



BELIEVERS CHAPEL

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The Sermons of S. Lewis Johnson

2 Corinthians 3:7-11

“The Surpassing Glory of the Ministry of the Spirit”

TRANSCRIPT

The subject for today that we are seeking to develop in the study of 2 Corinthians chapter 3 is “The Surpassing Glory of the Ministry of the Spirit.” But since the passage is a passage that depends upon acquaintance with Exodus chapter 34, verse 27 through verse 35, I’d like to read that at the beginning of our Scripture reading. And so will you turn to the Book of Exodus chapter 34, verse 27 through verse 35. And this section will be significance for the next couple of messages in 2 Corinthians chapter 3.

In your spare time this week, you might ponder it a bit and read 2 Corinthians 3 in the light of it. Moses writes in Exodus chapter 34, in verse 27,

“Then the LORD said to Moses, ‘Write down these words, for in accordance with these words I have made a covenant with you and with Israel.’ So he was there with the LORD forty days and forty nights; he did not eat bread or drink water. And he wrote on the tablets the words of the covenant, the Ten Commandments.

It came about when Moses was coming down from Mount Sinai (and the two tablets of the testimony were in Moses’ hand as he was coming down from the mountain), that Moses did not know that the skin of his face shone because of his speaking with Him.”

And, incidentally, that word “shone” is a word that is a rendering of a particular Hebrew word that comes from the -- a Hebrew word that means, “a horn,” and it means “to emit rays,” suggestive of a horn, of course. And that’s the reason for the similarity in meaning. The Latin Vulgate rendered this particular word as *cornuta*. For those of you who remember your Latin, it means, “horned.” And so, that’s the source of Michelangelo’s great painting of Moses, in which Moses appears with horns. And that’s the reason for it. So his face shone because of his speaking with him.

“So when Aaron and all the sons of Israel saw Moses, behold, the skin of his face shone, and they were afraid to come near him. Then Moses called to them, and Aaron and all the rulers in the congregation returned to him; and Moses spoke to them.

And afterward all the sons of Israel came near, and he commanded them to do everything that the LORD had spoken to him on Mount Sinai. When Moses had finished speaking with them, he put a veil over his face. But whenever Moses went in before the LORD to speak with Him, he would take off the veil until he came out; and whenever he came out and spoke to the sons of Israel what he had been commanded” --

And for those of you who have in the audience an Authorized Version, you will note that it appears that there’s a contradiction. In this instance, the Authorized Version is in error in its rendering of the Hebrew text. And what Moses writes is, that he took off the veil when in the presence of the Lord. When he came out and after he’d finished speaking, he put on the veil again, went into the presence of the Lord where he took it off and received the revelation from the Lord. And finally in verse 35,

“And the sons of Israel would see the face of Moses, that the skin of Moses’ face shone. So Moses would replace the veil over his face until he went in to speak with Him.”

Now, let’s turn over to 2 Corinthians chapter 3 and read verse 7 through verse 11, which is the next of the sections that we want to study in the exposition of 2 Corinthians. In the 7th verse, after having written, “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,” Paul continues, “But if the ministry of death, in letters engraved on stones, came with glory” -- Now, you can see from this, that what Paul has in mind is the fact that Moses went into the presence of the Lord. When he came out, his face shone, emitted rays of glory. That’s primarily in his mind, but, also, no doubt in his mind was the fact that the law itself was given with a magnificent display of the glory of God in the incident, as it is described in the Book of Exodus earlier. So associated with the commandment with the covenant of the law is glory. So he writes,

“But if the ministry of death, 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, how shall the ministry of the Spirit fail to be even more with glory?”

One other comment. You’ll notice the expression “fading as it was.” Now, strictly speaking, Exodus doesn’t say that. Nowhere does Exodus say that. This is the apostle’s addition. It’s his inference from what he read in Exodus chapter 34. Now, it’s no doubt a legitimate inference, but it is simply an inference. Exodus doesn’t say that. He reasons from the fact that Moses put on the veil that that indicated a fading glory of the old covenant and, therefore, he argues accordingly. “How shall the ministry of the Spirit fail to be even more with glory?” Now, verse 9.

“For if the ministry of condemnation has glory, much more does the ministry of righteousness abound in glory. For indeed what had glory, in this case has no glory

because of the glory that surpasses it. For if that which fades away was with glory, much more that which remains is in glory.”

So a rather difficult section just simply to read and grasp all of the points of it, but I hope that when we finish today, you’ll have a pellucid view of what Paul is trying to say here. May the Lord bless this reading of his word, and let’s bow together in a moment of prayer.

