



## BELIEVERS CHAPEL

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The Sermons of S. Lewis Johnson

2 Corinthians 3:1–11

Paul and the Ministry: 2

“The Supremacy of the New Covenant Ministry”

TRANSCRIPT

[Prayer] Father, we thank Thee for the privilege of the study of Thy Word. We thank Thee for the great conception of the ministry of it, that the Apostle Paul obtained through the teaching of the Holy Spirit. And we thank Thee that in our own witnessing, our simple witnessing to the saving work of the Lord Jesus Christ, we too may carry out ministry as the Apostle Paul carried out ministry. And we thank Thee for the privilege of having a part in the proclamation of the truths concerning him. We thank Thee for the privilege of being a particular cog in the overall divine program of the ages.

And especially, Lord, we thank Thee for having part in the fulfillment of the mystery, the secret hidden from ages past, but now manifested and made known through prophetic writings such as the apostle’s writings. We thank Thee for the privilege of the study of the Scriptures. Give us understanding and breadth of knowledge, and enable us also to respond in our own personal testimony to the grace of God in Christ. Enable us to be good representatives of him who loved us, and has made it possible for us to have a part in the blessings of the New Covenant.

We pray in Jesus’ name. Amen.

[Message] We’re looking for a few Tuesday nights, at the subject of the ministry, and Paul’s comments and teaching concerning it, centering our attention upon us—one of the great sections of

the Pauline letters in 2 Corinthians, where Paul deals with the subject of ministry. Last—in our last study, we looked at chapter 2 in verse 14 through verse 17 primarily, and we want to continue our studies and take a look now at 2 Corinthians chapter 3; our subject being “The Supremacy of New Covenant Ministry.”

The letter that Paul wrote, called 2 Corinthians, has distinguished itself for several reasons. Its matchless discussion of the ministry is one of its most important aspects and characteristics. The term used in the New Testament for ministry, *diakonia* is a term which, with its cognates, occurs about twenty times in this letter, and so the apostle does have a great deal to say about ministry.

It is something of a digression in the argument of the book, in the sense that, his train of thought is interrupted for a moment, and he launches into this lengthy discussion in thanksgiving for the words that he received concerning Titus, when he had passed from Asia Minor on to Macedonia. But nevertheless, it is a magnificent exposition of ministry. He speaks of the glorious gospel of Jesus Christ in the fourth chapter, and that of course, is one of his descriptions of what the ministry meant to him. Dorothy Sayers once wrote somewhere that—concerning the fact that the Lord Jesus Christ had been made flesh, “If this is dull, then what in heaven’s name is worth it to be called exciting.” Well, Paul considered the ministry of the gospel of Jesus Christ to be exciting; exciting because the second person of the triune God at a point in time, took to himself human nature, and came down here in our midst.

Another thing that distinguishes 2 Corinthians is its revolutionary discussion of Christian giving. If we really paid attention to what Paul says in 2 Corinthians 8 and 9 concerning Christian giving, the work of the Lord would be carried on in quite a different way, I believe. And then there is the third great theme of this letter, and that is the admonition that the apostle gives—it’s very stern—against the Judaizing adversaries. In this respect, this part of 2 Corinthians is quite similar to Galatians. Some of his strong words concerning Judaizers and false teachers are found in the latter part of this particular epistle.

Unfortunately, 2 Corinthians is not studied as often as Romans and Galatians and some of the other letters, and for that reason, some of the important features of the epistle are not as—familiar to us. And that aspect of 2 Corinthians is one of them. The apostle makes some rather interesting statements in this epistle. He says, for example, speaking about the false teachers, “Such are false apostles, deceitful workers, transforming themselves into the apostles of Christ. And no marvel, for Satan himself is transformed into an angel of light, therefore, it is no great thing if his ministers also be transformed as ministers of righteousness whose end shall be according to their works.”

When I was converted in Birmingham, Alabama, many years ago now through Donald Grey Barnhouse, one of his familiar sayings was something like this, “If you want to find Satan, be sure to look in the pulpit.” And he referred to this particular text, and it has stuck with me through the years, because the apostle thought very strongly about those who taught doctrine that was not in the Word of God. He felt that if one veered from the gospel of Jesus Christ, then he was worthy for eternal perdition. “If we are an angel from heaven, should preach any other gospel unto you than that which I preached unto you, let him be accursed.” Which means essentially, “let him go to hell” in the full and truest sense.

