

The new covenant

Part 1

Speaker	Michael Johnson
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[00:00:01] The twenty-second chapter of the Gospel of Luke, Luke chapter 22.

Luke 22 and verse 19. Luke 22 and verse 19.

Luke 22 verse 19.

And he took bread, and gave thanks, and break it, and gave unto them, saying, This is my body, which is given for you, this do in remembrance of me.

Likewise also the cup after supper, saying, This cup is the new covenant in my blood, which is shed for you.

[00:01:04] Now if you'd like to turn on into the epistles, which is the second epistle to the Corinthians and chapter 3. 2 Corinthians 3. 2 Corinthians 3 verse 1. 2 Corinthians 3 verse 1.

Do we begin again to commend ourselves, or need we, as some others, epistles of commendation to you, or letters of commendation from you? Ye are our epistle, written in our hearts, known and read of all men, forasmuch as ye are manifestly declared to be the epistle of Christ ministered by us, [00:02:04] written not with ink, but with the spirit of the living God, not in tables of stone, but in fleshy tables of the heart.

And such trust have we through Christ to God would, not that we are sufficient of ourselves to think anything as of ourselves, but our sufficiency as of God, who also hath made us able ministers of the new covenant, not of the letter, but of the spirit.

For the letter killeth, but the spirit giveth life. But if the ministration of death, written and engraven in stones, was glorious, so that the children of Israel could not steadfastly behold the face of Moses for the glory of his countenance, which glory was to be done away? How shall not the ministration of the spirit be rather glorious? [00:03:03] For if the ministry of condemnation be glory, much more doth the ministration of righteousness exceed in glory.

For even that which was made glorious had no glory in this respect by reason of the glory that excelleth. For if that which is done away was glorious, much more that which remaineth is glorious.

Seeing then that we have such hope, we use great plainness of speech, and not as Moses who put a

veil over his face, that the children of Israel could not steadfastly look to the end of that which is abolished, but their minds were blinded. For until this day remaineth the same veil untaken away in the reading of the Old Testament, which veil is done away in Christ. But even unto this day, when Moses is read, the veil is upon their heart. [00:04:06] Nevertheless, when it shall turn to the Lord, the veil shall be taken away.

Now the Lord is that spirit, and where the spirit of the Lord is, there is liberty. But we all, with open face beholding as in a glass the glory of the Lord, are changed into the same image, from glory to glory, even as by the spirit of the Lord.

Therefore, seeing we have this ministry, as we have received mercy, we faint not, but have renounced the hidden things of dishonesty, not walking in craftiness, nor handling the word of God deceitfully, but by manifestation of the truth, commending ourselves to every man's conscience in the sight of God, [00:05:03] that if our gospel be hid, it is hid to them that are lost. And lastly, in the eighth chapter of the epistle to the Hebrews. Hebrews chapter 8.

Hebrews chapter 8 and verse 6.

Hebrews 8 verse 6.

But now hath he obtained a more excellent ministry by how much also he is the mediator of a better covenant, which was established upon better promises.

For if that first covenant had been faultless, then should no place have been sought for the second. For finding fault with them, he saith, Behold, the days come, saith the Lord, [00:06:03] when I will make a new covenant with the house of Israel and with the house of Judah, not according to the covenant that I made with their fathers in the day when I took them by the hand to lead them out of the land of Egypt, because they continued not in my covenant, and I regarded them not, saith the Lord. For this is the covenant that I will make with the house of Israel after those days, saith the Lord.

I will put my laws into their mind and write them in their hearts, and I will be unto them a God, and they shall be to me a people.

And they shall not teach every man his neighbor and every man his brother, saying, Know the Lord, for all shall know me from the least to the greatest. For I will be merciful to their unrighteousness and their sins and their iniquities will I remember no more.

[00:07:05] In that he saith a new covenant, he hath made the first old. Now that which decayeth and waxeth old is ready to vanish away.

Now can we sing another hymn? Number 67.

Hymn number 67.

We bless thee, God and Father, with joy before thy face, beyond dark death forever, we share thy son's blessed place, his Father and our Father, his God and ours thou art, and he is thy beloved, the gladness of thy heart, we're his. In joy he brings us to share his part and place, to know thy love and favor, the shining of thy face.

Shall we stand and sing hymn number 67? Number 67.

[00:08:09] I want to talk tonight about the new covenant.