[Prayer] Father, we are grateful to Thee for the word of God, and we give Thee thanks for this portion that we have read, for it reminds us again of the surpassing glory of the new covenant ministry. We thank Thee that we who proclaim the word of God are in our particular ministry ministers of a new covenant and one that surpasses the glory of the old covenant, remarkable as it may seem.

We thank Thee for the Holy Spirit who takes of the things of Christ and shows them to us, who brings regeneration and faith and the knowledge of the Triune God through the mediator, the Lord Jesus Christ. We’re grateful for the merits of his finished work on Calvary’s cross and for the substantial basis, therefore, of our faith and trust. In the day in which we live, in which our society is so neglectful of the things of the word of God, we’re grateful that we have the solid foundation of the Lord Jesus Christ and his ministry.

And we’re thankful for the presence of the word of God, preserved and brought to us by the power of God who exercises providence to perform all of his purposes. How marvelous it is to trust in a God who cannot be frustrated. We are thankful, Lord, and we exalt Thee as the great and true and loving and gracious God.

We thank Thee for the whole church of Jesus Christ today, wherever gathered together in the name of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ to proclaim Thy word. May Thy blessing rest upon them for good. We pray for our country. We ask Thy blessing upon

the United States of America. And we give Thee thanks for the privilege of growing up in a land such as this. When we look out over the face of the globe and see the many place in which we might have been born, theoretically, we are grateful and thankful that Thou hast placed us within this land.

We pray for the president. We pray for others in government. We pray that the freedoms that we have may continue to be ours and that the Gospel may be freely proclaimed in this land. We pray for the ministry of Believer’s Chapel, for its members and for its friends and the visitors who are here today, Lord, we pray a special blessing upon them. And for those who are bereaving, we pray for them. We pray particularly for the Richardsons. We ask Thy blessing upon them and for others as well. And for those who have problems that are distressful and difficult and hard, we bring them also before Thee. Remember those in our calendar of concern. And, Lord, may the petitions that are reaching the ears of our God find a favorable response, if it should please Thee.

We thank Thee for the outreach of Believer’s Chapel. We pray for our elders and for our deacons, and we pray Thy blessing upon the radio ministry and the tape ministry and other forms of outreach, the publications and the Bible classes, especially remembering the daily Vacation Bible School soon to come up. We pray for that. And, Lord, may Thy presence be with us in the ministry of Thy word. For Jesus’ sake. Amen.

[Message] I am always very grateful for Mark McCracken, a marvelous voice, a marvelous song leader. But there are sometimes when I’m especially grateful to him. Now, we sang that hymn this morning at 8:30, and Dr. Howard and I stood by each other and occasionally we met in singing that hymn. I did better this time, but I told Mr. Pryor beforehand, “Do not follow me in this hymn.” [Laughter] And so, it was so nice to have Mark there, just a few feet away singing, and I listened to every note that he sang. And I did much better on that hymn. That’s not a bad hymn if you follow the tune a little better than I have done. [Laughter]

Many of you don’t know this but Mark McCracken, when he was in Dallas going to the seminary, was one of the most beloved soloists over this city. And I have often heard him sing and have very rarely heard him sing a solo in recent years. I presume he still has that beautiful voice, but he really had a beautiful voice and we are so appreciative of his leading the singing and trace it all to Dorothy his wife. So thank you, Mark. I’m glad that you were standing there by me singing.

The subject for today as we continue our exposition, is “The Surpassing Glory of the Ministry of the Spirit.” The section to which we turn in 2 Corinthians 3, raises the age-old question, “Can one be saved by keeping the Ten Commandments?” It seems strange to us who are in evangelicalism because it’s one of the first things that we learn, but the answer to that question, of course, is, “No.” But the answer’s been given down through the centuries by men who have expounded the word of God, and men have not listened. Our generation does not listen. The average person, with whom you may have conversation about these things, would probably think that if someone were to try to keep the Ten Commandments and do the best that he can, that the Lord would be forced to acknowledge the accomplishments of such a one and receive them into heaven. As far back as Augustine this question was raised by the law.

What, therefore, do those very vain and perverse persons who follow Pelagius mean by saying that, “The law is that grace of God which helps us to avoid sin.” Augustine said, “Do they not, by making such an allegation unhappily and beyond all doubt, contradict the great apostle? He indeed says that, through the law, sin received its strength and power against man. And that man through the commandment, although it be holy and just and good, dies. Death working in him through that which is good. From which death, there could be no deliverance unless the Spirit quickened him, whom the letter had killed.”

