

We Do Not Lose Heart

by Daniel Henderson

The sermon emphasizes that ministry is not just about activities, but about experiencing and expressing the glory of Jesus Christ, and that this can be achieved through prayer and beholding His face.

Duration: 28:33

Scripture: Matthew 6:33, 2 Corinthians 2:4-5, 2 Corinthians 3:17 - 4:1, 2 Corinthians 4:4-5

Topics: "Encouragement"

Description

In this sermon, the preacher emphasizes the importance of understanding ministry as a way to experience God's glory. He shares a story about a tired father who challenges his son to put together a torn-up picture of the globe. The son succeeds by focusing on the man's face in the picture, teaching the lesson that when we get our relationship with God right, everything else falls into place. The preacher then highlights the core message of the book of 2 Corinthians, which is about New Testament ministry and the contrast with false teachers. He encourages the congregation to commit their burdens and challenges to God and seek transformation from glory to glory.

Transcript

It's always good to be back, and yes, we have brought lots of people here over the years. We now bring students from Liberty University once or twice a year who come, and I always say it's a Brazilian proverb that I learned once, but the heart cannot taste what the eyes have not seen. You ever heard that before? The heart cannot taste what the eyes have not seen.

What a joy to come. Some of you I know visiting tonight, your eyes are seeing the wonderful reality of prayer in a church, but your heart is tasting of the goodness of Jesus, amen? And that's really, really what it's all about. And I just want to thank you, Pastor Jim, again, for your friendship in this church that has meant so much to me.

Some of you who are obviously members here don't get to see your pastor when he's out and about, but I want to tell you, it's just such a joy to see how God uses him to minister to pastors. And you've heard us talk many times about how the devil is going after pastors. I'm grateful that you have a pastor who is strengthening those who are in the fight so we can continue to win together, amen? And the Lord uses us all for his glory.

I want to invite you to take your Bible tonight and turn with me to 2 Corinthians, the book of 2 Corinthians. We're going to be looking at chapter three, reading into chapter four. As you know, the chapter break wasn't in the original text.

We put those in there to help us navigate our way around the passages. But I want to talk to you a little bit from this passage tonight in a way that I hope will encourage you. 2 Corinthians chapter three, and we're going to begin in verse 17 and read through chapter four and verse seven.

We'll focus on a particular section of this passage in just a moment, but here's what Paul writes. Now the Lord is the Spirit, 2 Corinthians 3.17, and where the Spirit of the Lord is, there is liberty. But we all, with unveiled face, beholding as an emir the glory of the Lord, are being transformed into the same image from glory to glory, just as by the Spirit of the Lord.

Therefore, since we have this ministry, as we have received mercy, I notice Pastor Jim was praising God for His mercy. Aren't you grateful for God's mercy? We have not received what we deserve by the goodness and grace of the cross. We do not lose heart.

He goes on, verse two, but 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, commending ourselves to every man's conscience in the sight of God. But even if our gospel is veiled, it's veiled to those who are perishing, whose minds the God of this age has blinded, who do not believe, lest the light of the gospel of the glory of Christ, who is the image of God, should shine on them. And then verses five through seven, for we do not preach ourselves, but Christ Jesus, the Lord, and ourselves your bondservants for Jesus' sake.

For it is the God who commanded light to shine out of darkness, who has shown, where? In our hearts, to give the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ. But we have this treasure in earthen vessels, that the excellence of the power may be of God, and not of us. I love this book.

As Pastor Jim mentioned, my pastoral ministry really began in a significant way when I was 30 years of age. I was called to a church in the Northern California area where the previous pastor had been for some 28 years. The church had grown from 60 to 6,000 during that time.

And in June of 1988, on a Father's Day, he confessed that dating back eight years, he had covered up a year-long extramarital affair. The church was devastated. He immediately resigned.

