

Signing the Covenant

The gift of tongues gives us the opportunity of speaking in a variety of expressions, certainly the tongue of angels, speaking mysteries. We get the opportunity under the influence of the Spirit to bypass the thoughts of our mind and the limitations of our own thoughts. This morning I am in a state where that gift isn't going to help. It's not just because Paul said, *I would rather you speak a few words in a known tongue when you are together*, but my heart is full and I don't have that gift to say all the things that I want to say at one time.

We clearly stand at a time in the unfolding of God's purpose that is a time that has never been before. I don't mean that we stand at a time we have never been before. People say, "Well, I think we are closer than we have ever been before." I say, "Well, yeah, we have thrown away pages from the calendar; we have to be closer." It isn't just a progression of time; it is the unfolding of the purpose of God. We know that the redemption for man was put in place before man was created. The indication we have of that in the letter of the word is out of Revelation where it says, *The Lamb was slain from the foundation of the world*. In a strong sense out of the origins of the languages, that that word "from" could also be clearly seen as *the Lamb was slain as the foundation of the world*. We get testimony to that in Paul's writings. He said, *All things are held together by the word of His power*. They consist, not just were created, but have substance and continuity and enduring quality because of what was done before the worlds were made that uphold it.

One of the things that is on my heart is for us to realize that the opportunity that we have is not just because of the time in which we live, but it is also because of the heart of God is seeking to bring to a full expression what was hidden in that provision that was made before the worlds were made. It is something that has been unseen. Paul talked about the roots of his gospel as not starting in Genesis 1 and going forward to Revelation, but that the real roots of his gospel were hidden before the worlds were made. God gave Paul a revelation that unveiled what had been hidden up until then. No one had ever said before Paul, *Christ in you, the hope of glory*. Jesus didn't say it. He said, *That where I am, there you may be also*. He said *If I live by the Father, you must live by me*, so there were plenty of hints. It was that part of the revelation of the gospel that God had given Paul that made

it very difficult for the other apostles to relate to what he was sharing. Even after Paul spent two weeks with Peter in Peter's house, Peter wrote later, *Our beloved brother Paul has many things to say that are difficult to understand*; they are hard to get ahold of.

After 4000 years, John looked at the bank of the river Jordan and said, *Behold the Lamb of God*, pointing to a two-legged man instead of a four-legged wooly beast. As big of a shift as that was – the difference between a four-legged wooly beast and a two-legged man, there is a greater difference between a two-legged man and the Spirit of God working in our hearts. It takes it from an external physical representation to an internal, invisible work of the Spirit. Although a four-legged wooly beast and a two-legged man are significantly different, they are both physically represented. What we are infused with and what the testimony that the Spirit of God is seeking to install in your life and in my life has something that isn't referenced externally and visibly. It is something that is the fulfillment of what Jesus said to the woman at the well, *God is seeking them who will worship Him in Spirit and in truth*. To recognize that the moving of the Spirit of God in your life isn't just so that you can be gifted and anointed and have ministries and callings and stand up and preach the gospel. It is so the Holy Spirit has access to your heart and can bring the fulfillment of all of this book forward in you as life. 1 Cor. 2:5 *The Kingdom of God is not based in the wisdom of men but in the power of God*. Later on in 1 Corinthians, Paul says, *The Kingdom of God is not in word but is in power*. Still later, it says in 1 Cor. 6, *God has both raised up the Lord and will raise us up by his own power*.

The kingdom of God is not in a concept although there is concept associated with the kingdom of God. We can talk about the differences between the kingdom of this world and the kingdom of God. There is a certain understanding and a certain knowledge that brings definition to that difference. The knowledge isn't the desired goal. Us coming into the kingdom of God and benefitting by the authority of that kingdom is an engaging of the purpose so that we can come to the end result. The verse that Michael quoted out of Matthew 5:48 says, *Be perfect even as your Heavenly Father is perfect*. It really wouldn't matter what our definition of perfect is, even if we are supposed to be 'purple' the way God is 'purple.' Anything that is measured by God is something that is outside of the parameters of this world. The word would not define it but being as God does; it's not limited.

One of the keys to what Michael was talking about concerning forgiveness and that the scripture ends up not saying “forgive” but just “give” is that you don’t need to forgive if you are not offended. Right? How do you forgive unless you are wronged and are offended? Then, you have to forgive, and that can be a process especially when you have to forgive from the heart. If you are in a place where you have gone past the limitation of offense and forgiveness, you are now free, by life, to “give for,” to lay your life down “for.” Now you are in a foundation not of forgiving but of giving for. It is the frame that John 3 talks about when it says *God so loved that He gave for*. It wasn’t that He forgave; He gave for.

