

Spiritual Ministry. the Letter of Christ

by Stephen Kaung

Spiritual ministry is the impartation of Christ, where the life of Christ is being increased in the people we minister to.

Duration: 54:25

Scripture: 2 Corinthians 3:2

Topics: "Ministry"

Description

In this sermon, the speaker emphasizes the importance of developing our ministry as members of the body of Christ. He uses the example of Moses, who initially thought he was competent to minister to his people but ended up failing and fleeing to the wilderness. The speaker encourages believers to actively engage with the word of Christ and personally experience it before ministering to others. He highlights that the ministry should not be limited to the written word but should be filled with the spirit of the living God. The speaker also contrasts the Old Covenant, represented by the Ten Commandments engraved on stones, with the New Covenant, which is written by the spirit and brings life.

Transcript

We'll please turn to 2nd Corinthians, 2nd Corinthians, Chapter 3. We'll read the whole chapter, 2nd Corinthians, Chapter 3. Do we begin again to commend ourselves, or do we need as some commendatory letters to you or from you? Ye are our letter, written in our hearts, known and read of all men, being manifested to be Christ's epistle, ministered by us, written not with ink, but the spirit of the living God, not on stone tables, but on fleshy tables of the heart. And such confidence have we through the Christ towards God, not that we are competent of ourselves to think anything as of ourselves, but our competency is of God, who has also made us competent as ministers of the new covenant, not of letter, but of spirit. For the letter kills, but the spirit quickens.

But if the ministry of death in letters, graven in stones, began with glory, so that the children of Israel could not fix their eyes on the face of Moses, on account of the glory of his face, a glory which is annulled, how shall not, rather, the ministry of the spirit subsist in glory? For if the ministry of condemnation be glory, much rather the ministry of righteousness abounds in glory. For also that which was glorified is not glorified in this respect, on account of the surpassing glory. For if that annulled was introduced with glory, much rather that which abides subsists in glory.

Having therefore such hope, we use much boldness, and not according as Moses put a veil on his own face, so that the children of Israel should not fix their eyes on the end of that annulled. But their thoughts have been darkened, for until this day the same veil remains in reading the old covenant, unremoved, which in Christ is annulled. But until this day, when Moses is read, the veil lies upon their heart.

For when he shall turn to the Lord, the veil is taken away. Now the Lord is the Spirit, for where the Spirit of the Lord is, there is liberty. But we all, looking on the glory of the Lord with unveiled face, are transformed according to the same image, from glory to glory, even as by the Lord the Spirit.

May we look to the Lord in prayer. Our Heavenly Father, we do praise and thank Thee for the unspeakable gift of Thine, even our Lord Jesus Christ. We do praise and thank Thee Thou hast given Him to us.

He is ours, and we are Thine forever. We do praise and thank Thee because nothing can separate us from Thy love, which is in Christ Jesus. So as we come together this morning, we come with boldness.

We come with confidence, knowing that Thou art towards us, and we just open ourselves to Thee and ask Thee to shine upon our hearts, that we may be transformed from glory to glory, even as by the Lord the Spirit. In the name of our Lord Jesus, Amen. We have been considering together a few times in the past on 2 Corinthians.

I think probably we should be reminded that 2 Corinthians actually is the autobiography of Paul, a man in Christ. And we find that his whole life as a man in Christ is characterized by spirituality. If we want to learn what true spirituality is, we have to learn from Paul in this second letter to the Corinthians.

Now, in the past we have mentioned about what is spiritual life, and there are 3 unmistakable signs of a spiritual life. Number 1, the sentence of death. Number 2, yest in Christ.

And number 3, the fragrance of Christ. Now this morning we would like to continue on in this letter, and it concerns with spiritual ministry. From chapter 3 to chapter 7, you will find that the subject there is concerning spiritual ministry.

And we know that life and ministry are inseparable. There must be life, and then out of that life will come forth ministry. Ministry is something more than just gift.

