

WE HAVE THIS MINISTRY

Jonathon Wills, Presbytery Word for week commencing Sunday 14 June 2026

Transcription of recording, slightly edited

Turn with me to 2 Corinthians chapters 3 and 4. I am going to teach from the preface of *The Lampstand Church*. When David spoke at Easter, in about the final 20 minutes of his speaking, he moved to this section of the preface. That is the presbytery word for this week as well. So, the two should sit well together. We will begin by reading chapter 4 verses 1 to 2. Then we will move into chapter 3.

Paul says, 'Therefore, since we have this ministry...' The ministry that he is talking about is the ministry that he has spoken of in the first three chapters of 2 Corinthians. We will come back to that in a moment. He is saying that in the light of this, 'We have received this ministry' and we have sung of this ministry this morning where 'the light of the gospel of the glory of God is in the face of Jesus Christ'. We have also sung of the transformative capacity of this gospel as we are being transformed from one degree of glory after another by the Spirit of the Lord, into the image of Christ. 'Since we have this ministry...' we are going to list seven things. If you are taking notes, you can note the seven of these down.

The first is, 'Since we have this ministry...' These seven that we are talking about are to be the testimony of every messenger in the right hand of Christ. This is to be the testimony of every believing household that belongs to a lampstand church.

'Since we have this ministry, as we have received mercy...' That is number two. We are recipients of the mercy of God ourselves. It is the mercy firstly covering the forgiveness of our sins. But His mercy also grants to us a participation in the fellowship of that offering whereby sin ended and He was enabled to forgive us - where we are (by mercies that are new every morning) enabled to participate with Christ and to walk in His resurrection life and power.

The third point is having received mercy, 'we do not lose heart'. This is characteristic of a messenger of Christ and of a believing household. 'We do not lose heart.' Why? Because we have received mercy. We are looking into the face of Christ and being transformed from one degree of glory after another into that same image, and we are receiving the comfort that the Holy Spirit ministers to us, which is the resurrection life of Christ. It is grace for us to walk in each day. Having received that comfort... (as we will read shortly in Corinthians) ...we receive that comfort in order that we might comfort others with the same comfort which we have received. So we are not losing heart, '...even though the outer man is perishing, yet the inward man is being renewed day by day'. That was the third - 'we do not lose heart.'

Fourth is 'we have renounced the hidden things of shame.' This is that we ought to be ashamed of our sin. But the deeper issue here is our self-righteous shame that when our sin is exposed because the light is shining, that man loves darkness more than the light. This issue of needing to renounce the hidden things of shame is not an issue that unbelievers are dealing with. It is an issue that is in the church. The true light is shining. The issue is that because of self-righteous shame, we seek, through acts of penance, or we cover up and hide instead of walking in the light as He (Christ) is in the light - being able to confess our sins to one another such that the blood of Christ is effective for us. That was the fourth: 'We have renounced the hidden things of shame.'

The fifth is that we are 'not walking in craftiness'. In other words, I am not trying to transform myself into an alternate image, which is what Satan does. He transformed himself into the image of a seraph in the tree of the knowledge of good and evil. He could then deceive Eve because of what he had transformed himself into through his

craftiness. That is what this craftiness is referring to. It is where there is not something that is true and settled in terms of the image of who we are in the mode of our ministry.

The sixth has two components to it. It has to do with our handling of the word. We are 'not handling the word deceitfully, but rather by manifestation of the truth.' This is where Paul not only *proclaimed* Christ and Him crucified, but he *exemplified and portrayed* Him through his living. He proclaimed and portrayed Christ and Him crucified. He did not handle the word with deceit so that what he said was not true within him, but rather it was manifested in him as being the truth. This is what it ought to be for us as well. That is the sixth element of this testimony.' We are not handling the word of God deceitfully', but by the manifestation of the truth, the word is effective.