Within the 12 months to follow, they lost about half of their attendance, their giving. They were embroiled in a \$25 million lawsuit, a man who was suing the church over a disciplinary action they had taken. And a year later, I showed up at the ripe age of 30 as the new senior pastor.

I was there four years, but I was there as long as he was because my four years in dog years equaled his 28 years, you know what I mean? It's been said that hurting people hurt others, and those were difficult years. So we were trying to bring healing and restoring trust. And I'll be honest with you, at about year three, my wife and I had pretty well decided we were gonna try something else.

This is how bad it really is. We're just gonna get a real job, make real money, and tie it to some other guy's church because this is really bad. Really, really painful.

And obviously, the Lord used a number of things to keep me in pastoral ministry, the gifts and calling of God without repentance. But one of the things he used that I was teaching in the book of 2 Corinthians during that time, and this book is perhaps Paul's most transparent book he ever wrote. It's one that he wrote to his problem church, we might call it, because by now, they had been infiltrated by some false teachers.

And he was having to open his heart in ways that even seem uncomfortable to him as he writes to help them understand what really motivates him, what his ministry is all about in contrast to the ministry and the tactics of the false teachers. And many commentators will tell you at the core of this book really is the best description of New Testament, New Covenant gospel ministry. And I believe at the core of that section is the passage we read tonight.

And at the core of the core of that section is a passage we're gonna particularly break down in just a moment. You say, well, Daniel, that's helpful for you. You're a pastor, that's a good thing.

But let me ask you, how many of you are in full-time ministry tonight? Let's see your hand. Full-time ministry. All right, that was a little bit of a trick question, wasn't it? How many of you know Jesus Christ as your personal Lord and Savior? You've been born again, you're bound for heaven.

Keep your hand up, repeat after me. I am in full-time ministry for the Lord Jesus Christ. Amen, that's right.

You're all ministers of the gospel. You say, that was easy, I didn't have to get ordained or anything, right? Well, that's a different deal. But full-time ministers of the gospel of Jesus Christ.

That being the case, I believe this passage is gonna encourage your heart tonight because Paul says, seeing we have this ministry, he really gives us an understanding of what ministry is all about in this particular passage. And I want us to look at it tonight. We're gonna go back and just look at verses 18 and then chapter four, verse one, one more time.

But we all with unveiled face beholding as in a mirror the glory of the Lord are being transformed into the same image from glory to glory just as by the Spirit of the Lord. Therefore, seeing that we have this ministry as we have received mercy, we do not lose heart. I read a story a number of years ago that was riveting.

Young couple just had their first little baby. They had invited some friends over for what was described as a christening party on a cold winter night. As the friends began to arrive, there was a bedroom near the front door and the first one that arrived, not thinking, threw their coat on the bed.

Others began to do the same, seeing the coats there. And as they all arrived a few minutes later, they all said, let's see the baby. And the young mother with joy went to retrieve the baby only to find that the bed upon which she had actually laid this newborn was the very bed on which they had laid their coats.

And the baby they came to celebrate had died. Tragic. But you know, sometimes we do that in ministry, don't we? That the life, the essence, the heart of what ministry's all about gets buried by the coats of our activities and our celebration.

And we define ministry in ways that the Lord never wanted us to define it as. And as a result of that, we get discouraged because maybe we don't see the results we should. Maybe we don't get the affirmation that we desire.

Maybe people don't cheer us on as they should. But in this passage, Paul is saying, seeing therefore we have this ministry as we have received mercy. We do not lose heart.

So tonight, that's what I wanna talk to you about. We do not lose heart. And let me give you a definition that keeps resonating in my heart about what our ministry really is.

Doesn't matter if you're an accountant or a homemaker or whether you're a coach or a school teacher, you are in full-time ministry. And here's really the heart of what ministry is. It is experiencing and expressing the glory of Jesus Christ.

Say that with me. Experiencing and expressing the glory of Jesus Christ. It's so simple, isn't it? But that's the heart of what it really means to raise your hand and say, I'm in full-time ministry for Jesus Christ.

