

(2 Corinthians) ch.3:5-4:2

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The new covenant ministry is a ministry of the Holy Spirit, not of the letter, but of the spirit, which gives life and increases in glory.

Duration: 44:09

Topics: "Ministry Comparison", "Spiritual Transformation"

Description

In this sermon, the preacher emphasizes the importance of not getting discouraged in the face of challenges and losses in life. He highlights the contrast between the ministry of the Old Testament, which brought condemnation, and the ministry of the New Testament, which brings righteousness. The preacher also emphasizes the need to renounce hidden and shameful things in our lives, including dishonesty and manipulation of God's word. He emphasizes the role of the Holy Spirit in opening our eyes to understand Scripture and transforming us into the likeness of Christ.

Transcript

Welcome today to 2nd Corinthians in chapter 3 and verse 5. We were considering these verses in our last study, where Paul uses this phrase, a servant or a minister of the new covenant. And such confidence we have through Christ toward God, he says in verse 4. In verse 5 he says, not that we are adequate in ourselves to consider anything as coming from ourselves, but our adequacy is from God, who also made us adequate as servants of a new covenant, not of the letter, but of the spirit, for the letter kills, but the spirit gives life. One distinctive feature of the new covenant ministry is that it is a ministry of the Holy Spirit.

And this is why the Holy Spirit was poured out in abundance on the day of Pentecost, so that all could receive and all could be strengthened to be ministers of the new covenant. We must not think that only one who has given up his secular job and is in full-time Christian work can be a servant of the new covenant, for then the number of the servants of the new covenant would be very small indeed. Paul himself, who writes this, had a secular job.

He was a tentmaker, and he supported himself thereby and served the Lord as an apostle. So being a servant of the new covenant has got nothing to do with giving up our secular occupation, but rather it has got to do with the type of experience that we consider in our study of chapter 1, verses 1-8 of going through affliction and being strengthened by God and thus becoming qualified to be a minister of the new covenant. Now here we see, Paul says that this adequacy can never come from ourselves, which indicates verse 5, that however intelligent we may be, we're still not adequate to be servants of the new

covenant.

However many years we may have studied the Bible in some Bible school or college, it still does not qualify us to be ministers of the new covenant, because all that sufficiency is from men, and that sufficiency which comes through human intellect and human energies is never adequate to be a servant of the new covenant. It is through the power of the Holy Spirit, and it's possible for us to understand the message written in the New Testament and yet to minister it as a servant of the old covenant. We can speak new covenant language with an old covenant spirit, and that is the tragedy that we find in a lot of Christendom today, where we do not place sufficient emphasis on the power of the Holy Spirit, on the fullness of the Holy Spirit, on the ability that the Spirit gives, on life as opposed to mere academic knowledge of the Scriptures.

If we do not place emphasis on that, we'll find that even though we know the New Testament thoroughly, we will still be serving as servants of the old covenant. With the old covenant spirit, ministering the letter which kills. What is needed is the ministry of the Spirit that brings life, that delivers people from sin.

The letter kills, but the Spirit gives life, he says in verse 6, and God has not made us ministers of the letter, but of the Spirit. And those of us who are in the ministry of preaching the Word need to ask ourselves whether we are in the ministry of the Spirit or of the letter. Are we ministering life or are we ministering death? The ministry of death, we read in verse 7, in letters engraved on stones came with glory, so that the sons of Israel could not look intently at the face of Moses because of the glory of his face fading as it was.

We considered this in our last study that the ministry that came through Moses, Moses was a mighty man of God, was a ministry in which the glory that shone on his face after he had gone into God's presence on the mount, we read about it in Exodus 34, faded after a little while. And that's always the case with the ministry of the Old Covenant. And when we live in the spirit of the Old Covenant, it results in that glory becoming less and less as time goes on.

But that's not the way it is in the New Covenant. In the New Covenant, the glory increases. Ten years after being born again, the glory in our life should be far greater and far superior to what we had when we were first converted.

How can we explain then so many people losing their first love and becoming backsliders after five or ten years? It's because they have never entered into the glory of the New Covenant at all. The ministry of the Spirit must be far more glorious than the ministry of death which came through the law. The law came through Moses, but grace and truth came through Jesus Christ.

