

NEW COVENANT MINISTRY

Brother Stephen Kaung

March, 2012

Alhambra, California, USA

Content

Message 1: Fundamentals

- Created for God and saved to serve God
- We are his workmanship
- The measure of the work of God and the measure you can work for God
- Saved individually for a corporate purpose
- Building his church
- Gift vs. grace
- Gold, silver and precious stones vs. wood, hay and straw
- Two kinds of ministry

Message 2: Difference between New Covenant Ministry and Old Covenant Ministry

- God makes covenant with people
- Old covenant, new covenant, and us
- New covenant of grace
- New covenant ministry
- Differences between old covenant ministry and new covenant ministry
 - 1st difference – ink vs. spirit
 - 2nd difference – stones vs. hearts
 - 3rd difference – competency in self or in God
 - 4th difference – glory fading vs. glory to glory
 - 5th difference – condemnation and death vs. righteousness
- Moving from old covenant ministry to new covenant ministry, gradually
- Turning to the Lord

Message 3: How to Enter into New Covenant Ministry

- Our reaction
- Our preparation, our attitudes
- Rejecting the hidden things of shame
- Not walking in deceit nor falsifying the word of God
- Treasure in earthen vessels
- Let the Holy Spirit break the earthen vessel
- The dying of Jesus and the life of Jesus
- Outward man vs. inward man

Message 4: An Example of New Covenant Ministry – Apostle Paul

- From Saul to Paul
- II Corinthians—Paul's ministry
- Heart attitude 1—we do not preach ourselves, but Christ Jesus lord

Heart attitude 2— for your encouragement and salvation
Nature of ministry — spiritual warfare
Nature of ministry — visions and revelations
Process of ministry — power perfected in weakness
Process of ministry — spend and be spent
Process of ministry — authority for building up, not for overthrowing
The Lord will lead us gradually out of the old and into the new.

Message 1

FUNDAMENTALS

Ephesians 2:10—For we are his workmanship, having been created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God has before prepared that we should walk in them.

I Corinthians 3:9-15—For we are God's fellow-workmen; ye are God's husbandry, God's building. According to the grace of God, which has been given to me, as a wise architect, I have laid the foundation, but another builds upon it. But let each see how he builds upon it. For other foundation can no man lay besides that which is laid, which is Jesus Christ. Now if any one build upon this foundation, gold, silver, precious stones, wood, grass, straw, the work of each shall be made manifest; for the day shall declare it, because it is revealed in fire; and the fire shall try the work of each what it is. If the work of any one which he has built upon the foundation shall abide, he shall receive a reward. If the work of any one shall be consumed he shall suffer loss, but he shall be saved, but so as through the fire.

II Corinthians 3:1-6—Do we begin again to commend ourselves? Or do we need, as some, commendatory letters to you, or commendatory from you? Ye are our letter, written in our hearts, known and read of all men, being manifested to be Christ's epistle ministered by us, written, not with ink, but the Spirit of the living God; not on stone tables, but on fleshy tables of the heart. And such confidence have we through the Christ towards God: not that we are competent of ourselves to think anything as of ourselves, but our competency is of God; who has also made us competent, as ministers of the new covenant; not of letter, but of spirit. For the letter kills, but the Spirit quickens.

Dear Lord, our hearts do bow before Thee. We thank Thee for giving us another opportunity to be together. We thank Thee for Thy precious promise, when two or three are gathered together unto My name, there am I in the midst of them. We believe Lord that Thou art here with us, and we are all in Thy presence. Lord, we want to remove our shoes, stand on the ground of a bond slave and say, "Lord, what have Thou to say to us? Speak, Thy servants are hearing." May Your name be hallowed among us. Thy kingdom come, and Thy will be done among us as it is in heaven. We are ready to give Thee glory. We ask in Thy precious name, Amen.

Brothers and sisters, we do want to thank the Lord for giving us another opportunity of meeting together. As I waited before the Lord, I was impressed in my spirit of one thing, and that is something I would like to share with you. It is on the matter of new covenant ministry. Now before we can enter into this subject, we have to lay some foundation, so this morning will be just laying foundation. We will mention a number of things, which I hope that you all know, but I feel that these things need to be mentioned before we can touch upon this matter of new covenant ministry.

Created for God and Saved to Serve God

I would like to go back to the very foundation. I believe, brothers and sisters, we all know God created us and God saved us for a reason. And what is that purpose? In a sense, I believe everyone knows it, but not everyone follows it. We all know we are created for God. We all know that we are saved to serve God. But it is not necessarily true that we live for God, and it is not necessarily true that we really are serving God's purpose. So this is something for us to review, to reexamine our foundation. We are living in such a day, everything is shaking. Not only is the earth shaking, heaven is also shaking. Everything that can be shaken off will be shaken off; only that which is eternal will remain. We need to seek for the eternal.

We all remember when God saved the children of Israel, He sent Moses to Egypt. Moses faced Pharaoh and said, "God said, 'let my people go, that they may serve me.'" Why is it that God wants His people to be free? Only for one reason—that they may serve God. While they were in Egypt, they were slaves to Pharaoh, and Pharaoh put them into hard labor. They had no time to think about God, no time to serve God. They were under the tyranny of Pharaoh. That is the reason why God wanted to set them free. But to set them free was not that they would be free to do anything, free to live for themselves. God wanted to set them free for one and one purpose only, that they might serve Him. So we remember after God delivered them out of Egypt, He brought them to Mount Sinai. There He made them His people. He gave them the Ten Commandments. He covenanted with them, and said, "If you keep My commandments and My covenant, you will be My people, and then I will be your God."

But as God gave them the Ten Commandments, He also gave them another thing. As a matter of fact, God spent more time in giving them the other thing than giving them the law. What follows is what God really desires. First of all, God gave them the law to make them His people. Then, after they ascended to be God's people, God showed them what they should be, and how they should serve God. God commanded them to build Him a tabernacle because God wanted to dwell among them. God wanted to make them His house.

Oftentimes when we think of Mt. Sinai, we think of the law, but very often we forget the tabernacle. As a matter of fact, the tabernacle is the purpose of God. It is God's work. It is the work that God wants His people to do. And thank God, they obeyed God. Finally, the tabernacle was built. When the tabernacle was erected, the glory of God filled that house. We know in the Old Testament, this is just a type. But when we come to the New Testament, then we will find God's fuller thought coming into being. That's the reason why He saves us. That's the reason why God continues to work in our lives.

We Are His Workmanship

Ephesians 2:10 says, "We are His workmanship." Before we can even think of working for God, we have to let God do work in us first. Without God working in us, we are not qualified to work for Him. When we were in sins and transgressions, we served the world; we served the god of this world. We were not allowed to serve God. So God set us free. But that is just the beginning.

Oftentimes, we think if only we are saved, that's enough. The reason is because we are so self-centered. But if we think of God and His purpose, then we will realize that being saved is just the beginning. God begins to work in our lives. We are His workmanship. Or to put it another way, we are His masterpiece. He will work upon us.

Now why is it so—having been created in Christ Jesus for good work? What is the workmanship of God? The workmanship of God is that He recreated us in Christ Jesus. He knows that the old creation is corrupted; it is corrupted beyond repair, absolutely no use to God. We may think we are useful. We may think we can do something for God. We may even devote ourselves to serving God. But if it is all from ourselves, this is completely useless before God. He cannot use anything of it. God has to recreate us in Christ Jesus. That is to say everything that belongs to our old man is useless; even the best of our intentions is enemy to God. We can never do God's work. We can never fulfill God's purpose. We have to remember one thing—God has to recreate us in Christ Jesus.

Put it in another way, to recreate us in Christ Jesus simply means He will create Christ in us. He will take away anything that is not of Christ in us, and then He replaces all with Christ Himself. As a matter of fact, this is God's eternal purpose. Whom He has foreknown, He has called. Whom He has called, He has justified. Whom He has justified, He has glorified, because to be glorified simply means to be conformed to the image of Christ. Before we can even think of working for God, we have to think first of letting God work in us.

The Measure of the Work of God and the Measure You Can Work for God

The measure that you have received the work of God in you is the measure that you can work for God; nothing more, nothing less. The Bible says you are His workmanship created in Christ Jesus for good works. Whenever you find in the Bible "good works", it is the good work of God. What does it mean? It may not be good to our natural thought. Or it may be good to our natural thought but not good to God. Good, really good, in the Scriptures, simply means God's will. Only God's will is really good. We are recreated in Christ Jesus for God's will. If we are not recreated in Christ Jesus, we cannot even touch God's will. So good will may not be God's will. Only God's will is good. That is the standard you find in the Scripture.

This good work is what God has prepared beforehand that we should walk in it. Before we can really serve God, we must let God first work in us. I think the principle is so clear, because if you are not saved, how can you serve God? Many people tried to serve God without being saved. Paul, as Saul, is one illustration. When he was a natural man, before he was saved, he was religious. He had the heart to serve God, and he put all his energy into his service, but we know what a havoc he made.

