

TO SERVE IN HUMANITY WITH DIVINITY

By Titus Chu

MESSAGE TWELVE: THE APOSTLE PAUL'S UPLIFTED HUMANITY WITH DIVINITY IN SECOND CORINTHIANS: TO LABOR WITH THE NEW COVENANT MINISTRY AS A NEW COVENANT MINISTER (3)

TO LABOR AS A CONSTITUTED NEW COVENANT MINISTER (1)

Introduction

The New Testament ministers are constituted. Not only do they possess the New Testament ministry in reality but this ministry itself, the ministry of Jesus Christ, becomes their very constitution. They are focused in that they know nothing save Jesus Christ and this One crucified. They have rich, constant experiences of the Lord as the Lord Spirit. They live a life of beholding and reflecting the glory of the Lord. They are being transformed. They are persons manifesting the truth and living a life which testifies the treasure in their earthen vessels. They are persons of visions and revelations, yet they groan in the earthly tabernacle. They labor, bearing glory and dishonor, through evil report and good report. They are unknown yet well known. They are dying yet living. They are sorrowful yet rejoicing. They are poor yet enriching many. They have nothing yet possess all things. They commend themselves as ministers of God while laboring together with Him. In the things they minister, both to the churches they care for and to all men, they are full of the experiences of Christ. These New Testament ministers thus become a group of most treasured persons in God's economy. Without the living God, the revelations God has given them, and all of God's governmental arrangements, they could never be produced. Without the New Testament ministers the very God

becomes frustrated and limited. Their oneness with Christ causes them to hold a most crucial place in the New Testament age.

Being Divinely Constituted

Paul was bold, because his hope was high for the Corinthians. He realized that his ministry was different from that of Moses. Paul had a ministry of righteousness while Moses had a ministry of condemnation. Paul's ministry was a ministry of the Spirit because the Lord is the Spirit and where the Spirit of the Lord is there is freedom. He therefore encouraged all the saints to come to the Lord as he did, with an unveiled face to behold and reflect the glory of the Lord and to be transformed into the same image from glory to glory even as from the Lord Spirit. This transformation is a constitution. It is from the Lord Spirit, yet with the Lord's person. "To be transformed into the same image is to be conformed to the resurrected and glorified Christ to be made the same as He is" - 2 Cor. 3:18 RcV footnote 8. This transformation, which leads to conformation, is the very constitution of life. It comes with the person of Christ, with all Christ is, and with all Christ has experienced. Only with the constitution of this living Person can the saints be genuinely constituted with truth, with experiences, and with operations. Paul hoped that the constitution he possessed would also become the constitution of the Corinthians.

Possessing this Ministry

Paul did not lose heart, because in God's mercy he possessed this ministry. He renounced three negative things which can easily defile many of the Lord's servants: the hidden things of shame, walking in craftiness, and adulterating the word of God. Paul was pure, so with him there were no hidden things of shame. He had no motive, so he did not walk in craftiness. He had no desire to win favor, so he would not adulterate the word of God. Rather, he commended himself to every conscience of men through the manifestation of the truth.

The New Testament ministry is a person, Jesus Christ - a life-giving, loving Savior. This is why Paul says, "Out of darkness light shall shine in the face of Jesus Christ." When the New Testament minister preaches the truth and when the truth is manifested, it must be the illuminating of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ shining in the hearts of the minister and the believers. What Paul manifested was the truth, what the Corinthians received was the illuminating of the knowledge of the glory of God. Yet this was not merely knowledge. Rather, this knowledge focused them on a person, Jesus Christ - the face of Jesus Christ. Here Paul did not say "in Jesus Christ," but "in the face of Jesus Christ." How impressive and how sweet! The New Testament minister's preaching is actually his manifestation. His person and his preaching are one. By this and only by this, the believers will be brought to the face of Jesus Christ - a living person. No truth, no matter how heavenly it is, should remain as truth itself. All the illuminating truths must lead the believers to the enjoyment, application, and experience of the living person of Christ.

A New Testament minister preaches Christ Jesus as Lord, and preaches only Christ Jesus while lowering himself to become the believer's slave for Jesus' sake. The preaching of the operative Christ Jesus must be accompanied by the minister being the slave of the believer in the uplifted humanity of Jesus. What he ministers is the *operating* Christ Jesus; what the believer receives is the intimate experience of the *savior* Jesus Christ.