Amen? To experience and express the glory of Jesus Christ. Now, we're gonna see that. In fact, if you read chapters three and four and circle every time you see the word glory or the idea of manifestation or the work of the Spirit, you'll be astounded as to what ministry really is and reminded and encouraged once again.

But this word glory, you probably didn't read it in the New York Times today. You could scour the whole newspaper, probably won't see the word glory. I remember when I was in college, we had a spiritual cheerleader.

His name was Sumner Wimp. And every time we gathered for chapel, he would pound his chest and he would say, well, glory. Now, that meant something to him, but when I was in college, I thought it was kinda corny.

You know, we'd make fun of him in the dorms. Well, glory. You know, we didn't know what that meant.

But now the word just captures my heart. And let me give you a sense, at least in my own heart, of what it means. I don't wanna get too technical, but just think about this for a moment.

I love to define this idea of glory in this way. It is the magnification of the person of Christ by his people and the manifestation of the presence of Christ among his people. The magnification of the person of Christ by his people.

But it's also the manifestation of the presence of Christ among his people. We sang earlier, we are standing on holy ground. We sung of his presence.

That is the glory of God. It's used in the Bible. Glorify the Lord, glorify his name.

But then also, both in Old and New Testaments, it's the idea of his manifest presence in the Old Testament, Moses prayed, don't let us go without your presence. And when God's presence left the temple, it was Ichabod. You don't wanna name your son that, do ya? The glory has departed.

And yet Paul says, the glory Moses knew was nothing compared to what we know. That letter kills, but this spirit now, the spirit that gives life is now the essence of the glory that we know. And Paul is really unpacking the reality of ministry from this standpoint.

So let's look at this verse. Verse 18, the core of New Testament ministry. He says, seeing therefore, we have this ministry.

And if you look at the passage one more time in verse 18, it begins this way, but we all. Or as they say down in Virginia, all y'all, right? Or you-ins. Paul is really contrasting the fact that in the Old Covenant, Moses had to go up to a specific place and have a specific experience in a specific moment, and he would come down and he would have glory and it would fade and he would wear a veil.

But in contrast to that, we all can experience this glory. And it's a reference to the fact that every believer, no matter where you are, what's going on, what kind of challenges you're facing, you can have a taste of the glory, amen? We all, it's all inclusive. We do it individually and on Tuesday nights and other times we do it together.

We all. And then I love this next part of the phrase, with unveiled face beholding as in a mirror the glory of the Lord. Some translations say contemplating the glory of the Lord.

Some say reflecting the glory of the Lord, but you can't reflect what you haven't contemplated and you can't contemplate what you haven't beheld, right? And I love the language Paul uses here, beholding as in a mirror. Now, mirrors in Paul's day were like polished metal. They weren't like the ones we have today.

My wife has one of these eight times mirrors. Some of you ladies have those. Makes you look really pretty.

That thing scares me to death when I walk by that deal. Man, that is, my nose looks like the craters of the moon. You know, it's just not my kind of thing.

But Paul is saying as clearly as we can, this side of eternity, we are beholding the glory of the Lord. Now, obviously, we come to the Lord with so many of our needs and he answers our prayer. James says you have not because you ask not.

And that's a vital reality in prayer. But Paul is really referring here just to that focus of coming to experience Him, to gaze upon His face. I often say as I teach, and I've learned this in my own life, if all I ever do is seek His hand, I may miss His face.

But if I seek His face, He's gonna be glad to open His hand. And Paul is saying we are seeking the face of Jesus Christ in intimacy and transformation. You know, Facebook is a big deal.

I won't ask how many are on it. We might have to have a special invitation for some of you. I don't know, but it's the third largest nation in the world if all the Facebook people were a nation.