When I was going through theological seminary, as many of you know, Dr. H. A. Ironside was one of the most popular expositors of the day. And Dr. Ironside often came

to Dallas Seminary. In fact, every year, came for at least two weeks, at one time, a month to expound a particular book of the Bible. And so we were all very familiar with the things that Dr. Ironside said.

I was thinking of an illustration that Dr. Ironside has given somewhere. And so in preparation for this message, I was looking it up in my notes. Thirty-five years ago, I could probably have found it but now, since the notes of sermons and the lectures that I’ve given take up shelf after shelf after shelf, it would take me too long. And so I trusted my memory for a little bit, and it failed me. And I began to read, in a book that I thought I might find the illustration. I never did find it, but in the course of reading the book, I found two others that were rather interesting.

Dr. Ironside was a man who ministered the Word of God on the streets, in public, preaching on street corners. He had a wide ministry out on the West Coast for a lengthy period of time as a Bible teacher and Evangelist before he became the pastor of the Moody Memorial Church in Chicago.

But in his book that I was reading he said, “Some years ago after listening to me preach on the street corner, a man said to me, ‘I detest this idea that through the death and righteousness of another, I should be saved. I don’t want to be indebted to anybody for my salvation. I’m not coming to God as a mendicant, but I believe that if a man lives up to the Sermon on the Mount and keeps the Ten Commandments, God does not require any more of him.’ I asked my friend, ‘Have you lived up to the Sermon on the Mount and have you kept the Ten Commandments?’ ‘Oh,’ he said, ‘perhaps not perfectly, but I’m doing the best that I can. But,’ he replied, ‘The word of God says, whosoever shall keep the whole law and yet offend in one point, he’s guilty of all. And it’s written, cursed is everyone that continueth not in all things that are written in the book of the law to do them. And because you have not continued, you’re under the curse,’ so Ironside told his questioning friend.”

Now, I was thumbing through the book again to -- still to find my illustration, which I never did find -- I ran across another instance of Dr. Ironside's preaching. He said that a gentleman said to me in California one night as he was preaching, "I don't like this idea of being saved by another." He may have given the same message at another time. "All my life I've never wanted to feel indebted to other people for anything. I don't want anybody's charity and when it comes to spiritual things, I don't want to be saved through the merits of anyone else. According to what you said tonight, if I keep the law perfectly, I'll live and will owe nothing to anyone. Is that right?" Dr. Ironside said, "Well, yes, it is." He said, "Well, I'm going to start in on that." Dr. Ironside said, "How old are you?" He said, "Around forty." "Well, suppose that you come to the years of accountability, somewhere around twelve years of age, you're nearly thirty years too late to begin," Dr. Ironside said. "And Scripture says, cursed is everyone that continueth not in all things that are written in the book of the law to do them. Therefore, because the law cannot give life, you'll never be able to earn anything on that ground." And Dr. Ironside said, "He went away very disgruntled."

Well, that is still true. People still think that it's possible for a person to earn salvation. It's surprising. And we who are in evangelicalism find it very startling to run across someone like that, but they're still out there and believe just such things as that.

Now, there's no question that the law was good. Paul says, "The law was holy, just and good." And we're not trying to suggest that the law does not serve an ultimately good purpose. It does. It serves the ultimately good purpose of informing us of our sin and of our need of a substitute to pay our penalty for us. And, furthermore, the law was given for righteous men -- for unrighteous men, in order to bring them to that particular understanding.

Paul had to deal with the essence of the same thing in Corinth. He had opponents in Corinth. They were evidently, of a Judaising bent having come from Jerusalem, questioning his apostolic authority. And so the apostle contrasts the ministry of

the old covenant, which they exalted, with the ministry of the new covenant, which he exalted. And he points, in the brief section that we’re looking at this morning, to three contrasts that show the surpassing glory of the new covenant.

Now, I’d like to say right here, that in the limited time that we have, I want to make three points, and they’re simply these. The new covenant ministry is life-giving, not death-dealing or lethal. And second, the new covenant ministry is exceeding glorious, not simply glorious. And thirdly, the new covenant ministry is permanent and not temporary, as was the ministry of the old covenant.