There is one thing I want to emphasize and re-emphasize. In the matter of serving God, the natural man has no part in it. It can only cause problems; it cannot solve problems. There is a basic principle we must understand. In serving God, all that is

natural is excluded. Only that which comes from Christ is usable, and this is the only way we can serve.

I think we all know the term “you are saved to serve.” After you are saved, you are encouraged to serve God. But when you are trying to serve God, by what energy, by what mind, and by what strength are you serving? If you do not let Christ first work in you, all of your service will be out of yourself. You think this is what God will like, and so you give it to God. You think He must be pleased with you, but the contrary is true because God rejects all that comes from the natural. We have to serve only out of that which is recreated in Christ.

Saved Individually for A Corporate Purpose

When we talk about our calling, everybody is called. But we are not all called to do the same thing, because when God saved us, even though we are saved individually, God’s purpose is corporate. When He saves you and when He saves me, even though our experience of salvation is personal, this does not make you individualistic. God’s purpose is for a body. Your father or your mother cannot be saved for you, and you cannot be saved for your child. Everyone has to believe in the Lord Jesus and be saved. God wants a body, and this is the work of God.

In John 5, after our Lord Jesus healed the sick man of 38 years, the Pharisees opposed Him because He did it on a Sabbath day. Our Lord Jesus said one phrase, John 5:17, “My Father works hitherto and I work.” In other words, the work of the Lord Jesus and the work of the Father are the same. What the Father has been doing is what the Son has been doing. How do we know what the Father has been doing? By what the Son has done.

When our Lord Jesus was on earth, in the beginning you find that He was just traveling around. He preached the gospel of the kingdom, and He saved many people. But when He was rejected by the Jews, He retreated to the border of Caesarea Philippi. That was a Gentile area. While he was there, He asked His disciples a question, “Who do men say that I am? What does the world say about me?” His disciples would only give Him rosy reports. They must have heard lots of bad reports, but of course, they would not share those with the Lord. They told Him, “You are like John the Baptist coming to life. And You are like Jeremiah because you weep. And you are one of the prophets, the prophet that Moses prophesized. Moses said one day God will raise up among you one like me; you must hear Him, if you don’t, you must perish.” So the disciples give Him all the good reports.

In China, we would say that you are Confucius coming to life. Now if anyone says such things to you, what do you say? You would say, “I dare not.” But our Lord Jesus is different. He was not satisfied. So He turned to His disciples and said, “Who do you say that I am? You have been with me for three years. You ought to know me now.” Thank God, Simon Peter said, “You are the Christ, the Son of the living God.” Then what did the Lord Jesus say to Peter? “Blessed are you, because this is not something that man can tell you. No flesh can tell you that. It is my Father who is in heaven who has

revealed to you.” Now after Peter received the revelation from above, immediately he was transformed. So the Lord said, “You are Peter, formerly you were Simon, you were just a dust. Now you are Peter, a little stone. You become a chip out of the big rock because you have My life in you now.” Then the Lord says, “I will build my church upon this rock and the gates of Hades shall not prevail against it.”

Building His Church

At the very end, our Lord uttered the word “church.” This tells us what the work of Christ actually is. The work of Christ is not just to save individuals; the work of Christ is to build His church, because this is His body, the fullness of Him who fills all and in all.

What is the work of God? What is it that Christ is really doing? You can conclude it by saying, “His work is to build the church.” Saving people individually is just the beginning, in order to bring these people into the body, and in that body is His church, His building, and His habitation. It is there God is in union with men in Christ Jesus.

What is the work of God that He has been doing through the centuries? What is the work of our Lord Jesus while He was on earth? Nothing but to build His church, build His body, to be His Habitation, to be in union with men in Christ Jesus.

There is a heresy that I have to warn you about. When a truth is lengthened beyond its measure, it becomes heresy. There is a saying about union with God. As a matter of fact, all the mystics are seeking for union with God. You remember Madam Guyon—how we admire her life! She had a parable. She said we are like a drop of water, and gradually the water flows into the ocean. When it enters the ocean, it is melted with the ocean water. That is very beautiful, but is it true? In other words, when you are talking like that, you deify man, and that’s heresy. Man is always man. God is always God. There is a line of demarcation in there.

In Christ Jesus, we are united. Here we have to be very careful, because in church history, we find some of those who loved God very much gradually drifted into this error. It is only in Christ Jesus that we are in union with God. We may be glorified men, but we are still men.

This is what God is really after. He is going to build His church, His body. You remember in Isaiah 66, it says, “Heaven is My throne, earth is My footstool, but where is My house?” God wants to dwell among His people, make His people His house. His house is so close to Him that it is the body of Christ. This is the fullness of His fullness.

When you sum up all the work of God, all the work of Christ, and all the work of God’s people, you will see the building of God’s house. In I Corinthians 3 the apostle Paul says he is like a foreman. In the original, this refers not to an engineer but a headman. Paul is like a headman because the engineer and the real builder is Christ Himself. Our Lord Jesus is the foundation, and Paul is just laying the foundation. He is laying the foundation of the house of God, and all of us who are saved are workmen. Our

work is to build His house, and that is really our work. No matter what kind of work you are doing, what kind of Christian work you are doing, if it is not connected with the building of God's house, then it is done in vain.

Gift vs. Grace

In the body, you have all kinds of members, and every member has its own function. But when they are functioning, they are for the building of the body, not to build oneself, but to build the body of Christ, to build the church of God. This is really the ministry that God has entrusted to everyone, even though our gifts are different. If you look at your body, all the members have different gifts. Your hands are for crawling. Your feet are for walking. But when your life is young, your hands cannot hold things, and your feet need the help of your hands, so children crawl. But you cannot crawl all your life. Someday you discover that your feet are strong enough to stand on, and then your hands no longer help. This is how life is growing. When our life is growing, then all the gifts will be manifested.

People often ask me, "What is my gift? I do not know what my gift is. So how can I serve?" I always tell them, "Don't worry." When your life grows to a certain point, the gift will be manifested. Do you believe that when God gave you eyes, he didn't give you the gift of seeing, but the gift of seeing comes later on? Can it be possible? If you are born blind, then even later on when you grow up, you are still blind. Your gift is born when you are reborn because at that time you become a member of the body of Christ. God has put you in the body, so you are a member of the body. Whichever member you are, God will give you the corresponding gift to exercise it. As your life is growing, the gift gradually appears, because the life within you will lead you to that direction. So don't worry about gift!

The more important thing is grace because what really serves God's purpose is grace, not gift. Today people put too much emphasis on gift, and the result is disaster. People with great gift but little life cause trouble. Just like if you give a sword to a child, it causes trouble. What handles gift is grace, and grace is life. So the most important thing for us to serve God is that our life must grow, and the life is the real thing that is supplied to people; gift is only a channel.

Gold, Silver, and Precious Stones vs. Wood, Hay, and Straw

So this is the reason why you find in 1 Corinthians 3, he says we are all building that building of God. You can build with two different kinds of materials. You can build with gold, silver and precious stones, or you can build with wood, grass and straw. When we are building the house of God, how do we build? What do you mean by gold, silver and precious stones, or wood, grass and stubble? It simply means this. Gold in the scripture always represents God's nature because gold is the most precious of metals. It is hard, it is unchangeable, so it speaks of God's nature. God's nature is like gold. It never changes. It never loses its luster, and it is most worthy. That represents the life, the nature of God in us.

Silver in the scripture always represents redemption. You find that when God commanded the children of Israel concerning the firstborns and the Levites, the Levites were to substitute the firstborns. All the firstborns belong to God, and all the Levites serve God. In Numbers 3, there were more firstborns than Levites, and those who were over above the number have to pay five shekels, which was the redemption money. So that represents the redemption work of Christ.

Precious stones represent the work of the Holy Spirit, because a precious stone is made under pressure, in darkness, and over time. This speaks of the discipline of the Holy Spirit. In other words, if you allow the nature of God to be implanted in you, the character of Christ becomes your character. If you allow the redemptive work of Christ to complete its work, if you allow the Holy Spirit to discipline you until you grow up, then you are building with gold, silver and precious stones. This is what the house should be.

If you don't allow the Holy Spirit to discipline you, you are building with wood, grass and hay. Wood represents man. In the scriptures, they use wood to represent man. Grass represents the beauty of man because the grass will wither. Stubble is used to make bricks. This speaks of the work of man. So whatever comes out of man, you find you are building the house of God with wood, grass and hay.

Today if you build with wood, grass and hay, you can build a big building, and it will be seen by everybody. But one day the fire shall appear, because when our Lord Jesus shall come we shall all be raptured into the air and there will be the judgment seat of Christ. It is not a throne because the great white throne is the judgment of eternal death and eternal life. The judgment seat is a family judgment; only the family members will be gathered there. Some will be rewarded because their works stand. Some will be disciplined. The Bible also says some will be thrown into darkness.

