

WE HAVE THIS MINISTRY

David Baker, Presbytery Word for week commencing Sunday 31 May 2026

Transcription of recording, slightly edited

What I am going to do today is continue from where I was last weekend, looking at the preface of the book *The Lampstand Church*. We will turn to 2 Corinthians chapter 4 as we begin. This is where Paul is describing his ministry as a messenger in the right hand of Christ. We will read these verses in 2 Corinthians chapter 4 verse 1. He says, 'Therefore, since *we* have this ministry... [He is saying 'we'. This this is Paul speaking as a messenger, but he is speaking as part of a fellowship - a messenger administration in the right hand of Christ; and he is addressing us here today as well. We are all called to be part of this. It is a ministry which is a ministry of the Spirit. So he is saying 'we'. He is asking us to confess this today with him] ...therefore, we have this ministry... [or what kind of ministry?] ...we have this ministry as we have received mercy...'

[There are seven statements Paul then makes. He says firstly] 'We have this ministry [Then he says] as we have received mercy [Each of these are big blocks. Then he says], we do not lose heart [It is number three. Verse 2]. But we have renounced the hidden things of shame [That is number four], not walking in craftiness [number five] nor handling the word of God deceitfully, but by manifestation of the truth [those two things are the corollary of one another, so we will call that number six] commending ourselves to every man's conscience in the sight of God [number seven].'

Paul says 'we' because it must become *our* ministry, and his testimony must become *our* testimony. This must become the testimony of every messenger in the right hand of Christ, along with every believing household that belongs to a lampstand church. The basic building block of a lampstand church is worthy houses. A lampstand is a messenger administration; it is revealing the light of the sevenfold Spirit of Yahweh to the world. This is what we are all being called to be part of as worthy houses.

When the apostle Paul declared 'since we have this ministry' he was referring to the ministry of the Spirit. He also called this 'the ministry of righteousness'; but he is talking about the ministry of the Spirit that he had previously described in the first three chapters of his letter. He is getting to chapter 4 and he is saying, 'Therefore, we have this ministry...' What ministry? The ministry he just described in the first three chapters - and particularly in chapter 3 where he was comparing the ministry of the Law Covenant with the ministry of the New Covenant. We talked about the ministry of the Law Covenant last weekend, so I am not going to do that again. We noted that the Law Covenant did have a glory. There was a glory. There was a blessing upon the nation of Israel if they were obedient, and that blessing did include physical healing; it included emotional well-being; included material prosperity - all these things. There was a glory of the Law Covenant. But that glory was passing; it was temporal. It was temporary because it only addressed their condition or experience in this life. It did not impart eternal life.

At the same time that the Law Covenant invoked a blessing upon obedience, it also invoked a cursing upon disobedience, and the weakness of the Law Covenant was the flesh of man. It is invoking a blessing upon obedience, but the word (or that Covenant) had no capacity to impart a capacity for obedience. It is also judging disobedience, but the Law Covenant had no capacity to circumcise the other law from the heart of man, which manifests itself in disobedience. That was the dilemma. Paul compares the glory of the Law Covenant with the glory of the New Covenant, which is the ministry of the Spirit by saying, 'The glory of the Law Covenant pales into insignificance when compared now to the glory of the New Covenant.'

The New Covenant is the ministry of the Spirit, which is the revelation. When we say 'the Spirit', we mean it is the revelation of the seven Spirits of God. That is the full capacity that belongs to Father, Son and Holy Spirit in the fellowship of one Spirit. That full capacity is the ministry of the Spirit that is ministered through the Holy Spirit. The ministry of the Spirit is the revelation of the seven Spirits of God that belong to Jesus Christ. That is why when John sees Jesus Christ in Revelation chapter 1, he sees all those symbolic personal attributes that belong to His spiritual body. They are representing that He now is the Possessor of the seven Spirits of God. He is ministering that capacity to us, and He is ministering it through the messengers that are in His right hand. The light of the seven Spirits of God that shines from the face of Christ is ministered to His lampstand churches through the messengers in His right hand. When this ministry is received, it is a ministry of light. When this ministry is received, it enables a person to turn to the lordship of the Holy Spirit, so that the veil of their own knowledge of good and evil is removed from the eyes of their heart. As the veil is removed from our heart, we are able then to see Christ or to meet Christ.

To summarise the point of this being the outcome of the ministry of the Spirit, Paul says in 2 Corinthians 3 verse 16, 'Nevertheless, when one turns to the Lord... [That is the outcome of your choice. It is like John hearing the voice behind him like the sound of a great trumpet and he chose to turn to see the voice. Turning is your choice in response to the word] ...when one turns to the Lord, the veil is taken away.'