Now, first of all, the new covenant ministry is life-giving, not death-dealing or lethal. Now, we read and we studied a bit, the 6th verse, in our last study, where Paul makes the statement, “Who also made us adequate as servants of a new covenant, not of the letter but of the Spirit, for the letter -- (and we pointed out this was a reference to the Mosaic Law) -- the letter kills. The Spirit gives life.” Then in the 7th verse we read, “But the ministry of death.” And in the 9th verse, “For if the ministry of condemnation.” It’s very plain from these instances in Paul’s treatment here that the law kills, that the law is a ministry of death, that the law is a ministry of condemnation, that the law is not a life-giving revelation of God. It’s a lethal thing for it reminds us of our moral condition before God and of our need of a Savior.

The difference may be put in this way. The new covenant -- well, let me start with the old covenant. The old covenant is good because it commands good things. The new covenant is good because it confers good things. The old covenant makes one a hero. The new covenant makes one a doer of righteousness.

As we said last week, the law is a mirror. It is not a bar of soap. We look in the mirror to see the condition of our countenance, or any part -- any other part of the body in which we may be looking. It’s the soap by which we are cleansed of our dirt. The law is a mirror. It’s not soap. The law is not a surgeon, who may excise, by his skills, a cancer. The law is a diagnostician.

John Calvin has a happy way of applying Scripture. It's sad that many people do not read Calvin, who are preachers. They ought to. Calvin is exceedingly good at making applications of the word of God. Listen to what he says. "The office of the law is to show us the disease in such a way that it shows us no hope of a cure, whereas the office of the gospel is to bring a remedy to those who are past hope. For the law, since it leaves man to himself, necessarily condemns him to death, whereas the gospel, by bringing him to Christ, opens the gate of life." So the law is that which shows us the disease, shows us there is no hope, and causes us to flee to God for deliverance.

Now, I think that has very striking application to us in our day. Reading in the newspapers this past week, some rather sad things. Four young people, teenagers, in the east in a suicide pact, killing themselves and making it very known that one of the reasons that they did because they sensed no meaning in life. They probably had other motives as well. But that's one of the common ones. And in the increase in teenage suicide in our society, let me tell you this. It's not surprising at all. It's to be expected. As long as our society persists in paying no attention to the divine revelation found in the word of God, we may expect that, and we may expect even worse things.

The law of Moses, the moral law, acts like the testing clinic of the Dallas County Health Department, where one goes to find out if he or she has contracted the lethal disease of AIDS, or Acquired Immune Deficiency Syndrome, except that, at the clinic, one may learn that one is not infected. Whereas, when one goes to the Law of Moses, there is always infection and lethal ends that must come. So you may go there. You may discover you're not infected. You're not even a carrier. But when you come before the law of God, we all are guilty. And we're not guilty simply of that which will bring physical death to us, but that which brings spiritual and physical death. And let me say -- I'm sure most of you believe this in Believer's Chapel -- that spiritual death is death indeed. Before the Law of Moses then, there is not only risk, but always certain infection

with sin and certain death, physical and spiritual, if no remedy from God is sought. We're all carriers, and we're all carriers of a lethal disease of three letters, S-I-N.

The whole AIDS epidemic is a lesson in the truth and in the word of God. In the '50s, the '60s and '70s, we were treated to people who were enjoying the sexual revolution. I can still see my mind -- in my mind's eye Time Magazine with the sexual revolution. Other periodicals with the same message. Words from sociologists and psychologists and philosophers and preachers and others, all combining to lambaste the Victorians and the Puritans, who were always bad. There's never been a good Puritan, according to the world, since the world began. So far as our publications are concerned, they're all bad. In fact, the adjective, "puritanical," always has a bad sense. But if you read the Puritans, you will find that they were not the individuals who would have been infected by the AIDS epidemic. You can be sure of that.

At any rate, today, we are seeing the results of the gauntlet thrown down before the Lord God. And Playboy and its friends and others, including, I say, a great section of the media have praised the freedom and they've thrown down the gauntlet before the Lord God, and the Lord God has picked up the gauntlet. He's picked it up. And so now we're discovering who is supreme. We're discovering that the Lord God stands over and above all of these individuals who set themselves up as experts in morals and ethics to give us guidance when we have the word of God coming from the Lord God by the inspiration of the Holy Spirit. And we're learning anew, the truth -- though we're not really learning -- but we're seeing the evidence again, of the truth. I'll be sure your sin will find you out.

And it's not surprising incidentally, that it's not limited to homosexuals. Those who were promiscuous in heterosexual endeavor took, it seems to me, a great deal of delight in saying, "The homosexuals have been inflicted with AIDS." But, listen, we're discovering that AIDS is something that flows from all kinds of illicit sexual activity. And so heterosexual activity, homosexual activity, all kinds of promiscuity among sexual -- in

the use of the sexual privileges that God has graciously given to man -- that has found its certain end in our society.

