

## Message Three

### **How the Ministers of the New Covenant and Their Ministry are Constituted, How They Behave and Live, and How Their Ministry is Carried Out**

#### **(1)**

Scripture Reading: 2 Cor. 2:10, 12—3:3

#### **I. The ministers of the new covenant are captives in a triumphal procession for the celebration of Christ's victory—2 Cor. 2:12-14:**

- A. Paul uses the metaphor of a procession held in honor of the victory of a Roman general to illustrate what he was in the ministry—v. 14.
- B. Paul and his co-workers had been conquered by Christ and had become His captives in the train of His triumph, celebrating His victory; therefore, Paul's ministry was a triumphal procession of the victorious General, the Lord Jesus, leading many captives—Eph. 4:8; Col. 1:18b.
- C. As such captives, we are witnesses that once we are enemies of Christ, but we have been defeated, subdued, captured, and made submissive to Him:
  1. In our experience much of the time we must admit that instead of being captives to Christ, Christ is a captive to us—cf. Acts 26:14.
  2. A captive of Christ is daily conquered, defeated, and captured by Christ; for this we should pray, "Lord, make me Your captive. Never let me win. Defeat me all the time."
  3. A captive of Christ lives and serves in the spirit—2 Cor. 2:13; Rom. 1:9:
    - a. A captive of Christ cares for the rest in his spirit, not for the outward circumstances or environment—2 Cor. 2:12-13; cf. 7:5-6.
    - b. A captive of Christ exercises his spirit of faith—4:13.
    - c. A captive of Christ is renewed day by day in the inner man—v. 16.
    - d. A captive of Christ serves in a holy spirit—6:4, 6; 7:1.
    - e. A captive of Christ is refreshed in his spirit to refresh others' spirits—1 Cor. 16:18; 2 Cor. 7:13.
    - f. The captives of Christ walk in the same spirit—12:18.
  4. A captive of Christ is a person in the spirit, doing everything in the person of Christ, the face of Christ—2:10; cf. 4:6:
    - a. A captive of Christ enjoys the changelessness of Christ—1:17-20.
    - b. A captive of Christ enjoys the meekness and gentleness of Christ—10:1.
    - c. A captive of Christ enjoys the truthfulness of Christ—11:10.
    - d. A captive of Christ enjoys the grace of Christ and the power of Christ—12:9-10.
    - e. A captive of Christ enjoys Christ speaking in him—13:3-5.
  5. A captive of Christ is a lover of the church—2:12; 11:28-29; 12:14-15.

#### **II. The ministers of the new covenant are incense-bearers to scatter the fragrance of Christ—2:14b-17:**

- A. As captives of Christ in Christ's triumphal procession, we are simultaneously incense-bearers; through us God manifests the savor of the knowledge of Christ in every place—v. 14.

- B. Actually, to scatter the incense of Christ is to live Christ—Phil. 1:19-21a.
- C. Because we have been captured, subdued, possessed, and gained by Christ, He has the liberty to saturate us to make us a fragrance of Christ—2 Cor. 2:15.
- D. The ministers of Christ, the lovers of Christ, are prepared to give forth Christ's fragrance in all circumstances and in any kind of environment—S. S. 4:10-16:
  - 1. All problems come from within, not from without.
  - 2. If there is a fragrance inside, outward circumstances will only serve to bring out the smell of the fragrance—Phil. 4:11-12.
- E. The scattering of Christ as fragrant incense has an effect; it is a matter of life or death—2 Cor. 2:16.
- F. Those who scatter the fragrance of Christ are not like the many, adulterating the word of God for profit; but they speak out of sincerity, out of God, before God, and in Christ for the building up of the Body of Christ—v. 17; cf. 13:3.
- G. As incense-bearers scattering the fragrance of Christ, we are the ambassadors of Christ—5:20:
  - 1. We do not live by what we are or can do, but by the immortal life, which is Christ Himself—v. 4.
  - 2. We are determined to gain the honor of being well-pleasing to Christ—v. 9.
  - 3. We are constrained by the love of Christ—v. 14.
  - 4. We know others according to Christ in the spirit—v. 16.

### **III. The ministers of the new covenant are letters written with Christ as the content to convey and express Christ—3:1-3:**

- A. Christ is written into every part of our inner being with the Spirit of the living God to make us His living letters, that He may be expressed, read, and known by others in us—vv. 2-3; cf. Eph. 3:17.
- B. The Spirit of the living God, who is the living God Himself, is not the instrument, like a pen, but the element, like ink used in writing, with which the apostles minister Christ as the content for the writing of living letters that convey Christ—Phil. 1:19; Exo. 30:23-25.
- C. The heavenly, compound ink is the compound Spirit, the essence of this Spirit-ink is Christ with all His riches, and we are the pen; to have this ink in our experience we must enjoy and be thoroughly saturated with Christ as the life-giving Spirit; then we will spontaneously minister Christ to those whom we contact, making them living letters of Christ—Phil. 1:19; 2 Cor. 3:6, Psa. 45:1.
- D. On the one hand, the believers were the letter of Christ; on the other hand, they were the letter of the apostles inscribed in their hearts—vv. 2-3:
  - 1. While we are ministering Christ to others, Christ is simultaneously written in the ones to whom we are ministering and also in us.
  - 2. The one writing produces two original copies of the one letter; one copy is in our heart, and the other copy is in the heart of the ones to whom we are ministering.
  - 3. They become a letter of Christ and this letter is also written in us, the writers; such a ministry involves two hearts becoming one.
  - 4. We can never forget the ones to whom we have ministered Christ and the ones who have ministered Christ to us—2 Cor. 7:3.

