

Series: Words of Correction and Counse
**Written Not With Ink But
In Fleshy Tables of the Heart**
2 CORINTHIANS 3

Text:

Introduction:

What is church service all about?

I mean, what are we doing here?

What is our business?

Our business is ministry.

Let's begin reading 3:17.

We're going to see something about how to measure a ministry, to find out whether we're on track or not.

As we begin to read we will break in, in a middle of a thought.

Note:

2 Corinthians 3:17-18

17 Now the Lord is that Spirit: and where the Spirit of the Lord is, there is liberty. 18 But we all, with open face beholding as in a glass the glory of the Lord, are changed into the same image from glory to glory, even as by the Spirit of the Lord.

Now, go down to 4:1, because chapter 4 is linked inseparably to chapter 3; and, it begins with a *therefore*—that is, it's referring back to chapter 3:

2 Corinthians 4:1

1 Therefore seeing we have this ministry, as we have received mercy, we faint not;

That is, "we're not going to get discouraged."

When you understand what real ministry is—what it's all about—it's not nickels and noses; it's not budgets and baptisms.

When we understand what real ministry is, when we have this ministry, we're not going to faint.

So, we're going to look, tonight, at this ministry that we have; and, when we see it, we're going to learn not to faint.

So, how do we measure a ministry?

1. WE MEASURE A MINISTRY BY THE PURPOSE OF THAT MINISTRY

We measure a ministry by the purpose of that ministry. Look, in verse 18:

2 Corinthians 3:18

¹⁸ But we all, with open face beholding as in a glass the glory of the Lord, are changed into the same image from glory to glory, even as by the Spirit of the Lord.

He is saying that we behold the glory of the Lord, and, as we behold the glory of the Lord—His image—as we look at Him, we're becoming more and more like Him.

I have often said that the measure of our ministry is not the number of members that we have.

It's not the size of our buildings, the size of our budget, the beauty of the music, the eloquence of the preaching, the friendliness of the people.

It is none of these things.

The measure—the bottom line—is this:

Are the people of this church becoming more like the Lord Jesus?

Why is God working all things together?

For His good.

What is the good?

Romans 8:28-29

*28 And we know that all things work together for good to them that love God, to them who are the called according to his purpose. 29 For whom he did foreknow, he also did **predestinate to be conformed to the image of his Son**, that he might be the firstborn among many brethren.*

God's purpose is to make you like the Lord Jesus Christ.

We have a lot of feel-good Christianity in the world today.

Understand; Christianity is not here to solve your problems.

God's purpose is not to make you happy, but to make you holy.

God's purpose is to make you like the Lord Jesus Christ.

Not only is that the test of my ministry—and, are you becoming more like the Lord Jesus?—but it is the test of your growth.

I read, going past a nursery a while back, about planting trees.

And, the nursery sign said, "What are the two best days to plant a tree?"

And, one said, "Fifteen years ago," and the other, "Today."

So, when's the best time to become like Jesus?

Beginning right now.

No matter where you are, you need to begin, right now, to become more like the Lord Jesus.

Now, what does it mean to be like the Lord Jesus?

- It means to talk as He talked.
- You ought to be patient as Jesus was patient.

Was Jesus patient?

Certainly

Matthew 17:17

¹⁷ Then Jesus answered and said, O faithless and perverse generation, how long shall I be with you? how long shall I suffer you? bring him hither to me.

Mark 9:9

⁹ And as they came down from the mountain, he charged them that they should tell no man what things they had seen, till the Son of man were risen from the dead.

Numbers 14:18

¹⁸ The LORD is longsuffering, and of great mercy, forgiving iniquity and transgression, and by no means clearing the guilty, visiting the iniquity of the fathers upon the children unto the third and fourth generation.

We ought to be humble as Jesus was humble.

Jesus washed His disciples' feet. I have to ask myself in a very practical way, "

Do you talk like Jesus?

Are you patient like Jesus?

Are you humble like Jesus?"

I have to say, I've got a long way to go.

One day, I will be like Him. But, day by day, I am to be becoming more like the Lord Jesus Christ.

We have considered The Purpose of the Ministry but also note:

2. WE MEASURE A MINISTRY BY THE POWER OF THAT MINISTRY

Look at this verse again, in verse 18:

2 Corinthians 3:18

¹⁸ But we all, with open face beholding as in a glass the glory of the Lord, are changed into the same image from glory to glory, even as by the Spirit of the Lord.

Now, what is the power of your ministry?

The two things that God gives to make people like the Lord are right in this verse—and that is, the Word of God, and the Spirit of God.

You say, "I see where it says something about the Spirit of God in the last part of verse 18, but where does it say anything about the Word of God?"

Look again in verse 18—the first part: "But we all, with open face beholding as in a glass"—and the word glass is "mirror"—"beholding as in a mirror the glory of the Lord, are changed into the same image from glory to glory" (2 Corinthians 3:18).

And so, the two things that the man of God has in his ministry to make people like the Lord are the Word of God and the Spirit of God.

There is no true ministry—no man is ever going to be able to motivate people and lead people to being more like the Lord who does not know and love the Word of God, and who is not filled with the Spirit of God.

One is not a substitute, for the other.

Now, I know some ministries put a great emphasis upon the Word of God, and I put a great emphasis upon the Word of God.

