

We Have This Ministry

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[0 : 00] This message was recorded at Vision Baptist Church in Alfred, Georgia. It is our prayer that you will be blessed by the preaching of God's Word. I do want to share something from my heart with you in 2 Corinthians chapter number 4 as we head into the missions conference and then we'll spend some time in prayer.

You will show that picture, Tim, that I made there. It says going and sending and then it has those words in the middle. I want to show you kind of concentric circles that come on top of each other with these two words.

In 2 Corinthians chapter number 4, it says this. It says, Therefore, seeing we have this ministry, as we have received mercy, we faint not.

Therefore, seeing we have this ministry, as we have received mercy, we faint not. Say this with me. We have this ministry. Once again, we have this ministry.

I want to talk about this ministry that we have. The questions I asked for tonight had to do with sending. And there's a part of sending in which the foreign missionary doesn't do as much or as well as somebody like me because I'm stationed at a different part of the road.

[1 : 08] And there's also a part of going that they do that I really don't know about. The passports and there's different ways of living and learning languages. But that is not the biggest part of the pie.

We share a ministry together. We have this ministry. That's what's represented there in the middle. That's our common ground of what we are doing together, proclaiming Jesus, discipling people.

And we do that. We come together in our missions conference and we're more alike than we are different, those that are involved in going and sending. So 2 Corinthians 4 and 1 says, Therefore, seeing we have this ministry, I want to talk to you about this ministry that we have.

We have this ministry here at the church. At the first part of verse number 1, it says, Therefore. And so it's talking about what happens at chapter number 3.

Chapter number 3 talks about a new covenant and the old covenant, something that you ought to be very familiar with. It tells the story about how Moses, he came off the mountain and his face would glow, but as he was away from God, his face would begin to diminish from time because he was not God.

[2 : 15] He'd only spent time with God. But we have a Savior that is God, so his glory doesn't diminish. And he says, if you think this ministry of condemnation was glorious, then you ought to know this ministry that we have is even more glorious.

That the letter of the law, what it brought was glorious, but this is even better. Because now the time we live in, we're indwelt by the Holy Spirit and we have that. And then it says, because of this we should not lose heart.

At the end of verse number 1, we have received mercy, we faint not. Why would we lose heart? We have such a wonderful ministry. Why would the Apostle Paul talk about losing heart?

And then in verse number 2, he says, We have renounced the hidden things of dishonesty, not walking in craftiness nor handling the Word of God deceitfully. What he was saying was, guys, I haven't hid the truth from you.

And if you don't know the truth, the gospel is hid from them that are lost. Meaning, if you don't understand the gospel, it's not because I'm not being clear about it. It's because you have a heart that is a rebel heart that's bent away from God.

[3 : 17] And so what's he saying? That we don't faint? That in this ministry we keep hope? Well, the reason he would get discouraged is he's preaching a very unpopular message that people may not like.

And he's telling them, I'm not being shady. I'm not being some kind of person that's trying to water down this thing. I'm telling it to you and some of you aren't getting it. Do you realize that for three nights, some of you will get up, stay up late, and get up early for school.

We have school teachers in here, and we have people that get up real early in the morning, taking three nights. You're going to come here three nights to hear people that plan to move to another culture with their families to share with people that Jesus is the only way to heaven, and that if people do not respond to that message, they will spend eternity in a lake of fire.

It may become kind of common to you, but that's not a very popular message. That isn't one that most of the world is going to like. They don't get greeted when they land in the other country with banners, and they don't have ambassadors signed to them and saying, while you're in our country, we're going to take care of you.

These missionaries stopping by our church aren't doing so because they have a ministry that we need to hear about. They're coming to our church because we have this ministry. It belongs to us.

[4 : 29] The Great Commission belongs to the church, and we are the church, and when they come by, we're looking at them and saying, you know what, we really need to get into Argentina because Brother Jeff's here doing a good job, and we need more church planners there, and we have this ministry to reach the world, and we need somebody in Argentina.

And Sean Bateman, we're going to deputize you. We're going to partner with you. We're going to make you a strategic partner because we have this ministry. We take ownership of it. We do not alter the message for the sake of a crowd or for money.

And Paul was accused of this, and he said that's not it. He said, I'm going to lose heart. Here's a summary of what that ministry is. What is our ministry? Verse 5, we preach not ourselves, but Christ Jesus the Lord, ourselves your servants for Jesus' sake.

We have this ministry. We preach not ourselves, but we preach Christ Jesus, and we are his servants for the sake of the gospel. And so to whom do we preach?

Matthew 28 tells us we're going to take it to the whole world. How are we going to do that? When we teach and preach the gospel, the people that respond to the gospel, we're going to teach them to observe all things, and that requires a church to be faithful to the Great Commission, and that church is going to continue to do it, and we're going to multiply our efforts.

[5 : 44] We should make it so accessible and undeniable that the only way they could choose to not understand the gospel is as they choose to deny it. Paul sees this blazing, shining reality that God in Christ is the new covenant and that he's saving sinners.

He says, you have no excuse. I preached it. I wasn't hiding it from you. It was very clear. It was in your face. You know that lady we saw in that testimony? We can't say that about her. The gospel is still hid to her.

