

2 Corinthians

Disclaimer: this is an automatically generated machine transcription - there may be small errors or mistranscriptions. Please refer to the original audio if you are in any doubt.

Date: 18 November 1987

Preacher: Shaw, Geoffrey Mark (1925-1997)

[0 : 00] Trusting the Lord might help us, let us turn to the third chapter in the second epistle to the Corinthians and verse 17.

The third chapter and verse 17. Now the Lord is that spirit, and where the spirit of the Lord is, there is liberty.

Now the Lord is that spirit, and where the spirit of the Lord is, there is liberty. The apostle in this chapter speaks unto the church at Corinth with evidently great love.

And consequently he speaks to them plainly.

And yet there flows through every word the sense of the union that he felt unto them by the bond of the word and the ministrations of the Holy Spirit.

[1 : 38] And it is indeed a wonderful thing to find that by the ministrations of the Holy Spirit within us, one and another is laid upon the heart.

And there is only one thing that we can do. Commend them to the Lord.

And yet what an earnest is given unto us, even in these things, the grace of the grace of Almighty God, of the love of Almighty God, the life of Almighty God, of the love of Almighty God, of the love of Almighty God, of the love of Almighty God, and the life which is by Him.

For we know that we have passed from death unto life because we love the brethren. And therefore the knowledge and the depth of the knowledge of that union, the apostle puts into these terms.

You are manifestly declared to be the epistle of Christ.

[3 : 27] There's the union. And this is the manner of it.

written not with ink but with the spirit of the living God not in tables of stone but in fleshy tables of the heart sometimes we read these things and they search us and we have to say with the hymn writer tis a point I long to know oft it causes anxious thought do I love the Lord or no am I his are these things wrought in me has the Lord taken away the heart of stone and given a heart of flesh and written with his spirit upon it that we are the epistle of Christ you see there is nothing vague there is nothing notional about real religion what is it that we say real religion is more than notion something must be known and felt and if the Lord has taken away the heart of stone and the spirit of the Lord has written upon the fleshy tables of our heart that we both know and feel and the apostle sets very clearly the peculiar glory that is upon those in whom the spirit ministers and he sets forth the glory of the law and the ministration of the law and then sets forth the ministration of the spirit and the more excellent glory of the spirit's ministration you know that he himself was most concerned for his brethren they go about seeking a righteousness of their own and have not sought the righteousness which is of God he knew for himself the impossibility of righteousness by the works of the law and he declares it openly clearly in his letters to the churches but in this letter he speaks of the characteristics of the ministration of the law compared with the characteristics of the ministration of the Holy Spirit and he takes us back to

Mount Sinai the tables of stone and the law that was written of the finger of God in those tables of stone and he declares the glory that pertains unto them and we do well to be reminded of them for there is a glory when the Lord gave Moses the moral law consider what it made known unto Israel it set before them standards and it set before them bounds and both the standard and the bounds reveal the glories that pertain unto God and what I mean is this the standard that the Lord set was after this manner thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy mind with all thy soul and with all thy strength oh can we come up to it could Israel come up to it they fell short as we fall short and the law set bounds the Lord said thou shalt not and Israel in many many ways overstep the bounds as you and I have overstepped the bounds and therefore the law can only judge our actions and condemn the transgressor and by the standard and by the bounds and by the judgment under the law

God's holiness his righteousness and his justice are set forth and they are glorious now the ministration of the law according to the apostle was a ministration of death before the law pronounced death upon the transgressor and even in the pronouncing of that death and judgment the purity the majesty the holiness of God is manifested and dear friend the law can only minister judgment and subsequent death unto the transgressor and therefore unto us the ministration of the law is a ministration of death

I wonder whether you and I at times understand understand the solemnity of our position and of our state under the law you see the word of God says as the tree falls so shall it lie it's a solemn thing to live and die under the law and but for the grace of God we are all under that ministration but the gospel sets before us hope the ministration of the spirit minister life and there is that word which the Lord bespeaks unto his people ye are no more under the law but under grace now consider when

