

(2 Corinthians) ch.4:3-4:11

by Zac Poonen

The sermon emphasizes the importance of recognizing our human weakness and limitations in order to experience God's power and be servants of the new covenant.

Duration: 44:29

Scripture: Genesis 1:3, John 12:24, 2 Corinthians 3:5, 2 Corinthians 4:5-7, 2 Corinthians 4:10-12

Topics: "New Covenant", "Spiritual Ministry"

Description

In this sermon, the speaker focuses on the ministry of the New Covenant and the importance of being adequate for this ministry. He emphasizes that it is God who makes us adequate, not our knowledge or gifts. The speaker highlights the need for preachers and Christians to go beyond imparting knowledge and instead bring people into a life of godliness, humility, and purity. He explains that the key to New Covenant ministry is dying to oneself, as Jesus said in John 12:24, and allowing the life of Jesus to flow through us. The speaker also discusses the veil that is over the gospel, which is veiled to those who are lost and blinded by the god of this world. He emphasizes that it is the life behind the knowledge and gifts that enables one to be a minister of the New Covenant.

Transcript

Let's turn today to 2 Corinthians chapter 4 and verse 3. Paul is speaking about this ministry of the new covenant to which God has called him, which is not a ministry of the letter, he says in chapter 3 verse 6, not a ministry of imparting knowledge to people and mere instruction, but a ministry of life, the spirit gives life, 2 Corinthians 3 verse 6. If it were knowledge, then of course we would not need the Holy Spirit. But when it is a question of imparting the life of people, we have to say what Paul says in chapter 3 verse 5, who is adequate for these things? Our adequacy is from God, he says. Chapter 2 verse 16, who is adequate for these things? Is it merely teaching people what is written in the scriptures? We don't need the Holy Spirit.

All you need to do is go to a Bible school, accumulate knowledge and dish it out. But if it's a question of leading people to a divine life, that can never come with mere study. That needs the mighty power of the Holy Spirit.

And he says in chapter 4 verse 1, this is the ministry which we have, to lead people into such a life. That's why we don't get discouraged. Knowledge need not change people's lives.

A person can know everything about physics and still live an immoral life. A person can understand chemistry thoroughly and still live an immoral life. And equally, a person can know the Bible thoroughly and live an immoral life.

And the devil is the number one example of that. He knows every verse in the scripture. He knows all the doctrines.

And he believes the true doctrines. And yet it hasn't changed his life one bit. It is into a life that God calls people in the new covenant.

But this gospel, this good news of the transformation into the likeness of Christ, which is possible under the new covenant, is veiled. Continuing the theme of the veil that is over Moses' face and the veil that is over the eyes of the Jews, he says our gospel also, verse 3, is veiled. Just like there is a veil over the old covenant, he said in chapter 3 verse 14, there is a veil over the new covenant too.

Our gospel is veiled. And it is veiled to those who are lost, to those who are perishing, to those who are on the way to destruction. And why is it veiled? Because the God of this world has blinded the minds of the unbelieving.

There is a veil over their mind. Satan has blinded their minds. How are their minds blinded? We can say by materialism, by worldliness, by prejudice, by pride, by seeking the honor of men and loving the traditions of men more than the truth of God, their minds are blinded.

And we have to be careful that none of these things blind our minds from understanding scripture. We may have understood a portion of the new covenant, which teaches us that Christ died for our sins, that our sins might be forgiven. But when it goes on to speak about our having died with Christ, as he goes on to say in chapter 5, verse 14 and 15, so that we might be free from the selfish way of life that we have lived, there we can have our minds veiled to understand that our old man was crucified with Christ too.

So it is possible for us to partially understand the gospel and for a part of it to be veiled. For us to understand Romans chapter 3 and not understand Romans 6, 7 or 8. Yes, it can be a partial veiling too. And that's what we see with many believers who have come into the reality of Romans chapter 3 and 4, justification by faith, but who have not come to the life of freedom from sin's power in Romans 6, 7 and 8. Our gospel is veiled.

And who has caused this gospel to be veiled? The God of this world, Satan. And so we see here that Paul recognizes that Satan is still the God of this world. He is.

Jesus called him the ruler of this world in John 14. But he said in John 14, 30, the ruler of this world's got nothing in me. And Paul could also say that, the ruler of the world's got nothing in me.