Living a Crucified Life

The New Testament ministry was first constituted in the man Jesus Christ. In His resurrection His ministry became a life-dispensing operation producing New Testament ministers. All the New Testament ministers must partake of, enjoy, grow in, and eventually mature in such a life. This requires them to have the identical experiences that Christ had. No genuine spiritual experience can be apart from the experience that Christ has experienced. Only a biography which is identical with Christ's

biography has value. Every minister needs the human experience of this very Christ who was constituted with the divine attributes. Christ lived an uplifted humanity all His life, and eventually died the death of a cross. No New Testament minister can live according to his natural ability, talent, zealousness, and good character. These items may be precious but they must go through the experience of the cross. The New Testament minister must live a crucified life, regardless of whether his natural humanity is high and noble, or low.

Paul was a high and noble person. He was a Hebrew born of Hebrews, a Pharisee, and blameless according to the righteousness which is in the law. Such a person was perfect according to man, yet Paul considered himself as only a vessel, an earthen vessel. He realized that his value was the treasure in his earthen vessel, and not the vessel itself. With this treasure, he experienced that the excellency of the power was of God and not out of him. He was “pressed on every side, but not constricted; unable to find a way out but not utterly without a way out; persecuted but not abandoned; cast down but not destroyed.”

In carrying out his New Testament ministry Paul lived a serving life in which he was always bearing about in his body the putting to death of Jesus, that the life of Jesus also might be manifested in his body. He was always being delivered unto death for Jesus' sake, that the life of Jesus also might be manifested in his mortal flesh. This was the secret of his operation. He boldly declared, “So then death operates in us, but life in you.” Paul's testimony was that the One who raised the Lord Jesus would raise him also with Jesus and would make him stand before God with the Corinthians. What a fearful statement to the degraded church in Corinth, that they would stand before God! Yet Paul did not present this as if he were Moses. Rather, he presented it with the dispensing of life, and with the expectation of glory. He declared that “all things are for your sakes.”

While he was experiencing the crucified life in grace, grace abounded through the greater number, eventually leading to abundant thanksgiving to the glory of God. What the apostle

experienced was the cross, and what the saints received was grace. Out of the grace, which the many enjoyed, issued the abundance of thanksgiving to the glory of God. What a healthy ministering life! It was not a teaching, nor a working, but rather the experience of death generating the dispensing of life. Here we see that neither the ministering one nor the recipient was the object. Rather, God and God alone received the glory.

In such a marvelous experience Paul testified that he did not lose heart, for though his outer man was decaying, yet his inner man was being renewed day by day. All the outer afflictions, no matter how severe, became momentary and light as he realized these experiences would issue, more and more surpassingly, in an eternal weight of glory. He therefore testified that he did not regard the things which were seen but the things which were not seen, as the latter were eternal.

Longing to be Transfigured

Paul was prevailing. His operation was effective, and the result of his labor was heavenly. The same should be true of many New Testament ministers. However, while executing such a heavenly ministry there was a deep longing within him. He realized the decaying of his outer man and the limitation of his mortality. He groaned because of what he was. He testified that he desired not to be found naked. He realized that no matter how spiritual or prevailing he might be, something in him would still be short. His experience of life would still not be full.

Paul longed after a building from God, a dwelling not made with hands, eternal, in the heavens. In all his limitations he desired to be “clothed upon, that what is mortal may be swallowed up by life.” What a deep longing! What a gracious desire! He would not be satisfied with anything short of the full realization of life, that is, that in his spiritual body he would see Christ, his lover and his Lord, face to face. While Paul was laboring, what possessed him was not a great work. What occupied him in his day was to see Christ face to face. While Paul was anticipating

meeting the Lord, what concerned him was not a great reward but the appearing of *life*, the person of Christ.

Paul declared that he walked by faith and not by appearance. In appearance he was decaying; he groaned while he lived in the earthly tabernacle, and he realized he was naked. Even though he was spiritual, overcoming, and well pleasing to God, because of his earthly tabernacle, he still confronted weaknesses and limitations. Many times he would feel that he was naked, exposed, and in shame. However, he knew that God was a God of transfiguration, and this God gave him the Spirit as a pledge: a surety, a foretaste, and a guarantee. This caused the apostle to be of good courage in the midst of all the discouragement - the physical decay, the psychological groaning, and the condition of shame. He realized that while he was at home in the body, he was abroad from the Lord, even though he desired the opposite.

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