

**Outline of
the Messages for the Full-time Training
in the Spring Term of 2024**

**GENERAL SUBJECT:
THE CRUCIAL POINTS OF THE TRUTH IN PAUL'S EPISTLES—
SECOND CORINTHIANS**

Message Four

**The Function of the New Covenant Ministry—Writing Living Letters of Christ
with the Life-giving Spirit as the Essence and Christ as the Content**

Scripture Reading: 2 Cor. 3:1-6

- I. The goal of the Lord's recovery today is to recover the ministering of Christ by all the believers so that the church as the organic Body of Christ may be built up; we need to live a life of ministering Christ to others for the building up of the church—Eph. 4:11-16; 2 Cor. 3:18—4:1:**
- A. We need to fully accomplish our ministry (2 Tim. 4:5) as a good minister of Christ Jesus (1 Tim. 4:6).
 - B. Ministry is produced by revelation plus sufferings (Col. 1:24; 2 Cor. 12:7-9; Phil. 3:10); this means that while our outer man is decaying through the process of suffering (1 Thes. 3:3), our inner man is being renewed day by day (2 Cor. 4:16):
 - 1. We need to be revived every morning in order to be renewed day by day—Matt. 13:43; Prov. 4:18.
 - 2. We are being renewed by the cross (2 Cor. 4:10-11, 16), by the Holy Spirit (Titus 3:5), by our mingled spirit (Eph. 4:23), and by the holy word (5:26).
 - 3. We need to come to the Lord's table in newness (Matt. 26:29) by making a thorough confession of all our sins (1 John 1:7, 9; Acts 24:16) and by always forgiving people (Matt. 18:21-22, 35; Eph. 4:32; 5:2) and seeking to be forgiven (Matt. 5:23-24).
 - C. A ministry is the expression of what we are; the person is the message—"The overflow of life is work; / The work should be our living! / What we experience e'er should be / The message we are giving. / When living and the work are one, / The work will be effectual; / When message and the life are one, / The word will be successful!"—*Hymns*, #910, stanza 1.
 - D. In order to fully accomplish our ministry as a good minister of Christ, we must love the Lord to the uttermost to be filled with Him and overflow Him into others with the resurrected Christ as our authority (Psa. 18:1; 91:14; 97:10; 116:1-2; 119:140; John 21:15-17; 2 Cor. 5:14-15; 1 John 4:16, 19; Num. 17:1-10), and we must maintain our victory in Christ by having a revived living and a labor in shepherding (Rev. 3:18-22; Hosea 6:1-3; Rom. 6:4; 7:6; 1 Pet. 2:25; 5:1-4).
- II. A good minister of Christ writes letters of Christ—"You are our letter, inscribed in our hearts, known and read by all men, since you are being manifested that you are a letter of Christ ministered by us, inscribed not with ink but with the Spirit of the living God; not in tablets of stone but in tablets of hearts of flesh"—2 Cor. 3:2-3:**
- A. In these verses, grammatically speaking, Paul is saying, "You are our letter because you are a letter of Christ"; it is because the believers are a letter of Christ that they are also the letter inscribed in the hearts of the apostles.

- B. Second Corinthians 3:2 speaks of the apostles' hearts, whereas verse 3 speaks of the hearts of the believers at Corinth; the same letter is inscribed in two categories of people: in the hearts of the apostles and in the hearts of the believers:
 - 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—Jer. 32:39.
 - 4. We can never forget the ones to whom we have ministered Christ and the ones who have ministered Christ to us—2 Cor. 7:2-3; 6:11, 13.
- C. Through the ministry of the new covenant, 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—3:1-6.
- D. Christ making His home in our heart equals the writing of Christ throughout our inner being so that we may express Christ in whatever we say and do—Eph. 3:17.
- E. The Spirit of the living God, who is the living God Himself, is not the instrument, like a pen, but the essence, like ink used in writing, with which the apostles minister Christ as the content for the writing of living letters that convey Christ; the Spirit is the ink, and Christ is the content of the ink with His person, work, and attainments.
- F. The heavenly, compound ink is the compound Spirit; this Spirit-ink is the unique essence that needs to be inscribed into the saints, and we are the pen—Phil. 1:19; Exo. 30:23-25.
- G. 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. 3:6.
- H. We need to treasure up God's words in our heart (Psa. 119:11), for out of the abundance of the good treasure of our heart, our mouth speaks the good things of God's eternal economy (Matt. 12:34b-35); then we can say with the psalmist, "My heart overflows with a good matter; / I speak what I have composed concerning the King. / My tongue is the pen of a ready writer" (Psa. 45:1).
- I. In prophesying about the new covenant ministry, Jeremiah 31:33 says, "I will put My law in their inward parts and write it upon their hearts":
 - 1. God's writing of the law of life on our hearts corresponds to 2 Corinthians 3:3, which tells us that the believers' hearts are the tablets on which the living letters of Christ are written with the Spirit of the living God.
 - 2. Thus, Christ being written into every part of our hearts with the Spirit of the living God, the life-giving Spirit (v. 6), to make us Christ's living letters is the fulfilling of the new covenant ministry prophesied by Jeremiah.