It would only be about, I suppose, a dozen years or so that I began to realize in talking to fellow believers that whilst we belong to the same Lord and we enjoyed the same salvation, views of things were quite different. And I remember calling one day on a Christian businessman, and mind you, he was a Christian businessman who carried his Christianity into his business. Not all Christians carry Christianity into their business, sad to say. But this man did. He was very honest. When you asked him questions, he knew he was telling you the truth. [00:09:02] And his books were straightforward. And after I'd finished, I knew him to be a believer, and I spent about 30 minutes talking to him.

And after we'd spoken together for about 30 minutes, he said to me, he said, he said, I think I've got you weighed up. He said, you're a pre-tribulation dispensational millennialist.

So I said, yes, I believe that the coming of the Lord Jesus is before the tribulation. I'm certainly pre-tribulation.

Dispensationalist, yes, I believe the scripture speaks about dispensations.

Yes, I believe that the Lord Jesus is going to reign on earth for a thousand years. Yes, I must be a pre-tribulation dispensational millennialist.

That didn't surprise me. I'd never been called that before, [00:10:01] but it's what he said afterwards that surprised me. He said, I'm a post-tribulation non-dispensational amillennialist.

He didn't believe that the Lord was coming before the tribulation.

He didn't believe in dispensations, and he didn't believe in a millennium. You say to yourself, how is it possible that somebody who reads the same Bible couldn't believe in these things? It surprised me. But what surprised me a lot more was what he said is the normal faith of your evangelical friends. They don't believe in dispensations, they don't believe in a millennium, and they don't believe that the Lord is coming before the tribulation. That might be a surprise to you, but in fact, the Reformed faith, to which most of the evangelicals belong, are encompassed by those statements.

[00:11:05] It made me all the more aware that there are things that differ in Scripture that have got to be distinguished. That's what I'm going to talk about tonight. I'm going to speak about the marks of the New Covenant in Hebrews chapter 8 and the sovereignty of God. I want to speak in 2 Corinthians 3 about the New Testament New Covenant marks, and there's a great difference. I want to speak about the effects of the New Covenant inwardly and outwardly, and I want to speak about the basis of the New Covenant. It's not going to be difficult. It's going to be very straightforward. Now, I don't know if I said to you, are we blessed under the New Covenant, what you would say. My Christian friend at work, who is a post-tribulation, amillennialist, [00:12:03] doesn't believe in dispensations, he would say, yes, we are the objects, the subjects of the New Covenant. That's what he would say. And oftentimes, we've gone over these Scriptures together. In Hebrews chapter 8, there are 4 marks of the New Covenant that before talking about the marks of the New Covenant, I want to speak just for a few moments about the sovereignty of God.

The fact that God alone can say, I will, and no power on earth can stop it being brought into being.

Now, get a hold of that. There's no other man who can say that. There used to be a Christian lady on the Isle of Wight, and she used to say to me, there's a verse in the Bible, and every time I read it, it sends a chill up my spine.

And this is the verse, it's about Samson, when Samson eventually told Delilah [00:13:03] about the secret of his strength. This is what the Bible says. Every time, you know, she said to Samson, bind me with cords of brass, bind me with cords of new flax. And every time he did, she said, Samson, the Philistines are upon thee. And Samson flexed his muscles, and he broke the cords of brass, and he broke the new flax, and he put the Philistines to flight.

But when he told Delilah the true secret of his strength, and he fell asleep on her lap, and she shaved off the hairs of his head, she said exactly the same. She said, Samson, the Philistines are upon thee. And this is what the words of Scripture says. Samson said within himself, I will arise and disengage myself as at other times, and wist not that the Lord departed from him. Samson said, I've done it before, [00:14:02] I'll do it again.

And he didn't do it again. And the pathetic picture of Samson grinding out the corn in the mill at Gaza is an evidence of the fact that no man on earth can say, I've done it before, I'll do it again. There's only one who can say, I will, and no power in the universe can stop it being brought into being. And it's God himself who says, and this I take to be the essential thread of the new covenant, that he will sovereignly bless, and there is no power in the universe can stop it being brought into being. I'm not a great one for numbers, but I can't help but think that there must be a good reason why seven times in these words, which are quoted from Jeremiah 31, God says, I will, and it all rests upon the sovereignty of the God who is able to say, I will, [00:15:03] and he has the power to bring it into being. What I want to do now is to speak about the four marks of the new covenant, and I don't want to say a lot about them. I think that if we had time, with great benefit we could linger over them, but I don't want to do that tonight because we haven't got the time. It's something that you might do quietly on your own because it will be a marvellous day when the promised blessings of God in the prophets are fulfilled and the new covenant is ratified with the house of Israel and the house of Judah. The first mark of the new covenant, it's found in verse 10 of Hebrews chapter 8, is this.