I want to take a look at a statement that Jesus made. In this statement he said that *The children of this generation are wiser in their generation than the children of light*. It refers to the context in another place that Paul talks about when he said, *We have been translated from a kingdom of darkness into the kingdom of his dear Son, or a kingdom of Light*. We have been brought out of death; we have been brought into a measure of life, and that measure of life is significantly different from the life that is death. It is different than the kingdom that is of this world and darkness. It is a kingdom of Light. The significant aspect of this life, Light and the kingdom of Light, is that it brings hope. When we are in darkness, we have no hope – without God and without hope in this world. We are translated into the kingdom of Light so that we have hope. If something didn’t exist, you couldn’t have hope in it. It would be a foolish thing to hope in something that doesn’t exist. One of the first aspects of our engagement with the kingdom of God, the kingdom of Light, the kingdom of his dear Son, is faith so that we begin to trust and to have evidence in our experience of a world that isn’t framed by what is seen. We have a testimony of things that can bring an influence into our life that aren’t based in what our natural body and our natural frame of reference can define.

In Isaiah, the Spirit of the Lord through the prophet says, *Come, let us reason together*. That invitation to “reason” wasn’t to fix the kingdom of God on a foundation of knowledge. We quoted out of 1st Corinthians that *The kingdom of God is not in word but in power*. What the Spirit of God was seeking to do was to say, *Let’s think about something that is beyond what you are aware of. I want to frame that reasoning but not in a transmission of concept*. I’m not inviting you to reason with Me in order to train your brain. What I want you to reason on, the

platform of this reason together, is that *Though your sins be as scarlet, they shall be white as snow*. Let's start there. Let's start with something that is beyond the capacity of nature to influence, beyond the capacity of your experience up until this time in life to hope for. Our natural existence is framed by condemnation, by guilt. Around a year ago, Ron Hassler ministered here and in Montana and then again at the convention in October at Bowen's Mill about our identifiers. What do we allow to identify us? How do we see ourselves? How do we define ourselves? We cannot afford to identify ourselves based on the accumulated testimony of our lives up until we were born again or baptized in the Holy Spirit, but God has so much more for us.

The Apostle defined it in Ephesians as, *Eye hasn't seen, ear hasn't heard neither has entered into the heart of man that which God has for them that love Him*. If I define myself based on my experience up to today, I am shutting the door on great options that were difficult for the apostle to define with words. Certainly the Spirit of God wasn't reaching out to reason together concerning cognitive thought. What He is saying in effect is, *What I want to establish our relationship and our reasoning in from this point forward is in power*. This power is primarily evidenced and speaks to one realm that we would use the word for, and that word is change. The evidence that He used for it immediately after *Come, let us reason together* was that *Though your sins have been as scarlet, they shall be as white as snow*. He used the example to begin reasoning with the spirit of man concerning man's greatest definition of his problem: sin. Who doesn't know sin? If you want to start talking to something that is carnal and not spiritual, you better use words that that realm of existence is aware of. If you speak concerning spiritual, they are going to say, "Boy, I do not know what you are talking about." This would have been God coming down to Adam and saying, *Adam, you know when I made you, I made you deficient. I made you incapable of being successful*. Adam would have looked at God and said, "Well, everything is progressing pretty smoothly from my point of view." He wouldn't have had a relationship with what God was talking about.

In order to establish some identifier, God gave Adam a commandment that He knew he couldn't possibly keep. He introduced failure into Adam's experience. Does that make sense? If God has foreknowledge, He didn't give the commandment with the anticipation that Adam was going to keep it. Then what was His reason for introducing it? So he would fail it. That is the only other option. This is the

reference point God's Spirit is seeking to identify with us in a realm that we can interact with in reality so that we can see the power of God effect change – real change. If I can't pin myself down, if I can't locate myself somewhere, at what point do I have a reference for what change is being made? The conceptual encounter, the different approach, that Paul is addressing when he said, *The kingdom of God is not in wisdom of men but in power. The kingdom of God is not in word but in power* is that He is trying to get us free from a religious concept and the pursuit of knowledge as bringing us to a point of capability where we could do this or show any indication of progress. Until I own that, until I am willing to admit that the little power that I have now that I have been born again, that I didn't have before I was born again, is not for me to accomplish the goal; but it is for me to humble myself.