## Message Four

### **How the Ministers of the New Covenant and Their Ministry are Constituted, How They Behave and Live, and How Their Ministry is Carried Out**

(2)

Scripture Reading: 2 Cor. 3:16-18—4:1, 6-7

#### **IV. The ministers of the new covenant are mirrors beholding and reflecting the glory of Christ in order to be transformed into His glorious image—2 Cor. 3:16-18—4:1:**

- A. Whenever our heart turns to the Lord, the veil is taken away from our heart, and we can behold the Lord of glory with an unveiled face—3:16.
- B. Actually, our turned away heart is the veil; to turn our heart to the Lord is to take away the veil.
- C. An unveiled face is an unveiled heart to behold the glory of the Lord—vv. 16, 18; 1 Sam. 16:7; Eph. 1:18a.
- D. The glory of God is in the face of Christ, and His face, His person, is the indwelling treasure in our spirit—2 Cor. 4:6-7; 1 Pet. 3:4:
  1. We are earthen vessels who are worthless and fragile, but within our spirit we contain a priceless treasure, the face, the person, of Christ Himself—2 Cor. 2:10; 4:6.
  2. In the whole universe, there is nothing so precious as to behold the face of Jesus—Gen. 32:30; Exo. 25:30; 33:11; Psa. 27:4, 8; Rev. 22:4:
    - a. It is only when we are living in His presence, looking at the index of His being, that we will sense that He is such a treasure to us.
    - b. Seeing God equals gaining God, which is to receive God in His element into us to transform us—Job 42:5-6.
    - c. The very God whom we look at today is the consummated Spirit, and we can look at Him in our spirit to absorb the riches of God into our being and be under the divine transformation day by day—2 Cor. 3:18b; Matt. 14:22-23; Col. 4:2:
      - (1) The glory of the Lord is the resurrected Christ as the Lord Spirit.
      - (2) “From glory to glory” means from the Lord Spirit to the Lord Spirit; this means that the Lord Spirit as the rich supply is continually added into our being.
      - (3) As we open to the Lord, He as the life-giving Spirit enters into our being to infuse His life essence into us, to operate within us by His life power, and to shape us into His image.
      - (4) If you have some problem, you just need to tell Him; He is right within you, and He is with you face to face—Phil. 4:6.
  3. Beholding is to see the Lord by ourselves; reflecting is for others to see Him through us—2 Cor. 3:18—4:1; Phil. 1:19-21a.
  4. As we turn our hearts to the Lord in our spirit to behold Him face to face and reflect Him for others to see, we are in the process of being transformed into His glorious image unto the day when “we will be like Him because we will see Him even as He is”—1 John 3:2.

- E. Transformation is not an outward change or correction, but spiritual metabolism; it is the metabolic function of the life of God in the believers:
  - 1. Metabolism includes three matters:
    - a. First, the supplying of a new element.
    - b. Second, the replacing of the old element with the new element.
    - c. Third, the discharge or removal of the old element so that something new may be produced—2 Cor. 5:17; Gal. 6:15; Col. 3:10-11.
  - 2. As we receive the Lord as the new element into us, a spiritual metabolism takes place within us to be expressed outwardly in the image of Christ, manifesting the metabolism in life.
  - 3. Only that which is expressed outwardly through the inward metabolism is genuine health and real beauty—Exo. 28:2; Psa. 90:17.

**V. The ministers of the new covenant are earthen vessels to contain the Christ of glory as the excellent treasure—2 Cor. 4:7:**

- A. These vessels are like today's camera, into which Christ the figure, enters through the flash of God's shining—vv. 6-7.
- B. Christ as the priceless treasure is contained in us, the worthless and fragile vessels; this makes the worthless vessels ministers of the new covenant with a priceless ministry—v. 7; cf. Gen. 4:26.
- C. This treasure, the indwelling Christ, in us, the earthen vessels, is the divine supply and power for the Christian life; God's power is manifested in man's weakness, and man's weakness cannot limit God's power—2 Cor. 4:7; 12:10.
- D. The new covenant ministers are Christ's chosen vessels to contain and express Him—Acts 9:15; cf. Dan. 5:2-3, 23:
  - 1. We are vessels containing Christ as mercy—Rom. 9:16, 23:
    - a. We were chosen by God according to His sovereign mercy; it is altogether a matter of mercy that we are believers and that we are in the church life—vv. 11-16, 20-21.
    - b. The goal of God's selection in His sovereign mercy is to have many vessels to contain Him and eternally express Him; this is the climax of our usefulness to God—v. 21.
  - 2. We are vessels containing Christ as honor—v. 21:
    - a. We are vessels unto honor through our cleansing ourselves from the vessels unto dishonor—2 Tim. 2:20-21.
    - b. We are vessels unto honor by being filled with Christ as the Spirit to honor God and by ministering Christ as the Spirit to honor man—Judg. 9:9; cf. John 7:37-39a.
  - 3. We are vessels containing Christ as glory—Rom. 9:23:
    - a. Instead of living by our life with our nature to express ourselves, we must live by the Father's life with His nature to express Him; this is glory, and in this glory we all are one—John 17:22-24.
    - b. We have been prepared by God unto glory through glorification—the last step of God's full salvation—8:21, 23, 29; Phil. 3:21.