writing on tablets of stone and on human hearts. This latter contrast is clearly an allusion to the prophetic description of the new covenant (cf. Je. 31:31-34; Ezk. 36:24-32) under which God would write his law on human hearts.”¹¹ Colin Kruse</p>

⁹ Bruce, 190.

¹⁰ Martin, 52.

¹¹ Kruse, 91.

ordinances and do them. Then they will be My people, and I shall be their God” (Ezekiel 11:19-20).

“Then I will sprinkle clean water on you, and you will be clean; I will cleanse you from all your filthiness and from all your idols. Moreover, I will give you a new heart and put a new spirit within you; and I will remove the heart of stone from your flesh and give you a heart of flesh. I will put My Spirit within you and cause you to walk in My statutes, and you will be careful to observe My ordinances” (Ezekiel 36:25-27).

“Paul’s gloss on Ezekiel’s text, whereby in place of a ‘heart of stone’ he substitutes ‘tablets of stone,’ is a clear reference to the tablets of stone on which the commandments were written. According to Paul, under that dispensation the tablets of the Law, given outwardly to Moses, were internalized within the people as ‘tablets of stone.’ Thus Paul signifies that the Law of God given to Moses became, in the hearts of the covenant people, stonelike, dead. Implicit in Ezekiel’s ‘promise’ of a ‘heart of flesh’ in place of a ‘heart of stone’ is the conviction that the people do not ‘follow’ God’s ‘decrees’ or ‘keep’ his laws,’ which is probably the reason why Paul interprets the prophet’s ‘hearts of stone’ as ‘tablets of stone.’ Disobedience to God’s laws has desensitized ‘hearts of flesh’ so as to become ‘tablets of stone’; the Law of God is as dead within them as their own dead hearts....The hearts of the people have been changed from ‘tablets of stone’ to ‘tablets of hearts of flesh,’ that is, to ‘living hearts.’ This remarkable transformation of the hearts of the people from ‘stone’ to living hearts of ‘flesh’ is attributable to ‘the Spirit of the living God,’ in demonstration of the genuineness of Paul’s claims as a minister of the long-awaited new covenant. The Law of God has been internalized in hearts made alive by the Spirit of the living God (see Jer 31:33; cf. v. 6).”¹²
Paul Barnett

“Under the old covenant, the locus of God’s activity was in the law; in the new age promised by Ezekiel, God will be at work in human hearts by the power of the Spirit. Paul’s ministry is therefore nothing less than a fulfillment of the promise of the new covenant as prophesied by Ezekiel. The Corinthians need look only at themselves for proof that the new age of the new covenant has dawned (cf. Isa 32:15; 44:3; 59:21; Joel 2:28-29; also the use of Jer. 31:31-34 in 2 Cor. 3:6). Their rejection of Paul’s ministry, therefore, means not only a denial of their own genuine existence as believers, but also a disavowal of God’s work in Christ as the fulfillment of the prophetic hope.”¹³
Scott J. Hafemann

¹² Barnett, 169.

¹³ Hafeman, pp 117-118.

	<p>“The idea that Paul’s commendatory letters have been written on flesh-and-blood hearts (καρδίαίς σαρκίναίς <i>kardiais sarkinais</i>) echoes Jeremiah’s prophecy of a new covenant, not like the old one ‘with their ancestors...a covenant that they broke’ (Jer 31:32-32 NRSV), but one written ‘on their hearts’ (Jer 31:33; cf. Jer 38:33 LXX).”¹⁴ J. Paul Sampley</p>
	<p>“...Paul’s language in 3:3 alludes especially to two biblical promises he regards as fulfilled in his day (cf. 1:20). First, in Ezek 36:26 (cf. 11:19), God’s Spirit would give his people hearts of flesh instead of hearts of stone, so they would keep his commandments (36:27; cf. 11:20)...Whereas God’s finger had written the law in the stone tablets (Ex 31:18; 34:1, 4), God’s Spirit (Ezek 36:27) now inscribed divine life in their hearts (cf. Rom 8:2)...Second, he alludes to Jeremiah: in contrast to the disobedience of God’s people in history, the new covenant would write the law in their hearts (Jer 31:32-33; on that new era, cf. Jer 3:15-16; 16:14-15; 23:7-8). This text explains Paul’s introduction of the new covenant in 3:6. Paul must have already explained these promises to the Corinthians (cf. 1 Cor 11:23, 25; cf. Rom 7:6). Now their existence as people of the new covenant functioned as proof of Paul’s ministry (3:2-3; also 1 Cor 9:2).”¹⁵ Craig S. Keener</p>
	<p>“[Paul] wants to contrast the giving of the law that was engraved on stones (Exod 24:12; 31:18; 32:15-16; 34:1; Deut 9:10) with the promise of the new covenant that will be inscribed on hearts. God prefers living hearts to dead stones because they can better communicate what the purposes of the living God are for humanity and what the presence of the life-giving Spirit can do. In composing 3:3, Paul appears to have drawn on more than one Old Testament text in which he interprets Scripture by Scripture....{quoting Exodus 31:18; Ezekiel 11:19; 36:26; Jeremiah 31:33}.”¹⁶ David E. Garland</p>

¹⁴ Sampley, in *NIB*, 11:63.

¹⁵ Keener, 167.

¹⁶ Garland, pp 159, 160 for refs.