So this epistle is a very important epistle, giving Judaizing corruption of the gospel of Christ, and the Christian ministry. We’re thankful for the apostle’s womanly prerogative of changing his mind, because that’s the local occasion for the writing of 2 Corinthians. He had told the Corinthians that he was going to come to them, and then travel to Macedon—Macedonia, which was in the north of Greece.

Tonight at Romano’s Cafeteria, we were sitting there, and a young lady came around with extra water and tea and various things. And her name was Anastasia, and I looked up and said, “Where did you get that name Anastasia?” She said, “My name is Ana-sta-sia.” And then she—I asked her what nationality she was, and she said she was Greek, and she was from Salonica, which is ancient Thessalonica. And the apostle was—had told the Corinthians that he was going to come

directly to them, and then he would go up to Macedonia to Thessalonica, but he had changed his mind.

And Paul had enemies. Wherever he preached, he had enemies. Anybody who preaches the gospel of Jesus Christ will have enemies, particularly if his message is the message of grace. Now, what is striking about it is that they were enemies that were well known to the Christians in those places. They were part of the professing group, but they did not like the Apostle Paul, and they did not like the message that he gave. So when it turned out that he was not going to come directly to them, but he was rather going up to Macedonia, and coming to them from Macedonia, they said, “Ah, that’s just like Paul. He’s fickle. He changes his mind.” And so they took that as an occasion for attacking the Apostle Paul.

Now, Paul became very concerned. He was very concerned about the condition of the Corinthians, and so—remember last week we were talking about chapter 2, verse 12 and verse 13, where he says, “Furthermore, when I came to Troas to preach Christ’s gospel, and a door was opened unto me of the Lord, I have no rest in my spirit because I found not Titus my brother. But taking leave of them, I went from there into Macedonia.” So he’s explaining in this letter, why he did not come directly to them as he had said he would do. And therefore, we owe this great section on the ministry to the fact that, when he got to Macedonia and he met Titus, Titus gave him a good report of conditions in Corinth, and he launches into this expression of praise and thanksgiving that God has given him the privilege of ministering as a minister of the New Covenant.

It is a matchless study of ministry. He’s shown us in the verses that just precede the beginning of chapter 3, the triumph and the tragedy of the ministry, because when we preach the gospel of Christ—this means incidentally, not just preachers like me, but preachers like you. For every one of us is a preacher of the gospel of Christ. When we give out the gospel of Christ, in the nature of the case, it provokes a two-fold response. There are some who respond. There are many who do not respond. As Paul puts it, “We are unto God a sweet savor of Christ, in them that are saved, and in them that perish. To the one we are the savor of death unto death, and to the other, the

savor of life unto life.” So the gospel is a cutting edge, and it divides up people. Those who are of God, respond. Those who are not of God, do not respond.

Now, we do not know the ultimate response. That of course, is left to God. It’s possible, and probably is true of most of us, that when the gospel first came to us, we didn’t respond. But later we did, by the grace of God. So we’re talking about the ultimate response, not necessarily the temporal immediate response. But ultimately, the gospel divides people into two categories; those who are being saved, and those who are perishing. Now that is, of course, is a very solemn thing. That we, as representatives of the Lord Jesus—you and I—when we give the gospel out, we actually are provoking a decision on the part of everyone who hears us; either positively or negatively, to the truth of God. Now, Paul has said that is the way the ministry of Jesus Christ works.

The last couple of days, I’ve been in Chicago at some—at a retreat for the faculty of Trinity Evangelical Divinity School, and the institution there has a new professor of homiletics—one of the men who teaches there. There are several who teach in the department. And he’s a Scottish man from near Glasgow, and he was in this country—I believe this summer—preaching. And he was preaching in a very liberal Presbyterian church. And he’s not a liberal; he’s from a conservative church of Scotland, in Scotland. That’s his background. Well, he stood up in this church, which is in the Chicago area, and it’s a church of upper middle class of wealthy people, it was mentioned to me, a fairly large church. And they invited him to speak, and they’re used to eight-, ten-, fifteen-minute messages. He spoke for forty minutes, but he took as his topic, “Judas.”