But he is the ruler of this world and he'll continue to be the ruler of this world until the day when Jesus comes again and establishes his kingdom of righteousness. The ruler of this world has blinded the minds of the unbelieving. They will not believe that Christ died for their sins.

And therefore, we find that their sins are not forgiven. It's possible for one whose sins are forgiven not to believe that he can have dominion over sin as it says in Romans 6, 14. And because he doesn't believe, he doesn't experience it.

The God of this world has blinded the minds of the unbelieving so that they might not see the light of the gospel of the glory of Christ who is the image of God. That's true with a lot of Jews that they have not seen the glory of Jesus as the fulfillment of the Old Testament scriptures. In the same way, we can say that many today have not seen the full glory of the gospel.

The light of the glorious gospel of Christ. The gospel of the glory of Christ, it's said in verse 4. Now that's something interesting that the gospel is called here the gospel of the glory of Christ. That reminds us of a phrase that Paul uses in his second letter to the Thessalonians which makes it a little clearer.

2 Thessalonians 2, 14 he says, It was for this that God called you through our gospel that you may gain the glory of our Lord Jesus Christ. It is the gospel of the glory of Christ. A glory that we are to partake of.

That we are to gain, it says in 2 Thessalonians 2, 14. That it says in 2 Corinthians 3, 18 that we are to be transformed into increasingly the gospel of the glory of Christ. And let me say there's much more to it than merely the forgiveness of sins.

The glory of Christ is not merely in the fact that we will not go to hell. But the glory spoken of in chapter 3 verse 18 of being transformed into the same image. Into the same image.

By the Lord the Spirit. By the Lord the Spirit. And so this gospel of Christ who is the image of God the exact reflection of what God is like this light people do not see because their minds have been blinded.

For he says, we are not preaching ourselves but Christ Jesus the Lord and ourselves your servants for Jesus' sake. Here is another aspect of the ministry of the new covenant. That under the new covenant people do not proclaim themselves.

We can say who are the ones who are proclaiming themselves. It's possible for a person to speak about Christ and yet to speak in such a way that people get attached to him, the preacher and not to Christ. They are drawn to the preacher and not to the Lord Jesus Christ himself.

Whatever such a preacher may say and however true his doctrines may be we have to say that such a preacher is preaching himself. Projecting himself. Think of the number of Christian magazines that there are today where a particular preacher may project himself and what you get out of his magazine is a projection of one person with multitudes of photographs of that one person and a lot of description of that one person's ministry.

It's a proclaiming not of Christ but a proclaiming of that preacher. Now Paul the apostle would never, never be engaged in doing such things. He says we don't preach ourselves.

We preach Christ Jesus as Lord. He says we want to hide. We don't want you to see us.

We want you to see Jesus Christ and if you see anything in us it must be us born servants for Jesus' sake. Your servants for Jesus' sake. That's the mark of a true servant of the new covenant that he proclaims Christ and he draws you to be attached to Christ and he himself will only be your servant.

One to serve you and do the lowly tasks for you. Not to be a master and a lord over you. We're not preaching ourselves as lords but Christ Jesus as Lord.

That's the point. A preacher who wants to be a lord over you is not a servant of the new covenant. He's a servant of the devil.

A true servant of the new covenant would be your servant and he would proclaim Christ Jesus as Lord. Because he says it is God who made the light to shine out of the darkness in the Old Testament. We read in Genesis 1 God said let there be light and there was light.

Mankind produced that light and he is the one who has shone out of the darkness and shone in our hearts. How then can we exalt ourselves and act like many gods as though we are the ones who are going to say let there be light into people's hearts? No, it's God. It's the same God who drove the darkness away and let the light shine in Genesis 1 who has now shone in our hearts to give us the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Christ.

It's he is the one who has opened our eyes to see the glory of Christ and he is the one who through the spirit opens your eyes to see the glory of Christ. How then can we take any credit for it? How then can any preacher take a credit for what God does? Oh, how wonderful it would be if everyone who preaches the word understood this. We need to fall on our faces and acknowledge God deserves all the glory because he is the one, he is the only one who can make the light shine into the darkness.

We turn now to 2 Corinthians chapter 4 and verse 7. We have been considering this ministry of the new covenant and more particularly as to how we can be servants of the new covenant. We've seen that Paul's letter to the Corinthians is an exposure of his inner life of the man that Paul was which enabled him to have the ministry he had. It was not the knowledge that Paul had that gave him the ministry that he had neither was it the gifts that Paul had that made him have the ministry that he had but rather it was the man that he was that gave him that ministry.