And through the coming of Christ and the work that he has done and through the outpouring of the Holy Spirit, it's possible for us today to come to a far more glorious level of life according to verse 8 than anyone in the Old Covenant could ever experience. This is the meaning of what Jesus said, that John the Baptist, he said in Matthew 11, was the greatest person born of women up until then, apart, of course, from himself. But he who is least in the kingdom of heaven, the one who enters into the New Covenant, can rise to a greater height even than him.

That's what Jesus said. And when we compare our life with the standard of life of many people in the Old Covenant, we find that it's so much less. They seem to have a more spiritual frame of mind than many Christians today.

What is the reason for this? It's only one thing, basically, that such Christians have not entered into this New Covenant experience and received the fullness of the Holy Spirit. Verse 9, If the ministry of condemnation has glory, much more does the ministry of righteousness abound in glory. That's only sensible.

To understand that, we know that the law brought condemnation. No one could ever keep the Ten Commandments perfectly. And the more people tried to keep it, the more they came under condemnation.

And yet, it had a glory about it because it raised the standard of Israel's moral life way above the standard of all the heathen nations around her. What about the ministry of righteousness, then? Jesus has come with a ministry of righteousness. It should abound in glory.

And there's another thing we can learn from verse 9. That is, the gospel is not a ministry of condemnation. It is a ministry of righteousness. A ministry of the Word, which is a ministry of condemning people, is an Old Testament ministry.

A ministry of condemnation that brings people under condemnation. And if you hear a message that brings you under condemnation, that can be basically due to only one of two reasons. One, perhaps the preacher is ministering under the Old Covenant spirit and is bringing condemnation on you.

Or secondly, that though he may be a minister of the New Covenant, you've received it in a wrong way. You haven't understood it aright, and therefore you've come under condemnation wrongly. But the New Covenant was never meant to bring anyone under condemnation.

It's a ministry of righteousness. It's very important for us to see this distinction in verse 9 between the Old Testament and the New Testament. The New Testament is a ministry of righteousness.

It's not just a ministry of sins forgiven, which they had even in the Old Testament. Bless the Lord, O my soul, who forgives all your iniquities. Psalm 103.

But it is a ministry of righteousness, which means one that delivers us from unrighteousness and from sin. Verse 10. Indeed, what had glory, that is this Old Covenant ministry, in this case has no glory on account of the glory that surpasses it.

We can say it's something like the stars disappearing when the sun shines. They're still there, but you can't see it anymore because the brightness of the sun is so much more. And so should be the contrast between the Old Testament and the New Testament.

There was a glory in the Old Testament like the shining of the stars, but when the New Testament came, the New Covenant that God has established with man, the stars disappear, and this is the light that we should live in. Verse 11. For that which fades away was with glory, much more that which remains is in glory.

The Old Covenant was a temporary covenant. We read that clearly in Hebrews chapter 8. It was meant to pass away after some time, but the New Covenant is to remain permanently. It's God's permanently established relationship with man.

How much more glorious this New Covenant ministry should be. And this is why we need to examine ourselves to see if this is indeed our experience. A far more glorious relationship with God and a far higher

level of righteousness and spiritual glory in our life than anyone in the Old Covenant had.

And if that's not our experience, we need to realize that that is our birthright and we need to ask God to give it to us. We'll turn today to 2 Corinthians in chapter 3 and verse 12. In our last study we were considering how the New Covenant ministry, which Paul begins to describe in this chapter, is superior to the Old Covenant ministry.

How much superior? We can say as much superior as Jesus is to Moses. And we know that there is a fantastic difference between the Lord Jesus and Moses. We can compare it, as we said in our last study, to the sun and the stars.

The stars disappear when the sun is there. Just like when Peter wanted to make three tabernacles on the Mount of Transfiguration for Jesus, Moses and Elijah, putting them as it were all on the same level, we read a cloud came immediately and covered them. And when the cloud had passed, Moses and Elijah had disappeared and they saw only Jesus.

And that incident was like a parable to teach us that when Jesus appears on the scene, every great man of God disappears like the stars disappear and you can't even see them in the light of the sun. This is the New Covenant ministry, where we have our eyes fixed on Jesus and run the race, not even some great man of God like Moses or Elijah. As long as we are looking at men of God, we will find that we remain at an Old Covenant level.

