

WE HAVE THIS MINISTRY PART 2

David Baker, Presbytery Word for week commencing Sunday 07 June 2026

Transcription of recording, slightly edited

What I am going to do today is continue to look at Paul's description of his ministry (which is the same ministry that we are all joining). Turn to 2 Corinthians chapter 4 verse 1 and we will keep considering these key verses. Paul says, 'Therefore, since we have this ministry....' We know that he was referring to the ministry of the Spirit. He had spent three chapters before this describing what that looks like and contrasting it with the Law Covenant. He is talking about the ministry of the Spirit, and we are noting that he is saying 'we'. He is not saying 'I' even though he could say that because he was describing the nature of his own ministry as a messenger in the right hand of Christ. But he was speaking as part of a fellowship of messengers, and he was saying 'we' because this must become the testimony of every messenger in the right hand of Christ and every believing household that belongs to a lampstand church. That is our key point. We are reading *Paul's* testimony, but it needs to become *our* testimony. We are considering the nature of *his* ministry, but that has to become the nature of *our* ministry as well.

The ministry of the Spirit is the revelation of the seven Spirits of God that belongs to Jesus Christ. The light of the seven Spirits of God then shines from the face of Christ. That is the light shining from His face. Then the light that shines from His face is ministered to lampstand churches through the seven stars in His right hand. There are rays of light flashing from His hand, as the book of Habakkuk tells us. The same light is then reflected and focused by a lampstand church to the world. This becomes the ministry of a lampstand church - to reveal the light of the sevenfold Spirit of Yahweh (or the seven Spirits of God) to the world. This is the only light in the world.

Paul continues. Let us read these statements. We will briefly summarise these as we gather this up and then we will continue. 'Therefore, since we have this

ministry, as we have received mercy...' He is now layering in behind this statement 'We have this ministry' and that is where he finishes. We will finish there hopefully today, but he is laying in behind that 'we have received mercy'. We have already received mercy.

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. However, mercy is more than forgiveness. The mercy of God grants to us a participation in the fellowship of the seven wounding events that Christ experienced from the garden of Gethsemane to the cross. The mercy of God is giving us 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. This mercy is new every morning because when we wake up in the morning, there is a new participation in the fellowship of Christ's offering and His sufferings each day. We are being delivered from sin each day and we are receiving the resurrection life of Christ to live as a son of God each day. His mercies are new each and every morning, and we will continue to receive the mercies of the Lord every day until we breathe our last or until the day of resurrection. Then it is the beginning of the eternal day.

The mercy of God is new every morning as I have said. 2 Corinthians 4 verse 1: 'Therefore since we have this ministry, as we have received mercy [recognising that we are receiving the resurrection life of Christ each day, he continues. Built on that point, he continues to say], we do not lose heart.' We have already heard that this morning. 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 so that we can fulfill the will of God each day. There is a real grace of resurrection life that you

receive in your physical body each day to be able to complete the works of your sonship. Whatever the obedience is that Christ has already completed for you, there is actually a grace that you receive in your mortality. But that does not make you immortal. We are still dying - the outer man is perishing. The primary focus of resurrection life is toward the inner man. The resurrection life of Christ is regenerating our inner man. This is the reason that we do not lose heart (obviously our 'heart' is talking about 'the inner man') in the middle of our suffering and difficult circumstances.

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. There is an overflow. You will read earlier in Paul's second letter to the Corinthians where he describes this resurrection life as 'the comfort of God'. That is pretty good comfort. That is not God reaching out His hand and saying, 'There, there, it will be okay.' It is a ministry of resurrection life. It is the fruit of the Father's chastening in our lives. There is a testimony of resurrection life. It is bringing forth the peaceable fruits of righteousness, and that is also equipping us to be able to minister that same comfort of God to others.

Let us continue in verse 2: 'But we have renounced the hidden things of shame.' This is where we finished in our last session. Jesus described the motivation of shame that causes us to make a projection for ourselves and to hide ourselves from fellowship. There are two elements there: to make a projection, and then to hide ourselves from fellowship by saying, 'This is the condemnation that the light has come into the world, and men loved darkness rather than light because their deeds were evil.' John 3:19. The Lord is calling each and every one of us saying, 'Where are you?' in the same way that He walked through the garden in the beginning and called to Adam. He is calling him out of the darkness, and He is calling us out of the darkness. It is shame that causes us to want to hide in the darkness.

