

"THE COVENANT PERSON IN CHALLENGING TIMES"

II Corinthians 2:12; 4:18

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Now tonight I want to talk to you about one of the most important subjects in the Bible that is important for each one of us to know - "The Covenant Person in Challenging Times."

This is going to be a Bible reading sermon - I don't do many of these. I'll be reading a lot of scripture this evening. So how many of you have your swords with you tonight? Let me see it. Well -- we are in business. Let the devil come; we are ready to roll.

Now I'll be reading out of the New International Version; you may have a King James Version or a New American Standard or something like that, but whatever it will be it will be very close. We are going to read a lot of scripture this evening so I want you to get ready to go with me. I would like for you to let the Word speak to your heart.

Will you turn with me please to Second Corinthians chapter 4. We are just going to read one verse of scripture now, but in just a few minutes we will be reading probably almost two chapters before it is over with this evening.

I hope that you will stay with the Word. I feel this message on my heart and I think it is one of the most important things, as I have said, that we can talk about.

Second Corinthians chapter 4 verse 7 - a verse that speaks to each one of our hearts and each one of our lives. In verse 7 it says - Second Corinthians chapter 4 -

But we have treasure in jars of clay to show
that hits all-surpassing power is from God and
not from us.

That's what Joy was singing about just a minute ago. I want to read that one more time.

But we have treasure in jars of clay to show
that hits all-surpassing power is from God and
not from us.

Will you quietly be seated for prayer and hold your Bible there to be ready in just a moment or two.

PRAYER

You know if we really see ourselves tonight as Bible believing Christians then it is important that the faith that we find in the Bible is to be a living reality in our everyday life that we understand one important principle and that principle is that we are covenant people collectively and we are covenant personalities individually. We are covenant people collectively and we are covenant personalities individually.

When I use the term "covenant" it means an agreement, a reciprocal agreement between two or more people. But the word "covenant" is more than just a contract. A contract can be

impersonal; a contract can be unemotional; a contract can be made between two people who have never seen each other and perhaps never will see each other. It may be legal; or it may be binding, but yet it leaves a lot when it is compared to the meaning of a covenant.

A covenant on the other hand is a commitment. It is a commitment to an agreement that is social, an agreement that is personal, an agreement that is emotional, an agreement that is physical, and an agreement that is spiritual.

So when the Bible talks about a covenant it talks about it in terms of a total commitment. Now - the interesting thing about the Bible is that God has made a covenant with us that is full and complete in every way. That's why the Bible is called "The Old Testament," or "The Old Covenant," and that is why it is called, "The New Testament," or "The New Covenant."

This is what the Bible is talking about in Genesis chapter 9 verse 16 when God said, "I put a rainbow in the sky as a sign of the covenant and every time I see the covenant, he says, or,

Every time I see the rainbow it will remind me
of the everlasting covenant I have made with
all creatures of every kind on the earth.

God made a covenant with all of the creatures of every kind on the earth.

This is what the Bible is talking about in Isaiah chapter 54 verse 10 God talking to Israel and also talking to us as the new Israel saying -

Though that the mountains will be shaken and
though that the hills will be removed, yet my
unfailing love for you will never be shaken
nor the covenant of my peace says the Lord who
has compassion on you.

"'Though the mountains would be shaken and though the hills would be removed, my unfailing love for you will never be shaken and my covenant of peace will never be removed,' says the Lord who has compassion."

Now the same theme is reiterated in the New Testament in Hebrews chapter 13 and verses 20 and 21 when the writer of Hebrews says

May the God of peace who through the blood of
the eternal covenant brought from the dead our
Lord Jesus Christ, the great shepherd of the
sheep - may He equip you with every good thing
to do His will and may He work in you that
which is pleasing to Him, to our Lord Jesus
Christ to whom be glory and power forever and
ever.

May He equip you with every good thing to do
His will and may He work in you that which is
pleasing to Him.

And He does that -

through the eternal blood of the covenant
through which He raised from the dead our Lord
Jesus Christ the great shepherd of the sheep.

But when we begin to talk about the covenant we see then it is
a commitment that God has made to us and in turn it is a commitment
that He requires out of each one of us.

We say to ourselves, How in the world can we live out the
covenant life in this kind of world where these are challenging
times?

And as we look around us it looks as though the world has lost
its mornings. It does not know where it is going. It does to know
what it is doing. And the big problems that we have today is that
the United States of America - we have forgotten that we are a
covenant people. That this nation was founded on a covenant with
God. And our problems in Congress and our problems in the White
House, the kind of unethical things that we've been watching
through the past kinds of years -- all of the loss of authority and
the loss of respect that we have had for the great institutions of
our land has been because there is a loss of this covenant
understanding.