And it's very important for us in our day to see this clearly because most Christians do not have discernment on this fact. Many people are impressed by a man's Bible knowledge or perhaps by his spiritual gifts but Paul's ministry did not come from his Bible knowledge or his spiritual gifts but it came from his life. He had Bible knowledge, he had spiritual gifts both in excess of almost anyone today but behind it all there was a life and it is that life that made him a true servant of the new covenant.

And we need to place the same emphasis on life today. It is a life behind the knowledge of the word and a life behind those spiritual gifts that one possesses that enables one to be a minister of the new covenant. And he's been speaking in these verses in verses 5 and 6 of chapter 4 of the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Christ which has now shone into our hearts.

John said that we saw the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ full of grace and truth. That light, that's a light, that grace and truth is the life of Jesus and him was life, John 1, 4, and the life was the light of men. There is only one light of men and that is the life of Jesus.

John 1, 4 makes it very clear that knowledge is not the light, spiritual gifts are not the light but the light is the life of Jesus, John 1, 4. That light has now shone into our hearts but we continue to remain earthen vessels even though there is this great treasure of the life of Jesus within it. That's the thing that sometimes perplexes us. Verse 7, we have this treasure in earthen vessels.

What is the treasure? There is only one thing in the whole universe that's worth being called a treasure. It's not money, it's not property, it's not knowledge, it's not honour. It is the life of Jesus, the life of God called eternal life or the divine nature.

There is nothing else in this whole universe that's worth being called a treasure. If a man's really a rich man, it's the one who's got more of the life of Jesus. Everyone else is poor.

Earthly riches do not make a man rich. It's a counterfeit. Those are the false riches.

This treasure, and it's very important for us to see, Jesus spoke about laying up treasure in heaven. What are the treasures of heaven? Just like here on the earth, different countries have different currencies. In India, we have rupees.

In America, they have dollars. If you take rupees to America, it's no use. Nobody wants it there.

In the same way, earthly treasures have no value in heaven. The treasures in heaven Jesus spoke of is the divine nature, which is the treasure of heaven. And while on this earth we are to lay up treasure in heaven, God gives it to us.

In trials, we have the opportunity to accumulate treasure. He goes on to say that later on in chapter 4, verse 17 and 18, that our light affliction works for us an eternal weight of glory. But this treasure begins when Christ comes into our heart and the light begins to dawn.

There's a beginning. And we have this treasure, 2 Corinthians 4, verse 7, in an earthen vessel. Earthen vessel does not mean a sinful vessel, because how can sin and the glory of God have anything in common? The earthen vessel symbolizes infirmity, weakness.

It can mean physical infirmity. It can mean sickness. Sickness does not hinder the glory of God from shining through a man's personality.

We've all seen sometimes people on a sickbed who reflected and radiated the glory of God from that sickbed by their contentment and their joy and their peace and their freedom from grumbling and complaining. No. It is sin, and only sin, that hinders the glory of God from being manifest in a person.

But the earthenness of our vessel, the fact that we are weak and tired, we understand partially. We are so weak in many human ways apart from sin. Our intellect is limited.

Our wisdom is limited. And yet, in spite of all these infirmities which make us earthen vessels, there is a treasure within. And God wants to use us as earthen vessels having a treasure so that when something is accomplished through us, people can see that the greatness of the power is God's and not ours.

So that people will give the glory to God and not to us. This is a very important point. So many Christians desire to take credit to themselves, either for their ministry or for the saintliness of their lives.

They haven't understood 2 Corinthians 4.7 at all. They need to humble themselves and come back to 2 Corinthians 4.7 and say, Oh God, please take away the veil from my blind eyes so that I can see the truth of this verse, that I am an earthen vessel and even after growing in Christ to the greatest degree of sanctity that a man has ever attained to, I'll still be an earthen vessel with infirmity, but in which you have planted a treasure so that the exceeding greatness of the power may be of God, not from ourselves. And even if God used you to do a fantastic ministry of preaching or miracles or establishing churches or whatever, Paul had a fantastic ministry.

He says, but there again, it's an earthen vessel that's doing all this so that the glory goes to God and not to us. Paul has in mind here the picture from the Old Testament in Judges 7 of Gideon's army, who, 300 of

them, had to carry an earthen vessel each, an earthen pitcher. But inside that earthen pitcher they had to have a light.