The self-righteous shame that causes us to love the darkness rather than the light is a bigger problem than our evil deeds. The darkness is a bigger problem than the sin, because the sin can easily be resolved in the light. But it is shame that causes us to hide in the darkness. The darkness is the bigger problem. The Lord has to deal with this shame. We have to be delivered from this shame. 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. Furthermore, on His offering journey, Jesus Christ has already overcome the shame. Now this is an amazing point. He has already overcome the shame. This is the shame that He despised. He has already overcome the shame that causes us to recoil to the darkness of our own religious projection. He says through Isaiah in Isaiah 50 verse 6, 'I gave My back to those who struck Me and My cheeks to those who plucked out the beard. I did not hide My face from shame and spitting.' We know that is particularly relevant for the court of Caiaphas.

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 an amazing thing, and it really continues to elevate and highlight how every provision for us has been made in the offering of Christ. 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 and walk in the light of fellowship with our brethren. That is where we were up to in our last session.

Continuing to read in verse 2, 'But we have renounced the hidden things of shame, not walking in craftiness.' Think about this a little bit. 'Craftiness' means 'trickery'. It means relying on our cunning. It means deceitful schemes – craftiness. It specifically describes the mode of Satan. This drives the point on the problem of craftiness. It is not just being a little bit clever or a bit manipulative. Specifically, it describes the mode of Satan that he uses to deceive. We

will read Genesis chapter 3 in a moment. Before I do, I will quote this verse from 2 Corinthians 11 verse 3, where Paul says to the Corinthians, 'I fear... [this is later in the same letter - part of the same address to the Corinthians] ...I fear, lest somehow, as the serpent deceived Eve [How?] by his craftiness... [We do not need to worry about the power of Satan. We are not trying to withstand his power. He has no power over us. But we do need to be aware of his trickery or his deceitful schemes or his craftiness. Paul describes it when he is writing to the Ephesians. We are withstanding 'the wiles of the devil'. Ephesians 6:11. Paul is saying] ...as the serpent deceived Eve by his craftiness, so your minds may be corrupted from the simplicity that is in Christ.' We will talk a bit more about the simplicity that is in Christ in a moment.

Regarding Satan's craftiness, he transformed himself into an angel of light. He pretended to be a seraph. He is not a talking snake in the garden; he is pretending to be a seraph. He is really a cherub, but he is pretending to be a seraph - a light bearer, a messenger. He begins to speak to the woman. This is before her name is Eve, but we will use it interchangeably. He begins to speak to the woman. I am going to make this point: When we look at the fall man, we note that there are three stages to exchanging the truth of God for a lie... (The fall of man happens when *Adam* eats the fruit of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil. We are going to look at how Satan talks to the woman before that) ...There are three stages in how man exchanged the truth of God for a lie.

These are the three steps (three dimensions, three steps, three exchanges). The first one is that the word of God, which is true, was exchanged for the lie of Satan. That is the first exchange. Now secondly, the word... (and I will say it generically. This is obviously applicable for all of us) ...the word of man's predestination (the truth of what God had planned for man) was exchanged for the lie of a projection. That is the second step

in the exchange. There is a distinction there. We will talk a little bit about that. The third step was that walking in the light was exchanged for walking in the darkness, because the light reveals what is true and things are hidden in the darkness.

Think very practically about the sequence of the Fall. Initially the woman listens to the word of Satan. She then brings that same word to her husband. He exchanged the truth of God... (which he was receiving each and every day from the tree of life in the fellowship of the tree of life) ...He exchanged that for the word now of his wife, which was the word of Satan. That is the first exchange. Then, they exchanged the truth of their predestination for the lie of a projection, and they decide to make fig leaves - step two. Then, step three, they hear the Lord walking through the garden in the cool of the day, and they exchange the light of fellowship (where issues can be addressed) for hiding in the trees. Can you see it is just a very simple three-step progression here - three points of exchange.

Let us look at the craftiness of the serpent here. Let us go to Genesis chapter 3 verse 1. 'Now the serpent [This is talking about 'the serpent of old'. This is the dragon. This is Satan here, pretending to be a seraph] was more cunning [more cunning, more crafty, more shrewd - however you want to say it] than any beast of the field which the Lord God had made. And he said to the woman, "Has God indeed said, 'You shall not eat of every tree of the garden?' " ' Satan is not launching in with a big statement. He is crafty. He starts with a question. What does a question require? A question generally requires an answer. Once you have a question and an answer, you have a conversation happening. He is wanting to engage the woman in a conversation, so he asks a question. It is a loaded question. He is wanting to get her thinking about the prohibition in relation to the tree of the knowledge of good and evil. He says, 'Has God indeed said you shall not eat of every tree of the garden?' We know he says 'God'.