God says, I will put my law in their minds and in their heart will I write them.

It won't be a people who are constantly disobedient and who constantly turned against him. [00:16:01] In that day, the law will be written in their mind and it will be written in their heart by God himself, and that's the first mark of the new covenant. The second mark of the new covenant is found in the later part of verse 10 where it says, I will be to them for God and they shall be to me for people. It won't be that in those days the nation of Israel looking after idols, as Hosea says, Ephraim is joined to his idols, in that day it will be, I think it's the last chapter of Hosea says, it will be Ephraim saying, what have I any more to do with idols? In that day Israel will cling to God himself and the nation of Israel will be in that day the people of God. They will not be low am I. So the second mark of the new covenant is he will be to them for God [00:17:01] and they will be to him for people. The third mark of the new covenant is in verse 11.

They shall not teach every man his neighbor and every man his brother saying, know the Lord for all shall know me from the least to the greatest.

The knowledge of Jehovah will fill the earth as the waters cover the sea.

And the fourth mark of the new covenant is in verse 12. God will say, I will be merciful to their unrighteousness, their unrighteousnesses I think it should be, and their sins and iniquities will I remember no more. God will not look back and remember the fact that they refused and crucified their Messiah, their sins and iniquities will I remember no more. Those are the four marks of the new covenant.

But I just want to say one thing [00:18:02] before leaving Hebrews chapter 8.

And that is this. If you look at verse 12, I will be merciful to their unrighteousnesses. Now if anybody bothers to use the concordance you may know that the language in which God put the New Testament is much richer than the English language and there are a number of words which are used for mercy or merciful and the one which is used here and I can't think that without great reason is that word which means mercy on account of sacrifice.

In fact it is the same root word which is used in chapter 2 when it says of the Lord Jesus to be a propitiation for the sins of the people. And I say that because it links very happily with that one verse in Luke 22.

Luke 22 verse 20.

[00:19:01] Likewise also the cup after supper saying this cup is the new covenant in my blood which is shed for you.

And I just want to say a few words about the basis of the new covenant. What it all rests on.

It rests on the sovereignty of God. The sovereignty of God. The fact that God will say I will.

But it equally rests on the fact that Christ has shed his precious blood. Every blessing for God every blessing for man rather and every glory for God rests upon the fact that Christ laid down his life and shed his precious blood. The blessing of God rests upon individuals today. It rests upon the company of Christians, the church. It will rest upon the nation of Israel in the coming day. It will rest upon the Gentiles as they are blessed through Israel. But the basis of all is that the Lord Jesus laid down his life. [00:20:05] The words that I particularly draw your attention to in Luke 23 in verse 22 rather in verse 20.

This cup is the new covenant in my blood.

I read recently, I don't know whether you like reading about the death beds of fellow believers. I do. I find it very challenging.

I don't know whether anybody has read the book called Fear No Evil. It's the last months of David Watson, the Anglican minister.

It's a remarkable book to read. If you've not read it, read it. It's only about £1.50.

It's a paperback. There's a lot in it which I don't hold any brief for. But the one thing which is most

marvellous is that the more ill he became, and he didn't know he was dying, the more ill he became, the validity of what Christ did [00:21:02] became clearer.

And it's not the first time I've read books about fellow believers who are dying. And the thing that shines through is the fact that many of them have spent their lives in ministering the truth of God. And the one thing at the end of the day to which they all go back is this, that Christ laid down his life for them.

The thing which is imperishable and can't be shaken in the face of death is the fact that Christ died for them. There's a very touching one. I'm not sure whether it's WK, but it's one of that generation who, when he was dying, said that he'd spent his life in ministering the things that the scripture spoke about, but now it was evident that his days were few. The thing that he pillowed his head on day by day was the fact that the Lord shed his precious blood. And that's the basis of the new covenant, as the Lord said, this cup is the new covenant in my blood, [00:22:04] which is shed for you.