Ministry is gift backed by life. Or ministry is life coming through gifts. Now in 1 Corinthians you will find the church in Corinth is rich in gifts.

And yet there is no ministry. Why because there is no building up. Instead of the church being built up, we find it is being torn.

And that is not ministry. Because the purpose of ministry is to build up, to build the body of Christ. Therefore you will find gifts alone do not constitute ministry.

Gift must be supported by life. Life must be that which handles gift. And then you begin to find ministry.

That's why we find in 2 Corinthians the ministry of the apostle Paul. He has a ministry. And God uses him to build up the body of Christ.

Because he has not only gifts, but there is much life in him. In a sense, there is a ministry which is special. As Paul says in 2 Corinthians chapter 4, having this ministry.

In other words, there is a ministry which is concerned with the ministry of the word of God. With these men whom God gives to the church as gifts. As we find in the 4th chapter of Ephesians.

God gives to the church some apostles, some prophets, some evangelists, some pastors and teachers for the perfecting of the saints. Now this is a special ministry. A ministry towards the body of Christ.

But aside from this special ministry, there is a ministry in which every member of the body of Christ is involved. And this is the ministry of the body. In Ephesians chapter 4 we find God gives these people to the church for the perfecting, maturing of the saints.

With a view to the ministry for the building up of the body of Christ. Both Dr. Lightfoot and Anglican Bishop and Campbell Morgan agree that the word the ministry in Ephesians 4 does not refer to the special ministry as ministered by these four classes of people. Rather the ministry there refers to body ministry.

That is a ministry that comes out of the body. A ministry that is ministered by all the members of the body. And it is through this body ministry that the body builds itself up in love.

So dear brothers and sisters, even though Paul may be speaking of this ministry that is a special ministry that he is engaged in. And yet we know there is a ministry of the body that all of us are engaged. Therefore the principles that governs the special ministry and the ministry of the body are the same.

So we can use what we find in 2 Corinthians chapter 3 to chapter 7. These principles that govern the ministry as applicable to all ministries. Probably before we go even into that a word needs to be said. And that is as members of the body of Christ we all have a ministry to fulfill.

Whether you are a big member or you are a small member. Every member in the body of Christ is involved in this body ministry. God has put you, set you in the body as a particular member.

And with that particular member God expects a ministry to come forth. But for that particular ministry to come forth from every particular member it requires a life with the Lord plus exercising the gifts that God has given to each. Now when Paul mentions this matter of spiritual ministry, I think we will use the same way as we did with spiritual life.

We will try to find a few catching phrases so that it will help us to remember. Now a true ministry, a spiritual ministry is writing Christ's epistle. In other words the letter of Christ.

Now the occasion for it is Paul said do we begin to commend ourselves or do we need as some commendatory letters to you or commendatory from you. Now evidently it was the custom at that time to write letter of commendation. As the churches began to spring up in various parts of the world and servants of God were travelling to different places and even believers began to travel and visit different cities.

There seemed to be a need for letter of commendation. Why? Because they did not know each other. And if a servant of the Lord should go from one place to another place to a new place and that place nobody knew him, it would be difficult for him to find fellowship and to minister.

And the same thing was true with believers. As they travelled for various purposes from one place to another they desired to have fellowship and they would need some letter of recommendation in order to be received. Therefore during the end of the first century in the early church you find it was the custom of those days.

Whenever a servant of the Lord was going to travel from one place to another or a believer was visiting another place the church there would give him a letter of commendation asking the churches in other places to receive them as of the Lord and to help them in any way they could. And with these letters of commendation they could travel far and wide. Now even in the New Testament you find such things happen.

For instance, in Acts chapter 18 Apollo, he came from Alexandria, Africa and he came to Ephesus and there he ministered to the church with the word of God but he had a desire to go to Achaia, to Corinth. But he knew no one in Corinth and no one knew him in Corinth. Therefore you find the church in Ephesus wrote a letter of commendation introducing him to the church in Corinth asking them to receive him.