He does not say 'Yahweh *Elohim*'. It was Yahweh *Elohim* who said to Adam, 'You shall not eat from the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, for in the day you eat of it you will surely die.' Why is that important? It is not just a semantical point. Yahweh *Elohim* is describing the fellowship of Yahweh where the Father, Son and Holy Spirit are all sanctified according to Their name and empowered with the seven Spirits of God through the Holy Spirit to make offering to reveal One Another. When you see the Father speaking, He is speaking from the ground of fellowship in Yahweh. He is not taking His own separate initiative that is independent from the fellowship.

Satan is crafty by saying this to the woman. I am sure Adam had said to her, 'This is Yahweh *Elohim* who said this.' They were meeting and had fellowship with Yahweh *Elohim* every evening at the tree of life. It was a fellowship. The word was proceeding from a fellowship. Satan is here. He is created, and he has no insight into the fellowship of Yahweh from before the foundation of the world. The angels are not predestined to receive the life of Yahweh and be included in that fellowship in the same way that man is predestined to receive that life and be included in that fellowship. We do receive that life; we are invited to join that fellowship; and we see and understand it by illumination. Satan does not have that. He is observing and his whole mode is to try to get ahead. He is climbing the ladder - the hierarchy. That is how he perceives everything. 'How can I climb the ladder? I am going to ascend above the stars of God. I am going to make my abode on the northern side of Mount Zion, and I will be like God.' He is climbing up higher and higher. 'I want to be like God because God is the top dog, so I am going for the top because God is in charge. He is commanding things. Everybody does what He says. He is the initiator.'

God is the Source of our name and identity as people and the sons of God, but all that is proceeding from a fellowship. Do you see what Satan is trying to do here? He is

inferring that God is acting alone, outside of that fellowship. That is how *he* acts. He says, 'God'. There is a lot in that statement. 'Has God indeed said?' He asks the question to elicit the response.

In verse 2, the woman responds. This is the major misstep (or the first misstep). She engages the conversation. The moment she starts listening (or engaging) she is beginning to be deceived. Verse 2, 'And the woman said to the serpent, "We may eat the fruit of the trees of the garden; but of the fruit of the tree which is in the midst of the garden, God has said... [she is already responding and saying the same thing that Satan said to her. She has now shifted from 'Yahweh *Elohim*' to 'God'. She is standing outside of the fellowship, and she is now making an observation concerning God] ...God has said, 'You shall not eat it, nor shall you touch it, lest you die.'"'

There are a number of interesting things about this statement. We have to compare it to Genesis 2 verses 16 to 17 which is where the Lord God speaks to Adam. He says it very clearly and it is a clear statement of fact. It is a clear statement of reality. The tree of the knowledge of good and evil belongs to God. It is *His* tree. He is the Creator. Man is not the Creator. If man presumes to be that, he dies. God is not trying to keep anything from them. It is just the statement of what is true. He is protecting them. 'Now the woman said to the serpent, "We may eat of the fruit of the trees of the garden; but of the fruit of the tree which is in the midst of the garden, God has said, 'You shall not eat it, nor shall you touch it, lest you die.'"'

There are two very interesting little distinctions here where the woman has completely changed what the Lord had said. The woman's response shows that she was beginning to exchange the truth of God for a lie. We could say that the first one is that she is referring to 'God' now, not 'Yahweh *Elohim*'. Secondly, she overstates the prohibition. God had said nothing about whether they could touch the tree or not. That was not relevant. God had said, 'You

will not eat it.' She has added that; she is inflating the prohibition in her mind. That is important because this thought process is starting. She is beginning to think, 'Yeah, this prohibition is a little bit over the top, right? It has gone from, "You will not *eat* it (which is just a very clear statement of reality)" to now, "You cannot *touch* it." It would only be just one more step to, "We cannot even *look* at it. When we walk past it, we have to shield our eyes."' The prohibition is growing; she is overstating it, while at the same time, she is understating the consequence. She is understating the consequence. She says, '...*Lest* you die.' God said, 'You eat that tree, *you will surely die.*' The Hebrew is great because it is 'You will die, die.' It is that Hebrew thing where the word is emphasised twice. 'You will surely die.' There are no ifs, buts or maybes. 'You will *die*. You will die physically; you will die spiritually; you will die.'