Even though you are thrown into darkness, you are saved. You are barely saved because you missed the thousand years of reward. During that time, you will still be disciplined. We cannot escape discipline, because if we escape discipline, we never grow up. It is much wiser if we receive the discipline of the Holy Spirit today, instead of remaining in darkness during the millennium years.

We are told here that we are all serving God. We are all building God's house, but the way you build it makes a great difference. This is what you find when you come to II Corinthians. We know there are two epistles that tell us of Paul and his ministry. If you want to know the life of Paul, you go to Philippians. If you want to know the work of Paul, you go to II Corinthians. In II Corinthians 4 it says "having this ministry." There you will find II Corinthians represents Paul's ministry.

Two Kinds of Ministry

In II Corinthians 3, it tells us there are two kinds of ministry. One kind is called old covenant ministry, and the other kind is new covenant ministry. We know Paul's ministry is apostolic ministry and our ministry is not apostolic ministry, but the principles

are the same, so we can apply the principles to us today. I see two different kinds of ministry today. We are all serving, but we can serve either in old covenant ministry or in new covenant ministry. Similarly, we can build with gold, silver and precious stones, or we can build with wood, grass and stubble.

I think it is time for us to reconsider, to examine our service, and see whether our ministry belongs to the old covenant ministry or new covenant ministry. It doesn't matter whether you are preaching or praying or visiting, or whether you are placing the chairs, or cooking the food, or managing your house. It doesn't matter what you are doing, because whatever we do, we do it as unto God. We are all serving God's purpose, and they are all related to the building of the house.

The problem is if we spend our lifetime working with wood, grass and stubble, one day when the fire appears, it will really speak to us. We need to be very, very careful. I feel this is very basic and very important because the Lord is coming soon. The fire will soon appear. We have no more time to waste. If we have to repent, this is the time. If we need to turn back to God's way, this is the time. This is the burden of my heart.

This morning is just a preparation. God willing, tomorrow we will talk about these two different kinds of ministry—what is old covenant ministry, and what is new covenant ministry. Next we will speak on how we enter into the new covenant ministry, and then we will use Paul as an example. May we prepare our hearts before the Lord, not only that we may live the new covenant living but also serve the new covenant ministry.

Dear Lord, we have committed this time into your hand. We pray that whatever is of Thee, Thou will bless it. Search our heart. Speak to each and every one of us. We all need to hear Thy voice. We all need to repent. We all need to turn back to Thee and pray, Lord, that Thou will have mercy upon us. And when Thou shall come, we may see Thee face to face. We ask in Thy Name, Amen.

Message 2

DIFFERENCE BETWEEN NEW COVENANT MINISTRY AND OLD COVENANT MINISTRY

II Corinthians 3—Do we begin again to commend ourselves? Or do we need, as some, commendatory letters to you, or commendatory from you? Ye are our letter, written in our hearts, known and read of all men, being manifested to be Christ's epistle ministered by us, written, not with ink, but the Spirit of the living God; not on stone tables, but on fleshy tables of the heart. And such confidence have we through the Christ towards God: not that we are competent of ourselves to think anything as of ourselves, but our competency is of God; who has also made us competent, as ministers of the new covenant; not of letter, but of spirit. For the letter kills, but the Spirit quickens. (But if the ministry of death, in letters, graven in stones, began with glory, so that the children of Israel could not fix their eyes on the face of Moses, on account of the glory of his face, a glory which is annulled; how shall not rather the ministry of the Spirit subsist in glory? For if the ministry of condemnation be glory, much rather the ministry of righteousness abounds in glory. For also that which was glorified is not glorified in this respect, on account of the surpassing glory. For if that annulled was introduced with glory, much rather that which abides subsists in glory. Having therefore such hope, we use much boldness: and not according as Moses put a veil on his own face, so that the children of Israel should not fix their eyes on the end of that annulled. But their thoughts have been darkened, for unto this day the same veil remains in reading the old covenant, unremoved, which in Christ is annulled. But unto this day, when Moses is read, the veil lies upon their heart. But when it shall turn to the Lord, the veil is taken away.) Now the Lord is the Spirit, but where the Spirit of the Lord is, there is liberty. But we all, looking on the glory of the Lord, with unveiled face, are transformed according to the same image from glory to glory, even as by the Lord the Spirit.

Dear Lord, we want to thank Thee for the privilege of being at Thy table. We thank Thee for telling us again and again that Thou dost love us and love us to the uttermost. Thou hast bought us with a price. We truly all belong to Thee. We praise and thank Thee that Thou hast moved our hearts, for us to understand that we can no longer live for ourselves. We live because of Thee, and we live by Thee, and we live for Your glory. We praise and thank Thee that we can not only live accordingly but also serve Thee in like manner. We thank Thee for calling us to serve Thee. Show us Thy way that we may truly serve Thy purpose, and be useful vessels in Thy hand. We give Thee all the glory. In Thy precious name we pray, Amen.

Brothers and sisters, this time when we gather together, we want to focus our attention just to one thing, and that is new covenant ministry. We mentioned yesterday morning that we are all called to serve. Even though the areas of our service are

different, just like members of one body, nevertheless, we are together serving the Lord. In serving the Lord, we are only doing the building of God's house. It is important to know with what material we are building. That leads us to this matter of new covenant ministry.

God Makes Covenant with People

Now, we know our God is a God of covenants. This is very strange. So far as God Himself is concerned, He has no need to make any covenant, because He is faithful. Whatever He says, whatever He promises, He always does.

Now, why is it that when you read the Bible, you find it seems as if God loves to make covenants with people? Covenant actually is an old word. If you want to use a modern word, it is contract. We all know what a contract is. When you buy a house, you have to make a contract. Even buying a car, you need a contract. Every transaction has to be backed by a contract. It is a document that defines your responsibilities and also your privileges, and it has legal binding. Because our words are not trustworthy, we are actually bound by a legal document. We have to be forced to do our promise. Of course God is in no obligation to have such a contract, because what He says, He does; He is not a man that can lie.

But why is it that in the Bible you find that God made contracts with man again and again? The only reason is because of His condescending love towards us. He lowers Himself to our level in order to lift us up. In the letter of Hebrews, Chapter 6 says "by two unbreakable things." 1) God is faithful. 2) God even makes oath. By these two unbreakable things, God encourages our faith. Of the many covenants you find in the Bible, there are two covenants that are most prominent. One we call the old covenant, and the other we call the new covenant.

Old Covenant, New Covenant, and Us

God made the old covenant with the children of Israel. After God delivered the children of Israel out of Egypt, He brought them to Mount Sinai and He made a covenant with them. He gave them the Ten Commandments, and He said, "If you keep these commandments and keep the covenant, then you will be My people. Out of all nations, you will be My possession, and I will be your God." That was the old covenant God made with the children of Israel. But we find throughout the history of Israel, they broke the covenant of God. They did not keep the Ten Commandments. They continually rebelled against God. So God allowed them to be captured to Babylon.

But before they were captured into Babylon God, through Jeremiah, gave a prophecy. In Jeremiah 31:31-35, God promised them a new covenant, because God said, "You had not kept my covenant with you." That old covenant was forfeited. One day God will make a new covenant with us, and we will call it "the new covenant."

But we are Gentiles—what have these covenants to do with us? God had not made the old covenant with the nations; the old covenant was made with the nation of

Israel. So what had that to do with us? Unfortunately, it has much to do with us, because when you read Romans 2:14-16, it says, "For when those of the nations, which have no law, practice by nature the things of the law, these, having no law, are a law to themselves; who show the work of the law written in their hearts, their conscience also bearing witness, and their thoughts accusing or else excusing themselves between themselves; in the day when God shall judge the secrets of men, according to my glad tidings, by Jesus Christ." In that sense, even we Gentiles, the nations, are under the old covenantal law. That is the reason why sometimes our conscience will accuse us.

What have we to do with the new covenant? In Jeremiah, God promised this new covenant to the house of Israel and to the house of Judah. What has that to do with us Gentiles? Now brothers and sisters, we have just had the Lord's Table. The Lord's Table should remind you how it happened. When you lift up the cup and drink it, what does it mean? What are you to remember? You remember in Luke 22:20, after supper, our Lord Jesus took up the cup, and He blessed it. He said, "This is the cup of the new covenant with My blood." So when our Lord Jesus had the Lord's Table with His disciples, He removed this new covenant that He would make with the future of Israel; He removed it to now and gave it to us first. The children of Israel have not enjoyed that new covenant yet; they will enjoy it during the millennium years. But our Lord Jesus, by His finished work on the cross, has removed it to now and given it to us.

