

—{1}. **2 Cor. 2:14–3:6** ..... **The Impetus to Ministry**

A. Ministry

1. now that word ministry

- a. is in the Greek, *diakonia*
- b. which I know many will recognize as sharing the same root as the word “deacon”
- c. so it is very natural for all of us, when we hear this word, “ministry”, to immediately apply it to pastors, elders, missionaries, ministers and deacons – and suchlike
- d. moreover, to do so is quite correct
- e. but, to limit the word to just such groups is quite incorrect: it is meant to apply to every child of God

2. why do we then tend to limit this term, “ministry”?

- a. firstly, it is because of the titles that we give to men and women who are engaged in an official way in Christian ministry: Rev. So-and-so, etc.
- b. secondly, it is because we forget the meaning behind this word, namely that of serving
- c. thirdly, we think of those holding these offices as being the “leaders (read ‘bosses’) of the church”
  - (A) **At a staff meeting, the boss complained that he was not receiving any respect. So he went out to a local sign shop and bought a small sign for his office door. The sign read, “I’m the Boss.” When he returned from lunch, he found that someone had taped a note to the sign that said, “Your wife called. She wants her sign back!”** —{2}.
  - (B) now I frequently have to remind myself, and very occasionally others, that the pastor and deacons are not “bosses” who run the church
  - (C) the disciples needed that reminder, too, by the Lord Jesus, in Mark 9:35 (NAS): **“If anyone wants to be first, he shall be last of all, and servant of all.”**
- d. the meaning of “ministry” is servant-hood; to be a “minister” or “deacon” is to be a servant

3. there is no restriction of ministry, or serving, then to those who bear some office or title within the church

- a. it is not limited by our position; Colossians 3:23 was written to bond-slaves: **Whatever you do, do your work heartily, as for the Lord rather than for men.** – so our secular work is part of our ministry

- b. and service fulfills; I Corinthians 15:54 (NAS): Therefore, my beloved brethren, be steadfast, immovable, always abounding in the work of the Lord, knowing that your toil is not in vain in the Lord.
- c. Galatians 5:13 (NAS): For you were called to freedom, brethren; only do not turn your freedom into an opportunity for the flesh, but through love serve one another.

## B. You and the Ministry

1. it is you, then, who are children of God, who form the ministry of this church
  - a. every one of you who teaches in the Bible School, in AWANA or in the men's or ladies' meetings, is part of the ministry of this church
  - b. every one of you who contributes musically to our worship is part of the ministry of this church
  - c. every one of you who participates in the hymn sings and Bible studies at the Aurora Retirement Centre is part of the ministry of this church
  - d. every one of you who is a witness to the gospel in your workplace or school is part of the ministry of this church
  - e. every one of you who visits or gives invitations or tracts in your community is part of the ministry of this church
  - f. every one of you who greets and shows concern and hospitality to others in our midst is part of the ministry of this church
  - g. and every parent among you who seeks to bring up their children to trust in God is part of the ministry of this church. Dr T. B. Mattson, for over 40 years a professor of ethics, always asked his class, "How many of you know that your mother and father dedicated you into the Lord's service, either before you were born or some time after your birth? Would you raise your hand?" Over 80% usually responded yes. He commented on how important was this parental commitment. <sup>{3}</sup>. It is part of the ministry of the church of Christ.
2. yet what is the impetus for you to keep in the ministry? ... what is the incentive?
  - a. often you are just plain tired: life is busy, life is tiring, life is demanding
  - b. often you are discouraged
    - (A) your ministry may show so few results
    - (B) your ministry may seem so unappreciated

- (C) complaints outnumber compliments
- (D) you receive brickbats instead of kudos
- c. how do you keep going in the face of these?
- d. our text today has something to tell us about this

#### A. Paul's Impetus to Ministry

1. the verses of today's Scripture reading from which I particularly want to draw our lesson this morning, are those describing Paul's ministry to the church at Corinth, 3:2–3 (NIV): *You yourselves are our letter, written on our hearts, known and read by everybody. You show that you are a letter from Christ, the result of our ministry, written not with ink but with the Spirit of the living God, not on tablets of stone but on tablets of human hearts.*
2. Now, when you examine the two letters that Paul wrote to this church at Corinth, these words seem very strange!
  - a. "Why?" you ask; because it would seem that this church had just about every problem there was; if you were writing a "Manual on Church Problems," then Corinth would be the case study
  - b. we could spend time at length reciting these problems, but just consider the following ...
  - c. when Paul spoke of a person who *"eats of the bread or drinks the cup of the Lord in an unworthy manner"* (1 Corinthians 11:27, NAS) he was not only speaking of disorderly conduct at the Lord's table
  - d. 2 Corinthians 12:20–21 (NAS) is Paul's summary: *"For I am afraid that perhaps when I come I may find you to be not what I wish and may be found by you to be not what you wish; that perhaps there may be strife, jealousy, angry tempers, disputes, slanders, gossip, arrogance, disturbances; I am afraid that when I come again my God may humiliate me before you, and I may mourn over many of those who have sinned in the past and not repented of the impurity, immorality and sensuality which they have practised."*
  - e. yet the letters that Paul wrote to these people are brimming over with love and tender compassion for them; for all their faults he loved them still
3. what was the impetus, the incentive allowing this?
  - a. simply this, that the Holy Spirit was with these imperfect, faulty, failing Christians; the Holy Spirit was

writing a **letter of Christ** with them; the Holy Spirit was writing a letter **read by all men**; the Holy Spirit was writing this letter on **human hearts**

- b. the impetus to Christian ministry by you and by me is that this is not our work, but God's; it is our responsibility as stewards to be found faithful and God's to give the results (1 Corinthians 4:2, 3:7).
4. so the next time that you find yourself discouraged in the ministry, in your service to Christ, just turn it over to the Holy Spirit, and let Him write the letter in their lives and in yours, on human hearts to be read by all.

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Various English versions of the Holy Bible are used in this sermon. Some (for example, the AV, ASV, and NAS) seek to be strictly translations, while others (and especially PHIL) contain paraphrasing which involves a certain amount of subjective interpretation. Nevertheless, there is little material difference in meaning among these. Some prove slightly clearer on some verses than others. Looking at more than one version sometimes sheds additional light on any particular verse. Explanatory additions to the Bible text are shown in [square brackets]. The versions are identified as:

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| ASV  | American Standard Version of 1901   |
| AV   | Authorized (King James) Version   |
| NAS  | New American Standard version © 1975 The Lockman Foundation   |
| NIV  | New International Version © 1984 by the International Bible Society                                     |
| NKJV | New King James Version © 1979 Thomas Nelson Inc., Publishers  |
| PHIL | New Testament Translation © 1972 by J. B. Phillips  |
| RSV  | Revised Standard Version © 1946, 1952 by the National Council of the Churches of Christ in the U. S. A. |
| WEY  | The New Testament in Modern Speech © 1902, 1912 R. F. Weymouth  |

Further sermons and illustrations may be found at the web-site, [www.holwick.com](http://www.holwick.com). Materials in this sermon from Rev. David Holwick's database are identified by “Kerux” followed by a sermon or illustration number.

2. “For Women In Ministry: Accept The Challenge” by Mary Southerland – Kerux illustrations 111713
3. “Infant Dedication Matters” by Dr. James A. McCullen – Kerux illustration #27905