She inflates the prohibition, but then she understates the consequence, '...*Lest* you die.' That is not the same thing. 'If per chance you die. You may die, but you may not die.' There is just a little crack here. It is all feeding this idea that this is an unreasonable demand that God is making and He is trying to keep something from them.

This is what Satan is after. Verse 4: 'The serpent said to the woman, "You shall not surely die... [You will not surely die.' He is almost agreeing with what she said. '...*Lest* you die.' (You probably will, but there is a chance you will not) He is saying, 'Yeah, yeah. No, you will not definitely die'] ...for God knows... [now this is where he goes for it - sticking with God] ...God knows that in the day you eat of it [because He has the knowledge of good and evil. It is His tree] ...God knows that when you eat of it, your eyes will be open... [You will get new knowledge. You will get all this knowledge. You will get the same knowledge that God has. If you get the same knowledge that He has, you will be like Him] ... and you will be like God, knowing good and evil." God does not want you to eat the tree because He does

not want you to be like Him. He is trying to limit you. But there really are all these other possibilities.' Satan impugned God's motive and promised her that if she ate from this tree, she would be like God - meaning that she would find creative initiative.

Verse 6: 'When the woman saw the tree... [We know that having engaged this discussion (having received Satan's word), she has exchanged the truth of God for a lie and now she is looking at the tree a different way. She has never looked at the tree this way before, but now she is looking at it in a different way. Her senses are distorted. She is deceived. She looks at the tree of the knowledge of good and evil in a new way and she is looking at it] ...saw it was good for food [That just means she is not looking at it and saying, 'I am really hungry and that fruit looks really delicious and tasty and that will satisfy the hunger in my belly.' That is not what it means. She is saying 'This looks good as an alternative food source because, at the moment, we are completely limited and confined to this fellowship with Yahweh *Elohim* and my fellowship with my husband at the tree of life every day. That is our food. That is our provision. That is where we get our energy to do the will of God each day. This tree looks good for food. It is an alternative to that. I can find energy for my work apart from that fellowship at the tree of life.] and pleasant to the eyes [she believed that it would give her power to fulfil her desires and expectations] and desirable to make one wise... [means that she has considered that the fruit would make her wise as a person who could then judge between good and evil and make the difference between good and evil.]'

Adam exchanged the truth of God for a lie when he received the word from his wife. The big distinction is that he was not deceived. The woman was deceived. She was deceived as she engaged in this conversation with the serpent. Adam was not deceived. He was just blatantly disobedient when he received that word from his wife. Then he ate from the fruit of the tree of the knowledge of good and

evil wanting to be the source of his own name and works and to exercise dominion over the creation apart from fellowship with the Lord. He is disobedient; that is the transgression. That is when sin enters the world. That is the Fall.

Once Adam had eaten - verse 7: 'Then the eyes of both of them were opened, and they knew that they were naked [that is the only new knowledge they get - they get knowledge of a few things]; and they sewed fig leaves together and made themselves coverings.' This is another step.

The outcome of the Fall was shame, and there are two dimensions to this. They became aware. What knowledge did they get? They became aware of their own nakedness. That is the first point of awareness - the new knowledge. That means their vulnerability, their inadequacy, everything that is wrapped up in nakedness. Then, on top of that, they suddenly became very aware of the consequences of disobedience. They are suddenly sick in their stomach with anxiety. Their head is suddenly throbbing - the first headache and all the flu symptoms just hit them like a truck. They become sick, they are aware of their mortality. All of the creation is now in disharmony. The lion is trying to eat them. He does not want to listen to what Adam has to say anymore. Everything is now plunged into a desperate struggle for survival. They become immediately aware of the fruit of their disobedience.

Those two things together then - the awareness of their nakedness (their own inadequacy, their own vulnerability, apart from fellowship with the Lord), and then the consequences of their disobedience. It is hard to imagine this, but we can all identify with a situation where it suddenly gets out of control, and you know there is no way of pulling it all back together. This was on a very macro scale. It suddenly all went out of control and there was absolutely no way of remedying this. There is now a new motivation. They are gripped with fear. motivated by self-preservation. This is the

other law now - man's infirmity - motivated by self-preservation, which is a very deep and acute manifestation of the fear of death.