New Covenant of Grace

We are today under the new covenant of grace. We are no longer under the old covenant of law. When we believe in the Lord Jesus as our savior, He has delivered us out of the old covenant of law, and He has replaced us in the new covenant of grace. This is our position. All our relationship with God is according to the new covenant. This is our standing. This is how God will deal with each one of us, and this is the way that we shall deal with God. This is our relationship with God.

I think this is something that we need to remember very well. We are no longer under the old covenant. We are no longer under law. We are under the new covenant. We are under grace. What is the difference between law and grace, the difference between the old and the new covenants? In the old covenant of law, God said, "Thou shall, thou shall, thou shall" ten times. "If thou shall do this or thou shall do that, or not do this or not do that, then you shall be my people, and I will be your God." You find the responsibility lies upon man. You have to prove yourself worthy, then God will take you as His people. It is all that you do, you do, and you do. You have to do your best, try your best, and see if you can do it. That is the old covenant of law.

What is the new covenant? If you read Jeremiah 31 and also Hebrew 8:10-12, you will find what the new covenant is. In the new covenant, you do not hear the word, "you shall, you shall, or you shall not." All you have heard is, "God said, 'I will do this, I will do that for you.' Because I am now your God, so you are able to be My people." He makes you His people. This is grace. Brothers and sisters, let us be very sure of this, that we are now under the new covenant of grace. All our relationship with God is according

to the new covenant. It is based upon the new covenant.

Now having been clear of our position, we can see our life as a Christian is a life under the new covenant. We cannot live a Christian life but still be under the management of the old covenant. That is the reason why you find, even today, most Christians fail in their Christian life, because they try to live as a Christian. They try to make their old man live like Christ. This is even more difficult than trying to make a monkey act like a man. No wonder we are so unsuccessful, because we are under the wrong relationship. But this is not what I am going to speak about.

New Covenant Ministry

My burden this time is new covenant ministry. Not only must we live a new covenant living, we must also serve a new covenant ministry. That is the way we should serve God, how our service will be acceptable to God. We try to read II Corinthians because it is the book that tells us of Paul's ministry. He said, "having this ministry" (II Corinthians 4:1). Of course, Paul's ministry is apostolic, and while we are not all apostles, the principle behind it is the same.

How should we serve God? The apostle Paul said serving God is like writing letters. He mentioned here an ancient custom, because during Paul's time, the beginning of Christianity, when Christians travelled to other places, they would get a commendatory letter from the place where they met. It would introduce him or her as a brother or as a sister to the other assemblies in other places, so that they could be received and helped. But Paul said, "I do not need any recommendatory letter from you or for you because I have ministered unto you. And when I minister to you, I am writing letters. I am writing letters not upon stones. I am writing letters upon hearts."

Here Paul mentioned that "you are my letter because you are the letter that I wrote, and you can be read in my life. What I have done to you is all formed into a letter, and everybody can read it in my heart, so I don't need any recommendation letter." Paul also said, "When I am writing a letter, it is writing the letter of Christ. I am not writing something of myself. I am writing Christ because I supply Christ to your life, and this is to be read by all people." To put it another way, "The way I am writing is the new covenant way, because I am not writing with ink; I am writing with the Spirit of God."

Differences between Old Covenant Ministry and New Covenant Ministry

1st Difference

What is the difference between writing in ink and writing with the Spirit of God? When you think of the word ink, what is your impression? When you are studying, when you are collecting information, you need ink. In other words, it is human efforts. When God gave Moses the Ten Commandments, He wrote them upon stones. It was not upon the heart. Stone is hard; it has no feeling. The word may be there, you can read it, but it has no feeling whatsoever. But if it's written upon the heart, it is the heart of flesh. In other words, you have feeling. It is not as hard or as cold as stones. The number one

difference between the old covenant and the new covenant ministries lies here. The instruments you use to write the letter are different. In the old covenant ministry, you use ink; and in the new covenant ministry, you use the Spirit.

To put it another way, if it is old covenant ministry, it comes from our mind; it comes from our study; it comes through our research. We are gathering all kinds of information, maybe even Bible information, but this is our human effort. If it is purely our human effort, then you will find your ministry belongs to the old covenant ministry. This doesn't mean that we should not study. God gives us a mind, and we should use it. We need to study the Bible. We need to find information in the Bible. But if it is only through these things, if the Spirit of God is not involved, then there is no working in your own life. It is all external, nothing inward. That is old covenant ministry.

New covenant ministry is different because the Holy Spirit is working in your life. Let me use an illustration. Where can we get Bible knowledge? God has given us a book, the Bible. The Bible is God-breathed. It will instruct us, it will educate us, and it will correct us. If we study it, then we can be perfect and do the work of God. We need to apply ourselves to studying the word of God. After we have studied the word of God, we can try to analyze it, and we can try to use God's word to help others, but without your own life experience, without the Holy Spirit to apply that word to your life first. Applying that word means you have not only read the word, but you have experienced the word. That is the work of the Holy Spirit.

You can read a verse and know it by heart, but it doesn't work in your life. For instance, lots of people read Romans 6:6 and Galatians 2:20, "Our old man was crucified with Christ. No longer live I, it is Christ who lives in me." Is this true in your life? The word is there, but you are in another place. The Holy Spirit has not enlightened upon that word and made it living and operating in your life. The Bible is the word of God, but to you it is dead. It needs the Holy Spirit to breathe upon it again. The same word is breathed into something living and alive by the Holy Spirit, and then you immediately find that word working in your life. This is the meaning of writing by the Spirit of God. Whenever knowledge becomes experiential, it is power. If it is only knowledge, then it will be from mind to mind and never reach the heart. That is the first difference between old covenant ministry and new covenant ministry – ink and Spirit.

2nd Difference

The second difference—on what is it written? Do you write on stone, or do you write on the heart? The stone here represents our old man. Before God, our old man is completely unresponsive to God because he is the enemy of God. When the word of God falls upon the old man, he will reject it and he will resist it. He will never follow and obey God's words, because the Bible says, "It is enmity against God, and he considers God's will foolish." So far as God is concerned, it is like a stone. It is hard, cold, and it has no reaction. But if it is written upon heart, then there is feeling; there is a sense there. In Ezekiel 36, it says that God will take away our stony heart and give us a heart of flesh. It has to be written upon heart, not upon stone. The old covenant is written upon stones, but the new covenant is written upon hearts. This is the second difference.

3rd difference

The third difference—If it is old covenant ministry, you are competent, because you have studied, you have analyzed, you have remembered, so you can deliver it. You are competent yourself. But when you find that you are not competent, you say, “How can I minister life to people? This is something beyond me. No matter how I try, I won’t succeed.” Then we’ll find that our competency is of God. So whenever you feel that you are able, you are under old covenant ministry. When you are under new covenant ministry, you find your competency is only in God.

Before I was saved, I had already preached. How could I do it? I went to my father’s study and got a book. At that time, Jowett was a famous preacher in the States, and he wrote a book on sermons. So I picked a subject and translated it into Chinese; I memorized it, and I preached it. After I preached it, I felt good. The only thing I regretted was nobody praised me. That’s old covenant ministry. You can do it, but it is old covenant ministry. You are competent yourself.

But if you touch new covenant ministry, you have to acknowledge that it is beyond you. You have to humble yourself before God. You have to seek His face. And even after you have delivered your message, you will tell God, “Lord, I have done all I could, but You have to complete it because this is beyond me.” Only the Holy Spirit is able to do God’s work.

4th Difference

The fourth difference—Old covenant ministry is a ministry of condemnation and of death; new covenant ministry is a ministry of righteousness. When you deliver law to people, what will happen? It will condemn people because law always condemns, and it will bring people to death. You should do this, you should not do that, and you cannot follow, so it is death. New covenant ministry is different. It will bring righteousness to your life because you begin to experience the living word of God in your life.

5th Difference

Furthermore, you find old covenant ministry begins with glory but that glory fades away, just as Moses’ face shone and gradually that shining passed away. New covenant ministry is from glory to glory. These are the differences between old covenant ministry and new covenant ministry.

Move from Old Covenant Ministry to New Covenant Ministry, Gradually

I believe what the Lord wants us to do is to move gradually away from old covenant ministry and enter into new covenant ministry. You cannot reason to yourself that, “Until I have the new covenant ministry, I won’t minister. Until I am perfect, I won’t be a Christian.” Then, you will never be a Christian, and you will never serve. We have to

gradually enter into it. When you read Hebrews 8, which talks about the new covenant, verse 13 says, “In that he says new, he has made the first old; but that which grows old and aged is near disappearing.” In other words, the old is gradually disappearing and is replaced by new covenant ministry.