To my mind it's very lovely and remarkable that when God will say to Israel, I will be merciful to their unrighteousness, it is mercy which is based upon sacrifice, the fact that Christ has shed his precious blood. Now for the rest of the time I want to talk about 2 Corinthians 3. 2 Corinthians 3 is a book of contrasts, of parallels and contrasts.

And what I want to do is to take up the four marks of the new covenant and see what 2 Corinthians 3 says about them. But I just want to draw your attention first to verse 10, to undergird the fact that it's parallels and contrasts.

It's talking about the law and it says, that which was glorious, the introduction of the law, [00:23:02] for that which was made glorious has no glory in this respect by reason of the glory that excelleth. One glory has gone out of view and there's an excelling glory that's come into view. About, I guess, nearly 20 years ago, perhaps more than 20 years ago, I listened to John Blackburn speaking on this chapter in Glasgow. I can't remember anything that he said, but one thing I do remember is this. He quoted a hymn.

I've never been able to track the hymn down, but I remember a line of it and he kept repeating this and it stuck with me and this is what it says. It says, The glory that excels shall know no evening shade.

Its glory will never diminish. It won't be like everything in this world that sooner or later knows its evening shade.

It will always burn brightly. I don't know who wrote those words. [00:24:01] I don't know the hymn it comes from, but they're good words. The glory that excels shall know no evening shade. Paul's talking about a contrast. He says, on one hand, the law was a glory which is done away.

It's done away because there is a glory that excels. It's like the stars that come out at night. They shine in the darkness, but when the light and glory of the sun comes, you can't even see them. It's not that they cease to shine, but the light and brilliance of something better eclipses them. The glory that excels shall know no evening shade. Now, that's exactly the pattern which is pursued in 2 Corinthians 3 and Paul is speaking about the new covenant. Look at verse 6.

He says, God has made us able ministers of the new covenant.

Listen to these words. Not of the letter.

Not of the letter of the new covenant, but of the spirit, [00:25:02] because the letter killeth, but the spirit giveth life. So Paul's talking about the spirit of the new covenant. The new covenant is for the house of Israel and for the house of Judah. The spirit of the new covenant is for the Christian company today. But look at the contrast. The first mark of the new covenant is the law written in the mind and in the heart.

But look at verse 3, what it says. Paul says of the Corinthians, with all the problems and with all the difficulties that he faced, he says, Ye are the epistle of Christ ministered by us, written not with ink on tablets of stone, but by the spirit of the living God on the fleshy tables of the heart. Now, there's a tremendous difference between the law and Christ.

[00:26:02] If you can tell me the difference, the immense difference between the law and Christ personally, then you'll get something of the idea of the distinction between the law and the brilliance which is connected with Christianity. When I first came to know the Lord, I remembered the Lord in a very small meeting on the Isle of Wight where there were just two brothers. And one brother there, he said, I haven't got any gift. I'm sure he had. Every brother and sister has a gift, according to Ephesians 4, 7.

One of his gifts was of saying things that explain statements of Scripture in a marvelous way. And I remember this one. He said to me one day, wasn't it a good job that the names of the children of Israel were not written with chalk on the stones in the breastplate of the high priest? He said, you see, if they were written with chalk, [00:27:01] he said, the high priest might have gone like that and they might have been wiped off. He said, they weren't written in chalk, they were inscribed. You couldn't wipe them off because they're inscribed. Now, surprisingly enough, that's exactly the word which is written here. You can check it out afterwards. When it says in verse 3, written not with ink, it's inscribed. What it means is it's indelible.

Now, if you're a Christian at all, one of the things which is happening is this. God, by his Spirit tonight, is writing in the fleshy tables of the heart.

And when it says fleshy tables, it's not easy to write in stone. It's a hard thing to write in stone, to inscribe in stone, because stone is not impressionable. But the fleshy tables of the heart are impressionable, and by his Spirit, God is writing upon the tables of your heart. If you're a Christian at all, he's writing Christ by the Spirit of the living God.

[00:28:05] Now, I don't know what you think about this, but very often we don't value one another very much. But I don't think there can be anything more precious, more valuable in the sight of God than Christ. And if Christ is being written on the fleshy tables of your heart, you must be infinitely precious to God. And if you're infinitely precious to God, you ought to be infinitely precious to me. The first mark of new covenant ministry applied to Christianity is this.