Motivated by self-preservation... I suspect that the blame-game probably began well before they ever started talking to the Lord about what had happened. Can you picture that? It has suddenly all gone bad, and you have two people. Now who is to blame for this? They have the other law now - self-preservation. 'You gave me the fruit.' I think the man probably had quite a bit to say to his wife in the immediate aftermath, and she probably had quite a bit to say back to him - the very big first argument. They get past that and they think, 'We still have to do something about this. Despite the enmity in their relationship now, they both decide that they are going to work together to sew fig leaves to cover their nakedness. They agree together to make coverings for themselves using fig leaves. The fig leaves are a projection.

This is the second step in exchanging the truth of God for a lie. I want to make a big point here. We made the point at Easter that Satan is not the father of the other law in our hearts. He is the father of lies. The origin of the other law in our hearts is the transgression (or the disobedience) of Adam. That is the other law that then flows down to all Adam's children. Satan is not the origin of that. He is the father of lies. Concerning his lie, let us not give him too much credit in terms of how good a liar he is (if it is even possible to get credit for being a liar). If you are the father of lies, then maybe you do derive some credit (or verification) from being a good liar. We are not going to give him too much credit for being a good liar. He is a good liar but let us be a bit careful here. He fathers the lie that there are all these possibilities. God's word is true and the thoughts of the Father, Son and Holy Spirit concerning each and every one of us are more numerous than the sand of the seashore. That defines the truth concerning you as a son of God. What Satan fathers is the lie that you could be something other than that. You

could somehow come up with something better than that. All he has to do is be the father of the idea (or the thought) that that is possible.

Now having received that word, Adam and his wife are plunged into the consequences of disobedience. They are now motivated by the fear of death to grab a hold of whatever resources they possibly can. 'The fig leaves look alright. They look better than most of the other leaves, so we will go with that.' They grab whatever resource they can to cover the shame of their nakedness - to make a projection. That is not the lie that Satan fathered. That is the lie that *they* fathered. That is *their* lie.

This is a very big point. I have said here that Satan is not the father of my projection. My projection is not *his* lie; it is *my* lie. *I* created that; it is *my* lie. I need to be accountable for my own projection. This is the second point of exchange here, where I am exchanging the truth of God's predestination for the lie of my own projection, for the purpose of deceiving those around me. That is a big distinction. My projection then is my own idol in my heart. Idolatry is self-worship. What is running with the exchange of the truth of God for the lie is the exchange of worship for the Creator to the creature. This is not the creation in terms of the natural creation in the first case. That is another step. What creature? If I am receiving the word of Satan, I am actually worshipping *him*. I am giving value to his word over and against the value to the word of God the Father and worshipping him by being obedient to his word. That is the first point of exchange.

Then, having received that word, I am now worshipping *myself*. Idolatry is self-worship. *I* am the creature and I am giving worth and value and investing all my time and effort and resources into making my own projection a reality. This is a second step.

Then we can go the third step in terms of hiding. 'I will just keep moving among the trees.' Later in the same chapter, Paul described the messengers of Satan. Let us think about this from the perspective of

ministry, because we are saying, 'We have this ministry...' There are different modes of ministry. Later in the same chapter Paul described the messengers of Satan by saying in 2 Corinthians 11 verses 13 and 14, 'For such are false apostles, deceitful workers, transforming themselves into apostles of Christ [pretending to be something that they are not. It is a simple point], and no wonder! For Satan himself transforms himself into an angel of light.' The mode of Satan is trading. That is what sorcery is; it is trading. This is where the law of sin is seen. It is seen in all the trading.

A person who is walking in craftiness will employ a trading mode in their relationships and in relation to their ministry. Rather than laying down their life for people in offering, they will seek to ingratiate themselves in the eyes of other people for the purpose of gaining favour or receiving something in return. I was anecdotally reflecting a little on evangelistic initiatives and strategies and thinking about all those strategies that begin with how to ask a question (how to ask a question to elicit a certain response) to draw a person into a conversation which is probably not prompted or initiated by the Holy Spirit at all. I am thinking that that mode actually goes right the way back to here. To think a little bit anecdotally, that is not how evangelism works. We are not tricking people into a conversation. They (false ministers) rely upon the strategies that they can develop using their own mind to achieve the outcome that they want. This may include using persuasive words of wisdom to convince people to believe their message for the sake of a successful ministry outcome.