Turn to the Lord

How do we come into this new covenant ministry? We have hope because the Bible tells us, when we turn to the Lord, then the veil upon our face is taken away. We can behold the glory of the Lord with open face, and as we behold Him, we will be changed and transformed from glory to glory, even as by the Lord, the Spirit. Those who live a new covenant living, we need to behold the face of the Lord with unveiled face. If we turn our hearts to the Lord and look at Him, the Holy Spirit will begin to work in our lives, and He will transform us from glory to glory. Glory is God Himself. More and more God Himself will be added upon us. More and more the life of Christ will grow in us. This is the way we live a Christian life. In the same manner, as you behold the Lord, instead of looking upon yourselves, look off unto Jesus. When you look off unto Jesus, gradually you find the Holy Spirit will work in your life and will produce a ministry that is according to the new covenant.

This morning we have looked at the difference between old and new covenant ministry. God willing, next weekend we will speak on how we get into this new covenant ministry. Finally, we will use Paul in II Corinthians as an example. May the Lord help us! Let’s pray.

Dear Lord, we commit these scattered words into Thy hands and look to Thy Spirit to breathe upon them, that they may be rooted and grounded in our lives, that Thy will may be done, and Thy ministry may be manifested, that it will speed up Thy return. We ask in Thy name, Amen.

Message 3

HOW TO ENTER INTO NEW COVENANT MINISTRY

II Corinthians 4—Therefore, having this ministry, as we have had mercy shown us, we faint not. But we have rejected the hidden things of shame, not walking in deceit, nor falsifying the word of God, but by manifestation of the truth commending ourselves to every conscience of men before God. But if also our gospel is veiled, it is veiled in those that are lost; in whom the god of this world has blinded the thoughts of the unbelieving, so that the radiance of the glad tidings of the glory of the Christ, who is the image of God, should not shine forth for them. For we do not preach ourselves, but Christ Jesus Lord, and ourselves your bondmen for Jesus' sake, because it is the God who spoke that out of darkness light should shine who has shone in our hearts for the shining forth of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ. But we have this treasure in earthen vessels, that the surpassingness of the power may be of God, and not from us: every way afflicted, but not straitened; seeing no apparent issue, but our way not entirely shut up; persecuted, but not abandoned; cast down, but not destroyed; always bearing about in the body the dying of Jesus, that the life also of Jesus may be manifested in our body; for we who live are always delivered unto death on account of Jesus, that the life also of Jesus may be manifested in our mortal flesh; so that death works in us, but life in you. And having the same spirit of faith, according to what is written, I have believed, therefore have I spoken; we also believe, therefore also we speak; knowing that he who has raised the Lord Jesus shall raise us also with Jesus, and shall present us with you. For all things are for your sakes, that the grace abounding through the many may cause thanksgiving to abound to the glory of God. Wherefore we faint not; but if indeed our outward man is consumed, yet the inward is renewed day by day. For our momentary and light affliction works for us in surpassing measure an eternal weight of glory; while we look not at the things that are seen, but at the things that are not seen; for the things that are seen are for a time, but those that are not seen eternal.

Let's have a word of prayer. Dear Lord, we want to thank Thee for gathering us again this day. We have read Thy word, and now we pray that Thy Holy Spirit will enlighten Thy word to us, and lead us into the reality of the power of Thy word, that what we have read will become our experience that Thou may be glorified. We ask in Thy name, Amen.

Review

We thank God for gathering us again in His name. Now we know Christian life is controlled by two things, living and serving. We live, but it is Christ who lives in us. This alone is Christian living. If after we have believed in the Lord Jesus and we continue to

live by ourselves, by our old life, this is not Christian living. Christian living is “for me to live is Christ.” In the same manner, you come to Christian ministry. Our ministries may be different, but we all minister unto the Lord.

What is Christian ministry? Simply put, Christian ministry is ministering Christ to others. When you come to new covenant ministry, everything is Christ and nothing is of our selves. I hope that brothers and sisters just remember this principle.

Last time we shared together on the difference between the old covenant ministry and the new covenant ministry (II Corinthians 3). We find that old covenant ministry is writing letters with ink. Whenever we think of ink, probably we think of scribes and Pharisees. The Pharisees and scribes of old tried to serve God. When you read Matthew 23:1-12, you will see what our Lord’s estimation is of scribes and Pharisees.

Matthew 23:1-4—Then Jesus spoke to the crowds and to his disciples, saying, the scribes and the Pharisees have set themselves down in Moses' seat; all things therefore, whatever they may tell you, do and keep. But do not after their works, for they say and do not, but bind burdens heavy and hard to bear, and lay them on the shoulders of men, but will not move them with their finger.

That is the ministry of the scribes and Pharisees. What they have taught may be right, but what they teach is just law and burden. They will not even move a little finger. That is the work of the scribes and Pharisees. In the same manner, when you think of old covenant ministry, we tell people all the laws and commandments of God, but are we ourselves keeping all these laws and commandments? No, we will not even move our little finger. We are giving people all kinds of law and burden, that they may feel condemned, but we will not in any way help them. That is the old covenant ministry.

New covenant ministry is completely different, because it is not writing letters with ink. It is writing letters with the Spirit of God, and where the Spirit of God is, there is liberty. In the old covenant ministry, when they write a letter, they write on stone. The Ten Commandments were written on stone. Stone is hard and cold, having no feeling. It is something that you have to learn from. It is not something written upon your heart, that you have feeling, that you have sense within you. The old covenant ministry is a ministry of condemnation, of death. The more you hear about it, the more you are condemned, because you cannot do it, and it will come to death.

The new covenant ministry is of life. It is of righteousness. The old covenant ministry is in letter; the new covenant ministry is of spirit. The old covenant ministry is of glory, but it is passing, while the new covenant ministry is from glory to glory. Brothers and sisters, we know what God has ordained for us. It is no longer the old covenant ministry, it is new covenant ministry that will give life to people, that will give Christ to people. It is living, it is vibrant, and it is full of life.

Our Reaction

Now that we have already found new covenant ministry in II Corinthians 3, having heard about it, what will be our reaction? Probably in the past when you are ministering to other people, you are full of confidence and you think you are doing something good. But when you realize what new covenant ministry really is, what will be your reaction?

When Paul came to II Corinthians 4, he said, “Therefore, having this ministry, as we have had mercy shown us, we faint not.” The moment you understand what new covenant ministry is, if you really understand what it is, probably our first reaction is, “We will faint under it. How can I do it? This is beyond me.”

The apostle Paul says, “We faint not.” Is it because we are competent? No, it is because we do not understand what new covenant ministry is. I believe that all that really understand what new covenant ministry really is, the first reaction will be, “I will faint under it. I cannot do it.” But brothers and sisters, this is what it should be because the Bible says we have had mercy shown us. If we think of ourselves, it is beyond us. But if we think of the mercy of God, then all things are possible.

What is mercy? Mercy is unmerited grace. We are unmerited, but grace has been shown upon us. That is mercy. So dear brothers and sisters, we are shut out to God’s mercy. There is nothing we can do. Everything depends on the mercy of God. Then what should we do? Do nothing; just sit back and wait? Is that the attitude that we should take? Are we to be passive about it? If we are passive, we will never come into it.

Our Preparation, Our Attitudes

So on the one hand we find that it is God’s mercy; there is nothing we can do. But on the other hand, there is an attitude. There is a position we must take. What will be our attitude? We should prepare ourselves. Prepare ourselves for the mercy of God to come upon us. If we take an inactive, passive attitude, even though God’s mercy is there, it will not come into us. But if we really have a heart for it, and if we really want it, we are willing to take a position for it, then you will find mercy will come upon us. So there are certain things we should prepare ourselves. If you want that new covenant ministry, there are certain attitudes we have to have.

Rejecting the Hidden Things of Shame

The apostle Paul says in II Corinthians 4:2, “But we have rejected the hidden things of shame.” In other words, if we really want to have the new covenant ministry, then first of all we should examine our hearts to see if there are any hidden things of shame within us. What does it mean? It means there is something within us we know ourselves. Nobody knows about it. It is hidden within us. We know that it is something wrong. We know that it is something not of God, but somehow we still hold onto it.

Brothers and sisters, if we want mercy and grace of God, all these hidden things of shame must be confessed before the Lord. Maybe these weaknesses of ours we cannot

overcome, but we should confess before the Lord. Expose ourselves before the Lord, let His light shine upon us, and ask for forgiveness and seek the Lord for His deliverance so that between God and us there is no shadow. We are open to the Lord.

Not Walking in Deceit nor Falsifying the Word of God

This is the heart attitude we must take: not walking in deceit, nor falsifying the word of God. When we are trying to share the word of God with other people, we are not cutting the word of God in a straight line. We try to twist it to suit our position. In other words, we make use of God's Word for our own glory, for our own favor. No, we have to cut the word of God in a straight line. If even the word of God will hurt us, we have to be faithful to the word of God.

That is an attitude we have to take so that when we present the truth, we are presenting to other people in a pure conscience. There is nothing hidden, there is nothing selfish. It is totally for the sake of the glory of God.