And he began by asking the question, “Why did the Lord choose Judas? Well, it wasn’t a mistake. He prayed all night before he chose Judas. Why did he choose Judas? And he did choose Judas. “Eleven men he chose, who were of the Lord, but one he chose who was not.” And he went on to suggest that it was likely, that it was intended, that by the choice of Judas, a distinction might be made and seen. And then he committed the ultimate faux pas. He said, “You know, in a congregation like this, there may be some Judases.” Well, I understand—I didn’t—I cannot tell you all of his sermon, because it was repeated secondhand, but it—it seemed to me rather appropriate,

because I remember Clarence McCartney, the pastor of the First Presbyterian Church in Pittsburgh, saying once that, “The—a sermon on Judas is the—is a sermon for the Church, because Judas is one of the professing ones; an apostle of Jesus Christ, and yet at the same time, a son of perdition.” But I understand, that as he grew near the end of his message that morning, that the congregation was anxious to buy him a ticket all the way back to Scotland.

Well, that’s the kind of ministry that the apostle talks about. “We are,” he says, “a savor of death unto death, and to the other, a savor of life unto life, and who is sufficient for these things?” Paul recognized this as a tremendously solemn thing. Now, he has spoken of the triumph and tragedy of that ministry, and in the third chapter he will talk about the supremacy of this New Covenant ministry. But first of all, he gives a—another answer for his critics.

We read in verses 1 through 3 these words,

“Do we begin again to commend ourselves? Or need we, as some others, epistles of commendation to you, or letters of commendation from you? Ye are our epistle, written in our hearts, known and read of all men. Forasmuch as ye are manifestly declared to be the epistle of Christ ministered by us, written not with ink, but with the Spirit of the living God; not in tables of stone, but in fleshy tables of the heart.”

One might ask, When did Paul commend himself? He says, “Do we begin again to commend ourselves?” Well, it’s not certain what Paul is speaking about here, but it’s likely that he’s referring to the fact that, in the first letter he wrote to the Corinthians, he said more than once, “Be followers of me.” And evidently, that had been taken in a bad sense, and they had said, “Paul is a man who is proud. He’s calling upon us to follow him.” He does, in 1 Corinthians chapter 4 in verse 16; again in chapter 11 in verse 1. He says,

“Be ye followers of me as I am of the Lord.” And perhaps, knowing from Titus and others, the criticisms of himself, he says at this point, “Because we are not as the many who do not corrupt the Word of God, are we beginning to commend ourselves? Furthermore,” he said, “do we need letters of commendation from you or to you?”

That’s an el—evidence, as I mentioned the other morning in the Romans 16 message of the fact that the early church practiced the use of letters of commendation when they traveled from one place to another. In other words, when one Christian moved from say, Thessalonica down to Athens, he took a letter of commendation from the brethren in Thessalonica, which was read to the—the brethren in Athens or Corinth, which established the fact that they were believers, so far as the Christians and Thessalonians knew, were in fellowship with the church there, and therefore, they would be received at the Lord’s Table, and in the other things that had to do with the life of the church. That was their custom. That’s what he means when he talks about letters of commendation. The Epistle to the Romans, we suggested, was Phoebe’s letter of commendation. A very lengthy letter of commendation, but nevertheless, it was a letter of commendation, because he said, “We commend Phoebe to you.”

So he says, “We do not need any letters from you do you, or to you, do you? Why, you are the product of our preaching.” That’s one case where you don’t need a letter of commendation, because you found Christ through my preaching. He says in the second verse, “You are our epistle written in our hearts, known and read of all men.” In other words, there is a bond between you and me. “I have begotten,” he told the Corinthians in the first letter, “I have begotten you through the gospel of Christ. I’ve brought you to birth through the preaching of the Word.” So you are our epistle, and furthermore, you’re known and read of all men. People know about what has happened here in Corinth through the preaching that I gave you. So I don’t need any letter of commendation from you or to you. He goes on to say, “Forasmuch as ye are manifestly declared to be the epistle of

Christ ministered by us, written not with ink, but with the Spirit of the living God; not in tables of stone, but in fleshy tables of the heart.”

Now, the apostle, speaking of the relationship that they bear to the ministry under the Old Covenant, draw some contrasts between the Mosaic Law, or the Old Covenant, and the New Covenant. That is, the Christianity that we know in this new age; the relationship that we bear under the preaching of the mystery. These two contrasts in verse 3, with the Mosaic Law, are a telling argument against the Judaizers that leads on to verse 4 through verse 11. The Law had no power to touch men’s hearts. It was an external kind of ministry, but the New Covenant ministry is a ministry that touches our hearts, and therefore—and furthermore, it touches our hearts permanently. So it is superior.