Not the law, good as it may be, written on the minds and the hearts of the children of Israel, but Christ himself, by the Spirit of the living God, written on the fleshy tables of the heart. What a marvellous distinction is drawn here.

The second mark of the new covenant is this. [00:29:02] Remember, it says, I will be to them for God, and they will be to me for people. Now, in verse 5, Paul says, Now, exactly in what way has that God been made known? And if you keep your finger in 2 Corinthians 3 and turn back to verse 2 of chapter 1, you're told a little bit about the revelation of God himself.

In verse 2 of chapter 1 of this epistle, Paul says, We've just started reading John's Gospel. A new convert at Denmark Street said, Can we read John's Gospel?

I remember when I first turned to the Lord, being attracted by the warmth of John's Gospel. And yet of all the Gospels, it's the most profound. [00:30:02] And yet there's something marvellously attractive about it. It's something which always attracts me, and the more I go on, the more wonderful it is. It's the Gospel that speaks about the revelation of the Father. When Christ, at the end of his life in this world, on the night of his betrayal, was speaking to his own, he said two things in John 17.

Well, two things I'm going to refer to. He said many more things there. One of them, he said, was this. He said, in his prayer to the Father, he said, What the Lord did made God perfectly known, not just as God as being light, and not just as someone who was all-powerful, but he made him known in the love of his heart and in the light of eternal relationships. But he didn't only say, I have manifested thy name. He said, I have declared thy name [00:31:03] to the men that thou gavest me out of the world. What he said also made God perfectly known.

And when in 2 Corinthians 3 Paul says, Our sufficiency is of God, he's speaking of God at last being made fully and perfectly known and standing in relation to a unique company.

Because, again, if you look at 2 Corinthians chapter 1, verse 1, you find that Paul says, Unto the church of God which is at Corinth, and that's something which is absolutely unique to the day in which we live. The church of God consists of all believers from the day of Pentecost until the last one will be saved. Before, by his voice, we're called up, but it's a unique company. It isn't, I will be to them for God and they shall be to me a people only. [00:32:01] It's God made known in the light of eternal relationships and it's a company who, by the indwelling of the Spirit and linked to Christ on high, are formed uniquely into that company which in scripture is called the church, the assembly of God. Now the third mark of the new covenant, you remember, from Hebrews chapter 8 is this, They shall not say every man to his neighbor and every man to his brother, Know the Lord, but they shall know me from the least to the greatest.

Now it's well beyond my time to go into it, but one of the things which is developed throughout the epistles again is the marvellous way in which God has made himself known. I've been engaged for some while now jotting down New Testament parallels to the Old Testament compound names of God.

Genesis 22 is the first compound name of God when it says Jehovah Jireh, the Lord will provide. [00:33:02] The last one is in Ezekiel 48, Jehovah Shammah, the Lord is there and there are eight others in between. Now I've been drawing the New Testament parallels to them and it's a marvellous catalogue of the glories of God known in the Christian company. I wouldn't wish for one moment to diminish anyone's appreciation of the knowledge of Jehovah. It will be wonderful in the day when the knowledge of Jehovah will fill the earth as the waters cover the sea, but in the Christian company today there's the light of something better and more precious. It's God made known in the light of eternal relationships. The fourth mark of the New Covenant, you remember, is I will be merciful to

their unrighteousnesses and their sins and iniquities will I remember no more. And in verse 9, the parallel in relation to [00:34:01] New Covenant ministry for Christianity is given, it's not merely God saying their sins and iniquities will I remember no more, but at the end of verse 9 it's a positive ministration of righteousness from the glory.

Just an aside, I get a magazine from the fellow believer that I referred to before at work and there are many very good articles in it, many very challenging articles in it. One of the things that you will never see in there is anything on matters like being accepted in the beloved. In fact, about a year ago there was an article Assurance.

Is it normal to have assurance of salvation?

And this man said quite plainly, it's not to be expected that every believer [00:35:01] will be assured that he is saved.

Now, that is not only wrong because it's a plain verse, this is what it says in 1 John 5 verse 10 or 11, it says, these things I write unto you that ye may know that ye have eternal life.

It's not only the normal thing for the believer to know that he is saved. More than that, it's the normal thing for the believer to know that the favour of God rests upon him. And that's the kind of thing which is in view in verse 9 when it says, it's a positive ministration of righteousness from the glory.