Then the seventh is that 'we are commending ourselves to every man's conscience in the sight of God'. Paul is saying that the whole fellowship of the ministry of the gospel of God is personal. We are proclaiming Christ and Him crucified and ourselves as bondservants of Christ. In that regard, we do commend ourselves to the conscience of every man in the sight of God because our heart is for fellowship. 'Come and have fellowship with us and indeed our fellowship is with the Father and the Son.' He is making it clear that we do not preach the word to appeal to anyone's mind and to your intellect and to your sense of reason or to argument. The word is ministered to our spirit. It is a Spirit-to-spirit interaction. We are body, soul and spirit and the conscience belongs to the spirit. It is our identity where there is a true knowledge of who we are. If the spirit is in darkness, then there is no true knowledge of who we are. In other words, there is no true knowledge of who the Father named us to be; nor is there any knowledge of God; nor of one another. Paul is saying, 'In the sight of God, I am commending myself as a messenger who is walking and worshipping in Spirit and in truth right to your spirit so that we

might find fellowship with one another in this regard.'

'We have this ministry' and the testimony of this ministry is carried within us through these elements. 'We have this ministry' is the first. The second... It would be good to write it down or to note it in your Bibles. 'We have this ministry.' 'We have received mercy.' 'We do not lose heart.' 'We are renouncing the hidden things of shame.' 'We are not walking in craftiness.' 'We are not handling the word deceitfully, but rather by the manifestation of the truth of what is true in us.' And 'we are commending ourselves to your conscience in the sight of God.' These are the seven elements that belong to the testimony of every messenger who is in the right hand of Christ and to every believing household. These need to be true within us if we are to carry not just the *word*, but also the *portraying* - the lived example of the gospel.

Come to 2 Corinthians chapter 3. I have really wanted to make sure that we have the seven in front of us and now we will step through some different elements in relationship to them. Again, I commend you to the preface of *The Lampstand Church* book which we could have just read through together and we would have had a great morning. So, maybe we could do that another time.

In 2 Corinthians chapter 3, Paul is highlighting the distinction between the Old Covenant and the New Covenant. We are ministers not of the Old Covenant, but we are ministers of the New Covenant. And he says that this is a ministry of the Spirit and it is also a ministry of righteousness. But amazingly, he does make the point saying that the Old Covenant and its law *did* have a glory associated with it. If you were obedient to that word, then the blessing of God was there for you. That is amazing. You can read that in Deuteronomy chapter 8. God's intention in terms of giving them the Law was that it was to be a tutor to lead them to Christ through each generation all of the way through to Christ. He is saying, 'Part of the blessing is that if you will be obedient

to My commands and teach them to your children, your land will receive its rain in its season, such that all of your crops and all of the necessary harvest will be there for you.’ It is a remarkable blessing - a very practical blessing in terms of meeting the needs of the people. It is even remembering that they were allotted portions of land according to their family groupings and tribes. Each one was receiving the resource that was necessary for that family grouping (generations together) to be fruitful and to minister in the land.

The Old Covenant though did not have the capacity to circumcise the heart of a person; and yet, it judged the heart of a person. That then establishes a problem for them. This is the judgement extended beyond someone's behaviour to what was in their heart, knowing that with the Law came both blessing and cursing. Deuteronomy 8 verse 2: ‘...to know what was in your heart whether you would keep His commandments or not’. It is not even a matter of whether you have said it or done it; it is whether it is in the heart. Here is the problem then: There ought to be a cry that I need a circumcision of my heart; not just of my flesh.

Even though the heart of a man was judged under the Law Covenant, the Law had no capacity to circumcise the other law that existed in every man's heart because of Adam's disobedience. While the Law promised *blessing* for obedience, it did not give the *capacity* for obedience. Rather, the law acted as a tutor to lead people to Christ. By it, people could walk by the faith of Abraham and make offering in faith for the coming of Christ - for the inauguration of the New Covenant as the outcome of His death and resurrection. There was a glory associated with it, but it was a temporary, passing glory.

Paul then says in 2 Corinthians chapter 3 verse 11, ‘For if what is passing was glorious, what remains is much more glorious.’ In verse 8, he says, ‘How will the ministry of the Spirit not be more glorious?’ Then into verse 12, ‘Therefore... [in light of the glory that

belongs to the New Covenant of the Spirit - a glory that is lasting] ... therefore, since we have such hope, we use great boldness of speech.’ Why? Because the glory is not passing away. In fact, we are being transformed from one degree of glory into another, into the same image of Christ for every day of our life until the day of resurrection, when we are then fully and completely brought forth in the spiritual body as a man just like Christ.