Now, in speaking of the advantages of the New Covenant ministry, I’ll just pick out three of them, because we’re—I don’t want to try to deal with everything that the apostle states here, but center our attention upon the ministry, here, the advantages of New Covenant ministry.

First of all, he says about the New Covenant ministry, that it is life-giving ministry, not death-dealing ministry. I want you to notice verse 6 and verse 7 and verse 9, what Paul says about the Law, but since we haven’t read verse 4 and 5, we’ll read that, and then note those things in the verses 6, 7 and 9.

“And such trust have we through Christ toward God. Not that we are sufficient of ourselves to think anything as of ourselves, but our sufficiency is of God. Who also hath made us able ministers of the new testament.”

Now, Paul considered himself to be an able minister of the New Covenant. If you’d ask Paul what was he ministering, “I’m ministering the New Covenant.”

What is the New Covenant? Well, the New Covenant was prophesied in the Old Testament in Jeremiah chapter 31 as a covenant God would make with Israel by which they would have the



forgiveness of sins. That was part of the covenantal un—part of the covenantal unfolding of the relationship between God and Israel. The Abrahamic Covenant, the Davidic Covenant, and ultimately, the New Covenant all being part of God’s covenantal relationship that he bore to the nation Israel.

Now, in those covenants—the Abrahamic Covenant and the Davidic Covenant—no reference was made to the forgiveness of sins, and so for Abraham and his seed to have their blessing, for David to have his blessing, it was necessary for some provision to be made for the forgiveness of sins. So in Jeremiah 31, God gave the promise of a New Covenant, by which would come the forgiveness of sins. Well, the Lord Jesus is the one who inaugurated—established the New Covenant in his blood. So when he died on Calvary’s cross, he was dying as the one who confirmed and established the New Covenant, and it was ratified in his blood. As a result of the shedding of the blood, the forgiveness of sins is proclaimed, made available by the blood of the cross. The apostle is a minister of that covenant.

One might ask, “Well, how do we Gentiles figure in?” Well, Paul tells us. He tells us in Romans 11. He says the natural branches were graft—were cut off, the unnatural branches—the Gentiles—were grafted in, so that they’d become fellow partakers of the promise, because in the Abrahamic promise, not only was blessing said to be for the nation Israel, but in Abraham’s seed, all of the families of the earth would be blessed. So we share in the promises that God gave to Abraham, and to the nation. We share, and our relationship at the present time is a relationship of equality because of the “mystery revelation,” as Paul puts it.

So here, he says concerning the Law now, which came in to show men that they were sinners, that they would be prepared for the forgiveness of sins—he says, that ministry is a death-dealing ministry. Notice verse 6:

“Who also hath made us able ministers of the new covenant; not of the letter—that’s the Law—but of the spirit: for the letter—that’s the Mosaic Law—the letter killeth, but the spirit giveth life.”

How does the Law kill? Well, the Law kills because it shows us we’re sinners. The Ten Commandments were designed to reveal our sin, and also to increase sin, in the sense that it stirred up our sinful nature, but the ultimate purpose was that we would see we were sinners, and see we were condemned, and therefore, flee to the cross and the New Covenant to receive the forgiveness of sins.

So he says in verse 6, “The Law kills.” That verse has often—often been taken in a symbolical way. “The letter kills.” That is, if you take things literally, it kills. But the spirit—if you take things symbolically—then you understand. That, of course, is a—is a false interpretation, because the apostle is talking about the Mosaic Law, and he’s talking about the letter. That is, what Moses actually saw written by God. No sir, that’s the letter, as you can see from verse 3. He says,

“Forasmuch as ye are manifestly declared to be the epistle of Christ ministered by us, not with ink, but with the Spirit of God; not in tables of stone.”

That’s the letter. That’s the Law. So the Law kills, but the Spirit—the Holy Spirit, who is now a gift by virtue of the New Covenant—gives life in regeneration and faith. So he says then, the Mosaic Covenant is inferior because it deals out death.