She still has not heard of the gospel. That lady that you saw, she wasn't an actor. She represented one of billions of people that even though she might have met an American and got to do an interview for National Geographic, that lady, not just ladies like her, that lady will probably live and die and never hear the gospel.

Who's responsible to make sure that lady hears the gospel? We have that ministry. You and I do. No matter who comes in here and no matter what presentation they make, it still belongs to us as the church.

And I have a question. Are you part of the we in this sentence? Do we have this ministry? Could it have been just for the apostles? Some people would say, verse 8 says, we are troubled on every side, not distressed, we are perplexed, but not in despair.

[7 : 00] He's saying, not just me, but all of us. The nature of the work shows that it cannot be done by a select few. It has to be multiplying. Every one of us have to multiply our lives.

India grows by the size of Montana every eight days. If that doesn't tell you anything, it ought to tell you this one thing, that if the problem is growing exponentially, then the answer can only be exponential itself.

So if you're not involved in a multiplying ministry, then you can't be involved in this ministry that gets the gospel to the entire world. Recently, I helped the missionary make something to present, and they wanted to put on there, we're reaching this place one by one.

And I wanted to write back and say, please don't reach that place one by one. We don't have enough time for you to reach that place one by one. We reach countries one by two, two by four, four by eight.

We multiply what we're doing, and if we just keep adding, it will never happen. We have this ministry, so we must multiply. That's why I'm excited at the end of our missions conference, we're going to have the training center display, we have the mission board display, we have the foundations display, that when you hear the messages preached, Brother Dean's going to bring the word and share it with you.

[8 : 12] You can come down to an altar, you can get up, and you can go over the foundations and say, I'm going to figure this thing out until I have a multiplying ministry, so that I can be part of the solution for world evangelism.

1 Peter 4, 10 and 11. To those of you in here who think we have nothing to offer, it says, As every man has received the gift, even so minister the same one to another, as good stewards of the manifold grace of God.

As every one of you have received this gift, let us minister one another. Each Christian has received the gift, some special work of God's grace in your life. If He saved you, He's done something amazing in your life.

At that point of salvation, He created you for good works that are built into you, that you're supposed to live out. If the Christians of this world were to live out the good works that they were created to do, we would get the gospel to the world.

And so every one of you in here have been equipped to do something. You're responsible to use it. And for whom? It's for the benefits of others and for the glory of God. And it's not just our missionaries.

[9 : 15] 1 Corinthians 12, 4-7. Now there's a diversity of gifts, but the same Spirit. And there's a differences of ministrations, but the same Lord. And there's a diversity of operations, but it is the same God with work is all in all.

But the manifestation of the Spirit is given to every man, the prophet with all. Every one of you have been equipped and given a job from God to do that directly affects the Great Commission.

I don't like the spiritual gifting test because I'm not very good at tests. When I was in middle school, I took one and they said I was supposed to be a truck driver. And that's not a bad thing to do. It's just when everybody else said doctor and lawyer, I thought that's not very fair, okay?

You're supposed to be told that you're going to be something great on these tests. And in spiritual gifting, you can go through it and you can fill it out and it can tell you that you have this gift and you can try to work to fit the mold.

But the best way to find out where you fit is just to jump in and start doing the work and you'll find out where you're at. Try something over here and you say those kids give me a headache. Try something over here and you say middle schooler smell kind of funny.

[10 : 14] Try something over here and you try something else. But if you keep shifting around, you're going to find a place that you fit in and you're going to do it with all your heart unto the glory of God.

It's an exciting thing to see. Our being an adequate ordinary sets us up for great use. If you're in here, and I fall into this all the time, I will hear a missionary and make a presentation like that we've heard, Mark Tolson, he was recently in, I think, I'm happy to have my socks matched when I come to church.

I am not that superhero person. I'm just a very ordinary person. And if you're with me and you feel that way, verse number seven says, but we have this treasure and earthen vessels that the excellency of the power may be of God and not of us.

If you feel like you're ordinary and inadequate, you are set up perfectly to carry a wonderful treasure to somebody that doesn't have it. If you're unable to see yourself as weak, a clay vessel, but you see the gospel as priceless, you will never, you will never be able to enjoy this ministry.

Beth is not in northern Africa because she thinks she is the hope of that country or she thinks she is super talented or that everybody wants to come with us. She just knows that she has a gospel that is so incredibly wonderful and she looked out and said, where is there a place where people don't know this?

[11 : 28] I will carry my earthen vessel over there so that they can have it and they can know of it. And the true reward of Christian use is a gift to help others and not to be thankful for God, for people to thank God.

Verse 15, for all things are for your sake that the abundant grace might through the thanksgiving of many redound to the glory of God. It's when you're helping somebody and when you get done helping them, they look up to heaven and they say, praise Jesus.

And you want to say, no, thank me. I'm the one who helped you all day. No, they say, praise Jesus. That your work ended up as a result of people saying, praise be unto God.

And you can see it in the here and now and locally, but you know that you can do things by partnering with our missionaries that people on the other side of the world in another language because of something that you and I have been part of will look up to the God of heaven and say, praise you, heavenly Father.