And you can imagine a deep earthen pitcher like the type we store water in and putting a candle inside it or a lamp inside it. Even though there is a lamp inside, its lamp will not be seen outside, its light will not be seen outside because of this earthen vessel hindering. Maybe a little bit can be seen from the opening on the top, but most of the light is hidden by the earthen vessel.

He's spoken of a light in verse 6, and this light, he says, is a treasure, verse 7, inside the earthen vessel. This is referring to that Old Testament picture. A light inside the earthen vessel.

But what did Gideon's army do? When they went into battle, they broke and shattered those earthen pitchers. And what happens when you shatter the earthen pitcher? Then the light is seen clearly. And that's what he goes on to say in verses 8, 9, 10, 11, and 12.

That this earthen vessel, which contains this treasure, needs to be broken if that light is to be seen outside. And that's why God allows us to be afflicted in every way, verse 8. In other words, hit on every side. And some earthen vessels are quite hard.

Even a hundred hits don't break them. That's how it is with many human beings, many Christians. They remain unbroken, even though God's tried so many ways.

And what's the result? They are unbroken. They are hard. They are strong.

And therefore the glory of God is not seen in their life. Just a wee bit from the top of this unbroken vessel. Think if Gideon's army had not broken that earthen pitcher.

The light would not have shone. And God wants in His army those who are willing to break the earthen pitcher. Those who are willing to break the alabaster boxes.

So that the fragrance of the spikenard can flow out. Not those who want to show off their alabaster boxes. Not those who want to show off their earthen vessels.

By that I mean those who want to show off their natural talents and gifts and abilities and personalities. No, God has no use for such people in the body of Christ. They cannot be ministers of the new covenant.

But rather those who are willing to be afflicted. But even though we are afflicted, He says, we are not crushed. God will not allow us to be tested or afflicted beyond our ability we get crushed.

That's impossible. And also we are perplexed. Perplexity is not a sin.

Jesus was perplexed in the garden of Gethsemane almost in the last moments of His earthly life. He didn't know what the will of the Father was. Father, take away this cup.

But not my will, but thine, indicates that Jesus Himself was not clear of the Father's will. And that's a great encouragement for us to know that perplexity concerning the will of God can even come to a very mature Christian. If Jesus Himself faced it, how much more us.

Perplexity only shows that we are earthen vessels. Our minds are not perfect. But we don't despair.

No, we don't get discouraged. We are persecuted by others. God doesn't forsake us.

We are struck down, but we are not destroyed. Because we keep coming up like a rubber ball thrown down bounces up. Because God's power lifts us up.

What a wonderful comfort it is to know that even though we are earthen vessels, God's power is always there to lift us up and make us stand. Let's turn today to 2 Corinthians chapter 4, verse 7. But we have this treasure in earthen vessels, so that the surpassing greatness of the power may be of God and not from ourselves. This is the verse we were considering in our last study.

That God does not change the earthenness of our vessel, our infirmities, our weak intellects, our physical infirmities perhaps. And we see that in many Christians around us. Paul himself later on speaks in chapter 12 of having a thorn in the flesh which God never removed so that he would remain weak, so that he could experience God's power perfectly.

It's the same thought he is having here, that God's power can be experienced perfectly only by those who recognize their human weakness. Our strength of personality is no qualification for God's work. It's weakness which necessitates our having to lean upon God for His power that enables us to be servants of the new covenant.

In the old covenant it was different. There the spirit of God came upon a man, and he was a mighty strong man like Samson and some of those great prophets. But in the new covenant the ministry is of a different nature.

It's in human weakness, not through the power of human personality or the human soul or the human intellect, that God does His work. And therefore God has to break this earthen vessel even more through affliction, verse 8, although He'll ensure that we are not crushed, praise God for that, through perplexity to show us that our understanding is still imperfect. In so many areas we do not see clearly, and it's good for us to humble ourselves to acknowledge we are perplexed.

But we do not despair. There are many areas where we do not know God's will. In 1 Corinthians 7, Paul himself says concerning some matters in the realm of marriage, he says, I don't know what the will of the Lord is, but I give you my opinion.

Not despairing. We don't get discouraged because of that. Because our wills are yielded, that's the main thing.

