

2 Corinthians 3:2

Authorized King James Version (KJV)

Ye are our epistle written in our hearts, known and read of all men:

Analysis

Ye are our epistle written in our hearts, known and read of all men: The Corinthians themselves are Paul's epistolē (ἐπιστολή)—not a letter of parchment but a living testimony. The phrase **written in our hearts** reverses the expected metaphor: rather than carrying a letter in his hands to show others, Paul carries the Corinthians in his heart. The Greek *en tais kardiais hēmōn* (ἐν ταῖς καρδίαις ἡμῶν) emphasizes the apostle's deep affection and spiritual connection with his converts.

Known and read of all men (Greek *ginōskomenē kai anaginōskomenē*, γνωσκομένη καὶ ἀναγινωσκομένη) employs a wordplay on "know" and "read" (both from the same root). The Corinthians' transformed lives were public testimony—legible to everyone. Unlike a sealed letter requiring authentication, their conversion was self-evidently genuine. Paul's ministry produced visible fruit that spoke louder than any formal credentials.

Historical Context

In the honor-shame culture of first-century Corinth, public reputation mattered immensely. Corinth was a cosmopolitan commercial hub where credibility determined success. Paul's metaphor of the "living letter" would resonate powerfully: just as merchants displayed letters authenticating their business relationships, Paul's converts displayed God's transforming power. The church at Corinth, founded by Paul around 50-51 AD during his eighteen-month stay (Acts

18), comprised both Jews and Gentiles, many from the lower social strata, whose moral transformation was dramatic and public.

Related Passages

1 John 4:8 — God is love

John 15:13 — Greatest form of love

Study Questions

1. If your life is a letter "known and read of all men," what message does it communicate about Christ?
2. How does Paul's emphasis on relationship over credentials challenge transactional approaches to ministry?
3. Who are the people "written on your heart" whose spiritual growth testifies to God's work through you?

Interlinear Text

ἡ	ἐπιστολὴ	ἡμῶν	ὕμεῖς	ἐστε	ἐγγεγραμμένη	ἐν	ταῖς
G3588	epistle	our	Ye	are	written	in	G3588
	G1992	G2257	G5210	G2075	G1449	G1722	
καρδίαις	ἡμῶν	γνωσκομένη	καὶ	ἀναγινωσκομένη	ὑπὸ		
hearts	our	known	and	read	of		
G2588	G2257	G1097	G2532	G314	G5259		
πάντων	ἀνθρώπων						
all	men						
G3956	G444						

Additional Cross-References

1 Thessalonians 1:8 (Parallel theme): For from you sounded out the word of the Lord not only in Macedonia and Achaia, but also in every place your faith to Godward is spread abroad; so that we need not to speak any thing.

Romans 1:8 (Parallel theme): First, I thank my God through Jesus Christ for you all, that your faith is spoken of throughout the whole world.

Philippians 1:7 (Parallel theme): Even as it is meet for me to think this of you all, because I have you in my heart; inasmuch as both in my bonds, and in the defence and confirmation of the gospel, ye all are partakers of my grace.

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