God can not operate without a covenant and faith can not operate without a covenant.

So when we look around us we know that we live in perilous times. It is as though Second Timothy chapter 3 would come into our living rooms every day in living color.

Know this also that in the last days perilous times shall come. Men shall be lovers of their ownelves - covetous, boasters, proud, blasphemers, disobedient to parents, unthankful, unholy, without natural affection, truce breakers, incontinent, fierce, despisers of those that are good, heady, high-minded, lovers of pleasure having a form of godliness but denying the power thereof.

Those who are involved in that can not enter into the kingdom of heaven.

We know that we are living in a day of what is called "Carnal Culture."

When you look at Galatians chapter 5 and verse 19 it tells us that "the deeds of the flesh are these," and we see it everyday - sexual immorality, impurity, debauchery, idolatry, witchcraft, hatred, discord, jealousy, fits of rage, selfish ambition, dissensions, factions, quarreling,

drunkenness, reveling and such like. Those who do those things can not enter into the kingdom of heaven.

The Bible tells us that in the last days one of the things that we have to look for is Satanic deception.

In Matthew chapter 24 and verse 24 it tells us that in the last times we are going to see false Christ. We are going to see false prophets. There is going to be false signs and there are going to be false wonders even to the point that the very elect of God would be deceived if it were possible.

So we find ourselves saying - "How then shall we live?" If we are surrounded by a world that is in perilous times - if we are surrounded by a cult/carnal culture - if we are surrounded by Satanic deception, what is it going to take?

We have got to understand that we live by a different drum beat because we are a covenant people and the covenant people have a different style and the covenant people sing a different song and the covenant people follow a different star and the covenant people have a different security. The covenant people tell us that

Though God slay us yet shall we trust Him and
though the skin worms eat our body yet in our
flesh we shall see God -

Because Jesus Christ is the same yesterday, today and forever and in Him we live and we move and we have our being.

Hallelujah.

We begin to think about the covenant people we understand what Paul the Apostle means in Romans chapter 12 and verse 11 and 12 when he says -

What you have to understand that you have to maintain your spiritual fervor never be lacking in zeal but serving the Lord be joyful in hope, patient in affliction, faithful in your prayer.

I don't care what the circumstances are. I don't care what the situation may be. I don't care how tangled your life may be, when you begin to live by the covenant you can be joyful in hope and patient in affliction and faithful in a prayer and maintain your zeal and keep up your vigor and your God will see you through because we know that He is able to do exceedingly abundantly above all that we ask or that we even think. Amen, amen and amen.

Well praise Him in this place. Let the people of the Lord praise the Lord.

Well what does it mean then to be a covenant person? That's exactly why Paul wrote to the people in Second Corinthians. We know that these are tough times. We know that it is not easy always to be able to know what to do or how to do it.

Sometimes we find ourselves facing difficult circumstances. This was the same situation that they had in Corinth. Paul had

written the first letter to Corinth and he had tried to deal with their multitude of problems. They had problems about marriage. They had problems about their legal relationships. They had problems about the Lord's Supper. They had problems about worship. They had problems about the exercise of the gifts of the Spirit. They had problems about divided loyalty. Some said - I am of Sepus. Some said - I am of Paul. Some said - I am of Apolos. They had difficult times.

Paul wrote them a scathing letter in First Corinthians, but then he got a little concerned about that and sent Titus back down to Corinth to try to soothe the waters and get the church working together in unity so they would really be a covenant people.

Then you pick him up in Second Corinthians chapter 2 beginning with verse 12 - you have your Bibles turn with me there. Now we hear Paul the Apostle saying -

Now when I went to Boaz to preach the gospel
of Christ and I found that the Lord had opened
a door for me I still had no peace of mind.
Because I did not find my brother Titus there.
So I said goodbye to them and went on to
Macedonia.

Now what he had hoped to do was to meet Titus as he went to Troaz but Titus didn't show up there. He wanted Titus to bring him a report. He sent Titus to Corinth to be a trouble shooter.

But he did meet Titus at Macedonia. And Titus brought him a good report. He said, Paul those people that were having that trouble think things are doing better. So he writes this second epistle to the church at Corinth because he wants first of all to establish the fact of his apostolic authority because there were those people who were questioning his right to say some of the things that he said in First Corinthians. So in the second letter he establishes that.

But in the second letter he also makes them aware of the importance of them being the

TAPE IS TURNED OVER

... has given us a covenant ministry. Say that with me one more time, please. "God has given us a covenant ministry."

Everything that we do in the world today in the name of the Church individually or corporately is a covenant ministry. And he starts out in verse 14. He says - Now I want you to understand the covenant ministry.

But thanks be to God who always leads us in
triumphantal procession in Christ and through
us spreads everywhere the fragrance of the
knowledge of Him.