The story doesn’t end there, of course. Without the council of the Word of God in our education, there is no certain morality, there is no certain ethics and, in fact, no sense of the ultimate meaning of life. Paul was right. If there is no resurrection, we eat, drink, and be merry, and have fun. And know that when we die, that’s it. That’s the end of everything. That may be one of the reasons, I say, for the increase in teenage suicide. And as long as we persist in that kind of viewpoint, we shall expect that and perhaps worse things happening. Coincidentally, isn’t it surprising? Finally, some of the publishers of the nation’s textbooks, like Doubleday, responsible in the activity of the preparation of textbooks, has finally decided to change its ways to, quote, “include some reference to the role of religion,” unquote. Well, better late than never, but what a gigantic wrong has been done by our society and by our government schools who have been under the influence of that kind of thinking. If it were possible to string up a generation, then we should pick out those individuals who have been helpers along the way to the kind of thing that we see in our society today.

So the Law of Moses. It brings conviction of sin. We need to pay attention to the word of God. Fortunately, the same God who gave the Mosaic Law, in order to bring the society to whom it was given the sense of their sin and, through them, the sense of sin over the face of this globe, the same God gave us the life-giving ministry of the new covenant. And so through the new covenant, we are delivered from the judgment, death, condemnation, that are set forth for us as the result of disobedience of the old covenant. So the new covenant then is life-giving. It’s not lethal.

Secondly, the new covenant is exceeding glorious, not simply glorious. Paul says in verse 9 and verse 10, “For if the ministry of condemnation has glory, much more does the ministry of righteousness abound in glory. For indeed, what had glory in this case, has no glory on account of the glory that surpasses it.” You’ll notice the little word “for,”

by which the apostle introduces the 9th verse. He explains the surpassing glory of the new covenant ministry further. Its ministry of righteousness is the reason for its superiority. It’s a ministry, not of death. It’s not a ministry of condemnation. It’s a ministry of righteousness. And because it’s a ministry of righteousness, it’s of surpassing glory.

Notice he says, “The ministry of death has become the ministry of condemnation. The ministry of the Spirit,” referred to previously, “has become the ministry of righteousness.” And that’s striking. The Apostle Paul was a Hebrew of the Hebrews, a Pharisee of the Pharisees, a Jewish man who grew up under the Mosaic Law. And here he is, to some extent -- defined also by other things that Paul says in other places -- disparaging the Law of Moses. That’s remarkable. That a man brought up as the apostle was brought up to suggest any failure on the part of the Law of Moses. That’s very uncharacteristic of the thinking of Judaism, but the apostle has come to understand something more than human Judaism. It’s extraordinary that the apostle should disparage the Mosaic Law in this sense. It’s a ministry of death. It’s a ministry of condemnation. And even though it’s holy, just, and good, it cannot do what the new covenant does and that is provide righteousness. That’s the key word. Righteousness. It’s a ministry of righteousness. In fact, that really is the key to our understanding of what it means to be right with God.

Luther, as you know, had deep struggles over this. God, the Holy Spirit, was working in his heart. He was carrying out all of the requirements that the Augustinians were supposed to carry out in order to be right with God. But he felt that, even though he’d carried them all out, even though he acted as a monk beyond any other monk, he still had no peace of heart. This is what he says, “Though I lived as a monk without reproach, I felt that I was a sinner before God with an extremely disturbed conscience. I could not believe that he was placated by my satisfaction.” Now he means, the things that he did, in order to invoke God’s pleasure, which were things that he did, not things

given him by God in grace. “I did not love. In fact, I hated the righteous God who punishes sinners and secretly, if not blasphemously, certainly murmuring greatly, I was angry with God. At last, by the mercy of God, meditating day and night, I gave heed to the context of the words in it.” That is, in the Gospel. “The righteousness of God is revealed as it is written, he through who -- he who through faith is righteous, shall live. There, I began to understand that the righteousness of God is that by which the righteous lives by a gift of God, namely, by faith. And this is the meaning. The righteousness of God is revealed by the gospel, namely, the passive righteousness with which merciful God justifies us by faith. So the righteousness of God is not something that I do to please God, but the righteousness of God is something given me as I come to him in faith.” Luther also said in another place, he used to think of God as an angry God sitting on a rainbow holding --hurling thunderbolts at sinners on the earth. And now he said, “When I came to understand the righteousness of God, and the strength of God, and the power of God, as gifts that God gives on the principle of faith, through -- well, on the principle of grace through faith” -- then he said, “Here I felt I was altogether born again and had entered paradise through open gates.”

