

A.M. OUTLINE
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"YOU ARE AN EPISTLE OF CHRIST"

(2 Corinthians 3:1 - 6)

INTRODUCTION

(2 Cor. 3:2 - 3) "You are our epistle written in our hearts, known and read by all men; clearly you are an epistle of Christ, ministered by us, written not with ink but by the Spirit of the living God, not on tablets of stone but on tablets of flesh, that is, of the heart."

"Epistle" - a message written from one person or group to another; letter.

There are 6 characteristics of an "epistle"

1. AN AUTHOR

Christ is the Author of our living message: "you are an epistle of Christ"
Others must see Christ when they "read" us.

2. A CHARACTERISTIC STYLE

When forensic investigators look at a document to determine its author, one item they look at is the writing style to determine its authenticity.

There is a characteristic life-style that identifies us with Christ:
(Matthew 26:73; Acts 4:13; Ephesians 4:17)

3. IS WRITTEN ON SOMETHING

"not on tablets of stone but on tablets of flesh, that is, the heart."
(Hebrews 8:8-10) "... I will put My laws in their mind and write them on their hearts ... "

4. A MESSAGE

"you are our epistle ... known and read by all men"

Someone says, "I can read you like a book."
What do others "read" when they "read" you?

5. WRITING INSTRUMENT: SOMETHING MAKES THE IMPRINT

"an epistle of Christ ... written not with ink ... but by the Spirit of the living God"
Don't take the pen away from God and try to write your own worldly message.

6. AN EPISTLE HAS A PURPOSE - to be read and it will be read.

(Matthew 5:13) "You are the salt of the earth ... (v14) "You are the light of the world"
Your life cannot be put in a drawer, hidden away.

CLOSE - we are not authorized to change the Book, change your life to the Book.
(Galatians 1:6 - 10; Revelation 22:19 - 19)

I'd rather see a sermon than hear one any day,
I'd rather one should walk with me than merely show the way.
The eye's a better pupil and more willing than the ear,
Fine counsel is confusing, but **example is always clear.**

And the best of all the preachers are the men who live their creeds,
For to see the good in action is what everybody needs.
I can soon learn how to do it if you'll let me see it done,
I can watch your hands in action, but your tongue too fast may run.

And the lectures you may deliver may be very wise and true,
But I'd rather get my lesson by observing what you do.
For I may misunderstand you and the high advice you give,
But there's no misunderstanding how you act and how you live.

There's a sweet old story translated for men,
But written in the long, long ago -
The gospel by Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John,
Of Christ and His mission below.

You are writing a gospel, a chapter each day,
By deeds that you do, by words that you say.
Men read what you write, whether faithless or true,
Say, what is the gospel according to you?

Men read and admire the gospel of Christ
With its love so unailing and true,
But what do they say, and what do they think
Of the gospel according to you?

'Tis a wonderful story, that gospel of love,
As it shines in the Christ-life divine,
And Oh, that its truth might be told again
In the story of your life and mine.

Unselfishness mirrors in every scene,
Love blossoms on every sod,
And back from its vision, the heart comes to tell
The wonderful goodness of God.

You are writing each a letter to men,
Take care that the writing is true.
'Tis the only gospel some men will read,
That gospel according to You.