And there he went, he was received and he helped them greatly with the word of God. Or for instance in Romans chapter 16 Paul wrote that letter to the church in Rome and in chapter 16 verses 1 and 2 how he recommend Phoebe a deaconess in the church in Centuria. Phoebe has some business to attend to in Rome so Paul wrote a letter and recommend her to the church there and told the church not only to receive her but to help her in every way they could because Phoebe had been a great help to him and to the church in other place.

Letter of commendation. Not only that but you even find say in Acts chapter 15 when the church, the apostles and the church in Jerusalem wrote that letter to the churches of the Gentiles they sent Judas and Silas two leading brothers out with the letter and in the letter they recommend these two brothers to the churches in other places. And in Paul's writing you find he often did that.

How he introduced Timothy to the church in Corinth 1 Corinthians chapter 16 he said if Timothy should come receive him, do not make him afraid of you because Timothy was of a very timid nature. And then also in 2 Corinthians chapter 8 you find he recommend Titus to them. In the letter to Philemon he recommend Onesimus.

So it was the custom of that day to write letter of commendation. But Paul said to the Corinthian believers do I need to have a letter of commendation? To you or from you? Certainly if other place, other people do not know him the Corinthian believers certainly know him. In other words their very being in Christ was the result of his preaching.

So Paul said do I need letter of commendation from you? Or do I need letter of commendation to you? You are my letter. You are my letter of commendation written upon our hearts to be read and known by all men. As Paul minister to the believers in Corinth.

They in turn became his letter to be studied and read by all men. Therefore Paul said I do not need any letter of commendation. Now that was the occasion.

But Paul used that occasion to shift it to something else. He said you are our letter known and read by all men. Being manifested to be Christ epistle.

In other words from the letter of commendation Paul shifts to the letter of Christ. You are our letter. At the same time you are the letter of Christ.

Ministered by us. Not with ink but with the spirit of the living God. Not upon stones but upon tables of flesh.

What is spiritual ministry? Spiritual ministry is writing the letter of Christ. You know how a letter is formed. When you write a letter you use words you use sentences you use phrases and clauses and you use these things to write and to form a letter.

So in ministering in spiritual ministry you are writing the letter of Christ. A word, a phrase, a clause, a sentence. But what you are writing is Christ.

It is not you yourself. It is not the thought of Paul. It is not the idea of Paul.

It is not Paul's way and method. It is not Paul's like and dislike. When Paul ministers to the church in Corinth he is not putting down words of Paul phrases of Paul, sentences of Paul so when the letter is finished it is Paul.

The letter of Paul. People will see Paul in that letter. No.

Paul said when I am writing that letter I am writing Christ in you. It is Christ in words in phrases, in clauses and in sentences. So after the letter is finished and when people read that letter they do not read Paul they read Christ.

That is spiritual ministry. Now of course because Paul being used by God to write that letter it carries some characteristic of Paul. Some style.

Some flavor of Paul. That is true. You know this is how the New Testament is written.

When you read the New Testament you will find that Paul's letter always have some special flavor of Paul. You know it is Paul who is used by God in writing that letter. But the contents of the letter is not Paul.

It is Christ. Or if you read the letter written by Peter you will find Peter's flavor is always there. You can recognize this is Peter.

And yet it is Christ. It is not Peter. That is the contents of the letter.

That is being incorporated or organized in the life of the believers. It is the letter of Christ. When we minister if we minister ourselves to the people then the letter will be our letter.

But when we minister Christ to the people then that letter will be the letter of Christ. I think it is an unmistakable sign. You can easily see whether your ministry is spiritual or carnal.

Whether your ministry is of the spirit or of yourself. You can easily find in the lives of these people whom you minister to is it Christ that appears in their life. They are the epistle of Christ.

