

Message Five

The Essence and Glory of the New Covenant Ministry

Scripture Reading: 2 Cor. 3:7-11, 18; 4:4, 6

I. The new covenant ministry has an essence in two aspects—the ministry of the Spirit and the ministry of righteousness—2 Cor. 3:8-9:

- A. The ministry of the new covenant is a ministry of the Spirit who gives life (vv. 8, 6), because the new covenant brings in God's righteousness unto life (Rom. 5:18, 21); hence, the new covenant ministry is also a ministry of righteousness.
- B. As the old covenant ministry was of death and condemnation, so the new covenant ministry is of the Spirit and of righteousness; death is versus life, which is embodied in the Spirit, and condemnation is versus righteousness.
- C. The Spirit and righteousness are the two aspects of an essence which is inscribed into us by the ministry of the new covenant; this Spirit and this righteousness are the essence of the new covenant ministry—2 Cor. 3:8-9.
- D. Paul's view of the Spirit in 2 Corinthians 3 is that of an essence used for inscribing letters of Christ—vv. 2-3:
 - 1. As indicated by *with* in verse 3, the spiritual ink, the Spirit of the living God, is an essence used in the writing.
 - 2. A divine essence has been written into our being, and this essence is the Spirit:
 - a. The unique essence which needs to be inscribed into the saints is the processed Triune God as the all-inclusive life-giving Spirit.
 - b. The new covenant ministry inscribes the Spirit into us, that is, this ministry adds more of the essence of God into us.
 - c. The essence of the Spirit inscribed into us is life—v. 6; 4:12.
- E. Based upon the principle that the Spirit in 2 Corinthians 3 is an essence, righteousness is also an essence—v. 9; 5:21.
- F. The ministry of the new covenant inscribes an essence into our being, an essence that has an inner aspect and an outer aspect; the inner aspect is the living Spirit

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moving in us, and the outer aspect is righteousness as our expression—3:3, 8-9.

- G. The goal of the new covenant ministry is to minister Christ as the life-giving Spirit inwardly and as the living righteousness outwardly.
- H. The Spirit and righteousness are both related to our expressing the image of God (v. 18); the reason for this is that the Spirit and righteousness are both God Himself:
 - 1. The central vision of the Bible is related to the image of God expressed by the life of God—Gen. 1:26; 2:9; Rev. 4:3; 21:10-11; 22:1-2, 14.
 - 2. God as the Spirit is moving in us as a substance and living in us as an essence, for He Himself has been added into our being by the new covenant ministry.
 - 3. The righteousness we express outwardly is also God Himself, for we have God as our righteousness, and this righteousness becomes our appearance, our expression.
 - 4. Righteousness is the outward expression of the Christ who lives in us as the life-giving Spirit:
 - a. This righteousness is God's image—Eph. 4:24; Col. 3:10.
 - b. The new covenant ministry is a ministry of the Lord's image—2 Cor. 3:9, 18.
- I. To say that the ministry of the new covenant is a ministry of the Spirit and of righteousness is equal to saying that the new covenant ministry is a ministry of God—vv. 8-9:
 - 1. The Spirit is God within us living, moving, and acting, and righteousness is God expressed to become our appearance outwardly.
 - 2. Since the Spirit inwardly and the righteousness outwardly are God Himself, the ministry of the new covenant, a ministry of the Spirit and of righteousness, is a ministry of God.

II. Whereas the old covenant ministry came about in glory and was through glory, the new covenant ministry is in glory and abounds in glory—vv. 7-11:

CRYSTALLIZATION-STUDY OUTLINES

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- A. In 3:7-11 we see the inferiority of the glory of the Mosaic ministry, the ministry of the old covenant, a ministry of condemnation and death, and the superiority of the apostolic ministry, a ministry of righteousness and the Spirit:
1. The glory of the new covenant ministry is the glory of God manifested in the face of Christ, which is God shining Himself in the hearts of the apostles—v. 8; 4:6.
 2. With the old covenant ministry, there was glorification; with the new covenant ministry, there is the glory itself, even the surpassing glory—3:10.
 3. The apostolic ministry of the new covenant not only has glory but also abounds with the glory of God—v. 9.
 4. The glory of the new covenant ministry does not come to visit us—it comes to remain in us and to shine out from within our being; this glory comes first to invade, pervade, permeate, soak, and saturate us and then to shine forth from within us—4:4, 6; 3:18.
- B. The glory of the new covenant ministry is the resurrected Christ—Christ as the life-giving Spirit—1 Cor. 15:45b; 2 Cor. 3:17-18:
1. The resurrected Christ is Himself the glory of the new covenant—John 7:39; 17:1, 5; Luke 24:26; Acts 3:13; Rom. 6:4.
 2. Glory, which is an essence, is intimately related to the Spirit—2 Cor. 3:18:
 - a. The glory in verse 18 is equal to the Lord Spirit; thus, the glory actually is the Spirit.
 - b. Christ in resurrection is the life-giving Spirit—1 Cor. 15:45b.
 - c. The glory of the new covenant, being the resurrected Christ, is the Spirit.
 - d. The glory, the Spirit, and resurrection all refer to the same thing.

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3. The Triune God as the all-inclusive life-giving Spirit—the glory of the new covenant ministry—is now shining in us all—2 Cor. 4:4, 6.