[12 : 30] Israel came out of Egypt and drew near to the Red Sea their enemies pursued them and the Lord told Moses to bid them go forward and the presence of the Lord was between the Israelites and their enemies on the one hand was the covenant people of God on the other hand was the hosts the hordes of the enemy and between them stood the Lord where do you and I stand now respecting these very things with the covenant people of God or with the hordes of the enemy because there comes a time when the covenant people of God go through the sea and the Lord makes a way for them as he made a way for you and me and they passed through and on the other side they sang and their joy was double for they sang having a scene of their enemies a way to do the same and the returning floods of judgment overwhelmed them and they were destroyed now we shall be on one side or the other the hymn writer says how stands the case my soul with thee for heaven are thy credentials clear and what are the credentials the ministrations of the Holy

Spirit upon the fleshy tables of the heart nothing less than that notions in the head doctrines in the mind a way of life and a profession of religion none of these things will satisfy in that great day only the ministrations of the Spirit the writing upon the fleshy tables of the heart and dear friend if the matter is in question or in doubt what should we do do well I believe that the Lord encourages his people and by that I mean those whom he makes concerned to come for he says those things that you don't understand those things that you don't know ask and I'll tell you and if you really want to know

I believe that you will and must come unto the Lord if you think of all those whose records are written in God's word how many times were they in places that they couldn't understand there were circumstances that seemed inexplicable there were matters too hard for them and if the matter is too hard for you bring it to the Lord now this the ministration of the law was a ministration of death for the letter killer death but also this ministration was to be done away this ministration also was such that those to whom it was sent could not bear it and the glory that pertained unto it had to be veiled the children of

Israel could not stepfully look to the end of that which is abolished and they desired that Moses should put a veil over his faith and yet it was the glory of it that was more than they could bear there was a glory there is a glory that pertains unto the Lord but it is by far exceeded by the glory of the ministrations of the Holy Spirit and the apostle mentioned these excellences that pertain unto the ministration of the spirit and he mentions first of all it was not a ministration written in stone the ministration is written in the fleshy tables of the heart in other words where the ministration of the spirit is the truths of God are written within us and as a consequence of it they speak from within us they've not spoken by the head they're not spoken only by the tongue and the lip they're spoken from the fleshy tables of our heart it may be of some encouragement and some comfort to someone because it often appears that when we're convinced of sin these things are more than we can bear and also it seems at times to be a strange way and yet this is the office of the

Holy Spirit to convince of sin but do we see the glory that pertains unto that ministration when the Holy Spirit writes on the fleshy tables of our heart that the word of God that is written is true it's unpopular today to talk about being vile and black and yet the woman in the song of Solomon when the king brought her into his chamber she said I am black the presence of the Lord the ministrations of the Spirit will never give us a sense of our nature being improved but it will show us the vileness of our nature and from within us there will speak out an agreement with the word of

[21 : 18] God this is how we know it is of the Lord for the carnal mind is enmity to God and cannot know these things you know it's a mercy if that ministration of the Spirit is wrought within us so that when the Lord speaks of our true state as sinners and of his abomination against sin we know our own state and we feel ourselves the abomination of sin the truth of God then speaks within us the consequence of the ministrations of the Spirit and as the ministration of the law was a ministration of death the ministration of the

Spirit is the ministering of life and that that life is imparted is evident by the speaking forth of the truth of God from within the soul it wasn't there by nature it was never felt by the flesh that which is of the flesh is flesh and that which is of the Spirit is Spirit and the hymn writer says strange and mysterious is my life what opposites I feel within the ministrations of the Spirit alone can occasion opposites within the poor sinner at one time we are reminded in the epistle to the

Romans the sixth chapter and the nineteenth verse I speak after the manner of men because of the infirmity of your flesh for as ye have yielded your members servants to uncleanness and to iniquity unto iniquity and we've all been there we have yielded our members servants to uncleanness and we were content we were content to be enslaved we were content to serve but by the ministration of the Holy Spirit there rises up in us a sense of what we are and of what we've done and a desire the apostle says even so now yield your members servants to righteousness unto holiness oh there is there that inward motion in us to know