How do we exalt God? Have you ever thought about that? I mean there is a certain heart influence that happens when we sing that song. There is a certain inherent desire to exalt God. It can well up in an exaltation and an outreaching and an outpouring of our soul. Sometimes it can even extend itself to tears in our desire to exalt God. The best I can figure is that He is exalted. In fact, He is exalted to the point where it says, *He is beyond the highest heavens – far above*. So the highest heaven is way below where He is. It is the kind of thing Paul was saying *Eye hasn't seen*. It cannot be described with words. So how do I lift Him up? How do I exalt Him? I think it is a recipe for frustration or maybe a hernia. If we would think about what exalting something would do, it would be lifting it up. By lifting it, you increase the distance between you and it. Since I can't lift Him up and I only have a little strength, I can exalt Him by acknowledging, by humbling myself, by bringing me to the actual judgment by which the revelation is made life.

The whole point of the ministry of the word being foolishness is because it doesn't create it by itself. So why do we bother? We can't give life to one another. God Himself has reserved that capacity for Himself. We don't have that. We can encourage; we can strengthen; we can confirm. We can bring context to situations, so you are not alone in this. We need to watch out for commiseration, but *strengthen the feeble knees. Lift up the hands that hang down*. The whole concept of which Paul said, *It's not a good idea to spend a lot of time in church speaking in tongues*. But he also said, *I would that you all spoke in tongues more than you do* because when you speak in tongues, you get edified. One of the reasons that

edification works as cleanly as it does is because it bypasses my head/mind and gives the Spirit direct access to my soul. If while we are not together, I give myself to edification, then when we come together I have something out of that edification to bring; it may be just a few known words. This is the benefit. The life happens by my interaction with the Spirit of God, but the expression of that life has two aspects. First, I am strengthened. Secondly, I have something of Spirit to offer others. It may be counsel; it may be prayer; it may be encouragement. I am really seeing a great need for both.

Did I share with you all what the Lord spoke to me when I was in Atlanta? He said, *I want you to move back to Sharpsburg*. I started to counsel God and explained to Him why it wasn't a good idea. I already had so many t-shirts. He acted like He didn't even hear me. He just ignored it completely. He said, *The reason why I want you to do this is for three things. You need a context. You need accountability, and you need transparency*. All three of those things are interwoven; they are not staying alone, separate from one another. If you don't have a context, you can be as transparent as you want to be, and you don't generate any accountability because nobody is there to talk to you about it. We know you can hide in a community. You know you can hide from yourself. We need to have interaction that includes what we bring from God to one another.

Jesus said, *The children of this generation are wiser*. I looked back on my life in the natural and thought, "If there needs to be a definition of 'stupid,' that should be it – significantly unaware of anything that has any reality or any substance to it. How could the *children of this generation be wiser than the children of light?* That's not what He said, actually. He didn't say the children of this world are wiser than the children of light. He said, *The children of this generation are wiser in their generation than the children of light*. What he meant by that was, or at least an aspect of what he meant by that was, that the children of this world, the children of this natural universe do more with the tools and the laws that frame their existence to benefit and progress in their world than the children of light do with the principles of the kingdom of God for their benefit. The natural man has gone from hunting food with a sharp stick and living in caves to a much better way of living, naturally speaking. If you think about medieval times – the knights and all that kind of thing. They were still living in drafty rooms with water dripping down the walls and mold and rats. The children of this generation make progress

using the principles and the laws that govern the natural world to better their own condition. He is saying that the children of Light don't do that with the kingdom of God as well as the children of the world do it with their laws. I started thinking about that, and I thought about the predictability of interacting with this world and the knowledge of the principles that govern this world. Nobody would think that, if I had a pencil in my hand and let go of it, it would float up and land on the ceiling. At no time would they think that. It is predictable that it won't. The kingdom principles of God are actually even more predictable when you interact with those and bring yourself subject to the laws of that kingdom than the predictability of the laws of nature. If you humble yourself under the mighty hand of God, He will lift you up in due season. If you will deny yourself and if you are not trying to live to save your life and you are willing to deny yourself, you will find a life that will be a path unto eternal life. The life of Christ is never designed to be a destination; it is designed to be a vehicle.

Last week, we talked about two great themes in terms of sacrifice and priests. One of the other great themes in scripture is covenant. God spoke to Abraham and He spoke out of His heart. It was a very brief comment but it was a covenant. God said to Abraham, *I am your shield and I am your exceedingly great reward.*

Abraham was not a man of great spirituality at that point. He was very early in his walk with God when he heard God say that and he answered, "You know, it's interesting; it brings up something I was thinking about. I don't have a son." *I am your shield and I am your exceedingly great reward, and you want to talk about a child that you don't have? I am your provision. I am your protection. I am your enabler. I am the authority by which Paul (or whoever wrote Hebrews) is going to say, and this will we do if God permits.* That's the shield: *I am your protection; I am your provision; I am your enablement. When you are done interfacing with the shield, I have even better news for you. When the shield gets you to where you are supposed to be, you are going to inherit Me.* Wow! That's pretty good.