It is a remarkable glory that belongs to the New Covenant of the Spirit. We live with hope. We do not look at the things that are passing; or the pains that we experience; the things that are temporary to a day. Rather we are ‘looking unto Jesus, the Author and the Perfecter of our faith’ and to the glory that belongs to His face. ‘We then use great boldness of speech.’ We have a ministry and we are bold in relationship to this ministry.

I will reference for you Acts chapter 4 where Peter is speaking. Peter and John had received some threats after healing the lame man. The church was in prayer for them in verse 29. ‘ “Now, Lord, look upon their threats, but grant to Your servants that with all boldness we may speak Your word, and that Your hand might be stretched forth to heal, and that signs and wonders may be done through the name of Your holy Servant, Jesus.” And when they had prayed, the place where they were assembled together was shaken; and they were all filled with the Holy Spirit, and they spoke the word of God with great boldness.’

This is what Paul is speaking about here (in Corinthians). ‘Therefore, since we have *this* ministry...’ It is a ministry that is communicated and exemplified boldly – unashamedly - because we know what the Lord is actually dealing with in our own life. We are men of like passions in this regard. Paul is using great boldness of speech because it is not a ‘passing glory’. Rather, in relationship to the veil, he then says in verse 14, ‘But their minds were blinded. For until this day, the same veil remains unlifted in the reading of the Old Testament because

the veil is taken away in Christ.' This was really sitting on me as I was praying this morning. 'The veil is taken away in Christ.' If you are not seeing it, and if you are not hearing it, 'the veil is taken away in Christ'. Christ has been lifted up from the very beginning of our meeting. 'The light of the knowledge of the glory of God that is in the face of Jesus Christ' has been lifted up before us. 'If you would turn to the Lord, the veil is taken away in Christ.' We do not need to try to do it ourselves. We just need to look up and believe. 'But even to this day, when Moses is read, a veil lies over their heart. Nevertheless, when one turns to the Lord, the veil is taken away.'

Here now is Paul's descriptive summary of this ministry of how it is that when we turn to the Lord, the veil is taken away; and what then happens in someone's life. 'Now the Lord is the Holy Spirit; and where the [sevenfold] Spirit of the Lord is, there is liberty [and freedom]. But we all with unveiled faces... [Why? Because we turn to the Lord and the veil was taken away in Christ. When did we turn to the Lord that the veil would be taken away? When the Holy Spirit ministered the word to us by the sevenfold Spirit of the Lord and we did not hide our face from Him. Rather, we looked and beheld His glory. The veil is taken away and] ...we now with unveiled faces [What happens?] behold now, like looking into a mirror, the glory of the Lord [But it is not just that we look and see His glory] but we are looking into a mirror and seeing the glory of who we are - seeing the glory of God [It is not just that it is *seen*], but we are then being *transformed* into the very same image from glory to glory, just as by the [sevenfold] Spirit of the Lord [that the Holy Spirit is ministering to us].'

'We have this ministry.' Is this not amazing? This is the ministry of the New Covenant of the Spirit. Within this (as the veil is being taken away - it is taken away in Christ, which means the heart is being circumcised) what the Old Covenant Law could not do, it is now accomplished and achieved in Christ.

From glory to glory, from day to day, all of this transformative power is taking place within us.

Let us read that again so we can catch the distinction. The Scripture is talking 'Spirit' and 'Lord' here and I want us to be clear about whom it is referring to. 'The Lord is the [Holy] Spirit.' We even sing that. 'The Lord is the Holy Spirit.' 'Where the [sevenfold] Spirit of the Lord is... [The Holy Spirit is the One who is strengthening us with the capacity of the sevenfold Spirit of the Lord] ...is where liberty and freedom are found.' That is where the freedom - the glorious liberty of living as a son of God is found - just as Christ was strengthened by the Holy Spirit with the sevenfold Spirit of the Lord. That is what Eternal Spirit is. It is the capacity that belongs to Father, Son and Holy Spirit and it is the means by which each One of Them offers to reveal the Other and lays Their lives down in love. 'The Lord is the Holy Spirit and where the [sevenfold] Spirit of the Lord is, that is where the glorious liberty of sons of God is. We all with unveiled faces [because we are turning to the Lord, the veil is being taken away in Christ], we are beholding as in a mirror the glory of the Lord [the first Man in the image and likeness of God. We are beholding the glory of that finished work; the glory of who we are to be, and the marvellous processive journey that belongs to each day of our lives that Christ has already journeyed for us. We are receiving faith and capacity by the sevenfold Spirit of the Lord to journey with Christ such that we], are being transformed into that very same image [every day of our lives] by the [sevenfold] Spirit of the Lord from one degree of glory into another.'