That's a marvelous verse because it gives us the picture of ancient Rome. In the days when they would have a triumphant procession of the army as it was returning from battle. As you know Rome ruled

the world. They would go off and conquer a nation and bring back slaves and bring back treasures. When they came marching in to the city of Rome all the people of Rome would gather on the streets and line the streets and there would be a sweet smelling incense that was thrown in the streets and all around the beautiful smell in the air as those Roman soldiers came processing triumphantly back into Rome.

That's what he means in verse 14 where it says - "The first step of this covenant ministry is - "We are to God the aroma of Christ. Among those who are being saved and those who are perishing." To the ones who do not know Christ is what he is saying.

We are the smell of death because our lives bring them a kind of conviction. But to the others (those who know Christ) we are the fragrance of life who is equal to such a task. Unlike so many we do not peddle the word of God for prophet - on the contrary in Christ we speak before God with sincerity like men sent from God. We have a covenant ministry to be the very aroma of Jesus Christ.

If there is anything that ought to sweeten up the stinking smell of this world, it ought to be the Church of the living God. And when we have a covenant ministry before the Lord and people see

us we become the sweet smelling savor to them and they know that there is something in us they need because we have a covenant process with God the father through His Son Jesus Christ. Amen, amen and amen.

I am almost tempted to ask you to ask your neighbor - "How do you smell?" But I won't do that. But I want you to say - "I am the aroma of Christ." Would you say that with me? Do you know what we are talking about. "I am the aroma of Christ."

Why are you the aroma? Because you're marching triumphantly You are in a procession. And when Paul uses this term, he is not talking about the Roman processional. He is using that as an illustration of the sight of the sons of God trampling Satan under their feet because He that is in us is greater than he that is in the world. Amen, amen and amen. The aroma of Christ.

The second step in this covenant ministry is found in verse 17. Because we speak before God with sincerity. If you were to ask me this evening what is the number one problem in the church today? So many people serve God insincerely. For so many people it is a spectator sport. For so many people it is just a matter of being entertained. There is a lack of real discipleship among the church of the living God today all over the world.

What the Lord is doing now, He is shaking the Church and He is sifting out the wheat from the chaff because there is only one kind of Church that Jesus Christ is going to come for. He is going to

come for a Church without spot, without wrinkle, without blemish or any such thing. He is going to come for a Church that is a virgin bride to meet him in the air and so shall we ever be with the Lord. Amen, amen and amen. We speak with sincerity. Are you all still on board here?

We are the aroma of Christ with covenant ministry. We are the aroma of Christ and we speak with sincerity. Say that with me. We speak with sincerity.

The third thing we have to understand is that we are letters. "We are letters that are read by everybody" beginning in chapter 3.

Are we beginning to commend ourselves again?

Or, do we need like some people letters of recommendation to you or from you. You, yourselves, are our letter written on our hearts known and read by everybody.

You show that you are a letter from Christ. Do you get that? You show that you are a letter from Christ.

The result of our ministry written not with ink but with the Spirit of the living God not on tablets of stone but on tablets of human hearts. Not only do we have the aroma of Christ. Not only do we speak with sincerity but we are the letters of Christ.

Say it - "I am a letter of Christ." Say that one more time. "I am a letter of Christ."

ILLUSTRATION

The man that brought the gospel to my family out in North Dakota --- he was a man that was nothing but a drunk down in the derelict section of San Francisco. He had decided to commit suicide and on the way to commit suicide he went into a little storefront mission. There he saw a former alcoholic and he heard him give his testimony.

At that particular time he then went down to the altar. He found Jesus Christ as Lord and he was delivered. His name was Matthew. They knew him as old man Matthew because he was the local resident drunk. His wife had turned against him. He was living so bad that even his dog left him. That is how bad the situation was.

But he found a new life in Jesus Christ. When he rushed out of that storefront he went back to the bars that he ordinarily frequented and he jumped up on a bar stool and began to - "Preach Jesus saves me - Jesus saves me."

The people said - Well, old man Matthew has really got a toot on tonight.

He would go to the next bar that he frequented and gets up on the bar stool and shouts, "Jesus saves me. Jesus saves me."

He got on the street corner and began to preach about how Jesus Christ had come into his life - a crowd of 30 or 40 came and listened to him and in that particular meeting, just about an hour after he had become a Christian over 26 people found Jesus Christ at that curb because he was a letter of Jesus Christ. Amen, amen and amen.

You are a covenant person. You are a covenant person.

You know I don't know when we are ever going to get that. I don't know when we are ever going to get that. I'm tired of sad, disgruntled, wimpish, pushed around Christians. I'm looking for some soldiers to stand and be counted for the name of the Lord Jesus Christ. Amen, amen and amen. You are a covenant person. You are a covenant person.