Isn't that amazing? And you know, it's funny. It's not called elbow book or leg book or knee book, right? It's called Facebook. Now, I don't know what Zuckerberg had in mind, but I do know this.

There's something about a face, isn't there? That's how you know who someone is. That's the essence of their expression and their heart. You know what I think is so beautiful? This is the original Facebook.

And every day, the Lord is sending you a friend invitation, isn't He? He says, come and be my friend. Seek my face. Behold my glory.

Experience my heart. I want you to know me, and I want to know you. And we are gonna walk in intimacy together.

That's the heart of ministry. It is intimate, isn't it? Not only that, it's transforming. Look at what He says next.

That we are being transformed into the same image from glory to glory. We are being transformed. Aren't you grateful you're not what you used to be? Amen, I'm so glad.

Amen, praise God for His grace. And I'm so excited that I'm not what I will be someday. But I know that right now, right now, as I stand here, as you sit here, as we worship together, God is in the process of transforming us.

The Greek word there is the same idea of metamorphosis. He's transforming us. He's making us new.

He's making us different. You know, sometimes in prayer, and rightfully so, we want the Lord to change things around us. And thank God He does that for His glory and our good.

But sometimes, as we're praying, the Lord's wanting to change us, isn't He? You remember the Sermon on the Mount, Matthew chapter five? Jesus is giving a number of points to the great crowd there as He's teaching them. And I'll just read it for you here in Matthew chapter five. You'll remember this.

Jesus said, in verse 43, you've heard that it was said, you will love your neighbor and hate your enemy. In other words, the word on the street is this. But I say, love your enemies, catch this, and pray for those who persecute you.

Stop right there. Now, what's that prayer list look like? I remember when that, I hate to admit this, when that guy was suing our church when I was a young pastor, I prayed for him. I said, Lord, take him home, would you? Just put him and the rest of us out of our misery.

I prayed for him. And you may have some people at work or in your neighborhood that just give you misery. They persecute you.

Pray for them. What's that prayer list look like? Hmm. Listen to the next two words.

This is interesting. So that you may become sons of your Father. Who's changing when you're praying for your enemies? We are.

They may never change. They may get worse. But somehow in the midst of that, it's prayer that changes you, isn't it? There's another passage that comes to my mind.

I'll just turn there briefly, 1 Timothy chapter two. And we use this a lot as we think about politics. Maybe you've noticed some elections are coming up.

I guess if they're gonna have inauguration, there must be a vote. Some of you perceptive people picked up on that. But we think about praying for our political leaders.

In fact, there's some movements now. Let's pray for the elections, et cetera. And that's all fine and good.

But let me tell you this. 1 Timothy two, Paul says, first thing you do is pray. Of course, Timothy, when you set up church.

1 Timothy two one, that supplications, prayers, intercessions, thanksgivings be made for all men. Here it is. For kings and all who are in high positions.

And stop. Hmm, what's that prayer list look like? Out with the bums or in with the good guys or Democrats, Republicans, Independents. So what are we praying about when we pray? By the way, Paul's people in

high positions that day made our people look like angels, right? I mean, Nero, this is the guy who burned his own city to turn the tide of public opinion against the Christians.

This is the guy who clothed believers in wild skins and fed them to the animals in the Colosseum. Dipped their bodies in tar and used them to light his own palace. Paul says, pray for these people.

Wow, what would that prayer look like? Here's what Paul says, that we, say that with me, that we, that we may lead a peaceful and quiet life, godly and dignified in every way. Who's changing as we're praying for our leaders? We are. God's making us into the image of Christ.

God's changing us as we're praying. We hope they get saved. We hope they rule in wisdom, but we're changing.

Why does God want that to happen? Well, listen to what he says next. This is good and it's pleasing in the sight of God. Why? Who desires all people to be saved and come to the knowledge of the truth.