There is a distinction then between turning (which is our choice) and then repentance. Christ has already authored our repentance for us, but you do not know what you need to repent of until you have met Christ eye to eye and heart to heart, because the nature of your repentance is revealed to you in that interaction - in that meeting. And Christ is also revealing that He has already done your

repenting for you. But before you see that, you have to choose to turn. We know repentance is a turning, but there is a turning that precedes repentance. Jeremiah says in Jeremiah chapter 31 verse 19. 'Surely after my turning I repented.' Turning is your choice. The Holy Spirit is giving you capacity to turn, but it is your choice to turn in response to the word.

Turning means that we are responding and we are then giving our attention to what the Holy Spirit is saying. This becomes our ongoing choice to set our mind on the things of the Spirit. Setting our mind on the things of the Spirit means that we are focusing and we are giving our attention to what the Holy Spirit is saying to the churches. 2 Corinthians 3 verse 17: 'Now the Lord is the Spirit... [This is where Paul says very clearly, 'We are turning to the Lord.' Who is the 'Lord' in this case? The Lord is the Spirit, the Holy Spirit. He is the Lord of the church age] ...and where the Spirit of the Lord is... [Notice the distinction here. He is saying the Lord is the Spirit; that is the Holy Spirit. But then he says, 'where the Spirit of the Lord is...'. That is a different statement. Jesus said, 'The Spirit of the Lord is upon Me because He has anointed Me to preach the gospel to the poor' et cetera. He is talking about the capacity of the seven Spirits of God. That capacity was the anointing and that anointing was upon Him through the Holy Spirit. 'Where the Spirit of the Lord is... [That is talking about the full capacity of the seven Spirits of God] ...Where the Spirit of the Lord is, there is liberty.'

The first expression of the seven Spirits that is coming to a person when the word is proclaimed is the Spirit of grace and supplication, which pushes every other influence back, every other bondage, even the impact of the other law. It pushes it all back so that you are free to choose. There is nothing preventing you from choosing. That is the first ministry of the capacity of the seven Spirits of God. The spirit of grace and supplication belongs to that. It is setting you free to choose.

But then, more than that, it is the full capacity of the seven Spirits of God, which is giving you the freedom to walk then as a son of God. This is the glorious liberty that belongs to sons of God. 'Where the Spirit of the Lord is, there is liberty [Verse 18]. But we all with unveiled face, beholding as in a mirror the glory of the Lord... [This is a different Lord now. This is Christ] ...beholding as in a mirror the glory of the Lord (that is Christ now) - looking into His face] are being transformed into the same image [that is of Christ] from glory to glory [We are back to the seven Spirits again] just as by the Spirit of the Lord [the capacity is by the seven Spirits of God].'

We know that on His offering journey from the garden of Gethsemane to the cross, Jesus Christ fully identified with our fallen condition, and He pioneered a pathway for our salvation. On that very same pathway, He was glorified with the glory that He had before, which is the glory of Yahweh the Son as the full expression of all sonship. So now when you look into His face by the Holy Spirit you can see the reflection of who you are predestined to be as a son of God. He is the full expression of all sonship. Billions of sons can all look into His face and by the Holy Spirit see the reflection of their unique individual sonship for He is the expression of it all. That is the significance of Him receiving the glory that He had with the Father before - the glory of Yahweh the Son. He is learning every individual son of God's obedience on that one offering journey - fulfilling the works of our sonship both in this lifetime and in the age to come. That is an amazing point.

We are seeing this, and then we are being transformed. There are two steps: seeing it firstly; but then also being transformed as we are walking in the fellowship of His offering. A son of God who walks after the Spirit in the fellowship of Christ's offering will be progressively changed into the image of Christ from glory to glory. For this reason, the ministry of the Spirit is also called the 'ministry of righteousness' because the

righteousness of God is revealed from faith to faith. We walk after the Spirit by walking in the light of the word. Let us be very practical. How do you walk after the Spirit? It means you are being led by the Holy Spirit. He is leading; you are following. You are walking after. But how does that work?