Verse 7—he says the same thing, “But if the ministration of death, written and engraved in stones—there, the Mosaic Law again—was glorious, so that the children of Israel could not steadfastly behold the face of Moses for the glory of his countenance; which glory was to be done away.” Now, notice he calls it a “ministration of death.” The Mosaic Law is a ministration of death. The Ten Commandments is a ministration of death, because it shows us we’re sinners, and therefore,

worthy to die. Verse 9, “For if the ministration of condemnation be glory, much more doth the ministration of righteousness exceed in glory.” There, he calls the Law a ministration of condemnation. So it kills us. It brings death to us. It brings condemnation to us.

Now, he can say that’s a glorious thing, because it’s a glorious thing to have your sins revealed in order that you may flee in grace for forgiveness through the cross. So he says it’s—the New Covenant ministry is life-giving, it’s not death-dealing. That’s the first thing he says. The Law was a mirror. It was not soap. It would not cleanse us. It was a mirror, in which we looked, and we saw that we were guilty. The Law is a diagnostician; not like a surgeon who cuts out the offending tissue, but the Law is a diagnostician that says, “This is the mat—this is what’s the matter with you.” So the New Covenant ministry is life-giving, not death-dealing.

The second thing he says about the New Covenant ministry, is that it is exceedingly glorious, not just glorious. Verse 9 and verse 10,

“For if the ministration of condemnation be glory, much more doth the ministration of righteousness exceed in glory.” [Verse 10,] “For even that which was made glorious had no glory in this respect, by reason of the glory that excelleth.”

So he acknowledges that the Mosaic Law was a glorious thing, a glorious revelation. That is evident from the historical circumstances, if you’ll reflect upon how God gave the Law. But in the case of the New Covenant, we have something that is more glorious. In fact, Paul says in that second verse—the tenth verse—that the glory of the New Covenant ministry so exceeds the glory of the first covenant that the other appears not to be even glorious at all.

Now, we have a saying like this, “The moon does not shine in the daytime.” Well, we know the moon does shine in the daytime. In fact, occasionally, you can see the moon shining in the daytime. But when we say, “The moon doesn’t shine in the daytime,” we’re not speaking scientifically. We’re really speaking comparatively. We say, “The moon doesn’t shine when one

compares it with the sun. The glory of the sun is so great, that whatever light the moon might give, we do not see, because of the greater light of the sun.” It’s Paul speaking phenomenally; that is, how we see things.

So he says concerning the first covenant ministry—the Mosaic Law—and the second, or the New Covenant—he says,

“It’s true. That was a glorious thing, the giving of the Law. We shouldn’t degrade the Law. It was a reflection of the character of God. But the New Covenant ministry is a superior manifestation of that; so superior, that the other, well, we hardly see it at all. And I’ll give you just exactly what I think Paul would say if you were to ask him, “How is it so much more glorious?”

Well now, the Mosaic Law revealed the righteousness of God; thou shalt not, thou shalt not, thou shalt not, thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart. That’s all right. You know the Ten Commandments. That is a manifestation of the righteousness and the—the—the goodness of God.

But the greatest manifestation of the righteousness of God is not in the Ten Commandments. The greatest manifestation of the righteousness of God is in the cross of Jesus Christ. There we learn preeminently, that God is an absolutely holy, righteous God, because it is necessary for the second person of the Trinity to die under the judgment of that God if sinners are to be saved. Whatever manifestation of righteousness is found in the Mosaic Law is as the glory of the moon to the glory of the sun, when one considers the manifestation of the righteousness of God and the cross of Jesus Christ. That’s not to mention the righteousness of God—or the love of God, I should say—and the mercy of God, the grace of God, as it is also revealed in the cross of Jesus Christ. So he says it’s exceeding glorious, not just glorious.

And finally he says,

“The benefits that flow from the second covenant—the New Covenant—are permanent, not temporary.” [Notice verse 11,] “For if that which is done away.” [That’s the Mosaic Law.] “If that which is done away was glorious.” [Incidentally, in the Greek text, it’s a rather strange expression. It’s “was through glory—came into being through glory”] “Much more that which remaineth is in glory.” Now, my translation has, “For if that which is done away be glorious, much more that which remaineth is glorious.”

Now, what he says about the New Covenant ministry then, is that it remains. The Old Covenant ministry is done away with. The Law had a distinct period in which it was valid; from the time of its giving on Mount Sinai—Mount Sinai—to the time when the Lord Jesus Christ cried out, “It is finished.” That was the age of the validity of the Mosaic Law in its fullness.