What is the avenue through which that happens? The Republicans, the Democrats, the Green Party? No, it's the church, isn't it? And as we pray, we are being transformed so that in this society, we become the force for good. Amen? I often say, as we speak to pastors and church leaders, it's dark out there, but we really don't have a darkness problem. We have a light problem, right? I always say, kind of jokingly, the problem isn't Osama Obama or your mama.

You can blame anybody you want, right? You might say it's the politicians, you know, or it's the terrorists, or my mama dropped me on my head when I was a baby. I don't know what it is, but the real issue, friends, is we need to behold his glory and express that glory in this dark world as he is changing us in his presence. I love what that passage reminds us of.

From glory to glory. You know, with Moses, the glory was fading. For us, the glory just keeps getting better, right? As we gaze upon his presence, as we draw close to his heart, as we seek his face, we are being transformed.

And then notice what it says, into the same image. Into the same image. He is making us like Jesus, isn't he? I think of Paul, who, when he entreated the Lord three times, 2 Corinthians 12, Lord, remove this thorn in the flesh.

Remove it, remove it. And he said, no, Paul, but my grace is sufficient for you. My strength is made perfect in your, what? Your weakness.

So, Paul, when it's tough, keep seeking me, keep praying. But ultimately, I'm gonna make you like myself because that is the ultimate goal of all that I'm doing in your life. And then I just love this last thought here.

Just as by the Spirit of the Lord. It's a supernatural work, isn't it? We can't do this. But it is the ministration of the Spirit.

The old covenant was the covenant of the law. This is the covenant of the Spirit. It was written on tablets.

This is written on hearts. And it is now the Holy Spirit who is doing this in us. Oh, how we need the Spirit of God to work within us as we seek the Lord to help us taste the glory and to experience and express the glory of Jesus Christ.

Some of you have seen the movie *The Blind Side*. Michael Orr, who's now a professional football player with the Baltimore Ravens, who is in a disadvantaged childhood, was adopted by this family. Priority number one was to help him get his grades up.

So what did they do? They hired a tutor, right? Miss Sue, who worked with him day in and day out. He got his grades up, went on to play, obviously very well in high school and college and professional ball. But you know, the Lord wants us to know him so much tonight that he gave us a tutor, 24-7 tutor.

And he doesn't just come and visit us every once in a while. He lives in our hearts. And he's teaching us to pray, isn't he? It's a supernatural work, this thing called prayer.

And even Paul said, I don't know how to pray. Oh, but the Holy Spirit. The Holy Spirit works in me so deeply.

I don't even know how to articulate it, but he's moving in me to conform me to the image of Christ, to transform my prayers into prayers according to the will of God. And Paul, understanding all that, reflecting on that, now says, seeing therefore we have this ministry, as we have received mercy, we do not lose heart. We do not lose heart.

So we are experiencing the glory of Jesus Christ. And then one last glimpse. Fast forward again to the end of this passage we read as he talks about now this expression of the glory of Jesus Christ, because he makes it very clear in chapter two, verses four and five.

Chapter four, verses four and five. I want you to see them. Actually, verse six, he says, for it is God.

He goes back further than Moses now. He goes back to creation. It is the God who said, what? Let light shine out of darkness.

God's first declaration of creative power. Let light shine out of darkness, who has now shown in our hearts to give the light. Oh, don't you love this phrase? The light of the knowledge of the what? The glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ.

That's the summary of Paul's ministry now. The experience of it now, the expression of it. And I love what he says, and we have this treasure in earthen vessels or jars of clay.

Paul borrowed that from some Christian group name, I think, somewhere along the line, right? Jars of clay or cracked pots, one translator says it. That the excellence of the power may be of God and not of us. You probably know this, but the word Paul uses there is not a reference to the nice pots of the day, the collectibles.

It was a reference to the common clay pots that really had two uses. One was for trash, and the other was for human waste. Not to be gross, but that's what it was.