Speak with sincerity. You are a letter that represents Jesus Christ.

Well, when we begin to see that and we begin to understand that then we begin to see something else in verse 4. Such confidence as this is ours before Christ before God. That means that our confidence is in Christ not that we are confident to claim anything for ourselves but our confidence comes from God. And our confidence comes from God.

I want you to say - "My confidence comes from Christ." Say that with me. "My confidence comes from Christ." I want you to let that sink in your head, would you do that? I thought about

bringing drills tonight and drilling a hole in your head and put it in there. Say it one more time with me. "My confidence comes from Christ."

But notice the next thing. "My competence comes from God." Say that with me. "My competence comes from God."

Now that means that it is good for you to be educated. It is good for you to learn all that you can learn. It is good for you to reach the highest potentiality that you can reach but knowledge is not the only key. The key is confidence in Christ. The key is competence comes from God.

As you know my father was a pioneer preacher. He only started 67 churches during his ministry. After the gospel came to Golden Valley North Dakota through old man Matthew, and he said he was walking on the streets of San Francisco. He had begun to preach the gospel and the Lord spoke to him and said - Go to Golden Valley North Dakota. It had to be the Lord. No one else would want to go to Golden Valley, North Dakota. And he couldn't understand that. A little hole in the road - 350 population, but a big rancher population all around it in those days.

As you have heard me tell, my father's side were all ranchers. So he went to Golden Valley, North Dakota. He started a revival in a blacksmith shop, and the Holy Spirit moved in a great way and he preached the Holy Spirit because he had received the Holy Spirit

subsequently and after his conversion in San Francisco and everybody was receiving the Holy Spirit.

The whole Wlaker family received the Holy Spirit. Three of the Walker boys got called to preach and my grandfather sold out everything that he had and moved to Cleveland, Tennessee, helped start the Church of God, gave the first hundred dollars to the Church of God Orphanage and put his three boys in Bible school.

My father went to Bible School for six weeks. He figured he had learned everything that he needed to know. He got an old ragged tent and went up in Maryland and started preaching from town to town, organized six churches. Came back to Headquarters in Cleveland, Tennessee, and said - "I've organized six churches." They said, "You can't do that; you are not ordained. There is no way you can organize six churches." He said, "What do you want me to do? Go disband all of them?" They said, "No we will ordain you." So they ordained him the next day.

But how could he do that? His confidence was in Christ. His confidence came from God because God in us is the hope of glory. Amen, amen and amen.

Now - we have a covenant ministry. We are the aroma of Christ. We speak with sincerity. We are a letter that is read of everybody and a letter from Christ. Our confidence is in Christ and our confidence comes from God. Now - do you have that?

I'm going to go over it all again - if you don't get it. God has given us a covenant ministry.

Now - the second thing I want you to notice as we start with verse 7 in chapter 3. The covenant ministry reflects the glory of God. Say that with me, please. "The covenant ministry reflects the glory of God."

Now - it is important for us to understand what this really means.

Look at verse 7 -

Now if the ministry that brought death which was engraved in letters on stone came with glory so that the Israelites could not look steadily at the face of Moses because of His glory fading though it was.

When Moses went up on the mount and God gave him the decalogue, the Ten Commandments, and he came back down his face was shinning and there was so much shekinah glory of the Lord on him that the people of Israel fell down almost blinded.

But they sang, Paul says, Look -

If that law which was engraved in stone came with glory so that the Israelites could not look steadily at the face of Moses because of its glory fading though it was, will not the ministry of the spirit be even more glorious?

If the ministry that condemns men is glorious how much more glorious is the ministry that brings righteousness. For what was glorious has no glory now in comparison with the surpassing glory. And if what was fading away - the law that faded away - if what was fading away came with glory, how much greater is the glory of that which last and you have the glory of that that will not fade away.

And step one of that ministry that is reflecting the glory of God is the power of righteousness and God no longer writes His law in stone, He writes it in the hearts of those who are open to Him and He writes His glory, the Greek word is doksha. He writes His pre-eminence. He writes his power. He writes His magnificence. He writes His majesty. He writes His grace. He writes His goodness. He writes His glory and when He writes on our heart He gives you power that through the righteousness of God you can conquer whatever comes your way. Amen, amen and amen.

So the glory of God is reflected how? It reveals the power of righteousness. Now - say with me - the glory of God reveals the power of righteousness. Say it with me please. The glory of God reveals the power of righteousness.

Well - what else does it reflect? We are saying that the covenant ministry reflects the glory of God.