We know that the whole Spiritual adoption that we seek is not the adoption of *teknon*. *Teknon* don't get adopted; *teknon* get birthed. *Huios* get adopted. Jesus did not inherit the life of God until he finished his course. *He was declared to be the Son of God with power by the resurrection of the dead.* We have a calling; we have a covenant. The progress of God dealing with Abraham wasn't just to announce the covenant. He knew that Abraham was pretty clueless but He had to

start somewhere. It is good to start by setting aside what we think we know. God talks to us about stuff that we think we understand by the word, but then we realize we had no idea what He was really talking about. We heard the words but it didn't communicate to us the reality from which they were spoken.

Paul picks up on this context of Abraham's encounter with the Spirit of God and he said, *Because Abraham believed God*, not because he understood God, but *because He believed God, that faith was imputed to him as righteousness*. Then he goes right on the back end of that and he says, *Now this righteousness, did he have it when he was circumcised or when he was uncircumcised?* The imputed righteousness for his faith was it when he was circumcised or when he was uncircumcised? Paul says, *When he was uncircumcised*. You don't have to have something imputed to you if you qualify for it. It is imputed when you are not worthy. What had to happen in order for Abraham to join God in that covenant? God had extended the covenant on a unilateral basis to Abraham when He said, *I am, and this will I do*. He singled Abraham out, and He chose him. The ongoing expression of that calling began to identify the reason that he was called for and He said, *I want to give Myself to you, but you have to go the way of the shield first. I have to make a provision for you to get there*. Paul's point concerning this was that in order for Abraham to join God and benefit by the commitment of God to Abraham and position himself so that it could be his experience, he had to sign the covenant. So he had a righteousness before he signed it because of God's intent, but he could only experience the provision of God as he signed the covenant. That was circumcision.

The same author speaking about this in Romans also wrote in Colossians the 2nd chapter and said, *There is a circumcision which we are confronted by. It is not the circumcision of our flesh because it's not an expression of a natural covenant*. The same basis on which God imputed a righteousness to Abraham because of faith is the same basis on which we have faith as a result of a substitutionary sacrifice, but a substitutionary sacrifice can only give us an imputed faith. If we are going to join Him in the benefit of the promise, we are going to have to sign the covenant. The covenant isn't going to be something that is going to be done outwardly. Colossians 2 begins to talk about it in the 10th verse saying that the *circumcision has to be of the heart*. Even beyond that identification of the location, *it has to be done without hands*. It would seem to be obvious that even if Daniel was the most skilled heart

surgeon in the world and the rest of the surgical world and the heart surgeons were coming to him for instruction, he would be out of luck if he developed a heart problem and needed surgery. It goes beyond just saying that it is *of the heart* which is internal, but it says that not only is it something internal but it has to be done *without man's anything*. You can just fill in the blank. We don't have to define it, but it's not done in knowledge, it's not done by zeal. There is a whole list we can make. It says clearly that the way this is done is by trust. It has to transcend knowledge and it has to come to where we come to such a confidence in the One who has promised that we can join Abraham in his offering.

There is something amazing to me when you think back on the story that unfolds there concerning the interface between God and Abraham. It came to a time, not so much for Ishmael to be sent out of the house, that wasn't really the point; that was the effect. The point was that Hagar had to go. The commandment came through Sarah, *Cast out the bondwoman and her son*. Paul picks up on it, and he says that this is an allegory. The reason it had to be the bondwoman and not just the son. The conflict arose because Ishmael was persecuting Isaac, but the problem is that you can't just throw Ishmael out because, if Hagar is there, there is a next Ishmael. The tolerance and the capacity to allow Hagar to dwell in the house is a constant production of Ishmael. Now literally, we know that's not the case. There was a literal child that was the result of a literal union and there was a literal woman, Hagar. But Paul said, *Let's look at the allegory. Let's look at the principle that it is teaching*. If you have any patience for the law, if you have any tolerance for the operation of man, if you think you have the capacity that you can bring to the table that is going to sway this redemption, you know nothing as completely as you need to know.

I got into a fairly lengthy conversation with a friend. He said, "You know, I think that we can slow the work of God down in our life, but we can't hasten it." I said, "I think you are halfway home. I don't think we can do either." I think that when we measure this against the omniscience of God, the foreknowledge allows predestination. He has events scheduled for all of our lives that are going to put this on what's going to look like, in hindsight, like it's on railroad tracks. It would be a foolish man to think that a railroad engine is going to take a right hand turn onto a dirt road. *I will have mercy upon whom I will have mercy*. This is not God arbitrary and whimsical. It's not, *I will have mercy on you and you and you but not*

you, not you. What it is saying is, *I will have mercy on whom I know through foreknowledge is going to respond to this mercy. The intent of My heart is to finish this thing.* We live at a time, not history – not a time in time, but a place in the unfolding of God's purpose in the earth where what has been unveiled by revelation is designed to come to fulfillment by manifestation.