But that's not the only thing about new covenant ministry. One of the other hallmarks of it, and I quickly move down now to verse 17, is liberty.

Where the spirit of the Lord is, there's liberty. By the way, if you've got a pen, put a bracket which begins at the beginning of verse 7, [00:36:03] and put a bracket at the end of verse 16 where the parenthesis ceases, and then it will read like this, God who has made us able ministers of the new covenant, not of the letter but of the spirit, for the letter killeth but the spirit giveth life. Now the Lord is that spirit, and where the spirit of the Lord is, there is liberty. Now, as far as I can remember, the only time that people ever speak about that verse, where the spirit of the Lord is, there is liberty, is when we have open ministry meetings. Now, thank God for liberty in open ministry meetings. Would to God we knew more of it. But I don't think that verse really is talking about open ministry meetings at all. It's talking about the character of Christianity. We're not in bondage.

We're not under the law. We're in the place where the spirit of God has set us free. It's just like Paul says in Romans 8 verse 2, [00:37:03] the spirit of life in Christ Jesus has set me free from the law of sin and death.

The hallmark of the ministry of new covenant blessings in Christianity is liberty.

Where the spirit of the Lord is, there is liberty. Now, you might say to me, if the favor of God that rests upon us is so marvelous, ought there not to be an effect? It was expected that the children of Israel, of all the nations on the earth, because they were blessed by God, should be seen as a distinct nation. That's very plain on the page of scripture. I think Balaam utters the words, doesn't he? They shall not be reckoned among the nations. They're expected to be a people who showed forth the God who had called them out of Egypt into the land of promise that flowed with milk and with honey. [00:38:02] Now, it's not less so in Christianity.

And there are two effects which are spoken of. One is verse 18 of 2 Corinthians 3. I'm not going to say very much about it. That is the fact that new covenant ministry finds its center in Christ, in glory. And this is what it says. We all, with unveiled face, beholding, as in a glass, the glory of the Lord, are transformed into the same image from glory to glory, even as by the spirit of the Lord.

Now, I don't know about any of you children whether you do this at school now, but when I was a lad about your age, Mark, I went along to a school. It was a Church of England school in the country. And in May, the teacher took us out into the garden and she said, have a look under the cabbage leaves [00:39:03] and when you find a group of little eggs, tell me. So somebody found a group of little eggs, eggs of the cabbage white butterfly, and we took them inside and we put them in a glass aquarium, no water in it, and we watched something take place. We watched the eggs grow and we watched them become caterpillars. And we gave the caterpillars fresh cabbage leaves day after day and we watched until the caterpillars ate themselves until they were big and then they spun a cocoon round themselves and then we watched them transform into chrysalises.

And then the following year, and I'll never forget watching this, we watched the chrysalises one day split [00:40:01] and out of them we watched new cabbage white butterflies emerge.

We saw a miracle of nature.

Now you ask your teacher what the word is and she'll tell you it's called the metamorphosis of the butterfly, how it changes from an egg into a butterfly, through a cocoon and through a chrysalis.

That's exactly the word which the Holy Spirit of God here has used for the word change.

We all, with unveiled face, are transformed from glory to glory into the same image even as by the Spirit of the Lord.

I say this very seriously, that I've come to the conclusion over the years in the meetings that we haven't emphasised enough growing in the grace of Christ.

I said this to somebody recently, [00:41:01] if somebody comes along, a fellow Christian, turns up at your meeting one day, we're probably much more interested in knowing whether he knows the three sevens of scripture to put him right on the prophetic scheme.

We're not very much interested whether he bears the grace of Christ. That's what verse 18 is talking about. It must be a tragedy if somebody grows as far as his knowledge of the scripture is concerned, but he doesn't grow in the grace of Christ. Verse 18 is talking about that when it says, We all, beholding, with unveiled face, the glory of the Lord, are transformed into the same image from glory to glory as by the Spirit of the Lord, is talking about growing in the grace of Christ.

But it isn't only what goes on inwardly, it's what goes on outwardly. Listen to these words in chapter 4 verse 1. Paul says, [00:42:01] Therefore, seeing we have received this ministry, new covenant ministry, as we have received mercy, we faint not, but have renounced the hidden things of dishonesty, not walking in craftiness, not handling the word of God deceitfully, but by manifestation of the truth. It wasn't just what went on inwardly, it was the way in which he lived outwardly in this world. It's a tragedy.