	<p>“In 3:2-3...Paul develops the imagery of the letter in several directions under the stimulus of passages drawn from Jeremiah, Exodus, and Ezekiel. The letter is the Corinthian church as a whole as transformed by the gospel in fulfillment of Jeremiah 31 (38 in the LXX) and Ezekiel 11 and 36.”¹⁷ Murray J. Harris</p>
	<p>“Echoing Ezek. 36:26-27, yet using the image of the Spirit being written on the heart, Paul points to authentic Christian ministry in which God places the Spirit of God in the hearts of his people....[T]he image of the Spirit as performing a heart transplant in believers is conflated with the image of ‘writing on the heart,’ a word picture that seems to have its source in the prophet Jeremiah...{proceeding to reference Jeremiah 31:31-34}...Jeremiah’s use of writing imagery also concerns the effect of spiritual renewal on the hearts of Yahweh’s people, a renewal that issues in dynamic relationship. Significantly for our understanding of 2 Cor. 3, Jeremiah has the law written on the hearts of new-covenant people. So it seems that Paul primarily borrows from Jeremiah the image of writing on the hearts. Thus, when in 2 Cor. 3:3 he pictures the Spirit not as writer but as the written message, he offers a reflection of the Spirit’s work in the life of a new-covenant believer, bringing together images from both Ezekiel and Jeremiah.”¹⁸ George H. Guthrie</p>

Each one of the 2 Corinthians commentators, just referenced, does take v. 3 and the expectations of Jeremiah 31:31-34 and Ezekiel 36:25-27, in a number of different ways. But more 2 Corinthians commentators than not, do not just recognize the role of these two Tanach prophecies in the language of “written not with ink but with the Spirit of the living God, not on tablets of stone but on tablets of human hearts” (RSV),¹⁹ but they also recognize **some positive place for God’s Torah or Law to be realized in the faith experience of the redeemed.**

(Notably absent from the chart above is Ben Witherington III, who does not once in his commentary on 1&2 Corinthians reference the Tanach prophecies of Jeremiah 31:31-34 or

¹⁷ Harris, 265.

¹⁸ Guthrie, *2 Corinthians*, pp 192-193.

¹⁹ The Amplified Bible actually references the Tanach passages in its paraphrased rendering of 2 Corinthians 3:3:

“You show and make obvious that you are a letter from Christ delivered by us, not written with ink but with [the] Spirit of [the] living God, not on tablets of stone but on tablets of human hearts. [Exod. 24:12; 31:18; 32:15, 16; Jer. 31:33.]”

Ezekiel 36:25-27. This is to be contrasted with Scott J. Hafemann, who actually writes an excursus on the Tanach background of the New Covenant, in his 2 Corinthians commentary.)²⁰

With the Tanach background of Jeremiah 31:31-34 and Ezekiel 36:25-27 properly recognized, the intention of v. 3 is that the Corinthians being “a letter of Messiah,” is that they compose the Divine work of Yeshua, “the result of our {Paul and his associates’} ministry” (NIV), transcribed onto the redeemed hearts of flesh as promised to be given to those reconciled to the God of Israel. Mark A. Seifrid is correct in his conclusion, of how Paul “alludes to the Jeremianic promise of a new covenant, as is clear in his characterization of the work of the Spirit as a *writing* upon the human heart (Jer 31:31-34). [Paul] goes on to define apostolic ministry in precisely this way.”²¹ Seifrid’s further conclusion, however, is, “Yet in contrast to Jer 31:33, Paul does not speak of the Law being written on the heart. It is Christ, the Law’s goal (*telos*), who is written there (v. 13; cf. Rom 10:4).”²² While none of us should be caught downplaying the sacrifice of Yeshua or the centrality of His work—Seifrid is one who **explicitly denies**, here at least, that God’s Instruction in the Torah of Moses is to be written onto the hearts of the redeemed, and concludes that Paul’s teaching stands in some contradiction to the details of Jeremiah 31:31-34. Yet, the Apostle Paul himself in Romans 8:3-4 would explain what a letter or an epistle of the Messiah is—the work to be brought about the good news:

“For what was impossible for the *Torah*—since it was weakened on account of the flesh—God has done. Sending His own Son in the likeness of sinful flesh and as a sin offering, He condemned sin in the flesh—so that the requirement of the *Torah* might be fulfilled in us, who do not walk according to the flesh but according to the *Ruach*” (TLV).

The work of the Messiah involves Yeshua offering Himself as a sacrifice for the transgressions all people have committed by violating the Father’s Instruction (cf. Isaiah 24:5). Not only is permanent atonement provided and permanent forgiveness available—but the ability to live forth the requirements of the Torah *as promised in the New Covenant* is imparted.

4 Such confidence we have through Messiah toward God. 5 Not that we are adequate in ourselves to consider anything as *coming* from ourselves, but our adequacy is from God, 6 who also made us adequate *as servants of a new covenant, not of the letter but of the Spirit; for the letter kills, but the Spirit gives life.*

3:4 The confidence of all Believers has to be something placed into a Divine sphere of operation, and not a human sphere. The Corinthians’ confidence can only come through the Messiah, as the operative power of gospel in their lives has enacted the spiritual realities of

²⁰ Hafemann, pp 133-136.

²¹ Seifrid, 116.

²² Ibid., 117.