Now - look at verse 12. Therefore, since we have such a hope, we are very bold. We are not like Moses who would put a veil on his face to keep the Israelites from gazing at it while the radiance was fading away. But their minds were made dull for to this day the same veil remains when the old covenant is read. You can read the law and you can go by the legalistic systems and all that is going to bring you is death and there is no glory in it. There is no glory in it. Amen.

Now - it has not been removed because only in Christ is it taken away. Even to this day when Moses is read a veil covers their hearts.

But when ever anyone turns to the Lord - (Oh - I love this.) When anyone ever turns to the Lord, (what happens?) the veil is taken away. Hallelujah.

Now the Lord is the Spirit and where the Spirit of the Lord is there is freedom. Hallelujah be to God.

So not only does it reveal the power of righteousness, but it confirms in us the freedom of the Spirit. When this ministry reflects the glory of God it brings the power of righteousness and then it brings us the expression of the freedom in Christ. And He whom the Son has set free is free indeed. There is no need for us

to be bound by the things that the world is bound by. Don't get caught up in worrying about what the world worries about.

Matthew 6:33 says -

But seek ye first the kingdom of God and His righteousness and all of these things will be added unto you. Don't worry about tomorrow. Tomorrow will take care of itself. Today has enough trouble of its own.

And if you can learn to live in the freedom of the Spirit then you don't worry about the past. You are not concerned about the future, you know it is God and me right now and God and me right now in this covenant -- we can defeat anything that comes our way. Amen, amen and amen. Hallelujah. Well - praise God.

I want you to get excited about this. Turn to your neighbor and say - "Get excited while you feel like it or not." Amen, amen and amen and amen. Get excited. You are a covenant person. You are a covenant person. You are a covenant person. Amen.

They say - well, you know I don't like it this way -- it's too loud.

Back in my baseball playing days I was playing in Charleston, West Virginia, in an American Legion tournament. In the quarter finals - the national quarter finals and there was a big crowd in that stadium.

I played third base and I was right near the third base box and there was a couple there who had a son playing on the other team. Their son on one occasion with a couple of people on base hit a home run with two people on. By the time he rounded third they were so happy -- that woman was so exuberant that she pulled off her husband's straw hat and he was bald as Ul Brenner and she took a coke and poured it all over his head and then for good measure sailed his hat like a frizbee - one of those stiff straw hats - right out on the field. I had to go and retrieve it. That's excitement.

But if you know the covenant of God it is worth getting exciting about. Get excited about it.

Well God gives the covenant ministry and that covenant ministry reflects the glory of God and the glory of God reveals the power of righteousness. The glory of God is expressed in the freedom of the Spirit. Now the glory of God is demonstrated through a transformed likeness.

Look at verse 18 - You hear me quote it often from the Phillips translation. But here it is in the NIV and we who with unveiled faces all reflect - you don't have any choice if you are the covenant person. You don't have any choice - so quit trying to hide it. "Oh my God they might find out I'm a Christian." That would be a tragedy wouldn't it?

And we who with unveiled faces all reflect the Lord's glory are being transformed into His likeness with ever increasing glory which comes from the Lord who is the Spirit. That means it is demonstrated in the transformed likeness. If you have the power of righteousness and you are really energized and expressed in the freedom of the Spirit then it remains that you are demonstrating that transformed likeness.

ILLUSTRATION

When I was in California one of the favorite stories of all time was a young art student who was going through art school and living in Los Angeles and going to the Los Angeles Institute of Art at that time. She was just able to afford a little room right down in the middle of the ghetto.

Every day she would look out there and there was a derelict who walked the streets. He was a man that would get drunk every weekend. He was a "wino" as we knew them in those days. He would beg on the streets. He was a man who had nothing. He was a man who was despised by everybody.

But she had a project to paint someone and some special kind of situation. So she could sit at her window and every afternoon

when people were getting out of the offices he would stand on the corner and beg and get enough money to go get drunk.

So she began to paint him. It took her about a month or six weeks to finally get it painted. When she got it finished she took it to school and it was one of the prize pictures that they had. She took it to the man one day and said - "Look I've been watching you now for three months. I've been painting you for about six weeks. And this is how you look to me."

The man looked at the picture and he couldn't believe his eyes. She had painted a person in a very elegant business suit, a person surrounded by the buildings of Los Angeles. A person who was alert. A person who was erect, but a person who had all the features of this man.

That man looked at it and said, "That's not me. That can't be me. That's not me."

She said, "Oh yes it is. That's you as God sees that you can be. What you are is what you see that you are. But God sees what you can be. You can be in His transformed likeness."

She was able to develop a relationship with Him, to lead him to Jesus Christ, to help him to find a job and about ten years later I heard him give a testimony as an Executive in a Corporation of what Jesus Christ had done for him because he was transformed into the likeness of God because he became a covenant person. Amen, amen and amen.