In contrast to this, Paul testified to the Corinthians in his first letter. He said in 1 Corinthians 2 verse 3, 'I was with you in weakness, in fear, and in much trembling.' When he is saying 'weakness', he is saying, 'I was with you, joined to the fellowship of Christ's sufferings; to His crucifixion; to those seven wounding events where He was crucified in weakness. But right there in

those seven wounding events was also where the power of God was revealed - the power of resurrection life.' Paul is saying, 'I am joined to that weakness. It is a very specific kind of weakness.' He had to learn this over the course of his whole ministry. He had the thorn in the flesh - the group of Jews that chased him from place to place. They stoned him on his first missionary journey, and he was dragged out of the city dead. Then he stands up on his feet and walks back into the city; but he would have carried the effects in terms of his physical body. This is where he is saying, 'I bear the marks of the Lord Jesus in my body.' That event, as miraculous as it was (when he just stands up and walks back into the city), I am sure he is waking up every morning with a lot of aches and pains that are the aftermath of that. He is relying on the grace of God, the power of resurrection life. It takes him quite a season. Three times he is asking the Lord, 'Surely my ministry would be more effective if I did not have this group following me around everywhere, refuting everything I say, turning the crowds against me, beating me up. Surely if you could just remove the impediment, I would be able to get on and be a bit more successful in relation to my ministry.' But the Lord says, 'No. My power is made perfect in your weakness. You do not need any craftiness. Just stay joined to the weakness of Christ.' Then he says, 'in fear'. He is talking about the fear of God here. He did not minister according to the fear of man.

Jeremiah is another great example of this. Right from the beginning of his ministry, the Lord says to Jeremiah, 'You are going to keep running into people who completely reject your ministry; but do not worry about it. Do not be afraid. Do not look into their faces. You do not have to live and die based on the reflection that you get from them. Just stay obedient to what I am saying to you. Keep proclaiming My word.' Jeremiah says somewhere, when he is getting down in the dumps, 'Lord, your word has resulted in derision for me all day.' The Lord is saying, 'Well, what else do you expect? You are the one who is out there saying it. How did you

think they were going to respond? Do not tell me all your troubles. You are the one who is saying it.' There are some interesting dynamics in all that.

The Lord says right from the beginning, 'Do not be afraid of them.' This is Jeremiah 1 verse 17. ' "Therefore prepare yourself and arise and speak all that I command you. Do not be dismayed before their faces, lest I dismay you before them. [Verse 19] They will fight against you. They shall not prevail against you because I am with you to deliver you." says the Lord.' Jeremiah walks in the fear of the Lord - not the fear of man. Paul walks in the fear of the Lord - not the fear of men. He is not worried about how they are judging him or reacting to what he says.

Finally, 'in much trembling'... This described his demeanour in relation to the word of God. We know that verse well in Isaiah 66 verse 2. ' "For all those things My hand has made, and all those things exist," says the Lord. "But on this one I will look: on him who is poor and of contrite spirit. and who trembles at my word." ' That is what much trembling is referring to. Paul was one who trembled at the Lord's word. He says in verse 4 of 1 Corinthians 2, 'My speech and my preaching were not with persuasive words of wisdom, but in demonstration of the Spirit and of power.' He is talking about the manifestation of the seven Spirits of God.

As Paul is joined to the weakness of Christ, as he is walking in the fear of God, as he is trembling at the Lord's word, he is not using any craft, any trickery, any manipulation, anything that belongs to trading. He is not trying to gain favour. As he is delivered from all those modes ('not walking in craftiness' as he says it), then the power of the seven Spirits of God was being revealed and ministered to his hearers. These are big blocks. 'We have this ministry.'

Back to 2 Corinthians 4 verse 2: 'We have renounced the hidden things of shame, not walking in craftiness nor handling the word of God deceitfully, but by manifestation of the truth.' These two things here are the antithesis of one another. 'How we handle

the word of God' is talking about how we interface with it and how we apply it. We have to handle the word, but are we handling it deceitfully, or are we handling it as a manifestation of the truth? We do need to handle the word; however, we need to handle it the right way. Is the word a resource? Let us put these two things up and say that they are the antithesis of one another. How do we handle the word? Is the word a resource on one hand, or is it a command that we obey on the other hand? We have to find the capacity for obedience in receiving the word and then being joined to the fellowship of Christ's offering, because just wanting to obey is not enough. This is often symptomatic of the problem as we will just read in a moment. Is the word a resource or is it a command that we obey? Are we looking for food to feed our idol or are we looking for food to do the will of God?