III. In order to function as ministers of the new covenant, writing living letters of Christ, we need to be those who do everything "in the person of Christ"—2:10:

- A. The Greek word for *person* is literally *face*, as in 4:6; it refers to the part around the eyes, the look as the index of the inward thoughts and feelings, which shows forth and manifests the whole person.
- B. The apostle Paul, who was a pattern for the believers (1 Tim. 1:16), was one who lived and acted in the presence of Christ, according to the index of His whole person, expressed in His eyes.

- C. Second Corinthians shows that Paul was a person who lived Christ in the closest and most intimate contact with Him, acting according to the index of His eyes; he was a person who was one with Christ, full of Christ, and saturated with Christ.
 - D. Paul was a person who was broken and even terminated in his natural life, softened and flexible in his will, affectionate yet restricted in his emotion, considerate and sober in his mind, and pure and genuine in his spirit toward the believers for their benefit, that they might experience and enjoy Christ as he did for the fulfillment of God's eternal purpose in the building up of Christ's Body.
 - E. To live and do everything in the person of Christ is to live and do everything in our spirit:
 1. We need to care for the inner rest in our spirit more than the outward situation, environment, and circumstances—2:12-13.
 2. We need to exercise our spirit of faith to believe and to speak the things that we have experienced and enjoyed of the Lord; faith is in our spirit, which is mingled with the Holy Spirit; doubts are in our mind—4:13.
 3. We need to conduct ourselves as ministers of God in a holy spirit—6:4, 6; 7:1.
 4. We need to learn to be refreshed in our spirit, to refresh others' spirits, and to be joyful in others' refreshment—v. 13.
 5. We need to walk in the same spirit and in the same steps in a corporate way—12:18.
- IV. The ministry of inscribing the saints' hearts with the Spirit of the living God as the essence and with Christ as the content to make them the living letters of Christ is to be one with Christ in His heavenly ministry to care for the three major parts of their heart—their mind, emotion, and will:**
- A. In order to minister Christ, to write Christ, into the inner being of the saints, we need to cooperate with our Lord as "the Shepherd and Overseer" of our souls (1 Pet. 2:25) in His heavenly ministry by "establishing the souls of the disciples" (Acts 14:22).
 - B. To establish the souls of the disciples is to establish them (1) in their mind, that they may know and understand the Lord and the things concerning Him (1 Cor. 2:16; Phil. 3:10); (2) in their emotion, that they may love the Lord and have a heart for the Lord's interest (Mark 12:30; Rom. 16:4); and (3) in their will, that they may be strong to remain with the Lord and do the things that please the Lord (Acts 11:23; Col. 1:10; 1 Thes. 4:1).
- V. The ministry of inscribing the saints' hearts with the Spirit of the living God, the life-giving Spirit, culminates in Revelation 22:17a, which speaks of "the Spirit and the bride":**
- A. Christ's bride is the ultimate consummation of His regenerated, transformed, and glorified people being the living letter of Christ as the poem of God (Eph. 2:10) so that the entire universe may read and know Christ as the multifarious wisdom of God within them and through them as the church (3:10).
 - B. Christ as the Spirit, the essence of the processed Triune God, is fully inscribed into our being to eventually make us His bride, the ultimate expression and realization of Christ, so that we may be called to the marriage dinner of Christ—Rev. 19:7-9.
 - C. In the eternity that is without end, the Spirit and the bride will live a marriage life that is the mingling of God and man as one spirit, a life that is superexcellent and that overflows with blessings and joy.