It's God's will that we come to live before His face, because the veil has been rent and we can enter into the most holy place where God dwells and see Him face to face, which privilege only few had in the Old Testament. Moses had that privilege, but now every believer can have that privilege, even though the vast majority, unfortunately, do not live up to their birthright in Christ. And this is what Paul is trying to say here, that this ministry of righteousness has a glory which far exceeds the glory of the Old Covenant.

And who is adequate to lead people into such a life? Certainly not we ourselves, as he says in verse 5. No, but our adequacy comes from God. We are to lead believers into such a life of living before God's face. And therefore, since we have such a hope, what a wonderful thing it is, such a hope of having such righteousness in our life, of having such a glory in our life, of living before God's face, seeing Him face to face.

We use great boldness in our speech, he says. We don't have to hide anything. We don't have to throw a veil like Moses did, verse 13, over his face.

We're quite frank and open in our ministry. And he's contrasting the openness of the New Covenant ministry with that which was concealed. Moses' face was concealed.

And he's using the veil that was over Moses' face as a picture of a number of things in the remaining verses. He says Moses used to cover up something so that the sons of Israel might not look intently, verse 13, at the end of what was fading away. But we, we are very bold.

We can speak plainly, with great boldness, without any hesitation, because it is a fantastic calling that we have. And so we see here that in the New Covenant ministry, we do not have to hide anything. Why did Moses have to put a veil over his face? One reason is given here in verse 13, that he did it so that the people of Israel might not go on gazing at the features of that Old Covenant which was passing away.

That was the symbolic meaning of Moses putting a veil over his face, which doesn't come out so clearly in Exodus 34. When we read it there, it looks as though he's hiding his face so that the children of Israel may not be afraid, which is also true. But more than that, Paul sees a symbolic meaning there.

He says behind that veil was a glory on his face which was not increasing, but fading away. As time went on, that face no longer shone with that glory which it did shine with when he first came down from the mountain from God's presence. And so underneath the veil was a fading glory.

And he says in the New Covenant, we don't have to have any such veil. In other words, we don't have to conceal any area of our life because we are afraid people will see there a glory that's fading, not a glory that's increasing. What a message there is here for us who are Christians to examine ourselves to see whether there's some area of our life which we have to hide, which we have to put a veil over because we're afraid that other believers might see that there's something there in which there's no glory.

Maybe there's something in your family life over which you have to put a veil. Maybe there's something in your financial matters over which you have to put a veil. Maybe your thought life over which you have to put a veil because the glory there is not like what you preach and pretend to have externally.

What a sad thing that is. He says as servants of the New Covenant, we don't have to do any such thing. Those who have to do such a thing, those who have to conceal some area of their life from the view of others are not really servants of the New Covenant.

Servants of the New Covenant have to put a veil over nothing in their life, not over their thought life, not over their home life, not over anything. They are what they appear to be. In other words, there's no double life.

There's no fading glory underneath a veil in some area of their life which is different from the glory they are proclaiming with their lips. And yet how many servants of God and how many preachers of the Word can pass this test and live by this standard that there is no need for them to put a veil over any area of their life. And this must be our goal.

We all grow up with veils covering up various areas of our life because we are ashamed of them. And yet we claim such a high standard. But God's desire is to bring us to life, not just to a ministry of a letter as it says in verse 6, but a ministry of life, a ministry of righteousness in all areas, particularly those hidden areas which we have covered with a veil for so long where the glory has faded.

And so he says we are great boldness and great plainness of speech. We don't hide anything. We are quite frank and open in our ministry and not like Moses who put a veil over his face.

So that the children of Israel would not see that fading glory underneath the veil. He says their minds were blinded. Under the old covenant their minds were dulled.

They couldn't understand. They were spiritually insensitive. And there are many today like that even though we are living in A.D. and not B.C. Yet there are many whose minds are insensitive.

The dull of hearing as it says in Hebrews 5. Because, he is speaking of the Jews there, until this very day of the reading of the old covenant, the same veil remains unlifted because it is removed in Christ. And so we see that there were Jews in those days who read the word of God, but they couldn't understand what was written in it. They tried to, but they couldn't understand what was written there.