God's will and to do it well the apostle exhorts the brethren even so now yield there has to be a striving and by these strivings and by these oppositions we know the ministration of the Spirit is indeed a ministration of life you see the ministration of the Spirit does not propose life it gives life there's a difference between the two many proclaim in these days propositions of holiness propositions of eternal life the ministrations of the

Holy Spirit writing upon the fleshy tables of the heart proclaims the life and manifests the life which is given unto us of God now we read also concerning this ministration ministration of the Holy Spirit it is a ministration which takes the veil away the children of Israel commanded Moses to put a veil over his face they couldn't bear the glory the ministration of the Holy Spirit is to take the veil away so that they are recipients of this blessing for God who commanded the light to shine out of darkness hath shined in our hearts to give the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus

[27 : 06] Christ this is the ministration of the Spirit it takes the veil away it shows the glories of God in Jesus face you know when these precious things are made known in our own soul we read God's word and we see an entirely different aspect of the things that we have known since we were children I remember reading with understanding that request of Moses understanding it for the first time rightly the Lord that Moses said unto the

Lord show me thy glory and the Lord said unto him no man can see my face and live and yet the Lord took him and he put him in the cleft of a rock and he passed by and he saw his back parts he didn't look upon his face but the glory of the Lord and the substance of it was proclaimed unto him for the Lord declared that substance of his glory proclaimed it to him caused him to know it and I believe he saw it in Jesus faith and this is the substance of that glory as it was made known unto Moses the Lord the Lord

God merciful and gracious now the ministrations of the Holy Spirit will convince us of sin they'll demonstrate the life that is in us by the exercises and the opposition that we feel the ministrations of the Holy Spirit will take away the veil and teach us the things of Jesus the time's passing very quickly but I want to just mention very briefly one or two things that we might expect that under these ministrations we should know nothing but liberty for this is the end of those ministrations now the Lord is that spirit and where the spirit of the

Lord is there is liberty but you know how liberties are eternal liberties they're not temporal liberties you know that in that fourth chapter the apostle speaks of his state and condition in this world the circumstances through which he passed and you know that he says in another place we that are in this tabernacle do groan being burdened we don't have liberty from the assaults of sin and Satan and sometimes that seems very contrary and Satan full of his wiles and he comes and suggests well if you were the Lord's child you wouldn't be in that place and yet it must be so we shall be subject to the assaults of sin and Satan for we still have a body of sin and death the Lord has not patched up the old nature he has given a new creature and the apostle himself knew what it was to be burdened by that old nature oh wretched man that

I am who shall deliver me from the body of this death but he was not left there carrying the burden without hope or without recourse because he could say and herein was his liberty I thank God through Jesus Christ our Lord there was his liberty there's the glory of the ministrations of the spirit to be bowed down even unto the earth and yet overcoming in Christ Jesus the Lord now we're not at liberty from outward troubles you know that the apostle was in prison suffered many stripes was stoned suffered many indignities was pilloried on many occasions despitefully used was subject to much malice and enmity there was not a liberty from that but you see I believe that he saw these things in their true perspective this world is a wilderness unto the lost people and therefore there will be outward trouble but he says our light affliction which is but for a moment you see he sees the glory of God the setting the setting the setting of one thing the liberty which is ours in Christ

[33 : 48] Jesus the things that pertain unto trouble are only momentary compared compared with eternity that which the Lord hath prepared for his people to enter in and enjoy forever in his presence so that outward troubles don't weigh as they would upon those that have nothing before them you know a man doesn't look up to heaven before he sees something more desirable than that which he has here below if you and I are ever satisfied with what we have here below we shan't be looking up it's when the