Brothers and sisters, it is a shameful thing. Many who are preaching the word of God are for their own glory. They are seeking their own glory. They use the word of God for themselves, instead of really faithfully proclaiming the word of God. So this is the preparation we must have before we can receive mercy. Now as a matter of fact, we can do nothing. It is just a preparation for God to work. The work is done totally by God Himself.

Treasure in Earthen Vessels

The apostle Paul says, "We have a treasure in earthen vessels." Now who are we? We are earthen vessels, because we are made of dust. Earthen vessels are very cheap, and they are opaque. They do not give light. That is what we are, but oftentimes we think otherwise. We think ourselves as an alabaster flask.

Nobody will put treasure in earthen vessels. If you have a treasure, where will you put it? You may put it in a golden box. You have to put it in a safe. Who will put the treasure in an earthen vessel? This is what God is doing.

Think of yourself as an earthen vessel, and how God, in His marvelous grace, put Christ the treasure in us. This is something only God will do. Thank God He has done it! We have this treasure in earthen vessels. The radiance of the glory of the gospel of Jesus Christ has already shone into us.

What is the glory of the gospel of Jesus Christ? Christ in you, the hope of glory. We often think of our sins forgiven as the biggest thing. It *is* big. But when we compare this to Christ being our life, we cannot imagine how glorious that is. When we believe in the Lord Jesus, not only our sins are forgiven (referring to something negative), but there is something positive and glorious. Christ comes into us to be our life. Christ in you, the hope of glory. Glory is there. Radiance is there. But it is hidden in the earthen vessel,

because the earthen vessel is opaque, so even though there is glory within, the radiance cannot shine forth.

God is going to let out that radiance, and when that radiance of Christ is manifested, then you give life to people. The problem here is how the radiance of the treasure can be manifested through the earthen vessel. Thank God you have that treasure in you. Every one of us has that treasure. The radiance is there, the life giving radiance is there, but it is hidden.

How can that life shine forth? There is only one way. The earthen vessel will be broken, and then the radiance of the treasure will shine forth. You remember the story of Mary, how she had a pound of precious nard in the alabaster flask. In a sense, we all have that pound of nard in an alabaster flask. You all are alabaster flasks. I am an alabaster flask. It is a precious flask. Of course it has a pound of nard within it. How we will treasure this!

But here you find Mary, when her heart was touched by the love of Christ, when she saw how Christ restored her brother Lazarus to life. Her heart was so touched by the love of Christ, and she wanted to express her love toward the Lord. What should she do? She had nothing, because she was an orphan. But somehow she had a pound of nard in an alabaster flask. Maybe it was for her marriage. That was her treasure. But the love of God so constrained her she wanted to give it to Christ. Not just a few drops, she wanted to pour that nard upon the Lord. The only way was to break the alabaster flask.

Brothers and sisters, if we treasure ourselves, if we look high upon ourselves, if we want to preserve ourselves, then when we are constrained by the love of Christ we may open the flask and pour a few drops out. But if we are really constrained by the love of Christ, we have to break that alabaster flask. It is but an earthen vessel. If we look upon ourselves as an earthen vessel, it will help us to break that vessel, so that the radiance of Christ may pour forth and give life to people.

Let the Holy Spirit Break the Earthen Vessel

How can we do it? Brothers and sisters, the wonderful thing is that you don't need to do it, because if you do it yourself, you may not accomplish what you are after. You hand yourself over to Christ and let the Holy Spirit do the work, because this is what the Holy Spirit is for.

The Holy Spirit who dwells in us will do two things. One, He will reveal Christ to us, and that is something He will do within us. Oftentimes we are reading the word of God, we cannot understand it. Even if we understand, we do not experience the power of it. The word is word, and we are we, but one day when the Holy Spirit reveals that word to you, He makes the written word a living Word. Immediately you see it. There is strength within it. That is one thing He will do.

The second thing He will do is to arrange our circumstances. We call it the

discipline of the Holy Spirit. What is the discipline of the Holy Spirit? It simply means that He will arrange our circumstances. Brothers and sisters, there is one thing that gives us great confidence. After we have believed in the Lord Jesus, we become children of God, and the Father's care over us is so great, he will take care of us in everything. There is nothing that we can say, "It is by chance." Now before we believe in the Lord Jesus, there may be lots of things that seem to be by chance. But as children of God, there is no such thing as chance, because our Heavenly Father takes care of us.

The Bible tells us in Matthew 10, "Two sparrows are sold just for one farthing, and even one of them will not fall onto the ground without the Father's permission." Luke 12 tells us, "Two farthings you have five sparrows and that odd sparrow is worthless, and if it is not of the Father's will, he cannot fall to the ground. Now how much more are you than sparrows?"

Another thing the Lord says, "Don't be afraid. Why are you afraid? Even your hairs have been numbered." I don't think any one of us has numbered his or her hair. We do not know how many hairs we have. When you were combing your hair this morning, a few hairs fell down, and even though you do not know how many hairs have fallen out, the Lord knows.

Now can you imagine that? If your Heavenly Father takes care of you in such a way, is there anything that will come to you by chance? Nothing can come to you by chance. Everything is under His hand. What we consider as good things and what we consider as bad things, everything that concerns a Christian is under the Father's knowledge. So the Holy Spirit will arrange our circumstances, not according to our knowledge, but according to His wisdom. Nothing will come to us by chance. When He arranges circumstances around us, and we think we are in trouble, He knows it. And He does it in order to bring us into new covenant ministry. He uses all circumstances to break us so that out of the breaking, the radiance of the gospel of Jesus Christ may shine forth.

II Corinthians 4 says, "Every way afflicted but not straitened." To put it simply, shut in but not shut out. Why? It is because the upward way is opened. And "seeing no apparent issue, but our way not entirely shut up". At our wit's end, but not at our lives' end; this is Phillips translation. Persecuted, but not abandoned, cast down but not destroyed, knocked down but not knocked out. Oftentimes we feel we are being knocked down, but we are not knocked out, because we rebound.

Brothers and sisters, when we are in various circumstances, do not murmur, but try to look to the Lord and seek the Lord's mind about it. If we are willing to be broken, then you find the life of Christ will come forth. The apostle Paul says, "We are bearing in our body daily the dying of the Lord Jesus, that the life of Jesus may be manifested in me and in others."

The Dying of Jesus and the Life of Jesus

The word here is the dying of Jesus. It is not the death of Christ. The death of Jesus is an eternal fact. When Christ died on Calvary's cross, He said, "It is finished." In other words, what the Lord has done on Calvary's cross is eternal. It is an eternal fact. It is effective at any time and at any place. Even though He bore our sins on His body two thousand years ago, it is an eternal fact. Therefore when you believe in the Lord Jesus and confess your sins, your sins are forgiven. When He died on the cross, He took you and me with Him to death, because he took Adam to death. It is an eternal fact. Today if you really believe it, you've got it.

That is truth. Truth is eternal. It never changes. It is not affected by time or space. Here the word is "dying of Jesus." It is a verbal noun, so there is action there. The death of Christ is a fact. The dying of Jesus is an action. The death of Christ is done by Christ. The dying of Jesus is done by the Holy Spirit. The Holy Spirit will take the death of Jesus and apply it to us to put to death everything that is not of Christ. When the dying of Jesus comes to us, the result is the life of Jesus will be manifested both in us and in others. That is new covenant ministry.

So here we find a secret. We find that the Holy Spirit is disciplining us, arranging our circumstances every day. What will happen to you? What word you may have heard? Whom will you meet? What circumstances will you be in? Everything in our lives is under the control of the Holy Spirit. He has arranged it according to His wisdom in order to apply the dying of Jesus upon you, to make a break in the earthen vessel. But it is not negative. It is positive, because with that crack, the life of Christ will come forth. It will be in you as well as in those that you serve.

Service is not something outward. You are doing something, true. Maybe you are talking, maybe you are sharing, maybe you are preaching, maybe you are serving the table, or maybe you are fixing the chairs. These things are not real service. Serving is what comes out of it. While you are doing these things for the sake of Christ, the Spirit of Christ will come forth. The life of Christ will come out and touch people, either by word or by action. Brothers and sisters, this is new covenant ministry.

Outward Man vs. Inward Man

The apostle Paul said, "Even though the outward man is decaying, our inward man is renewed day by day." Who is the outward man? The outward man is our soul. Our soul life will decay day by day. Who is the inward man? The inward man is the spirit, Christ in the spirit. So you find that the inward man is renewed day by day. What we have gone through and what we can see is temporary. But what we do not see is eternal.

This is the way to new covenant ministry. As the cross is the way to life, so the cross is also the way to ministry. Without the cross, there is no Christ. Without the cross there is neither Christian nor Christian ministry.

We faint not, because we know the Lord is working out His purpose. He is to see that we are really transformed and conformed to the image of Christ. Whether it is our

Christian living or our Christian serving, it is Christ, not our selves. This is what we find in the word of God. So may the Lord lead us on! As long as we live, may it be Christ more and more! As long as we serve, may it be Christ that we serve! Let us pray.