We have read 2 Corinthians 4 verses 1 and 2. Paul then says in verse 3, 'But even if our gospel is veiled, it is veiled to those who are perishing [We could say there 'to those who are not believing; who are not turning; and who are stumbling over Christ the chief Cornerstone laid in Zion, but also the stone and the rock of stumbling and offence.' That is the context that he is addressing. If you

are not seeing and hearing, it is not because the gospel is not effective - it is because of the veil. You are not turning to the Lord so that it can be removed], whose mind, the God of this age has blinded... [How does he blind it? He blinds it through the hidden things of shame, through self-righteous shame, through craftiness where we seek to transform ourselves instead of walking in the light with our brethren. He blinds us through deceit. This is the very beginning point of the Fall where in his craftiness, he deceives hearts and minds. Paul says, 'I fear lest Satan, just as he did with Eve, has come and deceived you in such a manner that you would believe another gospel and another word.' He blinds us by causing us to walk deceitfully and not in the truth, and by appealing to our mind. Instead of looking into the glory that shines in His face, in preference to that, we look into... could I describe it as the 'face of our own mind'? It is a different face that we look into when we choose the face that belongs to our mind and say, 'I prefer those darkened, fallen, deceived, crafty thoughts.' That is how he blinds the minds. Why? Because you did not believe. This is why the Lord has been dealing with our unbelief. He is speaking a word that we might turn to the Lord and believe, and the veil that has been there is taken away in Christ, through the circumcision of Christ - through the fellowship of those seven wounds.] ... whose minds the God of this age has blinded, who do not believe, lest... [this is the alternative] ...lest the light of the gospel of the glory of Christ, who is the image of God, should shine on them [This is the invitation every time the word is proclaimed. His heart and desire is that the light of the gospel of the glory of Christ who is the image of God (the image that we are to be conformed to that gives us such hope and boldness in life), lest that it would shine on you.] For we do not preach ourselves, but Christ Jesus as Lord, and ourselves your bond servants for Jesus' sake [This is what we sang]. For it is the God who commanded light to shine out of darkness, who has shone into our hearts to give the

light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ.'

This is where he says 'we are commending ourselves to every man's conscience in the sight of God' - that the light of the knowledge of the glory of God might shine into your heart and light up your spirit and that there then might cease to be fracture lines between the expression of your inner man (the spirit and the soul). Then as the spirit is lit up, your mind that belongs to your soul will also be transformed. We are not being *conformed* to the world, but rather our minds are being *transformed* by this knowledge and by the light that belongs to this knowledge - all of which shines from the face of Christ. It is amazing where Paul is saying that if the gospel is veiled, it is because you do not believe. If you are not seeing it or understanding it; if you are not knowing the transformative capacity there, it is because you are not believing. But you can turn. The light may then shine upon you, and your spirit may be lit up, and you may obtain testimony.

He then says, 'We have this treasure [what a treasure to have] in earthen vessels that the excellence of the power [the power of the sevenfold Spirit of the Lord] may clearly be of God and not of ourselves.' He continues his testimony. We could just again sit here and read scripture. I am really tempted to.

I will try and touch on a couple of these. Again, 'Since we have received this ministry...' I think we have communicated that clearly. The second element there is 'as we have received mercy'. The context of this mercy is twofold. It is our acknowledgement that I am a sinner. But my testimony is that having heard and believed I turned and saw. I turned to see Christ in His death; and I cried out to the One who offered hope and mercy to me. He showed it to me. Paul made this kind of confession when he described himself as being the chief of sinners. This is what takes place for all of us when we become bankrupt in spirit, having met Christ as Lord and as King.