It was hidden from them. It was like they're reading a book over which there was a sheet of cloth. And of course they couldn't read what's underneath that sheet.

And that's how it is. There's a veil. And we can say here that Paul is using Moses' veil as symbolic of another fact.

And that is that there was a glory that the children of Israel could not see in the word of God. Because there was a veil between them in that glory, just like there was a veil between them in the glory on Moses' face. He says this was symbolic of the Jews' inability to understand the old covenant.

Because their minds were dulled. And he says even today, and we can say even 2,000 years later, there are many Jews today who read the old covenant and cannot see Jesus as the fulfillment of those prophecies. Because there's a veil there, hiding that glory.

How is it then that for some of us that veil has been lifted? It says there in the last part of verse 14, it's removed in Christ. It is in Christ. It's when a person comes to Christ that that veil is removed.

And you begin to see in Isaiah 53, in Psalm 22, Old Testament prophecies fulfilled in the Lord Jesus Christ. And the veil is removed. Verse 15, But to this day, and Paul wrote that in the first century, we can say that even in the twentieth century, whenever Moses is read, that is in the synagogues, even today, a veil lies over their heart.

But whenever a man turns to the Lord, the veil is taken away. When Moses went up to the mountain and stood before the Lord, he removed the veil. And it's just like that with us too.

But then we turn to the Lord, the veil is lifted up, and we see the glory. We see the splendor. We see the reality in God's Word.

And we can apply that also to the way we read the New Testament now. In the days when Paul was writing this, the New Testament was not written. But today for us, the New Testament has been written.

And we can ask ourselves whether a veil lies over the New Testament for us. For example, it says, Sin shall not have dominion over you. A New Covenant promise which is not found in the Old Covenant.

And we can live in Old Covenant blessings. And there can be a veil over our eyes when we come to the New Covenant. And this is where we need to turn to the Lord.

Not to men, not to good preachers, not to the opinions and traditions of the elders, but to the Lord and say, Lord, show me the truth. And the Lord, verse 17, is the Holy Spirit who has been sent to interpret God's Word and show us the glory of the New Covenant. We turn today to 2 Corinthians chapter 3 and verse 16.

We were considering Moses having a veil over his face, hiding a glory that was fading away on his face, symbolic of the Old Covenant ministry which had a glory that was fading compared to the New Covenant ministry where the glory increases. For it is from glory to glory, as he says later in chapter 3, verse 18. But also, we saw that the veil was symbolic of Israel's inability to see the glory of God in the Old Covenant.

To see that all those Old Testament scriptures pointed to Christ. Applying that to ourselves, we see how there can be a veil over the New Testament if we are not willing to let the Spirit of God lead us into the riches of truth there is in the Word. But it says here in verse 16, whenever a man turns to the Lord, the veil is taken away.

It is not God's will that that veil should ever remain between man and him. For we read in Exodus 34, verse 34, that when Moses went in before the Lord, and he had the privilege, he was one of those few people in the Old Testament who had the unique privilege of living before God face to face. God himself said that in Numbers 12, that Moses was one with whom he spoke face to face.

Whereas for the rest of the people, there is a veil symbolized in the veil that hung between the holy place and the most holy place in the tabernacle, where the high priest could go only once a year. And people could not go before God face to face. But now that Jesus has come, we know that the veil has been rent in the temple.

We can say the veil has been taken away. So that now we can go just like Moses before the Lord. When Moses went in before the Lord, as we see in Exodus 34, verse 34, he would take away that veil.

You can't speak to the Lord with a veil over your face. It's taken away and we see the glory of the Lord face to face. And the Lord is the Spirit.

When a man turns to the Lord, verse 16, the veil is taken away. And for us, it says the Lord is the Spirit. He is the Holy Spirit who leads us to that face to face relationship with Jesus Christ and God our Father.

And where the Spirit of the Lord is, there is liberty. There is freedom. Liberation.

What sort of freedom? Freedom, same freedom that Jesus spoke of in John 8, 32-36. Freedom from the power of sin. Freedom from slavery to sin.

That is the liberty that the Holy Spirit seeks to lead us to in the New Covenant. It's very important for us to see in this context what the greater glory of the New Covenant really is. It is a liberty and a freedom from the power of sin which no Old Testament saint could ever experience.