Dear Lord, we want to thank Thee for the high calling that Thou hast called us. Thou want us to minister Christ to others. We do confess that in ourselves we cannot do it. But we praise and thank Thee that Thou hast made every provision for us. We thank Thee for Thy precious Word. We thank Thee for Thy Holy Spirit that dwells in us. Lord, we want to put ourselves in Your hand. Break us, that You may make us! To the praise of Your glory, Amen.

Message 4

AN EXAMPLE OF NEW COVENANT MINISTRY - APOSTLE PAUL

II Corinthians 4:5—For we do not preach ourselves, but Christ Jesus Lord, and ourselves your bondmen for Jesus' sake.

II Corinthians 13:10—On this account I write these things being absent, that being present I may not use severity according to the authority which the Lord has given me for building up, and not for overthrowing.

May we have a further word of prayer. Dear Lord, we want to thank Thee for what Thou have already done for us. We thank Thee for bringing us to Thy presence. Now Lord, we are here to hear what Thou have to say to us. May Thy Spirit breathe upon Thy living Word, and make it living and operative in our life. We have given ourselves to Thee, Lord, and now Lord, do whatever Thou like with us. Glorify Thy name, we ask in Thy precious name, Amen.

Review

We are all called to serve God. How do we serve Him? Do we serve Him according to the old covenant or do we serve Him according to the new covenant? Do we serve Him with ink or do we serve Him with the Spirit of God? Do we write a letter on stone, or do write on the fleshly heart? Do we feel confident when we are serving, or do we feel that we are not confident? Our confidence is always in God. While we are serving, is it in letter or is it in spirit? What is the result of our service? Will it condemn or will it justify?

We can serve God in two different ways. We can serve God according to the old covenant or we can serve Him according to the new covenant. We all know that we are no longer under the old covenant. By the grace of God, we are all in the new covenant.

In the Breaking of Bread, our Lord Jesus raised up the cup and He blessed it and said, "This is the cup of Thy new covenant of my blood poured out for you." So brothers and sisters, we know that we are now under the new covenant. The Lord has already brought that new covenant to us. So whether we live or we serve, we are under the new covenant.

How can we enter into this new covenant ministry? On our part, we need to prepare ourselves. We need to lay down all the things that are hidden within us. We expose ourselves to the light of God. We do not have ulterior motives. When we are serving Him, our whole desire is that He may be glorified. We are not seeking fame, we are not seeking our own benefit. It is all unto the Lord Himself.

So whenever we are serving, we serve with a pure conscience, without offense to God or to man. That is the preparation we must make. Then we find that the work is done by the Spirit of God, how He arranges our circumstances to break this earthen vessel that the treasure, the radiance of the treasure within, will shine forth. We need to bear upon our body the dying of Jesus, so that the life of Jesus may be manifested in us and toward others.

The cross is the only way to new covenant ministry. If we try to bypass the cross, then the new covenant ministry will not come. But if we are willing to deny our self, take the cross and follow the Lord (it is not once for all, it is a daily thing), then we will find that this new covenant ministry will flow out from us. So it is all by grace, nothing under the law.

From Saul to Paul

Now we would like to examine an example, because sometimes we wonder that given such a wonderful ministry, are we able to really be involved in it? Who are we that God could grace us with such ministry? When you search for an example, I think the best example is the apostle Paul. Why? Because in the Bible, it is recorded how he served God with the old covenant ministry, and how later on, he served under the new covenant ministry. So what happened to him can happen to us. That will give us hope.

In Philippians 3, the apostle Paul told us how he served God under the old covenant ministry. He was a rare youth because while other young men were seeking the world and its glory, this young man sought God. He had every credential of serving God because he was a typical Jew. He told us himself that he was of the tribe of Benjamin. Why did he mention that? It is because the children of Israel were divided into two kingdoms, but Benjamin stuck with Judah. So that was one of his credentials.

Paul was a typical Jew and he was a Pharisee. Today, we think very poorly of Pharisees because they were hypocritical, but this Pharisee was real, and he was a Pharisee of Pharisees. What does that mean? It means that even in his family, they spoke Jewish language, Hebrew.

Paul was also educated under Gamaliel, the most famous rabbi of his days. Paul said how he was zealous for the tradition of the fathers, and how he persecuted the believers of Jesus, because according to the Jewish tradition, they considered Jesus an imposter of Judaism. So here you find this young man, he served God with sincerity, and yet he was in darkness. He was serving God with all his own energy, with all his power, all that he himself could do.

But brothers and sisters, we know how he was wrong. He became the enemy of God instead of the servant of God. That was the time when he served God under the old covenant ministry. He served God according to law. He tried to keep every letter of the law and he served God with all his energy. Now that is serving God under the old

covenant ministry. What a mess he made of himself. But thank God, God knows his heart.

Paul was on the way to Damascus, with a letter from the high priest to seize upon those believers, man and woman, and bring them to Jerusalem to be condemned. But before he arrived at Damascus, he testified himself, “at noontime, a light brighter than the noonday sun” shone upon him. That light was so powerful he fell upon the ground and there he heard a voice. “Saul, Saul, why do you persecute Me? It is hard for you to kick against the goads.” It was not an angry voice. It was a voice full of sympathy. “Why do you do that? You are hurting yourself.” And when that voice came to him, he said, “Lord, who are You? I do not know you.” And the Lord said, “I am Jesus, whom you persecuted.”

With that heavenly vision, we find the whole ministry of Paul changed. From that day onward, we find he began to serve God under the new covenant ministry. And what a difference it made. He was no longer serving God according to his own idea, according to his own understanding, according to what he had learned, what he had read about. He would no longer serve God according to his power and strength. He was serving God under the new covenant of grace. He allowed the grace of God to take hold of him. He served God not with his own idea, not with his own power. He depended totally on the Lord, and how the Lord used him mightily.

II Corinthians—Paul’s Ministry

So brothers and sisters, we would like to use Paul as our example. We purposely do not use Christ as our example because we will say, “Well Christ, He is the Son of God, so He can do it, but we cannot.” But here is a man, just as we are, and he can do it by the grace of God. So it gives every one of us hope. It is available to every one of us.

II Corinthians is a letter that shows the ministry of the apostle Paul. If you want to know the life of the apostle Paul, how he lived under the new covenant, then you have to go to the Philippians, where he said, “For to me to live is Christ.” But if you want to know the work of the apostle Paul, then you go to II Corinthians. We are not able to cover the whole book, but we would like to take out a few important points to show how his ministry is according to the new covenant.

Heart Attitude 1—We Do Not Preach Ourselves, but Christ Jesus Lord

First of all, we will turn to II Corinthians 4:5, “For we do not preach ourselves, but Christ Jesus Lord, and ourselves your bondmen for Jesus’ sake.” This is a very important statement because we remember, before Paul went to Corinth, he considered how he would approach these Corinthian believers. Corinth at that time was known for its culture. Not only was it famous for its culture, it was also famous for its eloquence. Paul was considering how he should approach these people. Should I match culture with culture? Should I match eloquence with eloquence? Paul had eloquence. He had culture. He was well able to match them and to try to overwhelm them. But he knew that if he did that, it would be a failure.

I wonder how you feel when he was in Athens, he tried to match them with eloquence and culture, but it was not very successful. I think he must have learned a lesson. Before he went to Corinth, he made a decision before God. "I will only preach Jesus Christ and the cross to them. I should know nothing among them but Jesus Christ and Him crucified." He knew that it would be considered as foolishness to these people, but it is the foolishness of God that will save them. So when he went into Corinth, he just preached Jesus Christ and Him crucified. He was not preaching himself, himself being their bondmen.

Probably you are surprised. How can we preach ourselves? Of course when we go, we preach Jesus Christ! But brothers and sisters, very often we find that while we are preaching Jesus Christ, we are actually preaching ourselves. We mention the name of Jesus Christ but we try to show people how knowledgeable we are, what we have learned. We are demonstrating our eloquence, demonstrating our learning. Unconsciously, we are preaching ourselves, instead of preaching Jesus Christ.

At the same time, we are doing it in such a way we never consider ourselves as bondservants. We consider ourselves as teachers and rabbis. We cannot take the lowest place. We have to sit in the seat of Moses. Brothers and sisters, this is possible. I can mention to you cases, but I will not do it. How subtle our natural man is! We can even use the name of Jesus for our own profit. It is just like what Jesus said about the scribes and Pharisees in Matthew 23. They want to sit in the seat of Moses. They want to be called rabbis and teachers and they give people laws. Unbearable, but they themselves will not move a finger. This is old covenant ministry.

Thank God, the new covenant ministry is that we preach nothing but Jesus Christ and Him crucified. There is no ulterior motive within us. We are willing to be the servant of all and to serve our brothers and sisters. This is the first thing we notice in II Corinthians. It is a kind of preparation of heart.

