

Epistle / Letter

(ἐπιστολή = 'epistollí')

A letter, written message, epistle, dispatch, correspondence.

2 Corinthians 3:2, "You are our epistle, written in our hearts, known and read by all men."

The Greek word translated "**epistle**" is derived from the word "*epistelo*" which means "*to send to*". That is why it can also be translated "**message**". Therefore, this verse could read, "*You are our message sent to all men, written on our hearts, known and read by all.*" We in fact are individual 'living' messages, sent from the Author of Life to all men. And in a qualified sense, we are just as much '*one*' with the Author (Jesus Christ). For that reason, as we continue to abide in Him, we are just *as* permanent, as enduring, and as eternally fixed in God as He is. So remember, we all have the same message written on our hearts (inscribed permanently by the power of the Holy Spirit), and this love-letter simply reads, "**For God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son, that whosoever believes in Him will not perish but have eternal life**" (John 3:16). Each of us carries a communication that can have an effect on people for eternity!

"An epistle is a less common word for a letter. A letter affords a writer more freedom, both in subject and expression, than does a formal treatise. A letter is usually occasional, that is, it is written in consequence of some circumstance that requires to be dealt with promptly. The style of a letter depends largely on the occasion that calls it forth." * [* From Notes on Thessalonians, by Hogg and Vine, p. 5.] "A broad line is to be drawn between the letter and the epistle. The one is essentially a spontaneous product dominated throughout by the image of the reader, his sympathies and interests, instinct also with the writer's own soul: it is virtually one half of an imaginary dialogue, the suppressed responses of the other party shaping the course of what is actually written; the other has a general aim, addressing all and sundry whom it may concern: it is like a public speech and looks towards publication" (J. V. Bartlet, in Hastings' Bible Dictionary)