The provision of God to bring man to life has always existed, and it was clearly represented by Enoch before the flood. He walked with God and had a relationship that was so significant with God that he didn't see death. That's pretty strong; he bypassed death because of his relationship with God. Think about that for a while. It has always been there, but that opportunity to enter in has never been as widespread as it is now. Think about the testimony of the Syrophenician woman. She went to Jesus for her child; I think it was a daughter. He rebuked her. This was not, "I'm busy; I'm tired; I don't think you qualify." This was, "You're a dog." She said, "Well, that may be, but when your children throw food on the floor, do you mind if I eat it?" He said, *I can't not respond to that faith. Although I have been sent to the lost sheep of the house of Israel, I am going to bring you into the fold, out of season – because you prevailed.* Although there has got to be that quality in us at this time, it isn't going to be because it is as unique as it was then.

The provision of God, the distribution of the Spirit of God in love and mercy and grace for us, is so great that there isn't anyone sitting here that can't enter in. There is no one here that is limited by their own inadequacy or provisioned by their own capacity, either way. What you have isn't going to help Him; what you don't have won't hinder Him – if you will trust. This operation is on the heart and it is without hands. When we present ourselves to God, it releases the Spirit to do what the Spirit does. The capacity upon which this foundation was established in Isaiah when he said, *Come let us reason together* was the unimaginable change of the sin of man being as if it never were. He said, *On that basis and on the testimony of My power to do that, let's talk.* Who here has not experienced the forgiveness of sins? You all have a foundation to the power of God in your life that goes past anything that is imaginable or is definable by human reference.

I think the greatest expression of the sovereignty of God so far on the earth was Jesus, after the accusers had left, saying to the woman, *Neither do I condemn you. Go and sin no more.* For this was a man who was born of a woman under the law,

raised in Nazareth, and there was no external frame of reference; there was no rabbi; there was no teacher, and there was no instructor in sonship. There was nothing in the world around him, literally, spiritually, and naturally that didn't require the life of that woman that day. The work of the Spirit in him had framed a reality that didn't have anchors in this world but was solidly framed based on the power of a kingdom that did not already appear. He spoke out of what was hidden, and it influenced what was already existing. Jesus never saw a miracle. The people saw a miracle because they saw natural law overturned, but Jesus' anchor was in a kingdom that was based on superior authority. The law of the kingdom of God was greater. What upholds the laws of nature is the kingdom of God, and for the kingdom of God's laws to influence and govern natural laws is not a miracle; it's just greater power brought to the table. It's the same Spirit that created the world out of what didn't exist! If you would make 2 fish into 5,000 fish, what is the big deal? There is no miracle there. It is not even as clear a testimony as creation was to the power of God. When He created the worlds, He started with nothing that already existed, and He brought a manifestation out of what wasn't already there. Jesus took some fish that were already there and multiplied them: not as great an expression of power.

If we are willing to allow our hearts to be circumcised from this world, if we are willing to let go of our dependency upon knowledge and engage a foundation of trust, God wants to bring an authority forth in those who will join Him in the signing of that covenant into a manifestation of life. It will make any miracle that was written between the covers of this Book look like child's play. It will take it from a gospel concept into a life which although it has been revealed it has never been manifested. It will bring the children of the kingdom of Light into a greater accountability and a greater wisdom of interface with their kingdom. It will reverse the statement that Jesus made so that it could be plainly said that *The children of the kingdom of Light are wiser in their generation than the children of the kingdom of this world.*

Hope. Sometimes when we frame things by only what is possible, it actually erodes hope. The definition of hope is that if we don't have that which we hope for, we will with patience trust. It says, *We will with patience wait.* The combination of patience and waiting is the definition of trust. Even in the original languages, not only of the Greek but the words that were given to form Greek words, the key

ingredient to patience isn't time. The key ingredient giving rise to the word "patience" used in a spiritual application is staying under – exalting the Lord in every situation, every encounter you have, internally and externally, staying under. Paul said it this way: *Therefore, I don't glory in my revelations; I am a child of the King; I am going to come to understanding of the things of God. But I will glory in this: my limitations and my infirmities, for when I glory in them, then is the power of Christ resting upon me.*

John Cheever
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