Jesus was perplexed in the garden of Gethsemane, but His will was yielded. Persecuted, that's another way God allows our human earthen vessel to be broken. Through opposition, through difficulties, persecution from ungodly people.

It need not mean physical affliction, like there is in some countries where Christians are being persecuted physically too. It can be other forms of oppression that we find in our office or factory because we are Christians and take a stand for the Lord and we do not indulge in heathen practices that we are persecuted in some way or discriminated against. But we are not forsaken.

Men may forsake us, but God will never forsake us. All these are means by which He allows the earthen vessel to be broken. Struck down, but not destroyed.

Struck down to the ground, but never completely destroyed because God lifts us up. The same experience that Paul describes in 2 Corinthians 1 verses 4 to 8. We go through all this, he says, but we understand

the reason for it. And that's why we submit because through all these situations I carry about in the body the dying of the Lord Jesus.

This is the one verse in the New Testament which speaks more clearly than any other verse that tells us how the life of Jesus can be manifested in our body. We've seen that the life of Jesus is the light. The same phrase used in 2 Corinthians 4.10, the life of Jesus, is what we read in John 1.4. In Him was life, and that life was the light of men.

And when we are born again, we can see a spark of that light comes into our hearts, but it is God's will that that light should increase. Like the light inside the earthen pitchers of Gideon's army. There was a light and you could see a little bit of it through the open part of that vessel, but for the full light to shine, that vessel had to be broken.

Gideon's army had to break their earthen pitchers. And when that experience becomes ours in our life, then we lean upon God and we die to ourselves. What is this dying of Jesus? This verse tells us how we can have the life of Jesus in our body.

And the only way we can have it is by bearing in our body, or carrying about in our body, the dying of Jesus. It's not just by asking Jesus to come into our heart that we have the life of Jesus manifested in our body. We are born again and we become children of God.

But for the life of Jesus to be manifested in our body requires much more than receiving Christ into our heart as we can see by our own life and experience and the experience and life of Christians around us. There are Christians who are manifesting the life of Adam. Anger, bitterness, jealousy, strife, lust, covetousness.

That's not the life of Jesus. That's the life of Adam infected by satanic poison that's being manifested in the body of many Christians. Why is that? Their sins are forgiven.

They're born again, but they haven't born in their body the dying of Jesus. This verse tells us it's only as we bear the dying of Jesus always. Here's one of those things that we are to do always.

Not once in a while, not once a day, but always. And those who bear the dying of Jesus always in their body can be sure that the life of Jesus will be manifested in their body. So we need to understand what this dying of Jesus is that we are to bear in our body.

That's a wonderful phrase, the dying of Jesus. It's not the dying of Paul, it's not the dying of Peter, it's the dying of Jesus. Obviously it cannot refer to the physical death of Jesus on Calvary's cross because there he died in one moment.

He hung on the cross for six hours and then he died. And his physical sufferings were primarily only in the last 24 hours of his 33 and a half years on earth. As far as we know he didn't have much physical suffering before that.

So the dying of Jesus cannot be that because almost none of us will be crucified. Paul himself was not crucified, he was beheaded later on and he certainly wasn't crucified here. He's not talking about Christians being crucified physically.

The dying of Jesus refers to that inward dying that Jesus said himself must be what we do if we are to follow him. Luke 9.23 said if any man wants to follow me let him take up the cross. That means die daily, every day and follow me.

In other words he himself was dying every day. That's how we follow him, to follow means to walk in his footsteps and if we have to die daily in order to follow him it must mean that he died daily. What was it that he died to? He died to that self-will that he had, his own will, not my will.

And this is the dying of Jesus. John 6.38 Jesus said I came from heaven not to do my own will. We can say that our life is summed up in the word my will.

I do what I want to do, that's the root of all sin. And Jesus never did his own will, that's why he never sinned. In the Garden of Gethsemane also we see that, him saying not my will but dying.

That dying of Jesus to his own will, to his own self-life, to the lusts in the flesh. What are the lusts in the flesh basically? My will in this area, my will in that area, my will in the sexual area, my will in the financial area, my will in every area. He came from heaven not to do his own will.

He took upon himself a body like ours with a flesh like ours and he did not do his own will in it but always died to his own will. That is the dying of Jesus. That is what is symbolized in the breaking of bread.

When the bread is broken he said this is my body broken for you. In that body of Jesus there was a brokenness. What was broken? His own will.