The first dimension of mercy ministers to us the forgiveness of our sin. And the second is that He grants to us a daily participation in the fellowship of His offering and sufferings through those seven wounds. It is there by mercies that are new every morning that our heart is able to be circumcised. His blood is able to touch all of these issues of the other law and the law of our mind, the things that then habitually cause us to stumble. As we turn to the Lord and cry out in mercy, He not only forgives us, but He provides us a pathway and a process whereby we can cease from sin. It is not just that my sin is forgiven (That is a really strong hallelujah), but it then provides us with a fellowship where we can *cease* from our sin, so we do not continue to stumble where we have been stumbling. This is really important in terms of how it is that we are thinking - which is reflective of what is in the heart of a man.

His third point was that 'we do not lose heart'... (You can write next to that, even as we have written next to 'we have received mercy' - 'we have both forgiveness and a participation') ... His third point here is 'we do not lose heart'. Why? Because there is a testimony within us of resurrection life. We do not lose heart because we are being comforted. His resurrection life regenerates our inner man. Let us read Chapter 4 verse 16. 'Therefore we do not lose heart, even though our outward man is perishing, yet the inward man is being renewed day by day.' The context of the outward man - its perishing and its pain is described in verse 8 where he says, 'We are hard-pressed on every side.' Yet our testimony is that we do not lose heart. Our testimony of resurrection life and comfort and the comfort that that ministers is 'though we are hard-pressed, we are not crushed. And though there are some perplexing things in life, we are not in despair. And though we are persecuted, our testimony and our comfort is that we are not forsaken. And though we are struck down, our comfort and our testimony is that we are not destroyed, because each day and in every circumstance, we are carrying about in our bodies the dying of the Lord Jesus that the

life of Jesus may be manifested in our bodies.'

This is again where he is saying that we are not handling the word deceitfully - rather by manifestation of the truth. It is being *proclaimed* and it is being *portrayed* within our life and there is no inconsistency (or could we say hypocrisy) between the two - where a man says one thing but then goes and does another. Then it gets covered up and compensated in marriage because of the hidden things of shame. Instead of receiving the invitation to 'walk in the light as He is in the light and to find fellowship with one another and to confess our sins together, knowing that He is faithful and just to forgive us. His blood is effective to cleanse us of our sin.'

Our fourth point was that 'we have renounced the hidden things of shame'. How and why have we done this? We have chosen to walk in the light. Why do we continue to live in self-righteous shame? Because we love the darkness of our own thoughts more than the light that comes. We have already described the light that is coming. That is one powerful delusion to choose to love the darkness of our own thinking in preference to the light that is shining from His face - the glory that is revealed; the glory of the first Man in the image and likeness; the hope that we can be brought forth in that image on the day of resurrection; and the hope that every day we are being transformed into that very same image by the sevenfold Spirit of the Lord. That is an almighty delusion to love darkness rather than that light. Why do we do that? We would have to confess that that is what we do. This is why Paul is not speaking to other believers here. He is speaking and saying, 'For our ministry to be effective, we must renounce the hidden things of shame.' The beginning point of that is actually acknowledging and confessing what the hidden thing of shame is.

I wrote this down last week: 'What did they say that distressed your spirit so deeply, even though you knew what was said was not true?' I say it again: 'What did they say that

distressed your spirit so deeply, even though you knew it was not true? Because of who said it, you believed it. The curse has found power over you because you forsook the truth for a lie, and it now causes a habitual stumbling in you. This is part of 'the hidden things of shame' and then the crafty cover up to try and appear in a different way because you are ashamed now of these thoughts. The word is now handled deceitfully instead of truth. The conscience is now darkened because of the power of something that was said. It now causes habitual stumbling in you. (Now that may be through deed, or it may just be through thinking - habitual stumbling in your thoughts.) To be free of it and to be built upon Christ in truth, you need to confess the lies that you believed and have allowed to take dominion over you.'

I wrote that down just in our time in the Spirit last week and it may sit for someone or for a few, because there is a strong, powerful delusion that holds us in bondage. Why would that person prefer the darkness of that over the light that is shining? It is because men love darkness more than the light, even though the true light is shining.

Paul is not talking there about what is happening out in the world. He is talking about what is happening here. But he is saying the great hope for us is that we have received a ministry by which the true light shines and deliverance can come from where this other dominion has taken power over you and you know you are not free of it. Some of us here today are not free because of things that other people have said and done. When they said it and did it, it exerted a dominion over us and there was something of it that you believed, and it continues to have power over you even decades later. We are 'renouncing the hidden things of shame' as we walk in the light together.