That is the greatest use of our lives is to not to be appreciated, it's not to be thanked, but it's to live a life so that when our efforts are done at the end of the day, that people would say, praise be unto God.

[12 : 35] I don't know how there's a missionary here. I don't know how he's living. I don't know how that church was burned in Argentina and now it's been built back. I don't know how they gave me a free Bible and they don't seem to have enough money.

I don't know how it happened, but praise God that it did and they're thanking God because of something you've done and that is awesome. As a teenager, I missed the point of all this.

I talked about the four pots and I talked about how I wanted to be the shiniest and the nicest of all the pots so that God would use me the most, but I totally missed out on what it meant to have something in the pot that was of greater value than the pot would ever be that was there.

And that's what we contain. A.T. Robertson says, there's always been men in the world so clever that God could make no use of them. They could never do His work. They were so lost in admiration of their own.

And then he goes on to say, God's work never depended on them and it doesn't depend on them now. If you feel like you lack ability, you feel like you don't know where you really fit in, you feel like you know that you don't measure up much, but you love the gospel, then you are exactly where you need to be to make a real difference.

[13 : 42] It's not a lack of ability, but it's an unconcern for an equality that causes us to not go forward in our advance. Most Americans only make decisions in life based upon what affects their quality of life.

If you want to advertise to them, you say, this will make your life better. If you don't get this, your life is going to be worse. Why do people often not make hard decisions when it comes about missions? Is that nothing you're going to be challenged with in the next few days is going to affect your quality of life.

If you say, I want to help, it doesn't make your life better right here. If you say, I don't care about that other country, it doesn't change your quality of life. But a mature Christian says, I care about something more than myself.

And the Bible calls for equality. 2 Corinthians 8.14 But by an equality that now at this time your abundance may be a supply for their want, that their abundance also may be a supply for your want, that there may be an equality as it is written, he has gathered much that had nothing over, that he had gathered little, had no lack.

All of us in here, the Yoke Fellows and every one of us being ambassadors, the fact that there is not an equality, equal quality between our lives and those that are sending and the lives of those that are going should really bother us.

[14 : 57] And at a missions conference would be a great time for us to level things up and to say, we have an abundance in this area, let us hand it to you, you have an abundance of need in that area, let us take it.

But if you'll think about it, is there really an equality there? When you look at your life and you look at the life of a missionary and you say, well in this area my life may have some perks and this area there may be some difficulties, but I'm suffering for the sake of the gospel, I'm going without.

Christmas comes around, they don't get to be with their family, but you're going to go without a few things without Christmas as well by choice because you know that there needs to be an equality between the way we live and the way they live and we for too long have just said that we're just going to let you carry the weight and we're going to just pay you to do this and we're going to outsource.

The church has outsourced our responsibility and given it to a few people and that shouldn't be our case. Let me read this to you before we pray here. That what we're proposing here is ridiculous to the world.

We have this ministry, say that with me one more time, we have this ministry and to the world they think it's crazy. To your friends, even the religious ones may think it's crazy, Andrew, that you came here and you're giving your life if God would permit you to be a foreign missionary.

[16 : 13] In Mark chapter number 14, the lady comes before Jesus with an alabaster box and she breaks the box. She pours the oil that she has there. The only way that it could be spilled out for Jesus was if it was broken and she does that and the religious crowd looks at him and says, what were you doing?

We could take care of the poor. We could do so many things and they thought she was crazy in what she was doing and she just poured her life out for them. If we're ready to live, if we're ready to live for him, we're ready to die for him, there's some people in this world that will never hear the gospel unless some people go and their life is physically broken.

There's parts of the world that may never hear the gospel unless our church raises up people that are willing to die for the sake of the gospel. And that's not an individual decision. That's a church-wide decision that we would say we love the gospel so much that we'd create an environment where people would go and have their lives broken to be spilled out as an offering at the feet of Jesus.

And people don't understand it. Paul will not argue against this accusation of weakness. He says, I argue against me against the gospel's not clear. The gospel's clear. If you don't understand it, it's because you're lost and you don't want to understand it.

But I am clear. But you cannot say in here, if you say I'm weak, I'll say you're right. I am definitely weak. Death to self and the abundant life found in Christ is what we will carry out.

[17 : 36] We carry this message of death inside of us, the sharing of the gospel. We take up our cross. We know that God is not a debtor to us and that God is going to work through us.

So therefore, because it's just incredible, this ministry that we have, that the Holy Spirit lives inside of us, it's not the ministry of condemnation, but it's a ministry of grace. Therefore, we have this ministry and because we have this ministry, we are ready for either.

And will you do whatever it takes to spread this treasure among the nations of the world. And I pray that your heart will be able to say with all sincerity that you are ready for either.

Say it with me one more time. We have this ministry. The Great Commission was given to us, people that are earthen vessels that carry a great treasure that will do what the world thinks is ridiculous that get the gospel to the ends of the world so that nobody can say that we hid it from them, that we disguised it from them, that we watered it down, that the only way they will not see it is if they choose to deny it, giving every man an opportunity.

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