We walk after the Spirit by walking in the light of the word that is proclaimed by the Holy Spirit to Christ's lampstand churches through the messengers in His right hand. It is, 'He who has an ear, let him hear what the Spirit says to the churches.' What the Holy Spirit is saying to the churches is defining the highway. It is the Highway of Holiness. It is the highway that leads to Mount Zion. As you are walking on that highway, the Holy Spirit Himself is awakening your ear morning by morning to lead you in relation to your specific obedience as a son of God. The Holy Spirit is not going to be waking you up in the morning to lead you on a byway. He is not going to be saying something to you that is other than what the Holy Spirit is saying to the churches, which is defining the highway. We are all walking on the highway. Then, day by day, the Holy Spirit is saying in terms of your unique obedience as a son of God, 'Put your foot there, and then put your foot there, and then put your foot there.' He is leading you in terms of the very specific issues of life.

Now Paul rejoiced that he had been given the privilege of being a minister of the Spirit in the right hand of Christ. Paul is rejoicing that he is not a minister of the Law Covenant. He is a minister of the New Covenant; he is a minister of the Spirit. As he is proclaiming the word of God, it is revealing Jesus Christ, and it is revealing this light. Everyone who receives His word is receiving this capacity to live and walk as a son of God. Is that a point of rejoicing? 'We have this ministry.' This is what Paul is trying to say to us. 'We have this ministry.' Let us get a bit happy and excited about this. This is the ministry that the Lord has given to you.

Paul rejoiced that he had been given the privilege of being a minister of the Spirit in the right hand of Christ. He recognised that his ministry revealed the glory of Christ. It was necessary for his hearers to receive the hope of their sonship, including the inheritance of their spiritual body on the day of resurrection. But we know that is not the sum of our hope. Our hope is to reveal the glory of God. It is the hope of sonship. The hope of glory. The glory of God is the seven Spirits of God. Let us keep closing the loop here and connecting all these points. We are talking about the revelation of His *glory*. It is the revelation of *light*. It is the seven Spirits of God. Speaking about the outcome of the ministry of the Spirit, Paul declared in 2 Corinthians 3 verse 11, 'For if what is passing away was glorious... [that is the Law Covenant] ...for if what is passing away was glorious, what remains is much more glorious.' [Verse 12] 'Therefore, since we have such hope [it is not just *any* hope; it is *such* hope], we use great boldness of speech.'

I keep reflecting on Peter and John going up to the temple at the hour of prayer and they see the lame man. This man was put there every day by the gate called 'Beautiful' and he is begging alms. He is very, very low in confidence and self-esteem, so he is looking at the ground all the time. Peter and John come up into the temple, and they see him and the first thing they say to him is, 'Look at us.' The man has to lift up his eyes, and he has to look Peter in the eye. Then Peter says to him (you know the story well), 'We do not have any silver or gold, but what we do have, we give to you. In the name of the Lord Jesus Christ, get up and walk.' Peter reaches out his hand, and he pulls the man up. As he is pulling the man up, all the bones in his ankles are strengthened. This man had never walked a day in his life. Peter pulls him up and this man has faith to be healed. Not only does he stand up, he *leaps* up. Then he is walking with them, and he is leaping and praising God as he goes with them into the temple. Now that is an amazing thing.

This causes a big scene. Everyone who is in the vicinity immediately comes to Peter and John. They are all gathered there in Solomon's portico and Peter starts to preach. He says, 'Do not look at us as if our power has made this man whole. We are just revealing Christ. It is Christ who has made this man well and strengthened him so that he can walk.' Peter starts preaching and they cause a big stir. They get pulled before the Jewish Sanhedrin. This is not what the Sanhedrin wants to be happening in the temple precinct. They start threatening them severely and telling them that they are not allowed to preach anymore in the name of Jesus. Acts 4 verses 19 and 20: 'Peter and John answered and said to them, "Whether it is right in the sight of God to listen to you more than to God, you judge. But we cannot but speak the things which we have seen and heard." ' They have a real boldness in relation to what they had seen and heard and know to be true. No one was going to tell them to stop speaking in the name of Jesus. The Sanhedrin threatens them more, but they cannot do too much because this man who has been healed is right there. They let them go and they immediately go back to all the believers. This is where I want to read. They report to all the believers what had happened in Acts 4 verse 29.

All the believers who were gathered together responded to what Peter and John had just said to them. They are responding in a prayer in Acts 4 verses 29 to 31. '“Now, Lord, look on their threats, and grant to Your servants [they are praying for Peter and John here and for all the messengers] that with all boldness they may speak your word [They are praying for Peter and John] by stretching out Your hand to heal [So as Peter reached out his hand to grab a hold of the man's hand, this was the Lord Himself stretching out His hand to heal. It is a beautiful picture], and that signs and wonders may be done through the name of Your holy servant Jesus.” And when they had prayed, the place where they were assembled together was shaken; and they were all filled... [this is not just Peter and

John. This is not just the apostles] ...they were all filled with the Holy Spirit and they [We could just insert there 'all'. We are talking about all the people - all the believers] spoke the word of God with boldness.' 'We have this ministry.' When we are illuminated to the hope and then the nature of the ministry, then we are able to speak with boldness, because there is power in the word.