But, if you have the Word of God without the Spirit of God, you're missing something.

I know preachers who use the Bible like a club, rather than like a sword.

They don't give the truth with love.

They sound more like lawyers than witnesses.

How is the Word of God going to make you like the Lord Jesus Christ?

Well, the Word of God and Jesus are so much the same. As a matter of fact, God calls Jesus the Word of God; God calls the Bible the Word of God.

They're both so similar.

For example, both are eternal.

The Bible says, concerning the Bible:

Psalm 119:89

⁸⁹ For ever, O LORD, thy word is settled in heaven.

Both are born of the Spirit.

How was Jesus conceived in the womb of Mary?

By the Holy Spirit.

How was the Word of God conceived in the hearts of the authors?

By the Holy Spirit.

2 Peter 1:21

²¹ For the prophecy came not in old time by the will of man: but holy men of God spake as they were moved by the Holy Ghost.

Jesus is called the bread of life.

The Bible is called bread.

Jesus Himself said, in Matthew 4:4:

Matthew 4:4

⁴ But he answered and said, It is written, Man shall not live by bread alone, but by every word that proceedeth out of the mouth of God.

The Bible and Jesus both are called light.

Psalm 119:105

¹⁰⁵ Thy word is a lamp unto my feet, and a light unto my path.

The Lord said:

John 8:12

¹² Then spake Jesus again unto them, saying, I am the light of the world: he that followeth me shall not walk in darkness, but shall have the light of life.

And so, you take this Word of God, and this Spirit of God, and, that's going to be our ministry.

And, it's the ministry of every deacon, every Sunday School teacher, every worker, in this church, to take those two elements. And, with the Word of God and the Spirit of God and we'll see people become more like the Lord Jesus, because the Spirit of God is really the Spirit of Christ and the Word of God is really the testimony of Christ.

And, those two working together are going to make people like the Lord Jesus.

Close:

You remember the story of the ugly duckling? The ugly duckling was with the other ducklings, the little ducks, and somehow he was just bigger.

He was more clumsy.

He didn't seem to fit in. The other ducklings laughed at him.

He tried to paddle like the other little ducklings, and quack like the other little ducklings, but he just didn't fit in.

He felt so lonely, and he felt so desolate. He just left the ducklings.

He went and tried to take up at someone's house.

They had pets.

They had a dog and a cat.

But, he couldn't bark like a dog, and he couldn't purr like a cat. They tried to teach him to do it, but he

couldn't do it. Then, he said, "You just don't understand me."

One day, the ugly duckling saw some swans.

He thought they were the most beautiful things he had ever seen. He watched those swans as they went across, glided across the lake.

He watched their graceful movements. He watched them as they lifted their wings and began to fly in the sky.

He couldn't take his eyes off of them.

He was captivated by the swans. But, he was an ugly duckling. He just didn't fit in anywhere.

The winter came, and the pond froze. And, the poor misfit, all winter long, couldn't even swim.

Then, when the spring came, and the thaw came, and the ice melted, he looked out there, and there they were—those creatures that he had admired, those creatures that he'd looked at.

He admired them so much, and here they came towards him.

While the other ducklings seemed to spread from him, these swans were coming right at him.

"Oh," he said, "I'm so ugly. I don't want those beautiful creatures to see me."

He took his wings, and put them over his head, and bowed his head. And, when he did, he looked down in the water; and, he saw in the water his reflection.

The water had become a mirror, and he saw himself and when it did he said, "That's what I am—that is what I am! I am a swan!"

He realized what he was, and removed his wings from his head, and lifted up his head, slightly bent, as a swan would.

The ugly duckling was really a swan.

So many of us spend lives as ugly ducklings.

We fail to understand what we are in Christ.

We fail to understand that the Holy Spirit has come into us as believers. He is our inner nature.

And, as we behold Him, we find something in us that says, "Yes, that's who I am, and that's what I am!"

Note the words of this wonderful hymn

Oh, to be like Thee, blessed Redeemer!

(1) Oh! to be like Thee, blessed Redeemer,
This is my constant longing and prayer;
Gladly I'll forfeit all of earth's treasures,
Jesus, Thy perfect likeness to wear.

Refrain:

Oh! to be like Thee, oh! to be like Thee,
Blessed Redeemer, pure as Thou art;
Come in Thy sweetness, come in Thy fullness;
Stamp Thine own image deep on my heart.

(2) Oh! to be like Thee, full of compassion,
Loving, forgiving, tender and kind,
Helping the helpless, cheering the fainting,
Seeking the wand'ring sinner to find. [Refrain]

(3) Oh! to be like Thee, lowly in spirit,
Holy and harmless, patient and brave;
Meekly enduring cruel reproaches,
Willing to suffer, others to save. [Refrain]

(4) Oh! to be like Thee, Lord, I am coming,
Now to receive th' anointing divine;
All that I am and have I am bringing,
Lord, from this moment all shall be Thine. [Refrain]

(5) Oh! to be like Thee, while I am pleading,
Pour out Thy Spirit, fill with Thy love,
Make me a temple meet for Thy dwelling,
Fit me for life and Heaven above. [Refrain]

The measure of the ministry is this – becoming more
like the Lord.

How do we measure up today?