And out of that came the Protestant Reformation and many people, who had never been anything other than under the law of justification, came to understand the ministry of the righteousness of God as a free gift. For those who’ve come to God and received that righteousness in faith, what a magnificent change the Holy Spirit wrought in the heart of this Augustinian monk, the righteousness of God.

Mr. Cunningham used to say, “The righteousness of God is that righteousness of God which God’s righteousness requires him to require. And because we have a righteous God and because he has certain righteous requirements and because he gives that righteousness, which satisfies himself, we can stand before him with the sense of the right to enter heaven on the merits of another, the Lord Jesus Christ.”

Well, the statement in verse 10 is rather interesting, I think. “For indeed, what had glory in this case, has no glory on account of the glory that surpasses.” What Paul is saying is, “It’s true. The law had glory. It had a glorious entrance into human society, and one can see the glory on Moses’ face and realize that glory was connected with it in that sense, too. But when it comes to the new covenant, that which is glorious is as if it has no glory in the light of the great glory of the new covenant.”

I don’t know how to illustrate this to our society, but we have to use very mundane illustrations. I love sports. In fact, if I had my way, I could look at sporting events constantly. I pay no attention to the basketball season because if I did, I wouldn’t have time for anything. I don’t have much time in the fall because I’m interested in football. So I steal myself in the basketball season to pay no attention. I get a peek at the sport page. I thumb through all of those pages in a hurry. I don’t want to get interested in basketball. I admit. I took a peek to see how TCU came out and was disappointed that the Irish beat them. But, nevertheless, I have to do that in order to have six months of freedom from my slavery to sports.

When I drive down the street, and if I see some kids playing on the sandlot, I’m liable to slow down my car and pull over to the side, if nobody’s there and watch them play for five or ten minutes. When I look and occasionally, I see some budding stars, fellows who are able to take a football and run and they weave in and out, and I picture in my mind there is a Dorsett or a Walker in the making. And so you admire them. You go then to a high school game or a college game and you see some stars. Now, look, one out of fifty college players makes it to the NFL. Think about it. One out of fifty. Now, if you went to college games, you’d see an awful lot of what appeared to be good football, a lot of skill, a lot of moves, a lot of things that would really thrill a lover of sports. But in the light of what transpires in the NFL, it’s as if there are no moves. It’s as if they have no glory. That’s what Paul is saying. He’s saying, “In the light of the new

covenant glory, the old covenant ministry, which was glorious -- had its beginning in glory -- it’s as if it doesn’t have any glory at all.”

The ancients like to use the illustration of a lamp and the sun and how the lamp was very useful until the sun came up, but when the sun came up, the lamp is of no further use. Because the glory of the new covenant is such, that the old covenant is like the glory of the lamp. It’s of no great use thereafter. Of course, in those days, the lamp was still somewhat useful and the law has its purpose still today. But when it comes to justification, well, as Paul says, “In this case, it has no glory on account of the glory that surpasses it.”

Charles Hodge said, “What was a bright cloud overshadowing the cherubim in the light of God’s presence filling us all?” In other words, in the ancient life of Israel, with the glory of God visibly present over the tabernacle and over the temple, that was marvelous. That centered -- that signified God was with us. But how can one compare that with God, the Holy Spirit, dwelling the -- indwelling the heart of every single believer in Christ? There is no comparison. It would be nice to have the glory of God overshadowing Believer’s Chapel. Some people think, perhaps it does. It doesn’t. But if we had just a little cloud over there to remind us, here’s where the truth is really proclaimed, that would help some people. They think, “Look, we have the glory of God, every believer, God himself indwelling us in the heart.” We don’t need any kind of thing like that. So the new covenant ministry is exceeding glorious, not simply glorious, it’s exceeding glorious, as he says. “It abounds in glory,” to use Paul’s expression in verse 9.

Now finally, in verse 7 and verse 11 -- really verse 11 primarily here, the apostle states, “The new covenant ministry is permanent, not temporary.” He introduces it again with an explanatory preposition “for.” “For if that which fades away was with glory (through glory, literally) was with glory, transitory, much more that which remains is in glory.”

Now, I like Moses, went into the presence of the Lord to have his face recharged with glory every time he had messages for the world of Israel outside. He came out. His face was glorified but it was as Paul inferred “a fading glory.” So the glory of the new covenant was a fading glory, for the simple reason that, the new covenant age -- the old covenant age, I’m sorry -- the old covenant age was an intercalation in the program of God. It had its beginning on Sinai. It had its ending at Calvary. It served its purpose while it was God’s means -- primary means of speaking to Israel and those related to them. Now, it has been as the Scriptures say, done away. And so the permanent new covenant has surpassed the temporary old covenant.