Every son of God should have the same boldness of speech as they testify about the ministry of the Spirit to their family, friends, neighbours and work colleagues.

Coming back to 2 Corinthians 4, 'Therefore, since we have this ministry, as we have received mercy... [Let us start to step these elements through. This is Paul's testimony, but he is saying this needs to be your testimony. Each of these statements are a big block, and we need to consider them and say, 'Is that my testimony?'] ...since we have received this ministry, as we have received mercy... [Paul recognised that he had become a minister of the Spirit on the basis that he was a recipient of the Lord's mercy. That is number two. We have received this ministry (number one), but on the basis that we have received mercy].'

The mercy of God has been extended to all men through the offering of Christ. How was that? Because He came and He joined us. That is how His mercy was extended to us. He came and He joined us. He fully identified with us in our fallen condition. He joined us in our death. When He drank the cup of sin in the garden of Gethsemane, He became mortal like us and then died our death. He fully identified with the death of our sin. In addition to this, He identified with the judgement of the Law and the judgement of the wrath of God upon our sin. At the same time, He pioneered the pathway for our salvation. This is mercy - fully identifying with us but also pioneering the pathway for our salvation. He has done this for every person. However, it is only received or obtained... (Paul talks about *obtaining* mercy. It is extended to everyone, but then

you have to receive it or obtain it - lay a hold of it) ...it is only received or obtained by those who have become bankrupt in spirit because they have met Christ as their Lord and King.

The first dimension of the mercy of God is the forgiveness of the debt that has been accrued because of our sin under the judgement of the Law of God. This is where the account of the woman in the house of Simon the Pharisee is so helpful for us. We really need to digest this where Jesus is saying to Simon, 'Do you see this woman?' Paul is making a very similar point in 'as we have received mercy'. Do you recognise that you have received mercy?

Jesus comes to Simon's house and then the woman comes in, and she is washing Jesus' feet with her tears, and she is wiping His feet with her hair. Then she is kissing His feet. Then she is pouring anointing oil upon His feet. This is a fantastic point. It was probably her whole life-savings to purchase the oil that she then so willingly and lovingly poured out upon the feet of Jesus. Simon is there and he is seeing the woman, and he is full of judgements, and he is thinking to himself, 'Jesus cannot possibly be a prophet, because He would know what kind of woman this is. Why is He letting her touch Him?' Jesus, knowing what he was thinking says, 'Simon, I want to tell you something.' This is what the Lord wants to say to each and every one of us. 'I want to tell you something. A creditor had two debtors. One owed 500 denarii and one owed 50. And the creditor forgave them both. Which one will love him more?' And Simon says, 'Well, I suppose the one that was forgiven more will love him more.' Jesus says, 'Yes. You have actually answered that correctly. Do you see this woman? The fact that she loves much is revealing that she is been forgiven much.' What Simon did not realise (and what we often do not realise) is that we have all been forgiven much. We are not the '50 denarii sinner'; we are the '500 denarii'. We do not often recognise it. Simon was not aware of how much he had been forgiven.

Regarding the apostle Paul, we will pick up the theme here with the Pharisee. Paul was

a Pharisee of Pharisees, but then he recognised that he had been forgiven much. Paul said in 1 Timothy 1 verse 15, 'This is a faithful saying and worthy of all acceptance [meaning this should be accepted by every person], that Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners, of whom I am the chief... [Paul is not satisfied with '500 denarii', or he is not saying, 'Let us multiply that by 10 and then by 10 again, or whatever you want to do with it. Whatever it is, I am the chief'] ...that Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners of whom I am chief.' Paul described himself as a blasphemer and a persecutor and an insolent man... (this is a great term - 'insolent'. It means 'injurious'. He is causing injury. In his pride and arrogance, he is causing injury) ...an insolent man. 1 Timothy 1 verse 16: 'However, for this reason I obtained mercy, that in me first Jesus Christ might show all longsuffering, as a pattern to those who are going to believe on Him for everlasting life.' This is the first question: 'As we have received mercy', do we recognise that we have received mercy? This is often a big issue for those who have grown up in the church - coming to recognise that you have received mercy.