They should make people know and read of Christ. Now if they only read of you then you have failed in ministry. If they can read Christ in the life of the people whom you minister to or to put it in another way as you minister if the life of Christ is being increased in them is being built up in them incorporated in them then you know this is spiritual ministry.

Otherwise it is not. Therefore dear brothers and sisters what is spiritual ministry? Spiritual ministry is the impartation of Christ. Spiritual ministry is not something that you can do by study, by research.

It is not something by books. It is not something that you try to analyze and organize and you can present certain sermons and messages that will reach the mind of man. If that is all to it it is not spiritual ministry.

Spiritual ministry is the impartation of Christ. In other words the Christ whom you know by experience the Christ whom you know intimately the Christ whom you have experienced it is not something in your mind but the Christ that you know by heart and when you minister to other people you are imparting the Christ in you to them. And as you do that you find the words and the letters of Christ and not you.

And you are writing the letter of Christ. And this is the reason why spiritual life is so basic. Because if our spiritual life is lacking there is not much of Christ you can impart.

Suppose you are rich in gift. You are able to say things or you are able to do things because you are rich in gift. But if you are lacking in life that is in the life of Christ in you then it is like symbols clanging symbols.

You make lot of noise and yet there is not much substance that you can really impart to other people. It is for this reason how important it is that if we want to minister in a spiritual way we need to go to the Lord and really seek His face that His light in us may be enriched and increased. And with that we are able to write the letter of Christ.

What is written is Christ. But of course we know the writer is you or me. We are used by God to write the letter of Christ.

Not in the sense of being scribes. You know in the Old Testament time and in the time of Christ there is a class of people called scribes. And these scribes were raised up mainly to copy the Old Testament.

Of course later on they did something more but the work of a scribe is to copy the word of God. And they learned to copy it with such exactness. And if you study the custom at that time you will find when a scribe is copying the Old Testament the word of God they did it with such reverence.

With such reverence. Whenever they came to a word the name of God they have to wash themselves before they will write down that word. They were fewer reverence.

But scribes are just people who copy. In other words we are not just copying the letter. In the New Testament sense we are ministers of the New Covenant.

In other words it is true that we are writing Christ upon the lives of other people. But we are not just there doing copying work. We ourselves are very much involved.

In other words it is not a passive work. It is an active work. By passive work it means that well you take say 2 Corinthians and you put it on the table and then you use a pen and you copy it word for word.

And maybe you can copy with reverence. And you may copy it exactly. Nothing is wrong.

But this is not spiritual ministry. This is still ministry of the Old Covenant. Of letter.

But to be writers of the letter of Christ we are not just doing it passively copying. We must do it actively. That is to say Christ or the word of Christ or the message of Christ that we are going to give.

We are going to minister to our brothers and sisters. Must not only be that which is recorded in the scripture. But it has to be living and real in us.

Say we may give a message out of study and we may give it exactly as it is recorded in the word of God. But that will be letter. It will not be in spirit.

Therefore you will find we who are to write the letter of Christ we must personally involved in the word in the phrase in the sentence, in the clause that we are going to write. We must ourselves experience it. And out of our experience God can use us to write that letter.

Whatever Paul writes he experiences. The reason why God can use him to write such letters is because he has such experience of Christ. He is actively engaged not passively engaged.

And I think this is the second thing that we need to remember as we come to writing the letter of Christ. And thirdly it is not of letter it is of spirit. The old covenant is written in letter with ink.

But the new covenant is written by the spirit of the living God. Moses went up to the mountain to receive the ten commandments. And these ten words were engraved upon stones.

When they entered into the promised land they put the ten commandments on stones by the mountain. So everybody can see it and can read it. It is in letter.

But the letter kills. Why? Because the ten commandments represent the perfect will of God. It is spiritual.

It is true. Nothing is wrong with that. And if people can keep it they may live.

But the problem is no power no life is promised and given. Because of the weakness of the flesh they cannot keep the ten commandments. So the letter kills them.

Kills them. But the new covenant is not written with ink. It is written with the spirit of the living God.