Paul describes the carnal mode of interfacing with the word in Romans chapter 7. I will do this very briefly, because we have done this a lot. In summary, the word of God comes. The lie of Satan is that I can use my own knowledge of good and evil to appraise the word - to be the measure of the word. This is a deception. That is the first point. Romans 7 verse 11, 'For sin, taking occasion through the commandment, deceived me, and through it killed me.' It shifted me onto another base where I am using my mind to appraise the word. I appraise the word with my mind. I agree with it. I want to live in a manner that is consistent with that word because I desire the life that comes from obedience to the word. If I am honest with myself, it is not that I want to be obedient, it is that I want the life that is promised through obedience. Obedience for me is a means to an end. This is compliance - not obedience; but you can see how this works. I desire the life that comes from obedience to the word. I do not recognise that I am motivated by self-preservation to covet the life because I am looking for a resource. The word of God is the best possible resource that you could ever hope for. I am very self-righteous. I am not out there pursuing riches

or all these kinds of things in the world. That would be all idolatry. I am much more sophisticated than that. I am after the best resource - the word of God. I do not recognise that I am motivated by self-preservation to covet the life. My covetousness brings me under the judgement of the Law which says, 'You shall not covet.' We have looked at that a lot. The summary is verse 22. 'I delight in the Law of God according to the inner man [I agree with it], but I see another law in my members [which is self-preservation], warring against the law of my mind, and bringing me into captivity to the law of sin which is in my members.' Satan articulated the law of sin when he said, 'All that a man has he will give for his life.' He is going to trade. This self-preservation will lock him into the bondage of trading.

The prophet Ezekiel described the same principle in Ezekiel 33 verse 31: 'They come to you as people do... [I like that phrase, 'They come to you, as people do.' Here it is referring to Ezekiel as a messenger, and he is identifying human nature. 'They come to you as people do.' It is like Jesus saying that He knows what is in the heart of man. This is how it works. This is what is motivating people] ...they come to you as people do. They sit before you as My people [not talking in the world - *My* people] and they hear your words... [Later on, he describes the words, too. It is like someone singing a lovely song with a beautiful voice and they are also a really accomplished musician. Whether they are playing on the piano and singing, or whether they are strumming their guitar and singing, it is a beautiful song. It is that kind of music that you think, 'I could listen to this all day. It actually makes me feel good.' The Lord is comparing that sort of mode - loving it, loving the word] ...they hear your words, but they do not do them [there is no capacity for obedience, even if there is a desire for it. There is no capacity for it]; for with their mouth they show much love, but their hearts pursue their own gain.' That is the little summary in Ezekiel, which is the same little summary that is in Romans chapter 7.

From a ministry perspective, a person will handle the word deceitfully if they cleave with deceit to the messengers of Christ who proclaim the word of present truth to them. Rather than receiving the word of God with meekness and meeting the messengers of Christ in a fellowship, they will view the word as a resource that will empower their own ministry projection. It is just interfacing with it as a resource. Even though a person may communicate the content of the word to others in an accurate manner, the ministry projection is the expression of a lie.

Let us look at the positive as we close. 1 John 1 verse 1 is talking about how we do need to handle the word. John says, 'That which was from the beginning, which we have heard, which we have seen with our eyes, which we have looked upon, and our hands have handled, concerning the word of life...' The word from the beginning is the command of the King. Let us just draw it all together. The word from the beginning is the command of the King that proceeds from the fellowship of the tree of life - that word.

There is a progression for it to become the food that enables us to do the will of God. We firstly need to *hear* it. John says, 'That which we have heard...' We obviously need to read the Scriptures, but reading the Scriptures is not enough. What is written in the Scriptures has to be proclaimed to us as a word of present truth. John says, 'Blessed are those who read and those who hear.' It has to be proclaimed. We have to hear the word. This is the way the Lord speaks to us. We firstly hear it, and 'faith comes by hearing, and hearing by the word of Christ.' It comes through the preached word. Paul says, 'This is the word which we preach to you.' He says, 'How can we hear without a preacher?' It has to be proclaimed. Then the Scriptures are warning us, 'Take heed *how you hear* that word.' You can hear that word and assess it with your mind and agree with it and decide it is a fantastic resource. You are going to do it. You are not going to realise you are motivated by self-preservation, and it is bringing you into captivity to the law of

sin and death. So 'take heed how you hear' because there are two different ways of hearing it. Are we appraising it with the mind or is it the conviction of the Spirit?