And this comes through the Holy Spirit. And this is the liberty and freedom that we are to experience in our life. And if we have not experienced this liberty and freedom in our life, then we have to say that there is a veil over our face even as we read the New Covenant Scriptures.

But if we turn to the Lord, the Spirit, that veil will be taken away and we shall enter into that liberty. We can compare the Scripture with what we read in Hebrews 10, verse 20 about a veil that was rent in the temple in the Old Testament when Jesus died. And we are told this symbolized a new and living way, Hebrews 10, 20, where Jesus inaugurated for us through the veil that is His flesh.

And so we see here that the veil symbolized the flesh of Jesus which was rent throughout His earthly life by His denying the flesh, denying Himself, overcoming the lusts in the flesh, being tempted and overcoming and thus renting the veil throughout His earthly life. Now it is for us, it says in Hebrews 10, 20, that that way has been inaugurated so that we too can walk this new and living way of the rent veil, of the renting of the flesh. This is what it means to follow in the footsteps of Jesus.

And this is where the Holy Spirit, the Lord, leads us. Thus we experience liberty, liberty from the lusts that dwell in our flesh that has made us slaves for so many years. Now we can be free.

And then we read here in verse 18, when the veil is rent, we can see the glory of the Lord just like in the Old Testament tabernacle and temple. Behind the veil dwelt the shekinah glory of God which one could see only if the veil was rent. And when the veil was rent, that glory shone into the holy place.

And when the veil of the flesh, we walk the way of rending it, the glory of God shines into our whole personality. That's what verse 18 of 2 Corinthians 3 really means. We all now with unveiled face, there are two veils in the Old Testament, the veil that Moses put over his face and the veil that hung over the most holy place in the temple, both symbolizing the same thing, the rending of the flesh, the veil taken away or the rent veil.

Now we can see the glory of the Lord in the most holy place as in a mirror, face to face, we see His glory. And not only see His glory, we can see the glory of Jesus Christ in the scriptures. But not only that, we can be transformed into the same image from one degree of glory to another just as from the Lord the Spirit.

And so we see here that God's word we can say is like a mirror. That's the mirror, the mirror mentioned in James chapter 1. When a man looks at the perfect law of liberty, we're told in James chapter 1 that it is like a man looking into a mirror. James 1 verse 23, 24 and 25.

The perfect law, the law of liberty says in verse 25. In verse 23 he says in James 1, it's like a mirror. That's the same law of liberty that's spoken of in verse 17 and 18 of 2 Corinthians 3. That liberty into which the Holy Spirit brings us, where the Spirit of the Lord is, there is liberty.

He says there's a mirror. For us that is the word of the new covenant, the perfect law of liberty. It's meant to bring us to freedom, not like the imperfect covenant, the old covenant which could not bring people to liberty.

The new covenant is a perfect law of liberty. And as we look into that mirror and look into the New Testament and the Spirit of the Lord removes this veil, we're walking the way of the rending of the flesh, putting the flesh to death, we find that the Holy Spirit gives us light on God's word. And so these verses teach us how we can understand the real meaning of scripture.

These verses teach us, verses 12-18 of 2 Corinthians 3, that there can be a veil over the scriptures. That even though we understand it intellectually, we may not understand the spiritual meaning of it. Matthew 11-25 says God has hidden these things from the wise and the intelligent and revealed them to babes.

The way to understand is by rending the veil, by allowing the Spirit of God to put to death the lust of the flesh in the moments of temptation. The one who is walking this way, even if he's not very intellectual, even if he's never gone to a Bible school or sat under the ministry of any great man of God or even read a lot of books, the Holy Spirit will open his eyes to understand the meaning of scripture and he will see the glory of the Lord Jesus Christ in the new covenant scriptures. And the Holy Spirit will continue from there into his second ministry of transforming such a person into that same likeness.

So we see that the ministry of the Holy Spirit is twofold here in verse 18. And we can say that perhaps there's no verse in the entire New Testament that describes the ministry of the Holy Spirit better than this one verse. What does he do? He first shows us the glory of the Lord Jesus Christ in the New Testament.

The New Testament was not given to us for doctrine, but to show us the glory of the Lord Jesus Christ. And secondly, he transforms us into that likeness. It's no use saying that we have seen the glory of the Lord if we are not being transformed into that likeness.