Heart Attitude 2— For Your Encouragement and Salvation

II Corinthians 1:6—But whether we are in tribulation, it is for your encouragement and salvation, wrought in the endurance of the same sufferings which we also suffer.

In ministering new covenant ministry, the first preparation is that we only preach Jesus Christ and not anything for ourselves. Number two, another attitude you must take, that whatever we are doing, it is for our brothers' and sisters' encouragement and salvation. In other words, first you have Christ in your heart, and second you have brothers and sisters in your heart. You are not seeking anything for yourself, you are only thinking of their encouragement. You are only thinking of how they can receive salvation in fullness.

If you turn to II Corinthians 11, there you find how Paul suffered. *II Corinthians 11:23-30—Are they ministers of Christ? (I speak as being beside myself) I above measure so; in labors exceedingly abundant, in stripes to excess, in prisons exceedingly abundant, in deaths oft. From the Jews five times have I received forty stripes, save one. Thrice have I been scourged, once I have been stoned, three times I have suffered shipwreck, a night and day I passed in the deep: in journeyings often, in perils of rivers, in perils of robbers, in perils from my own race, in perils from the nations, in perils in the city, in perils in the desert, in perils on the sea, in perils among false brethren; in labour and toil, in watchings often, in hunger and thirst, in fastings often, in cold and nakedness. Besides those things that are without, the crowd of cares pressing on me daily, the burden of all the assemblies. Who is weak, and I am not weak? Who is stumbled, and I burn not? If it is needful to boast, I will boast in the things which concern my infirmity.*

So brothers and sisters, here you find Paul only has the brothers and sisters in view. He is not thinking of himself, he is willing to suffer tribulation for their sake. In Colossians 1:24, he said, "Now, I rejoice in sufferings for you, and I fill up that which is behind of the tribulations of Christ in my flesh, for his body, which is the assembly."

Our Lord Jesus suffered for His church. Because of suffering, we find the church was born. Here you find a servant of the Lord, he suffered in order to fill the lack which is behind in the tribulation of Christ. What does it mean? It means that for the growth of the church, he suffered. This is the heart attitude of the apostle Paul.

So brothers and sisters, if we are in the new covenant ministry, we must have these two heart attitudes. Our attitude is just to uplift Christ. Our attitude is to encourage our brothers and sisters. We should not think of ourselves anymore. This is new covenant ministry.

Nature of New Covenant Ministry—Spiritual Warfare

What is the nature of this new covenant ministry? *II Corinthians 10:3-5—For walking in flesh, we do not war according to flesh. For the arms of our warfare are not fleshly, but powerful according to God to the overthrow of strongholds; overthrowing reasonings and every high thing that lifts itself up against the knowledge of God, and leading captive every thought into the obedience of the Christ.*

We realize that in new covenant ministry, there is a spiritual warfare going on. In other words, we do not look at it just on the surface. We know what it is involved. We know that behind the scenes there is an enemy, and how he influences the reasoning of man. We are not really facing people, we are facing the enemy behind the scenes.

How do we fight this fight? We cannot fight this fight with arms of the flesh because our enemy is not people. Our enemy is the one behind the people, the evil powers of darkness. How are you going to fight this fight? We cannot use the arms of the flesh to meet word with word, action with action. We cannot do that. All the arms of our

warfare is not the flesh, it is powerful according to God. So in other words, while we are ministering the new covenant ministry, we are dealing with the enemy behind the scenes.

Our weapon is prayer. We have to go to God Himself and present the situation before Him and pray that God will overflow all the reasoning that resists Him. It is like when Joshua was fighting against Jericho. It is not by the arms of the flesh; it is by surrounding the city with the ark in view. Then there was the final shout, and the walls fell. So brothers and sisters, we need to remember this. Never consider the outward appearance. Don't be disturbed by that, and do not try to counter-fight against such things. Bring everything to the throne of God and it is by His power that all these walls will fall. This is the nature of new covenant ministry.

Nature of New Covenant Ministry—Visions and Revelations

Not only that, but then when you come to II Corinthians 12:1, it says, "Well, it is not of profit to me to boast, for I will come to visions and revelations of the Lord." The nature of our ministry is not only a spiritual warfare, it is also based upon visions and revelations. It is true so far as our life experience is concerned, maybe a great vision or a great revelation will come once or twice in our lifetime that will revolutionize our life, but that doesn't mean that in our daily life there is no vision or revelation. The Holy Spirit who dwells in us, He will teach us all things. He not only teaches in big things, He also will teach us in small things. Something that probably you will think He should not be bothered about, but if our spirit is open to the Holy Spirit, we find that even in small things, He is guiding us. If we are faithful in small things, then we are faithful in big things.

In other words, in new covenant ministry, it is dependent on visions and revelations. That means it is dependent on God Himself. You cannot depend on your own logic, your own reasoning. Everything you laid before the Lord, He will reveal His mind to you. If you do accordingly, you will find your ministry is of a new covenant character.

Process of New Covenant Ministry—Power Perfected in Weakness

Now we come to this matter of the process. When you are in new covenant ministry, by what power are you doing it? *II Corinthians 12: 9-10—And he said to me, My grace suffices thee; for my power is perfected in weakness. Most gladly therefore will I rather boast in my weaknesses, that the power of the Christ may dwell upon me. Wherefore I take pleasure in weaknesses, in insults, in necessities, in persecutions, in straits, for Christ: for when I am weak, then I am powerful.*

In Philippians 4:12, the apostle Paul said he has been initiated into a secret. He knows how to be full and how to be lacking, because he can do all things through Him who empowers him. In other words, he has been initiated into the secret of God's power. I often wonder when he was initiated into this secret? I think it is probably II Corinthians 12, because Paul was traveling in Asia Minor, and these are the places of malaria. Evidently Paul had malaria attacks. When malaria attacks, what happens? You tremble.

Paul said, “See how I tremble.” When malaria attacks, it affects your eyesight, so he could not see very well. Do you remember when Paul wrote, he had to write in big letters?

Paul was traveling and preaching the power of God, yet he had such a weak body. That’s a contradiction, so he prayed to the Lord to remove the thorn from the enemy from him, that he would be strong and preach a strong message. However, God’s idea is different. God may use the weakest man to preach the strongest message. So the Lord said, “My grace is sufficient for you. You are mourning about your weakness. You want that weakness to be removed so that you can be strong. But My thought is different, because My power is perfected in your weakness. You will remain weak, so you have nothing to affect people. I will do the work. My power is perfected in your weakness.”

Brothers and sisters, do we move by our strength or do we murmur for our weakness? Of course we are proud of our strength, but we are ashamed of our weakness. We try to hide our weakness and exhibit our strength, but that’s not God’s way to power. The secret to power is weakness. Whenever you are weak, then you are strong. There is nothing you can boast of yourself. You can only boast of God. This is the way to power.

When Paul was serving, he was not serving with his own power. Instead, he was serving with his weakness. Now who would boast of his weakness? We would hide our weakness, but one day when you are boasting of your weakness, the power of God will come upon you. This is the secret to power. Paul is not using his own strength. “Not by might, nor by power, but by the spirit of God.” This is the way to new covenant ministry.

Process —Spend and Be Spent

At the same time, we find in II Corinthians 12:15, “Now I shall most gladly spend and be utterly spent for your souls, if even in abundantly loving you I should be less loved.” Here you will find that when he was serving, he did not reserve anything back for himself. He was willing to spend and be spent. Even if the Corinthians did not love him he would still spend for them. He was not thinking of himself at all. This is new covenant ministry.

Process —Authority for Building Up, Not for Overthrowing

Finally, we find in II Corinthians 13:10, the apostle Paul mentions authority. Authority is for building up, not for overthrowing. If authority comes from ourselves, it is overthrowing. But if authority comes from God, then it will build up. Even if at times it may seem to be overthrowing, but eventually it will be for building up. So new covenant ministry is a building-up ministry. Authority is for building up, not for overthrowing.

The Lord Will Lead Us Gradually out of the old and into the new

Briefly, when we go through II Corinthians, you will find that these are the signs of new covenant ministry. If this can happen to a person like Paul, we believe that it can happen in any one of us. May the Lord lead us into this ministry. I personally feel that

when we first begin to serve, probably we are more in the realm of old covenant ministry. But don't be discouraged because the Lord will lead us gradually out of the old and into the new. He will build Himself more and more within us, until more and more of Him will come forth. This is the ministry that the Lord is looking for. Let us pray.

Dear Lord, we want to thank Thee because what Thou hast promised, Thou fulfillst. We thank Thee that Thou hast done it in the life of the apostle Paul, how Thou hast changed his ministry. Lord, we offer ourselves to Thee, and trust Thee to do the same in each and every one of us, that Thy purpose may be realized. We ask in Thy name, Amen.