Lord makes us to know and to feel what we are in his sight what he has given by his song and given unto us a hope in his mercy that we begin to look up and we begin to expect and we journey as pilgrims journey not taken up with the things of this world not bowed down by these light afflictions we are not at liberty from inward fears either sometimes when we are in outward trouble inward fears rise up and Satan comes very soon and begins to suggest that these things wouldn't be so if we were the

Lord's people think of all the promises and what about your prayers and sometimes we listen because we've got a deceitful heart and it's an unbelieving heart and yet it is often times in those very places if you read Psalm 73 and Asaph's trouble and his fears and the questions that rose up in his heart the Lord took him into the sanctuary and he learned of the great mercy of God even in the midst of his envy of the wicked the Lord hadn't left him to walk in that downward dangerous hellbound path and though he was no better than they the mercies of the

Lord had held him up enfolded him the banner over him had been love so that he had to say my heart and my flesh faileth there's no good there there's no strength there there's no soundness there but he could say and he was a man as it were in a twofold state at the same time knowing that he could not depend upon his heart or his flesh but God is the strength of my heart and my portion forever and the Lord makes his people these are sweet and gracious revelations sometimes in the time of their deepest distresses and you know we are not free from his chastisement either there are times when we fall short when we sin when we behave in unseemly dishonouring ways we neglect that which we ought to attend unto and the

Lord comes and he chastises us but his chastisements are the chastisements of a loving father for he says as many as I love I rebuke and chastisement and oh how it melts the heart down and if you think back carefully over all these things in which we have not liberty that is in these outward these natural these temporal things the effect of them if we are the Lord's will bring us into an eternal liberty that he has given unto us of his grace surely when we're distressed we encourage ourselves in the Lord you think of

[39 : 36] David when the matter is too hard for us we spread our affairs before him when he chastises us for our backsliding we seek his face and want to know the renewings of his love we perhaps understand more than we used to at one time even a natural father appealed to by a tearful tender child doesn't steal his heart he puts his arms about them and he takes them to him these are precious seasons and

I believe that while we have not liberty in those natural things the liberties that are ours are beyond understanding fully for consider what is afforded to us we have access and all the blessedness of that access perhaps the sweetest way of putting it is like this it is me tis he instead of me is seen when I approach to God now if you think of the liberty that is afforded unto the believing child can we fully understand it or appreciate it or enter into it and yet it is so the

Lord does not look upon the sinner he looks upon his son in the song of Solomon the woman says look not upon me because I am black and he says there is no spot in me and how can it be even as the type and shadow sets it forth the transgressor brought his offering and his offering had to be without blemish he brought it to the priest he laid his hands upon his head and identified himself with it and the priest took it and offered it before the lord and the lord looked upon that offering not upon the offerer and he accepted the offering and the offerer went away satisfied how much more shall the blood of

Christ and this and this is what the spirit ministers unto the soul the sprinkling of the blood upon the conscience and we perceive that the lord looks upon him not upon us and we come thankful or beyond all expression thankful is he instead of me seeing when I approach to God and not only have we access but we have liberty to plead liberty to plead in his name and for his name sake and how great a liberty that is for there is no other name that avails there is no other blood that avails and he has said if ye ask anything in my name

I will do it can there be anything to compare to these liberties now the time has gone but let me just mention that we have liberty from the second death the wrath that shall come upon the wicked shall not come nigh unto them the lord hath declared I go to prepare a place for you and if I go and prepare a place for you I will come again and receive you unto myself that where I am there shall ye be also now he sits in the father's throne the eternal son and he has said there shall ye be also others or that we might look for those evidences those tokens and if we feel the want of them that we might plead in Jesus' name that the Lord will do these things for us.

[46 : 06] And I believe that none shall ever be turned away, not one, for he has encouraged the seeker.

Come unto me, Lord, ye that labour and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest. The liberty that you perhaps feel to need even now, liberty from these anxieties, liberty from these doubts, well, God is faithful, God is merciful, God is love, and we enter into the liberty by the ministration of the Holy Ghost.

May the Lord have his blessed. Amen.