If you have really seen the glory of the Lord, the Holy Spirit will also transform you into that likeness. If you have not been transformed into that likeness, that's a pretty good indication that you've not really seen the glory of the Lord. You've probably just seen a lot of truths and some doctrines.

We need to pray that the Holy Spirit will show us the glory of the Lord. And for this, the Spirit must be Lord in our life. Before we are born again, the flesh is Lord in our life.

When we are born again, a conflict begins between the flesh and the Spirit, and sometimes the Spirit is Lord and sometimes the flesh is Lord. But we must so completely align ourselves with the Holy Spirit that the Spirit is Lord in our life at all times. Then he can show us the glory of Jesus.

For the Spirit to be Lord means that when the Spirit looks against the flesh and fights against it, we cooperate with the Holy Spirit completely in putting the flesh to death. Then we shall see the glory of the Lord, and the Spirit of God will be able to conform us to that likeness from one degree of glory to another. We turn today to 2 Corinthians chapter 4 and verse 1. Therefore, since we have this ministry, as we receive mercy, we do not lose heart.

This is a verse that tells us the type of ministry that Paul received from God. In an earlier study, we said how Paul called himself in chapter 3, verse 6, a servant of the new covenant, or a minister of the new covenant. And what is this ministry of the new covenant? It is a ministry of the Spirit we saw in 2 Corinthians 3, verse 6. It is a ministry of life, also in verses 6 and 7. It is a ministry of the Spirit, a ministry of righteousness, verse 9, and a ministry where the glory increases and does not fade away.

And in chapter 3, verse 18, he describes in a nutshell, in practical terms, what this ministry leads to. It is a ministry which leads people to experience the Holy Spirit personally in their life, opening up for them before their veiled eyes, the veil being lifted, and their seeing the glory of the Lord Jesus Christ in the mirror of God's Word, and then being transformed into the likeness of Christ, the twofold ministry of the Spirit, mentioned in chapter 3, verse 18. Seeing the glory of the Lord, and then being changed into the likeness of Christ, into the likeness of Christ in terms of character, as well as ministry.

In character, becoming like Jesus. In ministry, as a part of the body of Christ, fulfilling our respective calling and function in the body with the same anointing of the Spirit that Jesus himself received. This is our ministry.

This is what we need to experience ourselves, and this is what we are to lead other people into. And this is why, as we considered in our study of chapter 1, verses 1 to 8, God allows us to go through various afflictions and trials so that we can experience this comfort and strengthening of the Holy Spirit, experience walking the new and living way where the veil has been went, experiencing the life and righteousness and glory and power of the Holy Spirit that's just been referred to in these last verses of chapter 3, seeing the glory of the Lord in the midst of trial and affliction, and thus being conformed to his likeness. God's ultimate goal is that we might become like Jesus.

And all the trials of life are meant to conform us to that likeness. It will be a great tragedy, dear friends, if we have lived our whole life on this earth and all we have accumulated is a lot of Bible knowledge. That will be one of the greatest tragedies that Christians will discover at the judgment seat of Christ, that they spent their entire life on earth merely accumulating Bible knowledge and perhaps giving out a few tracts and going to a few meetings.

No, that's not the goal. The goal is that we might be transformed into the likeness of Christ. And if that's not taking place, it's no use just increasing in knowledge and giving out tracts and going to meetings.

The Spirit of God is in the ministry of transforming people into the likeness of Christ, both preacher and congregation. And this is the ministry, Paul says, we have received. Have you received this ministry? If you are one who is preaching the word, is this the ministry you are engaged in? Leading people into an increasing likeness to Christ, into an increasing liberty of the Holy Spirit, verse 17 of chapter 3, from the power of sin.

He says it is by God's mercy that we have received this ministry, not because we are qualified or adequate or special in some way. No, it's God's mercy, God's undeserved favour that's given me such a ministry, Paul says. And that's why he says we are not adequate for this, chapter 3, verse 6. But chapter 3, verse 5, our adequacy, our sufficiency is from God.

How in the world can we transform anyone into the likeness of Christ? We can refine him and make him a civilized person, but we can't transform him into the likeness of Christ. There are many civilized people cultured on the outside who are not like Christ inside in their hearts. And all we can do is produce an external transformation.