Incidentally, the shining of the glory on Moses’ face has been written about by rabbinic students quite a bit. Last night, I pulled out Strack-Billerbeck, which is a German commentary on the usage of rabbinic literature in the New Testament. I looked up this passage. And reading in the German text of the exposition of this passage, in Volume 3 of Strack-Billerbeck, there’s a statement by one of the rabbinic authorities who makes -- who says this. He said, “If we were able to -- now, first of all of course, as I mentioned the other day, we don’t even know where the Prophet Moses was buried -- but if it were possible for us to have Moses’ grave and if we were to bore a hole in the grave, we would probably find the glory is still there.” In other words, the concept of the presence of glory with Moses throughout the remainder of his life, was common rabbinic teaching. And that if one could look in the grave, one would find it still evident there. Well, that, of course, is not biblical so far as we know, highly unlikely. We don’t know where Moses was buried to start with, and so it’s beyond us.

I want to mention an incident in my life which I’ve mentioned before and for those of you who’ve heard it, well, you’ll just have to hear it again. But when I went through Dallas Theological Seminary and in our senior year, we were required to take a course on the Greek exegesis of the Epistle to the Romans. Something that, later on, I taught for over --taking over forty classes through the Epistle to the Romans in the Greek

text. But my professor was Everett Harrison, who later, for many years, was Professor of New Testament at Fuller Seminary in California. Dr. Harrison gave us an assignment as we began the semester. He said, "Write a commentary on the first 8 chapters of the Epistle to the Romans or chapters 9, 10, and 11.

Now, that was a Herculean assignment, would never have been allowed in a school that was very careful about the assigning of lessons because it required that, for two hours' credit, a person had to spend about half of his semester studying Greek and the rest of the subjects went by the board. Fortunately, we had a Bible teacher who gave "A," no matter how you wrote your exam. You always got an "A."

In fact, Dr. Chafer, who was still teaching at that time -- I received a letter the other day from a Dallas graduate who asked this question, "Do you know of any Dallas Theological Seminary student who ever got less than an "A" for Dr. Chafer?" He was doing some research on that point. And I -- as far as I know, there never was one. You always gauged your -- how you had done by -- if it was "A-," it was terrible. If it was "A," it was passing, and if it was "A+," it was fairly good. And if you got 100+, like Merrill Unger did on one paper, that was exceedingly good. In fact, that's the reason Dr. Chafer gave it. He said, "Look, I gave "A+" to everybody else and here comes a paper better than the rest of everybody else so, I had to think up something, so he thought up 100+."

Well, at any rate, this student and I had many an argument over the law. He came from a school that had taught that we will still under the Mosaic Law as a way of life, as a code. In other words, under the law as a believer as law. And so we argued. I met him unfortunately, the first day I ever went to the seminary. We argued for three years. We actually lived across the hall and, in living across the hall for one year, we had an argument every night. And he was a wonderful guy except exceedingly dull. All of my arguments, which were clearly the better arguments, he was impervious to. He never accepted a one of them. And I didn't accept any of his either. And we knew exactly what were going to say and finally, at the end of that year and maybe the beginning of

the next, we decided that we’d each communicated all the information we’d ever commute -- communicate to the other, and that it would just have to be settled at the judgment seat of Jesus Christ. So I didn’t discuss it any more with him. I knew he was wrong. He knew I was wrong.

And, finally, halfway through that first semester of the final year, as we were walking out of the room, Greek exegesis, he walked over to me and he said, “Lewis, I’ve discovered we’re not under the law.” Well, I want to tell you, I was astounded, and I was especially interested in knowing how he had finally come to what I’d been trying to show him for all of that time. And he said, he said, “You know, I chose to write on the first eight chapters of the Epistle to the Romans.” And he said, “When I got to chapter 6 in verse 14 and it says there, “We’re not under law but we’re under grace,” I handled that very well because I had been taught at my school that when it says, “We’re not under law,” it means, we’re not under the ceremonial law. We’re under the principle of grace.” When he said, “When I came to chapter 7 and the apostle again says that, “We’re not under law,” in order to show the specific law that he’s speaking about, he cites one of the commandments, “Thou shalt not covet.” So it’s obvious that when Paul said, “We’re not under law,” he was speaking of the commandments. We’re not under them.” And so my friend came to understand -- and better than I, because I could not answer his questions - - that we’re not under law.