This is a powerful statement: The motivation of shame that causes us to hide from fellowship and maintain projection is described by Jesus in John 3 verse 19. 'Light has come into the world, and men have loved darkness rather than the light, because their

deeds were evil.' The self-righteous shame that causes us to love the darkness rather than the light (hear this) is a bigger problem than the evil deeds. Can we hear that today? The self-righteous shame that causes us to love the darkness rather than the light (which is the element of not coming into the light) is a bigger problem than the evil deed itself. Why? Because the sin is already dealt with in Christ. We can walk in the light together and we can confess our sins, and He is faithful and just to forgive and to offer us a participation. The bigger problem is the self-righteous shame that stops a person from doing that. That is where the lockup is, and that is what we have to discern. Jesus has already overcome this shame and learned our obedience. We can look into His face and see that He endured the cross and despised the shame.

In relationship to that, He did not despise the humiliation of the cross or the fact that He had to take our sin upon Himself and receive the judgement of it, despising it as though He was filthy about it - as though a great wrong had been committed against Him. Rather, it was with joy that He embraced it because He knew that He (and He alone) was the One who could bring an end to it all - to not just offer us forgiveness and remission of our sin, but to put an end to it and to destroy sin and Satan and death and to overcome the whole thing. It was with joy that He embraced it. What He despised was our self-righteous shame that causes us to hide ourselves because we are afraid of humiliation - even though He has already finished it all. He said through the prophet Isaiah in Isaiah 50 verse 6, 'I did not hide My face from shame and from spitting.' Our self-righteous issue is that we hide our faces. We hide our faces from Him, and we hide our faces from our brethren. Even as we look at ourselves, we even try and hide ourselves from our own face in this regard.

The word of the cross ministers grace for us to also despise the self-righteous shame and to renounce the hidden things of shame. We do this by walking in the light in open-

hearted confession with one another. There is grace for us to live free from shame. But I do believe that there is a necessary confession of the lie that has been spoken about you in relationship to you. You may have been the one that said it about yourself, and it holds you in bondage and causes you to habitually stumble. It needs to be confessed in the light of fellowship if you are to be free of it. The Lord is proclaiming today the glorious liberty and freedom that ought to belong to every son of God so that we are completely free instead of the little elements of lockup.

If you know that there are areas where you are locked up, there is a reason for the lockup. But if you would turn to the Lord, the context of freedom is here for us. There is a necessary confession that 'This is what I have said in relationship to myself all of my life', or 'this is what I have said about myself in relationship to when they said that, or when I saw this, or when this happened to me' - however it runs. It was not true. It was not true. It was not spoken in a genuineness of fellowship. It was not the expression of the light of the glory of God and of that knowledge that shines to you. It did not belong to that. You ought not carry it again for another day in terms of its impact upon you. Not only does it lock you in shame, but it also means that the word is handled with a degree of deceit, because there is something in us that is not open and true. It is not in the light as it ought to be. It is not in the truth.

As we finish, can I again note on this point seven here: 'We commend ourselves to every man's conscience in the sight of God.' What we are saying now is not to be reasoned through in the mind. If your mind is racing right now, then you just need to simply turn to the Lord. The Holy Spirit is the Lord. And He ministers to you the power of the sevenfold Spirit of the Lord that you might have freedom from the habitual stumbling that your thinking is causing you. This does not mean that we all go to the table and go, 'Great, I can talk about my mind chatter

now.' If you do, it ought to be the distress of the bondage that you have chosen to be held in, in that regard. Your testimony will be, 'Light has come and has penetrated the darkness. I heard the words speaking right to the depths of my person such that I can speak and respond. The truth of who I am can respond and can become free of these things.'

We have received the most wonderful ministry of the New Covenant of the Spirit. We receive it and continue to receive it and are being equipped to have the capacity to minister it to others as well. Every element of discernment and power and authority that belongs to the Spirit of the Lord is the means by which we then offer ourselves to one another such that this transformative glory might be our testimony and I can carry the testimony of you in that regard. I bring my own confession, and I carry your testimony in my heart.