Who can produce an internal transformation? Only the Holy Spirit. It's impossible, humanly speaking, for us to ever engage in this task. That's why we need to be constantly dependent on the power of the Holy Spirit.

And when we sense the anointing cooling off in our life because of our own lethargy and lukewarmness, we need to repent and turn to God in prayer and seeking Him and covet the anointing and the mighty power and fullness of the Holy Spirit in our lives at all times. This is the only way for us to experience the power of the Holy Spirit. And this is the only way we can be ministers of the new covenant.

He says, since we have received this ministry, we do not lose heart, we do not get discouraged. That means Paul also was tempted to be discouraged. And a man who is wholeheartedly serving God will be tempted to get discouraged.

Now notice that. I'm not saying he will get discouraged, but he will be tempted to get discouraged. In the Old Testament, people actually got discouraged.

Even that mighty man Elijah we read in 1 Kings chapter 19 was discouraged. But Paul says, we do not get discouraged. He was tempted, but he overcame.

We do not lose heart. Later on in chapter 4, verse 16, the same chapter, further down, verse 16, he again says, we do not lose heart. Notice that twice.

We do not get discouraged. We do not get discouraged. Chapter 4, verse 8, the last part, we are perplexed, but we do not get discouraged in despair.

Three times in this chapter, he says, because we have received such a glorious ministry, we just don't get discouraged. So what if you have lost some earthly things like earthly honor, earthly reputation, earthly comfort, and earthly wealth? None of these things will make us lose courage. No, we don't get discouraged.

On the other hand, he says, continuing the same theme of a veil over the face, having to hide something, which we considered in chapter 3, verses 12 to 18, Moses had to cover something, a glory that was fading. He says, we don't do that. We have renounced the hidden things.

There's nothing in our life that we have to hide now. And he's applying that to dishonest ways of handling God's word, dishonest things in one's life. He says, we have renounced the things hidden because of shame.

All underhanded, disgraceful methods, the deeds that men hide for shame, the secret ways that people are ashamed of, the secrets prompted by shame, the secret dealings that there are in the lives of some believers, which they are ashamed, which they have to put a veil over. He says, we've given up all that. Our life's an open book, and we're not walking in craftiness, he says in verse 2, 2 Corinthians 4.2, handling the word of God deceitfully, adulterating the word of God.

He says, I'm not walking in paths of cunning, tampering with God's message, tricking people, dishonest manipulation of the word of God. There's a lot of dishonest manipulation of the word of God by preachers today to support their own doctrines and their own viewpoints. No, he says, I don't do any such thing.

We're not practicing cunning. There's a lot of adulteration of God's word. He speaks here about adulterating the word of God.

It was there in the first century. It's much more in the 20th century. People pick out verses that suit their doctrines, and they go off one cliff of extreme.

But God's will is that we take the whole of scripture. Remember, Satan himself came to Jesus with one scripture. He wants us to take the whole truth, not dishonestly manipulate God's word to suit our own preconceived ideas and our preconceived theology.

No, no clever tricks. When you come to the word of God, dear friend, be honest. Be absolutely honest, and let the word of God change your way of thinking.

Don't merely accept the traditions of the elders and the fathers. If the word of God teaches you something else, that's how people missed out the truth in the first century when Jesus came, and that's how people are missing out on the truth in the 20th century, because they're following the traditions of the fathers and the elders and not what they see clearly written in scripture. And so, let's go to the word of God and be open before it, not be dishonest.

He says, on the other hand, we manifest by the manifestation of the truth. We commend ourselves to every man's conscience in the sight of God. He says we openly set forth the truth.

We make the truth publicly known. We're not hiding anything. We don't have to keep quiet about something we believe.

No, we declare the truth openly. Be careful about those who don't declare the truth openly. And thus we recommend ourselves.

And to what do we recommend ourselves? To the conscience of every man in the sight of God. Not every man's conscience is sensitive enough to live in God's sight, but those who want to live before God, their conscience approves the fact that we live before God's face and proclaim the truth openly. And it's only by declaring the truth openly, he says, that we recommend ourselves to the common conscience of our fellow men in the sight of God.

In other words, he's not seeking for man's approval, but only for God's. And this is our calling, too, if we are going to minister the new covenant.

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