In fact, in Galatians chapter 5 when Arthur Wade, the great classical scholar, translates chapter 5 om verse 18 which reads, “But if you’re led by the Spirit, you’re not under the law.” He translates it by adding, “If you’re led by the Spirit, you’re not under the law, but on a higher plane.” The facts are life by the Spirit is a higher plane than life according to the law. But it also should be pointed out that he who walks by the Spirit will keep the moral law, with the exception of the Sabbath law. We don’t have time to go into that, sometime we’ll do that. I think possibly in this series. But at any rate, the

surpassing glory of the new covenant includes the fact that it is the permanent covenant of God.

Now, to sum it up then, what we've been saying is -- we've simply been saying this -- that the new covenant is life-giving. It's not death-dealing. The new covenant is exceeding glorious, not simply glorious. The new covenant is permanent. It's not temporary. The age of the new covenant has extinguished the glory, largely of the Mosaic Age. And Paul, the apostle of grace and minister of the new covenant, is concerned to expose the grave error of the false apostles who've laid an inordinate stress and a wrongful stress upon the Mosaic commandment. The greatness and the comfort of the new covenant is seen in its proclamation. Have you ever noticed the things that are used in connection with new covenant ministry? We read of an everlasting gospel. We read of an everlasting covenant, Hebrews 13:20. We read of an everlasting redemption. We need -- we read of an everlasting salvation. These are blessings that flow out of the new covenant.

Now, one of the things that I've noticed in reading the Epistle to the Hebrews is a very important thing. And Dave, I see you in the audience, so I know you wrote your dissertation on Hebrews and its theology and you probably know all of this, but maybe the others haven't noticed it. Two characteristic words of the Epistle of the Hebrews are the words "better" and then, the second word is the word "eternal." Better. Eternal. Think of this. The writer of the Epistle to the Hebrews speaks about a better hope, better promises, better sacrifice, a better resurrection, a better country, and he speaks of a better covenant.

Now, what that means, simply, is that the old covenant has been superseded by that which is better. But look. Suppose I were to reply to the writer of the Epistle to the Hebrews. It's true. The new covenant has a better hope, better promises, better sacrifice, and better covenant. But suppose something better than better comes. Then what?

Well, the other word is very interesting in that connection. Eternal. See, the characteristic word of the new dispensation of the new covenant is that he means more than better when he says eternal. Now, we have in the Epistle to the Hebrews, eternal redemption, eternal spirit, eternal inheritance, but of course, we have the expression "eternal covenant." Eternal salvation, eternal love, eternal redemption, eternal inheritance, eternal covenant. But look. If we then read that while there is a better covenant than the Mosaic covenant, but the better covenant is an eternal covenant, that means, there can be no other covenant that follows it. It's the final covenant. It's the last word. It's God's final word, which is what he says when he began the epistle. God has spoken to us in these last days. And so we have the eternal covenant, which is incomparable and unsurpassable because, simply, the work and person of our Lord is incomparable. And God is not saying anything else with reference to human salvation.

And if you're in the audience today and you've never believed in him, the message that God has for you, and which he will always have for you as long as you're living in the flesh is, believe in the Lord Jesus Christ and thou shalt be saved. The mediator of the new covenant has accomplished and ratified that covenant by which the forgiveness of sins is made available for those for whom Christ has died.

Now, you wonder, "Am I one of those for whom Christ has died?" Ah, you settled that matter very simply, Come to Him and receive him as your own personal savior. If you don't want to do that, then you have no excuse. You're getting exactly what you want. May God, in his marvelous grace, cause you to see your sin. Look into the law. It's made for unrighteous people. Look into the law. Look into it as the mirror of your life, your thoughts, your deeds, your activity, your whole life in all of its aspirations and ambitions and motivations, and ask yourself, "If I'm going to live by what I do, am I continuing in all things that are written in the book of the law to do them?" If not, you need mercy. You need grace. You need Christ. You need the blood that was shed. Come to Him. Trust in Him. Believe in Him. And receive, at this very moment, eternal

life. If you don’t have the assurance of the forgiveness of your sins, may God give you grace. Come to him right now. Let’s stand for the benediction.

[Prayer] Father, we are so grateful to Thee for the new covenant ratified in the blood of our Lord by which we have forgiveness of sins. We look forward to the day when the Lord Jesus shall come, and we shall join all of the saints entrusted in him. If there are some here who have never believed, at this very moment may they be lifting up a voice of prayer and petition to Thee.

For Jesus’ sake. Amen.