

SYNC: Letter of Authenticity

(2 Corinthians 3:1-18)

Introduction

A) About twenty-five years ago, the baseball card industry exploded with popularity. New baseball card companies were created to compete with long standing companies like Topps and Fleer. Some joined the craze for financial reasons, while others for nostalgia. I was one of those.

Special cards were selling upwards of \$ 500 or more. Autograph cards were an anomaly though. Some viewed the signature of a famous or soon to be famous baseball players as adding value to a card, while others did not. No matter their philosophy, hardly any one trusted an autographed card unless there was some means of authenticating the autograph. Usually, a letter of authenticity was the only acceptable verification of true nature of the autograph.

B) Contextualize 2 Corinthians 3:1-18.

The criticism of Paul included a personal attack on Paul's character and ministry. Paul's reply was that the Corinthians were proof (letters of authenticity) of his character and genuineness of ministry.

Amid the defense of his own character and ministry, Paul revealed to us three proofs of a relationship with God.

The critics were Judaizers. They continually press the church to practice Old Testament ceremonialism as a part of their religious practices. That was an ongoing battle for the apostle throughout the region and throughout his life as an apostle.

I. The Testimony of Spiritual Transformation (v. 1-3, v. 18)

Principle: *Genuine faith is marked by spiritual transformation.*

A) The nature of transformation (spiritual, v. 3)

B) The arena of transformation (heart, v. 3)

C) The goal of transformation (Christ-likeness, v. 18)

II. Testimony of a Heavenly Relationship (v. 4-11)

Principle: *Genuine Christianity is not about religion, but about a relationship.*

A) What is the New Covenant (v. 6)?

The New Covenant was not a new way to salvation, but rather an updated manner of relating to God based on the completed work of Jesus on the Cross.

B) The New Covenant Replaced the Old (v. 10)

C) The Danger of Ceremonialism.

D) The Vitality of Life in Christ (v. 7-11)

III. Testimony of a Confident Hope (v. 12)

Principle: *Genuine faith results in a confident hope in Christ.*

A) Hope (v. 12)

B) Boldness (v. 12)

Conclusion.