Which means, apart from this glory, I'm just a trash can or a toilet. Isn't that amazing? It really builds you up, doesn't it? Next time you see your brother, man, you're a good trash can or you're a good toilet, but the glory of God is in you, and that's what matters. Amen? That's all we are.

That the excellence of the power will be of God and not of us. You know, the Lord hasn't called us to try harder, to work it more cleverly, to just give it a little more elbow grease, to figure out a fresh way to impress people, to just turn up the heat on our social media. Those are all tools, and they could be fine,

perhaps in their proper context, but friends, if you're losing heart tonight, the question is how are you defining ministry? Paul says, we all with unveiled face are beholding as in a mirror the glory of the Lord and are being transformed from glory to glory even as by the Spirit of the Lord.

Seeing, therefore, we have this ministry. You know, I've learned you'll love this. This just is a kind of a little preacher moment.

When we learn that ministry is like this, we learn that this is what the essence of following Jesus really is. This is how it can be that we don't get discouraged, we don't become overwhelmed with fear, we don't become spiritless, we don't become useless, but we are useful for the Lord. We are seeking Him face to face.

You know what happens? God is glorified, I am sanctified, we are edified, the world is mystified, and the enemy is notified, amen? That's what happens when we understand ministry in this way. And tonight, tonight, some of you are here and you feel like you've lost heart, so discouraged, don't see the results, you feel like you've gone dry, and tonight the Lord is just saying, come, experience my glory, and then by the supernatural power of the Holy Spirit of Christ, just let me express it through you. Close to the final story, you've probably heard it before, of a father who came home from work one night and he was tired and was sitting in his easy chair, and his little boy came up and said, dad, let's go out to play.

And the dad was so tired, he wanted to have a little time to rest, so he had a thought. He was reading the newspaper and he pulled out this sheet that had a picture of the globe on it, and he said to Johnny, Johnny, I'm gonna tear this up and do a bunch of pieces and you go put it back together, and when you get it taped back, come bring it to me and we'll go out to play. And the dad thought, well, I've won myself a good 20, 30 minutes here.

And five minutes later, little Johnny came back, had it all taped together, and his dad said, son, how did you do that? He said, well, dad, it's real easy. On the back was a picture of a man's face, and I just taped the man's face together, and when I got the man right, I got the world right. Tonight, God wants to make some things right in your life by changing some things in your own heart this evening.

Would you stand with me? And fathers, we come now to this time of response. Lord, some of us here tonight are discouraged. We've been laboring and praying and asking you to change the things and the circumstances and the problems and the people in our lives.

Lord, we've been laboring, wanting things to be different, but tonight, our great need is to come into your presence and say, Lord, transform me. Oh, God, I want to commit to you these burdens and these challenges, and I want to pray about so many things, but first, Lord, transform me from glory to glory. Oh, God, I don't want to lose heart.

I don't want to be discouraged. I want to be useful in your kingdom, so tonight, there's something in me that I know you want to change. And God, as you do that, I want to just gaze upon your face tonight, and I want you to give me fresh heart, fresh courage, fresh zeal, fresh strength for the call of ministry.

So this evening, Lord, I come to experience your glory. Change me. Let me express your glory to the world around me as I seek your face.

Tonight, if you are here and you'd like to come to this altar and just pray together with others who say, Lord, we want to seek you right now. I want to see your glory, Lord. You know what I'm dealing with.

You know what I'm struggling with, but Lord, inside me, do a deep work to make me more like Jesus in the midst of these days, and let me find this to be the heart of what ministry really is. Would you come? Let's pray together tonight. Let's pray for one another.

Would you join me as we say, Lord, I want to behold your glory. Change my heart. Make me new.

Make me like your Savior. We bless your name, Lord. The devil's a liar.

We praise your name, Lord. The devil's a liar. We praise your name, Lord.

We overcome him by the blood of the lamb. We overcome him by the blood of the lamb. And the word of our testimony.

Thank you for your word to us tonight, Lord.

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