If we are grabbing a hold of the Law... (this is the litmus test) ...if we are grabbing a hold of the Law all the time... (which is a misappropriation of the word of the cross) ...if we are grabbing a hold of the Law all the time to judge others and also to judge ourselves... (it works both ways) ... if we are grabbing a hold of the Law to judge others or to judge ourselves, then we do not recognise that we have received mercy. Because when we recognise that we have received mercy, we let all that go. Our prerogative to grab a hold of the Law, we do not have it. We have received mercy. We are able to be joined to the offering of Christ and find grace to forgive. While ever there is unforgiveness in our heart, we have not come to recognise that we have received mercy. You can see why Paul is saying that this is foundational - 'as we have received mercy'.

Mercy is much more than forgiveness. That is where it begins - the forgiveness of the debt. Forgiveness of debt means there is absolutely nothing that you can do to repay God to make it right. You cannot find recovery yourself. However, mercy is more than forgiveness. The mercy of God grants us a participation in the fellowship of the seven wounding events that Christ experienced from the garden of Gethsemane to the cross. That is the mercy of God. It is the whole package of Christ's offering and the fact that you have been given a participation in that. The mercy of God delivers us to a participation in both the dying and the living of our Lord Jesus. It includes both the remission of our sin in the death of Christ and the capacity to live as a son of God through the resurrection of Christ. It is both sides of the cross. Both sides are the mercy of God, because we do need to be delivered from our sin. That sin does have to go out into the sea of God's forgetfulness. The other law does have to be circumcised from our heart. While, at the same time, we are finding grace and capacity to do the works of our sonship. There is power. It is the resurrection life of Christ.

As the recipient of the mercy of God then, the apostle Paul testified in Galatians 2 verse 20, 'I have been crucified with Christ.' This is how he is explaining it: 'I through the Law died to the Law.' Galatians 2 verse 20. When we are looking at the offering of Christ, 'If One died for all, then all died.' When Christ is crucified, every person is crucified *with* Him. If you are crucified with Him, then 'Cursed is every man who hangs on a tree.' You are dying under the judgement of the Law - under the curse of the Law. As you are dying under the curse of the Law, then you are being delivered from the Law, because the Law only has dominion over you as long as you live. That is a good thing. 'I am crucified [I am co-cursed] with Christ.' 'I, through the Law, died to the Law [I am now free from the Law, but I am still crucified with Christ. I am dead.] Nevertheless [Paul says], I live... [This is a great surprise. I love the old King James] ... nevertheless I live. I

am crucified with God, but I live [How am I living?]. It is not me who is living, but it is now Christ who is living in me.' 'I have been crucified with Christ; it is no longer I who live... [I am living now by the resurrection life of Christ], ...it is no longer I who live, but Christ lives in me; and the life which I now live in the flesh [this is still in my mortality in the flesh] I live now by the faith of the Son of God... [is the better translation. We are receiving His faith as a gift. Again, the old King James is better] ...I live by the faith of the Son of God, who loved me and gave Himself for me.' This is all the expression of the Lord's mercy. Now I am living by resurrection life. I can confess with Paul that by the mercies of God, I am now able to present my body as a living sacrifice – living. Nevertheless, I live. I am living today by the life of Christ. I can present myself to God as a living sacrifice to prove the good and acceptable and perfect will of God.

The mercy of God is new every morning because each day we have a new participation in the fellowship of Christ's offering and sufferings. Is that how you view the mercy of God? Did you wake up this morning saying, 'His mercy is new every morning. I have a new participation in Christ's offering today, which is delivering me from sin and also giving me the capacity to live as a son of God today - new every morning.' We will continue to be a recipient of the mercy of God until we receive the inheritance of our spiritual body on the day of resurrection. Jude says in Jude 1 verses 20 to 21, 'But you, beloved, building yourselves up on your most holy faith, praying in the Holy Spirit, keep yourselves in the love of God, looking for the mercy of our Lord Jesus Christ...[We have received it; we have obtained it; but we are still looking for it, because it is a whole of life package] '... looking for the mercy of our Lord Jesus Christ until eternal life.' All the way to the day of resurrection and the redemption of our body.

Let us come back to 2 Corinthians 4 verse 1: 'Therefore, since we have this ministry, as

we have received mercy... [Let us substitute there that we have been given a daily participation in the offering of Christ, and we are receiving resurrection life - the same resurrection power that brought Him back from the dead, we are now receiving that in our mortality. It is *exanastasis*] ... as we are receiving that mercy, we do not lose heart.' When we experience difficulties or when we are rejected by men, we do not draw back in unbelief and become depressed. That is what losing heart means - becoming depressed. Our testimony is that we have the treasure of Christ's resurrection life in our mortal bodies.