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Transformed likeness. Transformed likeness reveals the power of righteousness. It is an experience in the freedom of the Spirit and it is demonstrated in a transformed likeness.

Now let's talk a little bit about that likeness. What does that mean? What does that likeness do for you and me? If we are really in His likeness -

All of us who are Christians, the Phillips Translation says, "have no veils on our faces. But we are transformed and forever we reflect like mirrors the glory of the Lord. We are transformed in ever increasing splendor into His own image and this transfiguration comes from the Lord who is the Spirit.

What does that mean? What does that do for us? What does it really happen in our lives at that point? Well, verse one of chapter four -

Therefore, since through God's mercy we have this ministry we do not lose heart. We are confident.

Did you get that? That if you are in His likeness, you can't lose heart. It is not allowed. It is against the rules.

You know you all get real, real quiet when I get down to where the rubber meets the road because you don't want to have

confidence. I would rather be afraid. Get a lot more sympathy. Not nearly as much is expected out of me. If I can wimp along then everybody is going to help me. But God is tired of propping you up. He has given you the keys to the kingdom. Use them. Use them. Use them. Amen.

We do not lose heart.

I'm enjoying this. But I'm having fun.

Verse 2 -

Rather we have renounced secret and shameful ways.

Can't hide it from God. We are the masters of deceit. We are great at subterfuge. We wear false faces.

But we who are covenant people. We have renounced secret and shameful ways. We do not use deception nor do we distort the Word of God. On the contrary we are transparent by setting forth the truth plainly, by being transparent. We commend ourselves to every man's conscience in the sight of God.

So check us out.

I want you to say next week to everybody - "Check me out. Am I who I say I am?" That's what it says right here.

Setting forth eh truth plainly we commend ourselves to every man's conscience in the

sight of God. And even if our gospel is veiled, it is veiled to those who are perishing.

The people that don't want to hear it - the people who make fun of it, the people who say it is a prop, the people who say "I don't need it," what they are forgetting is that they are perishing. They are dead people walking around. They don't know the meaning of life.

The God of this age has blinded the minds of unbelievers so they can not see the light of the gospel of the glory of Christ who is the image of God. But we are transparent.

Then look next -

We have knowledge. But we do not preach ourselves, but Jesus Christ is Lord and ourselves as servants for Jesus' sake. For God who said, 'Let light shine out of darkness made His light shine in our hearts to give us the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Christ.

We have confidence. We are transparent. We have knowledge.

The reason we should not fear -- we know what is going on in the world.

The reason we should not worry -- we know where this whole thing is coming out.

The reason we should not get uptight --- because we know that God is in control.

The reason we shouldn't get upset because we see everything shaken, because we know that after the shaking God is going to bring it all together and when God brings it all together He is going to have one culminating event and that culminating event is when Jesus Christ comes back to earth again and when He comes back to earth again He is going to take us to be with Him.

And where He is there we will be also. And He is going to set up a new kingdom and there is not going to be any more death neither sorrow nor crying neither will there be any more pain for the former things have passed away and He that sits upon the throne says - 'Behold I make all things new.'

Amen, amen and amen. Hallelujah. Well praise Him in this place. Let the people of the Lord praise the Lord.

When we begin to understand that then that brings us to the third premise.

The first premise is - God gives us a covenant ministry. The second premise is - the covenant ministry reflects the glory of God. The third premise is - the glory of God is released as a

treasure in the covenant person. Did you get that? The glory of God is released as a treasure in the covenant person.

Say that with me please. The glory of God is released as a treasure in the covenant person.

This is our text - verse 7.

We have this treasure in jars of clay to show that this all surpassing power is from God and not from us. And He releases within us radiant power, all surpassing power that is in us is from God and not from us. This glory of God is released in us. IT is released first of all as a radiation of power.

Now look at verse 8 -

We are hard pressed on every side, but we are not crushed. We are perplexed, but we are not in despair. We are persecuted, but we are not abandoned. We are struck down, but we are not destroyed.

Why? Because we radiate power because the glory of God is released in us.

There is a treasure in the covenant person. We always carry around in our body the death of Jesus so that the life of Jesus may also be revealed in us. We radiate power but we are energized by Jesus Christ. Our energy comes from Him.

I would to God that we could learn how to allow His energy to really empower us.

What does He say here? He says -

So that the life of Jesus may also be revealed in our body, in our body, energized by the very life of Christ, that we who are alive are always being given over to death for Jesus' sake so that His life may be revealed in our mortal body so then death is at work in us, but life is at work in you.

So while death is working at the same time life is working. The body dies but the Spirit lives forever. And therefore, in verse 13 it is written -

Therefore I have spoken with that same spirit of faith we also believe and therefore speak.