Now, the ball—the Law has been “done away with.” That’s Paul’s term. But the ministry of the New Covenant, the forgiveness of sins received by virtue of the blood of cross—of the cross—is a permanent thing. We receive eternal life. Individuals remained in right relationship with God, as long as they were in right relationship with the Mosaic Law in Old Covenant times. But now we receive not a temporary relationship, not something that is transitory, but something that is permanent.

Judaism misunderstood the whole purpose of Moses’ ministry, and that’s one of the reasons, humanly speaking—not divinely, because it’s all the plan of God, but humanly speaking, that’s the reason—one of the reasons—why Judaism today does not understand the grace of God. They, instead of making Abraham the superior father of the Old Covenant, or the—of the Old Testament—that is, speaking of the Old Testament as they—what we know the Scriptures of the Old Testament. Instead of making Abraham preeminent, whose whole life is a testimony to grace, they exalted Moses, because of the giving of the Law.

For example, even in rabbinical tradition, it is said that the glory that shone on Moses’ face from his encounter with the Lord when he was given the Commandments was a glory that continued

to shine unabated till the day of his death. And even after his death, when they placed his body in the tomb—although no one knows the writer of Deuteronomy, who added that last part about Moses’ death said, “No one knows where his tomb is.” Still, in Jewish tradition, the glory was still on his face as he died. Tradition of this sort of course, are simply rabbinical tradition, but they are designed to bolster up the supreme—supreme glory of the Law of Moses, which ultimately is a violation of the principle of grace, and makes it very difficult for men to understand grace. So Paul says here, “That which was done away,” he’s referring to the Mosaic Law.

I’ve, more than once, told you the story of the young man who went to theological seminary with me, and how we argued for three years over whether we were under the Law or not. And he was—when we first began this argument, he was much more knowledgeable in the Word of God than I, and I thought I was right, but he was very tricky. And usually I couldn’t win the arguments. I always like to win every argument I’m in, and it was kind of frustrating for three years, and I—and the more I went through theological seminary, the more convinced I was, because the faculty members agreed with me too. And he still persisted, “No, we are under the Law. We’re under the Ten Commandments.”

Well, he persisted until finally, in the senior year, Dr. Everett Harrison said, in the Romans class—Exegesis of Romans—he said, “I’ll give you one of two assignments. Number One: write a commentary on the Greek text of Romans 1 through 8, or a commentary on the Greek text of Romans 9, 10, and 11.” When I tell theological students today that that was our assignment, their eyes get big like this, because they usually have to write a commentary on a little section, you know, eight or ten verses. We had to write it on either eight chapters or three chapters—though three more difficult chapters. There were giants in the land in those days. [Laughter]

But anyway—anyway, I decided to write on Romans 9 through 11, because I was less familiar with that. My friend decided to write on Romans 1 through 8. Well, one day—this was the senior year at the seminary in the fall, and one day near the end of the semester, as we’re walking out

of the room, he walked over to me, and put his arm around me and he said, “Lewis.” He said, “I’ve discovered we’re not under the Law.”

And I—I remember I said, “Praise the Lord. Enlightenment has come.” And I said, “But how? All of my argument didn’t do any good.”

He said, “Well, I chose to write on Romans 1 through 8 for the passage, for my assignments.” He said, “Now, when I got to Romans 6:14, where Paul says; you’re not under Law, but under grace.” He said, “I didn’t have any trouble with that, because I simply understood that as I had been taught at my Bible college; that that meant I was not under the ceremonial law, but I was under grace. And I didn’t think that it had anything—thing to do with the moral law.” But he said, “When I got to Romans 7, and Paul still said; we have died to the Law, in order to illustrate his point he cited one of the Ten Commandments—Thou shalt not covet.” So it is evident then, when he said; we have died to Law and we were not under Law, that he was not talking about the ceremonial law, he was talking about the moral law; the Ten Commandments. That’s what he cites.”

Now, this passage is the other passage, in which Paul says, “We are not under the Old Covenant, but he’s let us know that he’s talking about the Law—the Ten Commandments—because he speaks of it here as “tables of stone” in verse 3, and then later on, speaks along the same line. So these two passages are passages that tell us when Paul says he’s—that we are not under Law, he’s talking about the Mosaic Law of the Ten Commandments, because this is what he refers to. He doesn’t refer to the ceremonial law, the civil law.