This dying of Jesus we can carry. We may not be crucified, we may not be beheaded, we may not have a crown of thorns on our head or whipped on our back by Roman soldiers but we can carry in us that dying that Jesus carried in his body for 33 years. And if we carry that, it is as simple as that, that in the trials and temptations of life I say Lord Jesus I want to walk the way you walked saying not my will.

Then God's part is to make sure the life of Jesus is manifested in our body. My part is to bear the dying. God's part is to manifest the life.

If I do my part he will do his. And this is why it says in chapter 4 verse 11 of 2 Corinthians that we are constantly delivered over to death for Jesus' sake. All the situations that God sends into our life, difficult neighbors, difficult relatives, difficult people in the office, trials, physical afflictions, financial difficulties, all types of things are meant to break our self-will.

We are constantly being delivered over to death every day means that God is constantly engineering situations for our good, Romans 8, 28. All things work for our good. The good is that we might have the life of Jesus and therefore he allows all types of situations where our own self-will is to be broken.

Of course we can be hard and resist it so that God's purpose is frustrated but if we allow his purpose to be fulfilled in those situations we'll find that we are broken. And the life of Jesus is manifested in our mortal flesh, verse 11. One final word, it's not for us or for our glory but it says in verse 11 for Jesus' sake so that he might be glorified even in that.

Let's turn today to 2 Corinthians chapter 4. We have been considering in our last study from verses 7 onwards about God in his great wisdom allowing the treasure of his life to be deposited in us retaining our character as earthen vessels. Earthen vessels of course referring not to sin but to weakness and infirmity

in our temperament and personality and in our bodies. And God allows various circumstances as we consider to bring us down to an inner depth to our own will so that we can experience the life of Jesus in our body.

And so the earthen vessel needs to be shattered and this is why God constantly delivers us over to death. We read in verse 11, so that the life of Jesus may be manifested in our mortal flesh. And this is the answer to that which puzzles so many Christians as to why they find themselves in circumstances that are difficult and with so much pressure on their life even though they are seeking to follow the Lord.

Here is the answer. We are constantly being delivered over to death. Many people experience that for a few days and say at last we've graduated out of that class and now we've come to a life of comfort.

It's not true. Paul experienced it constantly and if you are one of God's chosen ones and not one whom God has put on a shelf you will experience it constantly. Verse 10 refers to our carrying in our body the dying of the Lord Jesus that is our response.

Verse 11 refers to what God engineers in the circumstances of our life because He works all things according to the counsel of His will for our good. He delivers us over to death but His delivering us over to death is not going to accomplish His purpose unless we cooperate with Him in carrying about in our body in those circumstances the dying of Jesus. In other words, we don't grumble and complain against the circumstances we find ourselves in but we submit to God's dealings.

We humble ourselves and accept the circumstances God puts us in the pressures, the affliction, verse 8, the perplexity, the persecution, verse 9 the being struck down, we accept it. We say thank you Lord, I humble myself here, I believe this is for my good this affliction is for my good, this perplexity is for my good this persecution and this being struck down is for my good, I know in all this I will not be crushed, verse 8 and 9 I will not despair, I will not be forsaken, I will not be destroyed because God will not allow me to be tempted or tested beyond my ability and He's watching. His only purpose is to break down the strength of my self-will and that's why He delivers me over to death.

And it says in verse 11 that this is for Jesus' sake, for His glory, not for mine so that His body can be built, so that I can be a living, functioning, effective member of the body of Christ. So that the life of Jesus can be manifested in this mortal flesh so that the life with which Jesus conquered death can be manifested within us also. That's why we gladly give ourselves over to death just like Jesus when the Roman soldiers came to capture Him, He said Whom do you seek, Jesus of Nazareth? Well, He says, Here I am.

That should be our attitude in all the circumstances of life where we have to face death to our own will, to our ego, to our reputation to our honor, to our own will, to our own pleasure and our own satisfaction. We say, Here I am, I'm willing to die. And when we take that position, to share in a fellowship in the sufferings of Christ in dying with Him to our own self-will we'll find that the life of Jesus becomes manifest in our body.

This and this alone is the way by which we can experience that life. And we can also say that this is the main reason why many Christians do not experience that life being manifested in their body that in the time of trial, when God delivers them over to death, they are unwilling to die. God is faithful.

He will deliver you over to death a hundred times a day if need be. But if you are not willing to die, all that God has planned is frustrated for that day. Just think of that.

