

Message Two

**How the Ministers of the New Covenant
and Their Ministry Are Constituted,
How They Behave and Live,
and How Their Ministry Is Carried Out**

(1)

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

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

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

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- e. A captive of Christ is refreshed in his spirit to refresh others' spirits—1 Cor. 16:18; 2 Cor. 7:13.
 - f. The captives of Christ walk in the same spirit—12:18.
4. A captive of Christ is a person in the spirit, doing everything in the person of Christ, the face of Christ—2:10; cf. 4:6:
- a. A captive of Christ enjoys the changelessness of Christ—1:17-20.
 - b. A captive of Christ enjoys the meekness and gentleness of Christ—10:1.
 - c. A captive of Christ enjoys the truthfulness of Christ—11:10.
 - d. A captive of Christ enjoys the grace of Christ and the power of Christ—12:9-10.
 - e. A captive of Christ enjoys Christ speaking in him—13:3-5.
5. A captive of Christ is a lover of the church—2:12-13; 11:28-29; 12:14-15.

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

- A. As captives of Christ in Christ's triumphal procession, we are simultaneously incense-bearers; through us God manifests the savor of the knowledge of Christ in every place—v. 14.
- B. Actually, to scatter the incense of Christ is to live Christ—Phil. 1:19-21a.
- C. Because we have been captured, subdued, possessed, and gained by Christ, He has the liberty to saturate us to make us a fragrance of Christ—2 Cor. 2:15.
- D. The ministers of Christ, the lovers of Christ, are prepared to give forth Christ's fragrance in all circumstances and in any kind of environment—S. S. 4:10-16:
 - 1. All problems come from within, not from without.
 - 2. If there is a fragrance inside, outward circumstances will only serve to bring out the smell of the fragrance—Phil. 4:11-12.

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- E. The scattering of Christ as fragrant incense has an effect; it is a matter of life or death—2 Cor. 2:16.
- F. Those who scatter the fragrance of Christ are not like the many, adulterating the word of God for profit; but they speak out of sincerity, out of God, before God, and in Christ for the building up of the Body of Christ—v. 17; cf. 13:3.
- G. As incense-bearers scattering the fragrance of Christ, we are the ambassadors of Christ—5:20:
 - 1. We do not live by what we are or can do but by the immortal life, which is Christ Himself—v. 4.
 - 2. We are determined to gain the honor of being well pleasing to Christ—v. 9.
 - 3. We are constrained by the love of Christ—v. 14.
 - 4. We know others according to Christ in the spirit—v. 16.

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

- A. Christ is written into every part of our inner being with the Spirit of the living God to make us His living letters, that He may be expressed, read, and known by others in us—vv. 2-3; cf. Eph. 3:17a.
- B. The Spirit of the living God, who is the living God Himself, is not the instrument, like a pen, but the element, like ink used in writing, with which the apostles minister Christ as the content for the writing of living letters that convey Christ—Phil. 1:19; cf. Exo. 30:23-25.
- C. The heavenly, compound ink is the compound Spirit, the essence of this Spirit-ink is Christ with all His riches, and we are the pen; to have this ink in our experience we must enjoy and be thoroughly saturated with Christ as the life-giving Spirit; then we will spontaneously minister Christ to those whom we contact, making them living letters of Christ—Phil. 1:19; 2 Cor. 3:3, 6.
- D. On the one hand, the believers were the letter of Christ; on the other hand, they were the letter of the apostles inscribed in their hearts—vv. 2-3:

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1. While we are ministering Christ to others, Christ is simultaneously written in the ones to whom we are ministering and also in us.
2. The one writing produces two original copies of the one letter; one copy is in our heart, and the other copy is in the heart of the ones to whom we are ministering.
3. They become a letter of Christ, and this letter is also written in us, the writers; such a ministry involves two hearts becoming one.
4. We can never forget the ones to whom we have ministered Christ and the ones who have ministered Christ to us—7:3.