Well, let me close, by looking for a few moments at the last verses, where Paul speaks about the boldness of New Covenant ministry. “Seeing then,” in verse 12 is a kind of—of transition. “Seeing then,” because we have hope of abiding in permanent glory, that leads us to boldness in the preaching of the truth. “Seeing then that we have such hope, we use great plainness of speech.” Isn’t that interesting? That is something really, that preachers ought to use—great plainness of speech—and sometimes we don’t use “great plainness of speech.” Sometimes it’s because you’re dull of hearing, of course. Sometimes we use “great plainness of speech” and you’re not listening, or

sometimes we use “great plainness of speech” and you just don’t want to hear. You don’t like what you hear, so you say, “Ah, I don’t get it.” But sometimes, occasionally—occasionally the preachers—you know, preachers can be very abstruse.

“Brethren,” cried Father Taylor, the sailor preacher finding himself entangled in a sentence from whose labyrinth bind subordinate clauses, there seemed to be no exit. “I’ve lost the nominative of this sentence, and things are generally mixed up, but I’m bound for the kingdom anyhow.” Well, some of our language is like that, because we are not always really too plain. I heard about one fellow who was very boring. He was preaching on—it seemed—interminably, and finally, in the midst of the discourse he said, “Perhaps some of you at this point are suspecting me of eutychnianism.” Well, I’m sure that the audience had probably as the last thing on their mind, eutychnianism. They were wondering about, when in the world this man’s going to finish.

This is a great text. We use “great plainness of speech” and I’m sorry to have to say, that isn’t what Paul said, because the word really is “boldness.” We use “great boldness of speech” because we are preaching a doctrine of a permanent salvation. Now, you probably have in your translations—modern translations—the word “boldness,” rather than “plainness.” This is one case where the Authorized Version is not correct. I just came in tonight, and there was a note on my desk—or rather, a letter and a—and a pamphlet. And a preacher has written a—an—an article. He’s an editor of some little magazine somewhere, and this was sent to me by somebody in Dallas here, so evidently listens to KLRD and heard me make reference to the text here. They—they write me little notes and say, “The *Textus Receptus* is what’s right. You’ve got to follow the King James Version. That’s the inspired text. Everything else is not inspired.”

I—I appreciate the desire of people to hold for—hold the truth of God, but that is really just ignorance of the status of our text. At any rate, you can see, here is a clear place where the term does not mean “plainness,” it means “boldness.” But translators of the King James Version did not translate this text correctly. It does mean “boldness” in this place.

Well, Paul goes on and he says,



“Not as Moses, who put a veil over his face, that the children of Israel could not steadfastly look to the end of that which is abolished. But their minds were blinded: for until this day remaineth the same veil untaken away in the reading of the old testament; which veil is done away in Christ. But even unto this day, when Moses is read, the veil is upon their heart. Nevertheless, when it shall turn to the Lord, the veil shall be taken away. Now the Lord is that Spirit: and where the Spirit of the Lord is, there is liberty. But we all, with unveiled face beholding as in a glass, the glory of the Lord, are changed into the same image from glory to glory, even as by the Spirit of the Lord.”

Now, this a marvelous section, in which the apostle, against the background of the experience of Moses in receiving the Law, using that as the illustration, speaks of the greatness of the New Covenant ministry, and why he is bold in the proclamation of it, and ultimately, why we are so much more blessed through that ministry.

But it's 8:15, and it's going to take me longer to talk about this, so we're going to have to stop, but I hope you will be able to be here next week. This is one of the most interesting sections in 2 Corinthians, in my opinion, and we'll deal with what Paul meant when he talked about Moses on the mountain, and also what he means when he talks about our wonderful privilege of “beholding as in a glass, the glory of the Lord.”

Let's close in a word of prayer.

[Prayer] Father, we are grateful to Thee for the privilege of the study of Thy Word. We thank Thee for the greatness of New Covenant ministry, particularly for the advantages of it; the advantage of life; the advantage of permanent life, eternal life; the advantage of the forgiveness of sins, and the freedom that we have, and the hope that we have. And O God, give us the same spirit of boldness that the apostle had to proclaim the Lord Jesus Christ to our friends, and to our relatives,

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and to our family with the love of God in our hearts, and with apostolic frankness. We pray Thy  
blessing upon each one present to that end.

For Jesus' sake. Amen.