It would be a travesty of the things which we receive in scripture if we talk about them in meeting rooms and we don't live them in the world day by day. People outside don't see what we do when we're together, but they see the kind of lives that we live.

I remember some years ago I was talking to my brother and he'd been to see the widow of a brother in a meeting, not in Carlisle, not on Tyneside, so you don't know who I'm talking about. [00:43:03] And my brother went in and someone else was visiting the widow and so I think her daughter said to my brother, perhaps you'd like to wait in the front room. So he went in the front room and the whole of one side of the wall was covered with books, the kind of books that we read and treasure. And he'd sat there about five minutes and somebody else came in and the same lady ushered another man into the room. And my brother said hello to him and he said, I'm so-and-so and I'm a colleague of Mr. So-and-so. And he said, oh yes, so they chatted and then he looked round and he saw these books and he walked over to them. And he looked at them and he said, did he read these kind of books?

What a tragedy that somebody who had the light of God and in the world where he lived day by day, the place where he worked, [00:44:01] they had no idea that those were the kind of books that he read. It would be a tragedy if with the light of such wonderful things it has no outward impact. It wasn't so with Paul. He said, we've renounced the hidden things of dishonesty, we don't handle the word of God deceitfully, we manifest the truth by the kind of lives which we live. I don't want to say any more other than to refer just to one thing. When Paul said we manifest the kind of truth which we receive, manifestation of the truth, he's talking about the objective of his life. The kind of thing that he says in Philippians chapter 1, for me to live is Christ.

I sometimes say to myself, I wonder what kind of things people think my life is about when they look at me. Don't think that you would have any difficulty when you looked at the Lord to know that he lived for another. As the living Father has sent me, I live on account of the Father. [00:45:02] You wouldn't have had any difficulty in discerning Paul's objective in life. He said, for me to live Christ and his life, bore the stamp of it.

And his commitment, you wouldn't have had any doubt about his commitment. He wasn't a half-hearted Christian. He was a 101% Christian.

Philippians chapter 3 he says, forgetting the things that are behind and pressing to the things that are before, I reach, I press towards the mark for the prize of the high calling of God, which is in Christ Jesus. His commitment was totally and his occupation was in things that are wholesome. We were talking about this, two or three of us, last night. We have a colleague at work and for years and years he always was thought to be a strange chap because he was very careful what he ate. He always ate good things.

[00:46:01] He didn't drink. He didn't drink tea.

He didn't drink coffee. He always drank water.

Well, people used to laugh at him but the fact of the matter was, he's the healthiest chap in the office. Of course, the wheel has turned its circle and now people say, you are what you eat. If you eat junk foods, you'll not have a very healthy constitution.

If you eat wholesome food, you'll have a wholesome constitution and it's exactly like that as

Christians. If you occupy your mind with what is wholesome and good, you'll have a sound spiritual constitution and Paul talks in Philippians 4 about sound spiritual constitutions.

He says, whatsoever things are true, whatsoever things are honest, whatsoever things are just, whatsoever things are pure, [00:47:01] whatsoever things are lovely, whatsoever things are of good report, if there be any virtue, if there be any praise, think on these things.

I was saying that some years ago, I listened to a brother, still with us, well into his nineties now and he once said, someone had said to him when he was a young man, before you say anything, ask yourself three questions. Is it true?

Is it kind?

Is it necessary?

Do exactly the same thing with Philippians chapter 4 before you pick something up to read, before you turn the television on to see something, ask yourself, is it true?

Is it honest?

Is it just?

Is it pure?

Is it lovely?

Is it a good report?

And if it isn't, don't have anything to do with it. What you fill your mind with, will determine the kind of believer you are [00:48:02] and the spiritual constitution you have. And that's the kind of thing that Paul means about when he says, renouncing the hidden things of shame, not handling the word of God deceitfully, but by manifestation of the truth. And the only true response to such marvellous new covenant ministry is manifestation of the truth on every hand because if our gospel is veiled, it is veiled in those that are lost. Where you live, where you work, the schools or colleges that you go to day by day, you rub shoulders with people, maybe whose only opportunity of ever being reached by the light and salvation of God is by the kind of lives that you live and by the kind of things that you say. That's the only true response that the Bible knows to new covenant ministry. [00:49:01] God grant that that might be the kind of response that marks each one of us, inwardly and outwardly, whilst we wait for the coming of the Lord. Amen.