It radiates power. It energizes life but it communicates faith.

We also believe and therefore we speak with the spirit of faith.

It is important what we speak. There is no magic in our words. But the way we talk to ourself - if we talk to ourself about the world's vernacular then we get the world's result. That's the most important thing I've said here tonight. You all missed it.

If we talk to ourselves by the world's vernacular - you know what that is don't you? The words nomenclature - do you know what that is? The words everyday language, the way the world talks to itself, in its own set of language, in its own set of idioms (I didn't say idiots, but I should have said idiots) - it would have been far more precise. And some people are covenant people but they talk to themselves like they are worldly people. Then you wonder why you are depressed. You are depressed because you talked yourself into depression. Hello. Hello. Hello. Yes. Amen, amen and amen.

You are worried because you talked yourself into being worried.

We also believe and therefore speak (and how do we speak? We speak...) out of the spirit of faith.

So you know the ship is going down and you say to yourself - "Isn't the water beautiful?" You say - "But man do I hurt." But you say to yourself, "Boy will I feel great when this is over."

We asked an old man one day - "What was the secret to his success?" He said, "I live by one motto - the Bible says - "It came to pass, but no where does it say - It came to stay." Amen, amen and amen.

So when I release this treasure and this clay - see this clay jar - it has this treasure in it. You know some clay jars look better than other clay jars do. Looking over the congregation.

But every clay jar has its treasure and it is released by the glory of God. That's the covenant ministry. That's the glory of God.

Because we know that the one who raised the Lord Jesus from the dead will also raise us with Jesus and present us with you in His presence.

Now verse 14 - he says -

All this is for your benefit so that the grace which is reaching more and more people may cause thanksgiving to overflow to the glory of God. Therefore, we do not lose heart.

Now I like this next part.

Though outwardly we are wasting away yet inwardly we are being renewed day by day.

If you could get a hold of that, you know - outwardly you are wasting away. I hate to tell you that. But we look in the mirror as the years go by and where oh where has the hair on my head gone? Where oh where has my eye sight gone?

Outwardly wasting away but we are being renewed inwardly day by day.

Notice verse 17 -

For our light and momentary troubles are
achieving for us an eternal glory.

So we are sustained by eternal glory. What happens to us here? What does it give to us? It gives to us the power that is released in us. It radiates power. It energizes life. It communicates faith and it sustains us by the eternal glory that far outweighs all of these little troubles.

So how do we handle this?

We fix our eyes not on what is seen.

Now if you look at what is seen today, it is bad news. Because see - the world measures on everything that is bad. The Christian has to cut through that and recognize everything that is good. I mean advertising is sold on bad things. Hello. Movies bring crowds on bad things. Right? Are you all still here? And the world makes its living on bad things - on the things which are seen.

And if they are not bad it will do its best to make them bad. But you see if you go by that garbage and you don't understand that what is bad is a small percentage of all the good that God is doing then your heart is going to faint within you. But we do not lose heart because we know the ultimate end, when we all get around the throne in heaven there is going to be a multitude there. It is a number that no man can number and the good finalizes and the good

finalizes and triumphs over everything that is bad. Hallelujah be to God.

So we fix our eyes not on what is seen. If you look at the Prime Time sees you are going to be depressed. Sixty Minutes - you are going to be depressed. You know it is a bad day if you get to your office and the Sixty Minutes news team is waiting for you with their cameras. You know it is going to be a very bad day for you that day.

Of you know it is going to be a bad day if you are on the freeway and you start passing a motorcycle gang of Hell's Angels and your horn gets stuck. You know it is going to be a real bad day that day.

Looking at what is seen. So we

Fix our eyes on not what is seen but on what
is seen for what is seen is temporary, but
what is unseen is eternal.

We are sustained by eternal glory. This is the covenant person in challenging times.

Back in the 60s before we moved out here in '67, I met a man who used to come and hear me preach on Sunday night and he incidentally was a Presbyterian. I got very well acquainted with him and he would slip out here on Sunday nights from time to time and we would go to lunch together and he was a great motivator for me.

He had been a man who had been a very successful businessman, the president of a bank and had lost two fortunes because of Alcoholism.

He said, "You know Paul when I came to my senses I was separated from my wife; my children wouldn't talk to me; I had no money; I was dead broke; I was trying to dry out in Georgia Regional Hospital. I had on institutional coveralls and it was in the Fall of the year and I was out in the yard raking leaves. I had been contemplating suicide and thought - there is no hope for me.

He said, but you know there was a time when I taught Sunday school. There was a time when I was very active in the church. There was a time when I was an elder. There was a time when I was involved. But alcohol did me in and I was at the last rung.