Paul reflected on his ministry by saying in 2 Corinthians 4 verse 7, 'We have this treasure in earthen vessels, that the excellence of the power... [again, every time you read 'power' just keep thinking 'seven Spirits of God'. We are talking about the power of Father, Son and Holy Spirit in a fellowship of offering to bring forth everlasting increase - that power] ... that the excellence of the power may be of God and not of us. We are hard-pressed on every side... [I think 'hard-pressed' is just all the pressures of life which are often ongoing and continual (you could say 'unrelenting'). It is just pressure. You are under pressure, and it seems unrelenting, but you are not crushed. You are not burning out; you are not collapsing; you are coping] ...hard-pressed but not crushed; we are perplexed... [and there are lots of things that we do not understand. We are perplexed. We do not know why they are happening.] ...we are perplexed, but we are not in despair [We are not losing hope]; persecuted but not forsaken.'

I love that with Joseph in terms of all his persecution between the first and the second time (when he goes down to Potiphar's house and he is subject to injustice there and then he is in prison), but at every point there is this amazing statement that we read in the Scriptures. It says, 'The Lord was with him.' That is an amazing thing. 'Persecuted but not forsaken.' The Lord is with us. 'Struck down' - I often think of that one (and there

are probably a few different ways to come at it), but in terms of our mortality. He is struck down (sudden illness or various crises) but not destroyed. Paul is expanding it.

The best illustration of this is Jesus in the court of Caiaphas, where He is being persecuted and they have the strongest soldiers that belong to the temple guard and they are punching Him repeatedly in the face and hitting Him with rods and breaking His nose with each punch. But at the same time, He is immediately healed by the power of resurrection life. He is not being broken down. There is resurrection life sustaining Him in the midst of His suffering. That is the best picture of all these things all wrapped up into one - the court of Caiaphas. 'Hard pressed on every side, yet not crushed; perplexed, but not in despair; persecuted, but not forsaken; struck down but not destroyed [Verse 10] - always carrying about in the body the dying of the Lord Jesus, that the life of Jesus also may be manifested in our body.'

When we are walking after the Spirit in the fellowship of Christ's sufferings, the resurrection life of Christ sustains and strengthens us in our mortality. I am talking about in your physical body (in our mortality), so that we can fulfill the will of God each day. It is not making you immortal, but it is giving you grace in your physical body to fulfill whatever the will of God is for you that day, so that you can do the works of your sonship. The resurrection life of Christ is also regenerating our inner man. This is the reason that we do not lose heart in the middle of our suffering and difficult circumstances. Even as the limit of mortality is closing in upon us, and we are ageing and all these things, the inner man is being renewed. Verse 16: 'Therefore we do not lose heart even though our outward man is perishing, yet the inward man is being renewed day by day.'

Furthermore, the resurrection life of Christ that is regenerating our inner man is also equipping us to minister the same resurrection life of Christ to others. This is

helping us understand that 'we have this ministry'. We are actually ministering the resurrection life of God to others, but it is the resurrection life of God that we have received that has strengthened us in our inner man.

In the first chapter of his letter (we are making the point), Paul says, 'Therefore, we have this ministry.' What ministry? We go back and we read the first three chapters. You need to read all three of them. In the first chapter, Paul really launches into it on this point. 2 Corinthians 1 verse 3, 'Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of mercies.' That is the one we have just talked about - '...as we have received mercy'. But then he says (second one), 'We do not lose heart.' The way Paul does it in the first chapter is that he says, 'the Father of mercies'. Why do we not lose heart? Because He is 'the God of all comfort [Verse 4], who comforts us in all our tribulation... [It is a very specific kind of comfort. It is the ministry of resurrection life] ...who comforts us in all our tribulation, that we may be able to comfort those who are in any trouble, with the comfort with which we ourselves are comforted by God.'

Paul likened the resurrection life of Christ that regenerates our inner man to the comfort that we receive from God as the outcome of His chastening in our life. That is the type of comfort we are talking about. The Father is chastening us, and chastening is focused upon the formation of new creation. We are being comforted because new creation is being brought forth and we are growing and maturing as sons of God. Then, we are receiving a testimony that is the outcome of that chastening, and that testimony is overflowing as a blessing (or a ministry of life) to others. Let us finish here in verse 2; and this is only our third; but I will conclude here.