And because of that it quickens. Because the spirit is the spirit who gives life. Dear brothers and sisters as we minister to other people we may minister them as ministers of the old covenant.

In other words we may try to write with ink and in letter. Now if we do that we only bring people into bondage. And it kills.

How often we try to give rules regulations, laws to people. We try to tell people what is right. What they ought to do.

What is the right thing to do. Now nothing wrong with that. If they can do it they can live.

But the problem is letter kills. We bring them under bondage. The more we minister them the more dead they are.

It is the ministry of death. It is the ministry of condemnation. If they know less they may not be so condemned.

Well that's not my word. It's Paul's word. Because Paul said before I know the law I am alive.

But when I know the law that is you should not be greedy then I die. And that's exactly what is happening. Brothers and sisters sometimes we try to minister to others.

We know it in our mind this is knowledge. This is correct. But as we try to minister to them we just bring them into bondage and into death.

And you know why? Because we minister in letter. Not in spirit. We are writing with ink.

Not with the spirit of the living God. But what a difference it will be brothers and sisters when we ourselves have experienced the new covenant and we are able to minister in the spirit of the living God. And as we minister maybe outwardly there doesn't seem to be much difference in words and yet what a difference it is because when people are being ministered they are quickened into life.

It is the ministry of righteousness. It is the ministry of life. It is the ministry of the spirit.

If we want to have spiritual ministry remember it must be in spirit or not in letter. We must minister with the spirit in the power of the Holy Spirit. And as we minister in the power of the Holy Spirit life will be given to those who are being ministered.

Furthermore it is not graven on stones. It is written upon hearts. Stone.

Cold. Hard. No response.

Dead. But heart fleshy heart heart of flesh it is tender it is soft it responds it is warm. We are not writing that letter upon stones.

We are writing that letter upon hearts. If what we minister does not reach the heart we fail in our ministry. If we are only able to reach people's mind for instance well if it comes out of our mind it can only reach others mind.

But if it comes from our heart it can touch others heart. Whether it is in prayer whether it is in speaking or in fellowshiping if it does not come from our heart remember you are engraving on stones. You may wonder why people do not seem to be touched.

Well people may afterwards say well you give a good message. Now often times you know that is a temptation to one who preaches after you preach someone ah it is a good message good thought. That is a failure.

Because if it only reaches people's mind what use is that? If people are convicted their hearts are being touched then it is spiritual ministry. Brothers and sisters we are members of the body of Christ. We are expected to minister to one another.

Now do not think that you have no ministry. You should develop your ministry. You may not have it now but you need to develop it.

Because this is expected of every child of God. Whatever your ministry special area may be whether you are to help or to speak or to do things in whatever area it may be in the church in home in the world there is a ministry we need to fulfill. And especially in the church for the building up of the body of Christ.

And every part every one part has to play its part. Therefore it is very important that we know what spiritual ministry is. And we learn to develop that ministry.

Well probably you will say who is competent? We are ministers of the new covenant. Who is competent? Who is able to write the letter of Christ upon others lives? Who is able to do it in the spirit and not in the flesh? Who is competent? And that's the reason why Paul said our competency is of God. Even Paul realizes the seriousness of ministry.

Brothers and sisters on the one hand we should be eager to minister. But on the other hand we should be afraid to minister. We should be eager to minister because this is God's will.

And if we love the body of Christ this is what we ought to do. And yet on the other hand when we ought to minister brothers and sisters let us realize the seriousness of it. It is not a small thing.

Writing the letter of Christ is not a small thing. What if it comes out? All ourselves and little or even none of Christ. Therefore when we come to ministry there is a sense in us we are totally incompetent.

Brothers and sisters if you have not yet come to this point probably the Lord has to bring you through, bring you to that point through some testings and trials. For instance, Moses. Moses forty years in a palace in Egypt mighty in words and in deeds.

And he had desire to minister to his people. He was eager to do that. He went out thinking that he was competent.

