2nd Corinthians

Series: Relentless

June 17, 2018

Message 3:

**The Proof**

2nd Corinthians 3

*Guests - Handout designed with you in mind - Info and notes especially for you - won’t call or visit -*

*Growth Track*

*Generosity - Motion Conference*

*Notes on Handout and in YouVersion App*

**\*\* We’re calling this series “Relentless” - because in these passages we see Paul relentlessly pursuing God’s plan for His life, and relentlessly pursuing the purpose of the Corinthian people not wasting the grace of God that they have received -**

**And we share this goal - to relentlessly pursue God’s plan - and relentless pursue those who need God’s grace.**

**Msg 1 - There is a reason for hard times.**

**Msg 2 - The greatest life is the perfect combination of truth and grace.**

* We want to live with a clear conscience.
* Changes of direction can be a blessing.
* Forgiveness is the greatest blessing.
* The balance of grace and truth proves who we are.

**Big Idea: What is the proof of a valid ministry?**

T.S.: Based on this passage, I’m going to answer that question with 3 other questions -

Questions to determine the validity of a ministry:

**> Are lives being changed?**

2nd Corinthians 3:1-6 - Are we beginning to praise ourselves again? Are we like others, who need to bring you letters of recommendation, or who ask you to write such letters on their behalf? Surely not! The only letter of recommendation we need is you yourselves. Your lives are a letter written in our hearts; everyone can read it and recognize our good work among you. Clearly, you are a letter from Christ showing the result of our ministry among you. This “letter” is written not with pen and ink, but with the Spirit of the living God. It is carved not on tablets of stone, but on human hearts.

 We are confident of all this because of our great trust in God through Christ. It is not that we think we are qualified to do anything on our own. Our qualification comes from God. He has enabled us to be ministers of his new covenant. This is a covenant not of written laws, but of the Spirit. The old written covenant ends in death; but under the new covenant, the Spirit gives life.

Paul is saying, “You are questioning my authority? You are questioning my validity? You are questioning my ability to teach you the truth, speaking into your life, and be a leader in this church?

 “How did you get here?”

We could spin this off into an unhealthy spiritual abuse. Some Pastors or spiritual leaders have tried to exert total control over every area of people’s lives - Paul is not trying to do that - Paul is not addressing matters of personal preference - He is trying to pull them out of a destructive lifestyle that could eventually destroy them both physically and spiritually!

**Extremes regarding spiritually authority in our life are dangerous -**

We need spiritual authority -

* Writing off any need for authority - rejecting the wisdom of proven, godly leaders - that’s dangerous.
* Submitting ourselves completely to a leader who abuses his authority to control others - that’s dangerous.

Paul is not trying to rule their lives - he’s trying to keep them on the track they started on when they came to Christ! They are trying to disregard his authority, his leadership, and deny that he has any right to teach them or speak into their lives!

The fact that they exist is proof of the validity of Paul’s ministry!

How would I apply this to us today?

Our situation -

* family moved here in 1965
* Grew up here
* Started ministry here as a teenager
* Planted 2 churches -
* Served overseas
* In denominational leadership
* Now back here for 14+ years

Far from perfect - plenty of mistakes - but no scandal - people are coming to the Lord - lives are being changed.

This is not just about me - I’m not lifting myself up - I’m measuring myself to see if I am passing Paul’s standards -

It’s not just about me - we could apply this to every area of ministry -

Are lives being changed -

* Through our worship ministry?
* Through our Kids ministry?
* Through our Student ministry?
* Through our Small Group ministry?
* Through the missions ministries we support? Local and overseas?

Therein lies the goal of ministry -

**\*\* Success is not always in numbers - if people are just moving from church to church, we are not building the Kingdom of God.**

On the other hand - many people can be coming to the Lord, and we also see people move away, get jobs in other cities, pass away, go to college - even when the attendance numbers are even, we have to be adding new people to keep up with those who leave for a variety of reasons -

So - numbers are important - we want to see more and more people coming to Jesus - but numbers alone are not a measurement of a successful ministry.

**\*\* Success is not always in what we “feel”** - Some Sundays are going to “feel” great - some Sundays are going to “feel” not so great -

Every Sunday is not like Thanksgiving and Christmas - some Sundays are like Saturday cleaning out the garage days - but both are necessary to build a healthy family life!

Here’s my measurement - **Are lives being changed?**

I believe that was Paul’s measurement here.

“You are here. Think of that change that has happened in your lives. You are a letter written by Christ and His Holy Spirit - your life-change is evidence of God’s direction in this ministry.”

Thank God we have have churches in Kokomo of which this is true - lives are being changed all over Kokomo through many churches and ministries.

That should be the question for our small groups … Engle Scale …

What is the next step …

Are lives being changed?