In 2 Corinthians 4 verse 2 Paul continues, 'But we have renounced the hidden things of shame.' These are all essential blocks to consider. We have received mercy; we do not lose heart; and we have renounced the hidden things of shame. These are almost all

the prerequisites of 'we have this ministry'. We have renounced the hidden things of shame.

Prior to the Fall in the garden of Eden, Adam and his wife did not know any form of shame. We know that they walked in the light of fellowship with the Lord at the tree of life each day. However, immediately after they exchanged the truth of God for the lie of Satan and ate from the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, they became, in the first case, immediately aware of their nakedness. That was the only new knowledge that they received. They became immediately aware of their nakedness, which was their complete vulnerability and inadequacy - having been alienated from the life of God (or cut off from the fellowship of God). Adam ate the fruit of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, which was fed to him by his wife, because he wanted to become the source of his own name and works. We could say colloquially that he wanted to be his own man. He wanted to become the source of his own name and works and exercise dominion over the natural creation apart from fellowship with the Lord at the tree of life each day. He had participated in that for a very long period of time. There was no reason for him to turn his back on it, but he thought he was ready to have a bit more independence and 'take it from here'. After that length of time, he felt like he was ready. And what did he find? He was not ready. He just immediately became aware of his vulnerability, his inadequacy, and he was overcome with fear. He became aware of his nakedness.

Now rather than seeking fellowship with the Lord (having become aware then of his fallen condition), he became deeply ashamed of his action and his fallen human condition. It would have been pretty confronting for him, because prior to eating that fruit, he had dominion over the whole natural creation, including all the animals. He had named them all. He had defined how they would live and interact with all the other animals. He eats this fruit and he goes out and he tries to tell the lion what to do and the lion just roars

back at him, which in parenthesis says, 'I am not listening to you anymore.' He walks past all the sheep (We do not want to get humorous), but they are all baa-ing at him, 'Baa, baa, baa. You have done a very bad thing.' The whole thing is in disarray. The animals are not listening to him anymore; he cannot communicate with them. The whole of the natural creation is immediately plunged into disharmony in a desperate struggle for survival. He is deeply ashamed. There is a little distinction here between the shame of his nakedness and then this self-righteous shame which is trying to fix the problem. This becomes the real problem (or the bigger problem). It is the shame that is motivating us to cover up the shame of our nakedness ourselves.

Rather than seeking fellowship with the Lord... (this is speaking of Adam and his wife here, Eve) ... rather than seeking fellowship with the Lord, their shame motivated them to make coverings for themselves with fig leaves. It is very interesting to me, because as soon as they ate the fruit of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, there was enmity now in their relationship. As the Lord said to Eve, 'Your desire will be for your husband. Your desire will be for control. You will want to set the agenda and have him serve you. At the same time, He says to her, 'But he will rule over you, because he also wants control, and he will want you to serve him.' You have this conflict in relation to who is in control. There is enmity. But despite that, the one thing they agree on is that they need to cover up the shame of their nakedness. We are not talking just about their physical nakedness. We are talking about the shame associated with their vulnerability and inadequacy, having been alienated from the life of God. They agree then, despite the enmity, that they sew fig leaves together and they work together to do it. They sew the fig leaves together which was a very inadequate form of covering. When they hear the Lord walking in the garden, as He did every day, they were afraid and they hid themselves from Him in the trees. Now shame becomes the fear of being exposed that motivates us

to hide our sin by maintaining a projection. That is what the fig leaves represent - a projection that we have created for ourselves. Let us just go one further step. If our sin is exposed, it is the same shame... (we are talking about a self-righteous shame here) ...it is the same shame that motivates us towards the recovery of our projection through self-righteous acts of penance; to make up for it; to make it right; to recover our projection as quickly as possible. This is often driving a lot of apologies and a whole host of things - still motivated by shame.

Jesus described the motivation of shame that causes us to hide ourselves from fellowship by saying in John 3 verse 19, 'And this is the condemnation [note this], ...this is the condemnation that the light has come into the world, and men loved darkness rather than light [why?], because their deeds were evil.' But the condemnation is not that their deeds were evil. The condemnation is because they loved the darkness rather than the light. The self-righteous shame that causes us to love the darkness rather than the light is a bigger problem than our evil deeds. This is always true. The darkness is a bigger problem than the sin. Sin can be easily resolved in a fellowship. It is the darkness that is the bigger problem. 1 John 1 verse 7: 'If we walk in the light as He is in the light [and the first dimension of this is by making confession], we have fellowship with one another and the blood of Jesus Christ His Son cleanses us from all sin.' [Verse 9] 'If we confess our sins, He is faithful and just to forgive us our sins... [That is the deliverance from the debt. That is the deliverance from having to make it up or make it right or repay it, which is impossible to do. That is all self-righteous activity] ...to forgive us our sins [but then it does not stop there], and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness [which you know is in the fellowship of Christ's offering].'