Then we have to *see* with our eyes. This is talking about the eyes of our heart - not the eyes in our head. The eyes in our head are feeding information to the mind. The person who is relying on what they can see all the time is going to be asking the Lord for signs to prove that what He is saying is true. This is all 'looking for a sign'. 'Faith comes through hearing.' We hear the word firstly and then we are turning in response to the word to see the voice. We are turning to the lordship of the Holy Spirit, and the veil is taken from our eyes so we can see. It is the eyes of our heart; it is our spirit that is being illuminated. That is the first big distinction. Our spirit is being illuminated. As we hear the word, we turn to the lordship of the Holy Spirit. The veil is removed and we can see. What can we see? We are seeing the face of Christ and we are beholding. We are looking upon Him whom we have pierced. There are a number of elements to this. We are also beholding. That is, we are looking upon Christ whom we have pierced and beginning to mourn. That mourning is godly sorrow. It is leading to repentance.

As we look into the face of Christ, we are also beholding as in a mirror the glory of who we have been called to be as a son of God. This is an absolute miracle. You have billions of people all receiving the word. They are all turning to the lordship of the Holy Spirit. The veil is removed. They all look into the face of Christ, and they all see the unique nature of their own sonship which Christ has completed for them. This is by the Spirit of the Lord. We are seeing the hope of our sonship.

Then John says, '...our hands have *touched or handled*,' I was reminded that Jesus said to the disciples on the day of His resurrection, 'Behold My hands and My feet. It is Me.' They thought they were seeing a ghost - a spirit, and the Lord saying, 'No, this is Me. You can see the holes in My hands.' He

is saying, 'You can look at My feet. You can look at the wound in My side. It is Me.' Then He says, in Luke 24 verse 39, 'Behold My hands and My feet, that it is I, Myself. Handle Me and see, for a spirit does not have flesh and bones as you see I have.'

His resurrection body (that immortal, incorruptible, spiritual, resurrection body) was as spiritual as it was physical and as physical as it was spiritual. That is the substance of our hope. We have a living hope that is the substance of our resurrection body, which we all receive on the day of resurrection. That is our hope and it is substantial; it is real; you can handle it.

How do we handle it? We handle it as the word is proclaimed to us and we respond by turning. Then the veil is removed. We behold the hope of our sonship, and we are actually receiving capacity then in the word of faith that is ministered to us. 'Faith is the substance of things hoped for.' We are receiving this as a substantial, daily reality, walking in the fellowship of Christ's offering and sufferings. That is how we handle it. The substance of our hope as faith is ministered to us and the righteousness of God is being revealed in us as we are doing the works of our sonship day by day from faith to faith as we continue receiving the word in that way. The word is appropriated in our lives so that what is true in Christ (what He has already completed for us) is progressively becoming true in us. It is being made substantial in us. This is how we are to handle the word of God.

Paul explained that the opposite of handling the word of God deceitfully is just looking for food to empower my projection; it is all a lie. The opposite of that is that our ministry is the manifestation of the truth. This means that the word of God that we proclaim is the expression of our own testimony. The mode of Paul's ministry was to explain and to demonstrate his message. He proclaimed and portrayed Christ as crucified. Our ministry is the expression of our testimony when the truth of our message is demonstrated in our own life, in our own marriage and in our own family. This is the

opposite of striving for some kind of ideal. Our ministry is the expression of our testimony when the truth of our message is demonstrated in our own life, in our own marriage and in our own family. This is also the opposite of saying one thing publicly or with others, but then there is a completely different thing that is true at home. When the truth of our message is demonstrated in our own life, in our own marriage and in our own family, this is what it means to be walking in the truth.

I will finish here. This is where I have been considering devotionally how the apostle John talks about the truth and what it means to know the truth; what it means to have the truth in us; what it means to walk in the truth. It is amazing that he said in 3 John 1 verse 4, 'I have no greater joy... [this is John speaking as an old man, motivated pastorally toward those he is writing to. This is a pastoral letter] ...I have no greater joy than to hear that my children walk in truth.' When we minister in this way, the word that we proclaim is an invitation for our hearers... (thinking about our evangelism), ...When we minister in this way, the word that we proclaim is an invitation for our hearers to join a fellowship with us which is a fellowship with the Father and the Son.