He was able to deliver his brethren. And you'll find he was a total failure. He had to flee to the wilderness.

And there for forty years to die. But when he was eighty and God called him to that ministry he said Lord who am I? I cannot do it. I cannot speak.

I'm nothing. And so far as Moses himself was concerned he was dead. Because in Psalm 90 he said a man who is the life span of a man is three scores and ten.

And if he is strong he will be eighty years old. And Moses was eighty. He considered himself as dead.

But it was at that point when he realized he was incompetent he came to see that his competency was in God. So brothers and sisters I do encourage every one of you to seek for ministry. By ministry I mean body ministry.

All conclusive. God may call you to do this may call the other one to do other things but we all have a ministry to fulfill. I do feel that everyone should look for a ministry that will build up the body of Christ.

But one thing is important. We must realize we are totally incompetent. But not because we are incompetent therefore we do not minister.

We do not serve. We are totally incompetent therefore our competency is of God. We need to look up to Him.

Because He is able. He is able. Now if we are all ministering with that attitude brothers and sisters there will be very little problem.

You will find all the ministries will come together. And will really build up the body of Christ. As we minister to people we are bringing people to Christ.

That they may behold the glory of the Lord with unveiled face. And as they behold the glory of the Lord with unveiled face, they will be changed from glory to glory. According to His image.

Even as by the Lord, the Spirit. You know this is spiritual ministry. Spiritual ministry is leading people to the Lord.

That their hearts may turn to the Lord. The veils may be taken away. They may behold the glory of the Lord.

And as they behold the glory of the Lord transformation. To put it in another way. In one sense we are not able to bring people to Christ.

We are not able to incorporate Christ into their life. We are not able to change them. To transform them.

We are not able to do that. That is the work of the Holy Spirit. Only the Holy Spirit is able to do such a work.

But if we cooperate if we depend upon the Holy Spirit we will be used by God to help people to turn to Christ. We will be used by God to help people to have their veil taken off their face. And it is only when their hearts are turned to the Lord and the veil is taken away then the Holy Spirit does the work.

He transforms them. He conforms them to the image of Christ. So the end result is the letter of Christ.

Christ is being known and being read. This is spiritual ministry. So may the Lord help us.

Shall we pray? Our Heavenly Father we do praise and thank Thee because Thou has called us into this ministry of the body. Thou does desire that every one of us should function and should minister to the building up of the body of Christ. But Lord do show us what true and spiritual ministry is.

That we may not in any way doing a lot and accomplishing little or even nothing. Lord deliver us from just activities. Deliver us from ourselves.

We pray that by Thy grace we may know Thee in such depths that we may have much to impart to Thy church. That we may truly minister Christ to one another. Not with ink but with the spirit of the living God.

Oh Lord we do pray that Thou may use us to help other people. To lead them as it were to Thee to take off their veil that they may look to Thee and be transformed by Thy spirit. And really be conformed to Thy image.

Oh we do pray that we may be those who are writing the letter of Christ. This will be our letter of commendation. That we do not just write our letters.

That people will not just read us. And they do not read Christ. Oh forbid.

We ask Thee O Lord have mercy upon us. We know we are incompetent Lord. But we are not discouraged.

We look to Thee because we know Thou art our competency. Thou are well able to use us to write that letter. May Christ be glorified.

We ask in the name of our Lord Jesus. Amen.

Audio: <https://sermonindex1.b-cdn.net/1/SID1732.mp3>

Source: <https://sermonindex.net/speakers/stephen-kaung/spiritual-ministry-the-letter-of-christ/>

Grow in Your Walk with Christ

Listen and read messages that will stir your heart for Christ and point you to deeper repentance and devotion.

- 50,000+ Sermons from speakers past and present
- 3,900+ Classic Christian Books freely readable online
- 1,200+ Bible Translations and Commentaries
- Over 450k forum posts — Join our vibrant online Christian forum

www.sermonindex.net