We know that Jesus has already pioneered the pathway. I want to finish on this point to see if we can digest this, because this is a very big point. We know that Jesus has

already pioneered the pathway of our repentance and our obedience on His offering journey from the garden of Gethsemane to the cross. I am not at the point yet, but that is a big point. Not only has He already pioneered our obedience - but that is also a big point. All these things are massive points. That is a very big point - Christ has already pioneered your obedience for each and every day. All you have to do is join Him. You can be obedient. He has already done it. The word is coming to proclaim that it is already done. It is from a finished position. So you can live as a son of God today. At the same time, He has pioneered your repentance. Everything that you need to turn from, He has already done the turning for you. It gets better and better.

Furthermore... (and this is where I am going) ...furthermore, on His offering journey, Jesus Christ has already overcome the shame that causes us to recoil to the darkness of our own religious projections. The thing that is stopping us from laying hold of the full provision in Christ's offering... (because He has pioneered our repentance and obedience; it is all there; is already done; He is offering us a participation) ...but the thing that stops us laying hold of that is shame.

The good news is that Jesus has already overcome the shame that causes us to recoil in darkness. This is Hebrews 12 verse 2. 'Looking unto Jesus, the Author and Finisher of our faith, who for the joy that was set before Him endured the cross, despising the shame... [We need to know what shame we are talking about here] ...despising the shame and has sat down at the right hand of the throne of God.'

Jesus did not despise the fact that He was humiliated because of our sin. Let us go slowly. He fully identified with our sin. He fully identified with our fallen human condition. In that regard, He fully identified with the shame of our nakedness, and He did not despise the fact that He had to identify with that for our sake. In fact, for the joy set before Him, He willingly did that because He

was focused upon bringing a whole host of sons of God to glory. He was not afraid of being humiliated. Now that is our greatest fear. Jesus identified with that fear, but He did not recoil because of that. Jesus did not despise the fact that He was humiliated because of our sin. He willingly... (He did all this in obedience to God, and by the grace of God, as He is led by the Spirit) ...He willingly embraced and endured the humiliation of the cross. Now this is what we struggle with the most - the humiliation; the loss of reputation. He willingly embraced and endured the humiliation of the cross for the joy of recovering us as sons of God. What did He despise? He did not despise the fact that He was asked to do that. What He despised was our self-righteous shame, which causes us to hide ourselves because we are afraid of humiliation. Can you see that distinction? Now the Lord testified about how He despised our shame.

This is the biggest problem. It is not the shame of the nakedness; it is the shame that motivates us then to recoil and create a projection and hide in the darkness. Now Jesus despised that self-righteous mode. He hated it. Jesus despised our self-righteous shame which causes us to hide ourselves because we are afraid of humiliation. The Lord testified about how He despised our shame by saying through the prophet Isaiah in Isaiah chapter 50 verse 6, 'I gave My back to those who struck Me and My cheeks to those who plucked out the beard [this is particularly again talking about the court of Caiaphas], and I did not hide My face from shame and spitting.' He did not recoil from the humiliation. Because He did not recoil from the humiliation, He was pioneering the pathway where He was overcoming our shame that causes us to recoil from that.

This is our key point: Jesus has already overcome the shame that causes us to hide our face because of our fear of being exposed in the light. This is good news, because this is our biggest problem. Jesus has already overcome the shame that causes us to hide our face because of our fear of being exposed

in the light. Now this means that when the word of the cross is proclaimed to us, there is grace for us to likewise despise our self-righteous shame - the thing that is motivating us to maintain our projection; or when we are found out, to make it right - to recover that as quickly as possible; to despise our self-righteous shame, and to walk in the light of fellowship with our brethren.

There are actually some things that we are meant to be ashamed about. One of those things is that we need to be ashamed about the projections that we have created for ourselves. When the word of the cross is proclaimed to us, there is grace for us to likewise despise our self-righteous shame and walk in the light of fellowship with our brethren. We renounce the hidden things of shame when we willingly confess our faults to one another. At the same time, we confess our faith that Christ has pioneered the pathway of our repentance and obedience so that there is grace for us to live as a new creation.