That you can miss all the opportunities to partake of the life of Jesus in one day by a spirit of rebellion and unwillingness to humble yourself under God's mighty hand. Do you believe, Romans 8, 28, that God will make everything work together for your good? If so, you'll humble yourself under God's mighty hand in every circumstance and let your self-will be broken. Die to your self and its own will and its own pleasure and its own ego and reputation and honor.

And then the life of Jesus will be manifested in you. Not only in you, it says here in verse 12, that as this death works in us, Paul says and he's referring there to those who are writing this letter, that's Paul and Timothy as death works in us, who are God's co-workers, the life of Jesus not only manifests itself in us, verse 10 and 11, but it also manifests itself in you, Corinthians. And there in verses 10 to 12, we have the whole secret of New Testament ministry.

This new covenant ministry is not a ministry of knowledge. If it were a ministry of knowledge, only the intellectuals could have a part in it. But it's a ministry of life.

And it's a life that first begins within us and then flows out into others. There's a very beautiful picture of this in the Gospel of John. In John's Gospel, Jesus spoke about water three times.

In John 3, he spoke about being born of water in the Holy Spirit. That is to be born again. The Holy Spirit, like water, brings us to life, cleansing us inwardly.

We can say that's like having a cup of water. And then John chapter 4, he spoke to the Samaritan woman about having a well of water. And that is an abundance of the life of Jesus through the Holy Spirit that satisfies all our needs.

It's like having a well in your own compound. It doesn't matter if the municipality turns off the water supply. You have a private source of water in your own compound so that you don't need any external source of water.

And that is the life of Jesus, where your joy and your peace come from the Lord himself, and it does not depend on external circumstances. But that's not the final stage. The final stage is John 7, where it becomes rivers of living water.

A well may be for yourself, but rivers are for others. Where from you flows out a life that brings life and blessing and refreshing to others. Who is adequate for these things? As we saw in chapter 2 and verse 16.

It's God, chapter 3, verse 5, who makes us adequate. And that's what we see in chapter 4, verses 10 to 12 of 2 Corinthians. That as we bear the dying of Jesus in our body, that life wells up within us and flows out bringing life to others, not knowledge to others, but life to others.

And there we can see how shallow the ministry of a lot of preachers and a lot of Christians is. It only imparts knowledge. It's not bringing people into a life of godliness and humility and purity.

And why is that? Because the preacher himself is not dying. Jesus said in John 12, verse 24, unless a corn of wheat falls into the ground and dies, it will remain alone. But if it dies, it will bring forth much fruit.

The whole secret of new covenant ministry is in that verse. And that's also what Paul is speaking of in 2 Corinthians 4, 10 to 12. It's through dying to our self-life that we can experience the life of Jesus within us

and that we can minister the life of Jesus to others.

And so he says, having the same spirit of faith according to what is written, I believe, therefore I spoke. That is a quotation from the Old Testament in Psalm 116, verse 10. I believe, therefore I spoke.

He says we also believe, therefore we speak. We speak words of faith. Here is a beautiful phrase in verse 13.

The spirit of faith. And that's a very important thing to have at all times. The spirit of faith in the times of testing.

The spirit of faith, verse 8 and 9, speaks of affliction, perplexity, persecution and being struck down. The spirit of faith when we are afflicted. That we will not be crushed.

The spirit of faith when we are perplexed and persecuted and struck down. That God will not forsake us and we will not be destroyed. But that all these things are planned by God for our very best.

Do we have that spirit of faith in the time of trial? We know whether we have got faith or whether we have just got knowledge. It's in testing that we discover how much knowledge we have and how little faith. If we had faith, in Romans 8, 28, and that God is working these things for good, then we would speak boldly.

And we would also know, 2 Corinthians 4, 14, that he who raised the Lord Jesus will raise up, raise us also with Jesus and present us with you. Why could Jesus give himself so freely to the Roman soldiers and say, here I am, take me? Because he had faith that his father would raise him from the dead. If we don't have that faith, then of course we will not give ourselves to the Roman soldiers or to whatever circumstances come our way that want to put us to death.

We find situations daily in our life where somebody is trying to put us to death. Inwardly, we have to die to our reputation, honor, pleasure, will. We will give ourselves gladly if we have faith that God will raise us from the dead if we give ourselves to death in those circumstances.

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