

2 CORINTHIANS

Message One

**The Constitution of the New Covenant Ministry**

Scripture Reading: 2 Cor. 3:6; 4:1; 1:3-22

**I. The ministry is based upon God's covenants—the old covenant and the new covenant—3:6:**

- A. A ministry is to carry out what God has covenanted with His people; without God's covenant, it is impossible to have any ministry, and whatever we do cannot be considered a ministry.
- B. The ministry is the service that we render to God to carry out God's covenant.
- C. Based upon the new covenant of the New Testament, there is the ministry of the new covenant, which is uniquely one—Jer. 31:31-34; Matt. 26:28; Mark 14:24; Luke 22:20; 2 Cor. 3:6; 4:1; Acts 1:17.
- D. Whatever we may do to carry out our own preferences or desires is not a ministry of God but is merely a human work.

**II. In 1 Corinthians the gifts are covered as a major subject, but in 2 Corinthians the gifts are replaced by the ministry—4:1:**

- A. The ministry is to minister the Christ whom we have experienced (1:3-4); the church needs the ministry much more than the gifts.
- B. The ministry is constituted with, and produced and formed by, the experiences of the riches of Christ through sufferings, consuming pressures, and the killing work of the cross—vv. 3-8; 4:8-12.
- C. Second Corinthians gives us a pattern, an example, of how the killing of the cross works, how Christ is wrought into our being, and how we become the expression of Christ; these processes constitute the ministers of Christ and produce the ministry for God's new covenant.
- D. The ministry produced and formed by the experience of the sufferings, the afflictions, of Christ is the proof that the apostles are ministers of Christ—Acts 9:15-16; Col. 1:24; Phil. 3:10.
- E. The ministry comes out by the working of the cross; it is by the way of the cross that we have the riches of Christ to minister to others—2 Cor. 4:12.

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- F. The ministry is produced by the experiences of the anointing Spirit as the anointing, the sealing, and the pledge, with the experience of the cross—1:21-22.
- G. Ministry is a matter of being constituted with grace through experiences of suffering—v. 12; 12:9; 1 Cor. 15:10; 1 Tim. 1:14; 2 Tim. 1:9; 2:1.
- H. The constituting of a ministry depends upon the divine dispensing of the Divine Trinity—2 Cor. 13:14.

### **III. The ministry of the new covenant is produced by revelation plus suffering—12:1, 7; 1:3-5, 8-10:**

- A. In the Epistles of Paul we see three things—revelation, suffering, and ministry—Eph. 3:5; Rom. 16:25; Phil. 3:10; Col. 1:24; 2 Cor. 4:1.
- B. The revelation we receive is burned into our being through suffering.
- C. How much life and how much reality of the riches of Christ we can minister depends upon two elements—how much revelation we have received and how much we have suffered for what has been revealed to us.

### **IV. A ministry is the expression of what we are—vv. 1, 5; 2:17:**

- A. Paul himself was what he ministered because what he had seen was wrought into his being; thus, he ministered what he was.
- B. What Paul had was a ministry, and that ministry was what he was—4:2.

### **V. The ministers of the new covenant experience God as the God of resurrection—1:8-10:**

- A. Resurrection is the very God, who resurrects the dead—John 11:25:
  - 1. The working of the cross terminates our self so that we may experience God in resurrection.
  - 2. The experience of the cross always issues in the enjoyment of the God of resurrection.
- B. The ministers of the new covenant have the response, or answer, of death in themselves that they should not

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base their confidence on themselves but on God, who raises the dead—2 Cor. 1:9; 3:5; 4:14:

1. God is working through the cross to terminate us, to bring us to an end.
  2. Once we have been brought to an end, we will no longer trust in ourselves but will trust in the God of resurrection.
- C. Our God is the God of the first day of the week—1 Cor. 16:2:
1. The first day of the week is a sign that the Triune God has been processed in resurrection to become the life-giving Spirit—15:45b.
  2. In the church life, everything we do must be on the first day of the week; this means that everything must be done in resurrection.
- D. Our natural ability must be dealt with by the cross and brought into resurrection—Matt. 16:24; Phil. 3:10-11:
1. Natural ability acts on its own, not according to God's will, and seeks its own glory and satisfies its own desire.
  2. After our natural ability has been dealt with by the cross, it becomes useful in resurrection for our service to the Lord.
- E. To live in resurrection is to conduct ourselves in the "singleness and sincerity of God"—2 Cor. 1:12:
1. The apostles' situation forced them to be simple, that is, not to base their confidence on their natural human ability to work out a solution to their difficult situation.
  2. Being single and simple is an expression of the life in resurrection; only when we live in resurrection and by the God of resurrection are we simple.
- F. To live in resurrection is to conduct ourselves "not in fleshly wisdom but in the grace of God"—v. 12:
1. Just as fleshly wisdom equals ourselves, so the grace of God equals God Himself—God for our enjoyment—12:9; 1 Cor. 15:10.

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2. The resurrected Christ is given to the new covenant ministers as grace, enabling them to enjoy the experience of resurrection out of death.
- G. The ministers of the new covenant experience, in resurrection, a mysterious transfer out of “Tyre” and “Dan” into the tribe of “Naphtali”—2 Chron. 2:14; 1 Kings 7:14; Gen. 49:21; Hab. 3:19; Psa. 22 (title):
1. A hind signifies a person who trusts in God when he is in a desperate situation and who lives in resurrection for God’s building.
  2. Our life and our being should not only be transformed but also transferred so that we are absolutely of “Naphtali.”