He said - but that verse of scripture came to me. When we first talked about it - he said - I don't even remember where it is, but we have this treasure in jars of clay to show that the power of God, that the power in us is from God and not from us. And he paraphrased it in his own words.

I remembered what it was and quoted it for him. He said - that's it.

He said - As I stood under that tree I began to weep. I said, oh God this is nothing but a clay jar. Would you release the

treasure that is in me? Would you release the treasure that is in me?

He said - I went back into the Georgia Regional which at that time was just in a great big house. He said - I took off my coveralls, and I put on my clothes and I walked out of that place and I told them - I'll not be back.

Said - I went to a banker friend of mine and he said - look, you've tried it over and over again. There is no need to try it again; there will only be a matter of time before you are back.

He said - give me one more chance. Make a janitor. Make me anything. He said - he gave me a chance and I started working as a teller. Then I worked my way back up to Vice President and pretty soon I was able to show that what God had done in my life was valid. I was able to bring in some big depositors and pretty soon I had my own bank and I was the president of the branch - branch manager.

Then I got back on the Executive and I've made a lot of money since that time. But he said - the thing that has kept me going. I know that I am a clay jar and if I don't release the treasure I just can't make it.

That's what God wants to be in your life here this evening. He wants to release the treasure.

As every head is bowed and every eye is closed. I want the elders to take their places please. I want to pray for you

tonight. I want you to leave here a covenant person. I want you to understand that as a covenant person God has given you a ministry, a covenant ministry.

You are the aroma of Christ. You speak with sincerity. You are letters read by everybody. Your confidence is in Christ and your confidence comes from God.

I want you to know that you have a covenant ministry that reflects the glory of God. It reveals the power of righteousness and experiences the freedom of the Spirit and is demonstrated in transformed likeness. It radiates confidence, transparency and knowledge.

I want you to know that the glory of God is released as a treasure in you because it radiates the power of God. You are energized by the life of Christ. You communicate the Spirit of truth. You are sustained by eternal glory. God wants that to happen in your life.

I want to pray for people who are depressed. The devil's number one tool in this fast paced, fast moving, technological age is depression. If he can get you depressed he has you immobilized. You can't function properly. You just go through the motions. There is no joy; there is no peace; there is no power in your life. And you lose the sense of being a covenant person. I want to pray for people tonight who are battling depression.

If you are one of those folks here tonight I would like you to raise your hand. Put it up good and high. Don't be ashamed - all over the building. We are going to anoint you and pray for you in a minute. We are going to believe that God is going to break the bonds of that depression.

One of his other tools is anxiety. Anxiety is an apprehension, a sense of foreboding, you are just afraid that every phone call is going to be bad news. You look at a letter that strange and you just know that is bad news and you keep your motor running all the time and you just can't get it turned off. You have to have mediation every time you turn around to keep yourself leveled out. Does anybody know what I'm talking about? You are going through that kind of anxiety tonight you'd be honest with me - would you just slip your hand up, please. God bless you.

But the third tool the devil uses is fear - that plain old out sense of panic. When you have fear you live in panic - being panic stricken. It's a painful emotion of alarm or dread or disquietude. It is a tool of the devil. You don't need to carry around with you depression. You don't need to carry anxiety. You don't need to carry fear. You need to read these passages. You need to get this tape. You need to listen to it. You are a covenant person. You need to live by that covenant. It's time you begin to release the treasure that is in you in clay jars.

Milton was blind but yet Milton wrote Paradise Lose.
Beethoven was deaf but out of his deafness came the Ninth Symphony.
Bunyon was in prison and a prison under the river until his whole
beard mildewed and his little daughter was about twelve years old
was blind would come down to see him everyday and beg him to
renounce Christ so he could come home. But he didn't do it, but
out of that dungeon and out of that prison came Pilgrim's Progress.
Clay jars - releasing treasures.

You are a clay jar - release that treasure here tonight.

We are going to sin in the key of c in just a minute - "We are
standing on Holy ground." Because we are standing on holy ground
and the Holy Spirit is moving in this place I want you to step out
in just a minute if you raised your hand or you feel the need to
come. We are going to anoint you with oil and pray for you. Let'
stand together please.

Tape Is Over

I. God has given us a covenant ministry.

- A. Aroma of Christ B. Speak with simplicity.
- C. Letters read by everybody D. Confidence - Christ.
- E. Competence - God.

II. Covenant ministry reflects the glory of God.

- A. Power - power of righteousness. B. Experienced in freedom of the spirit. C. Devoted to in transformed things - 1. Reason, cognition - 2. Transparency 3. Knowledge.

III. The glory of God is released as a treasure in the covenant person.

- A. Reflects the power of God.
- B. Energized by life of Christ.
- C. Communicates the spirit of faith.
- D. Sustained by eternal glory.