**> Is there a maturing lifestyle?**

2nd Corinthians 3:7-11 - The old way, with laws etched in stone, led to death, though it began with such glory that the people of Israel could not bear to look at Moses’ face. For his face shone with the glory of God, even though the brightness was already fading away. Shouldn’t we expect far greater glory under the new way, now that the Holy Spirit is giving life? If the old way, which brings condemnation, was glorious, how much more glorious is the new way, which makes us right with God! In fact, that first glory was not glorious at all compared with the overwhelming glory of the new way. So if the old way, which has been replaced, was glorious, how much more glorious is the new, which remains forever!

Moses brought the law …

There was a lot to that! The people needed to learn about God … they needed to learn how to live in a desert and survive … they needed to learn about living together in a community - life and death - crime and punishment - human nature -

Previously as slaves every detail of their life was dictating to them -

No choices - no decisions - no free will -

Now - they are free! What do they do? How do they handle problems? How do they provide for themselves? How do they avoid deadly diseases and dangers in the desert? How do they respect their neighbors boundary lines?

That’s what a great deal of the law was about - along with showing them the character of a God they never knew - but had only heard stories that were 400 years old!

Moses would talk to God and his face would shine! They could always tell when he had been with God!

Today - people have great experiences! I have had great experiences -

* healing
* Tongues
* Exhilaration of the Lord’s presence - indescribable
* Prophecy - wisdom - knowledge - Joy

I have also seen people used in various gifts of the Spirit who have no love - no joy - no wisdom - there is sin in their lives -

Leroy Jenkins and Jimbo’s healing …

We could go on and on and on with examples -

God uses us in spite of ourselves -

I want to see the gifts of the Spirit - if you feel God wants to use you in the service, come to us … test … orderly … so that all can hear and be blessed …

But I also want to know that we are not just bouncing from mountaintop experience to mountaintop experience - not living for the mountaintop experiences - but walking in a lifestyle of continuously growing more and more like Christ regardless of what we feel or what we see.

God is a healer whether or not I ever see Him heal anyone again!

The Baptism in the Holy Spirit is real even if I never see anyone else experience it.

God changes lives because people live right, regardless of whether or not they ever experience anything more supernatural than forgiveness!

The old way - with that law - having to do things in order to be right with God - and always looking for that manifestation of a glowing face on Moses to see if God was still around - that was no good!

Jesus in all of us - the New Covenant - every life changed by grace - lives being changed for the better - no longer bound by sin.

**We are not living right because we fear God but we are living right because we love God!**

That’s the way!

**> Is there confidence and recognition from other believers?**

2nd Corinthians 3:12-17 - Since this new way gives us such confidence, we can be very bold. We are not like Moses, who put a veil over his face so the people of Israel would not see the glory, even though it was destined to fade away. But the people’s minds were hardened, and to this day whenever the old covenant is being read, the same veil covers their minds so they cannot understand the truth. And this veil can be removed only by believing in Christ. Yes, even today when they read Moses’ writings, their hearts are covered with that veil, and they do not understand.

 But whenever someone turns to the Lord, the veil is taken away. For the Lord is the Spirit, and wherever the Spirit of the Lord is, there is freedom.

Paul is saying, “You may have lost confidence in me … believed false prophets and false accusations … but I have not lost my confidence! I know who I am! I know who has called me!”

To Timothy -

1st Timothy 1:12 - I thank Christ Jesus our Lord, who has given me strength to do his work. He considered me trustworthy and appointed me to serve him

2nd Timothy 1:12 - …I know the one in whom I trust, and I am sure that he is able to guard what I have entrusted to him until the day of his return.

Summarize the story the story of Moses & the veil he is referring to …

Jewish people are still not believing - they are looking for something more than Jesus coming, dying on a cross, and raising from the dead.

Kind of hard to impress people like that …

Remember that Paul was kicked out the synagogue when he started the church …

There may be a lot of people who don’t believe - there may be people who are always looking for more proof - more evidence -

Romans 1 - the Creation itself should be enough …

But, I know I have seen lives changed - I know I have seen lives mature - I am not worried about my face glowing and whether or not that glow stays or leaves - The confidence I have is in Christ - His presence in my life - the way I have seen Him change lives over and over and over again -

Stories from our church …

* Brankles
* Carl Brocks

For these people - the veil has been taken away - understanding has come - faith has been kindled - their lives have been changed - that’s the greatest miracle of all - and there is freedom from sin - and freedom from any desire to go back to the old way of life!

This is the proof of valid ministry!

**Conclusion:**

2nd Corinthians 3:18 - So all of us who have had that veil removed can see and reflect the glory of the Lord. And the Lord—who is the Spirit—makes us more and more like him as we are changed into his glorious image.

All of us together - our lives are being changed - we are becoming more and more like Jesus! That ought to be proof enough for all of us!

Bethel vs. Peniel?

Questions we should ask about every ministry- including the overall ministry of this church - the various ministries within the church - and any ministry we might partner with outside our church family?

* **Are lives being changed?**
* **Do the changed lives mature?**
* **Do others recognize the evidence of the ministry?**

**Invitation** - if watching by video pray with us.

Connection Card - if watching on video - let me know via email.

**Blessing**