

2 CORINTHIANS

STUDY NUMBER FIVE

- 2 Corinthians 3:1-11

TEXT:

- v. 1 Are we beginning again to be commending ourselves? Or, we are not needing, as some, letters of commendation to you or from you, are we?
- v. 2 You are our letter, which has been engraved in our hearts, which is being known and read by all men;
- v. 3 who are openly being shown that you are a letter of Christ having been cared for by us, not having been written with ink but with the Spirit of the living God, not on tablets of stone but on tablets of human hearts.
- v. 4 And such confidence we are having through Christ toward God.
- v. 5 Not that we are adequate in ourselves to evaluate anything as coming from ourselves but our adequacy is from God.
- v. 6 Who also made us adequate as servants of a new covenant, not of the letter, but of the Spirit; for the letter is killing, but the Spirit is giving life.
- v. 7 But if the ministry of death, which has been engraved by means of letters on stones, came with glory, so that the sons of Israel were not able to look intently at the face of Moses because of the glory of his face, fading as it was.
- v. 8 How shall the ministry of the Spirit fail to be even more with glory?
- v. 9 For if the ministry of condemnation has glory, much more is the ministry of righteousness abounding in glory.
- v. 10 For indeed what had glory, in this case has no glory on account of the glory that is surpassing it.
- v. 11 For if that which is fading away was with glory, much more that which is remaining is in glory.

INTRODUCTION

Oncology Ministry

A new ministry by cancer survivors has been developed to provide support and oncology information for anyone in our church, and/or HAWL community, who has been newly diagnosed with cancer or has a recurrence of cancer.

Confidentiality will be maintained throughout this ministry.

For information contact Sharron Havens.

Why you never question a drunk

A woman was shopping at her local supermarket where she selected:

A half-gallon of 2% milk,
A carton of eggs,
A quart of orange juice,
A head of romaine lettuce,
A 2 lb. can of coffee,
And a 1 lb. package of bacon.

As she was unloading her items on the conveyor belt to check out, a drunk standing behind her watched as she placed the items in front of the cashier.

While the cashier was ringing up her purchases, the drunk calmly stated, “You must be single.”

The woman was a bit startled by this proclamation, but she was intrigued by the derelict’s intuition, since she was indeed single. She looked at her six items on the belt and saw noting particularly unusual about her selections that could have tipped off the drunk to her marital status.

Curiosity getting the better of her, she said “Well, you know what, you’re absolutely correct, but how on earth did you know that?”

The drunk replied, “Cause you’re ugly.”

Can Cold Water Get Your Dishes Clean?

John went to visit his 90 year old grandfather in a very secluded, rural area of Georgia.

After spending a great evening chatting the night away, John’s grandfather prepared breakfast of bacon, eggs and toast. However, John noticed a film like substance on his plate, and questioned his grandfather asking, “Are these plates clean?”

His grandfather replied, “They’re as clean as cold water can get them. Just you go ahead and finish your meal, Sonny!”

For lunch the old man made hamburgers. Again, John was concerned about the plates and his appeared to have tiny specks around the edge that looked like dried egg and asked, “Are you sure these plates are clean?”

Without looking up the old man said, “I told you before, Sonny, those dishes are as clean as cold water can get them. Now don’t you fret, I don’t want to hear another word about it!”

Later that afternoon, John was on his way to a nearby town and as he was leaving, his grandfather’s dog started to growl, and wouldn’t let him pass. John yelled and said, “Grandfather, your dog won’t let me get to my car.”

Without diverting his attention from the football game he was watching on TV, the old man shouted...”COLDWATER, GO LAY DOWN!!!!”

Edward B. Bratcher in his book The Walk-on Water Syndrome describes the minister in the following ways:

- He listens to all of the fears, mistakes, and loneliness of his parishioners but has no one to whom he can tell his struggles.
- He is a man who cries inwardly and often openly in the quietness of his office because he has so many human weaknesses.
- He is a man trying to play the game of religion but often doesn’t know where the ball-park is.
- He is a man who plays so many roles that he doesn’t know who he is.
- He is a man who stands behind the pulpit and tries not to let his parishioners know that he often doubts what he is saying.
- He is a man who sincerely wants to know just how the gospel meets man’s needs.
- He drinks Budweiser and is a convinced Teetotaler.
- At home he is a lover with itchy fingers and a suggestive pinch.
- He wants to become involved in the cause of those treated unjustly but he is afraid to be too open about it because he is afraid of his congregation’s response.
- He is a father who often isn’t home.
- He wants to be well known and hopes that the next church will be a little bigger and more prestigious.
- He would like to tell some of his congregation to go to Hell but this would take six months of theological discussion to clarify.

- He tells the congregation to walk in the Spirit and then goes to the office and wonders what it means.
- He is syrupy sweet in his conversation—like a used car salesman.
- He curses under his breath when the chronic neurotic in the church calls while he is entertaining guests and then feels guilty after he treats her so rudely.
- He is a man who has fleeting fantasies of going to bed with the shapely brunette in the choir.
- To a child he is God—the God who lives at the church.
- He is the one who wouldn't even express a little smile if a hole had developed in his waders and his shorts were getting wet while conducting a baptismal service.
- He is concerned about the well-being of this city but is more concerned about a new building for the church. A building for the over-privileged.
- Above everything else he is a human being.

Thus far in our first four studies:

1. We have seen the apostle Paul deal with the tough times and handling the subject of COMFORT in our first study.
2. In the second study he handled the CRITICISMS of the Corinthians because of his altered travel plans.
3. In study #3 we discussed the DISCIPLINE AND RESTORATION process,
4. and in the end of chapter 2, the GLORY OF THE MINISTRY and THE TRIUMPH OF CHRIST.

It is quite obvious as we get into chapter 3 the apostle is still dealing with some of the criticisms of the apostle and his ministry in this chapter, as well as showing the superiority and the greater glory of the grace of God as opposed to the fading glory of the Law.

- v. 1 Are we beginning again to be commending ourselves? Or, we are not needing, as some, letters of commendation to you or from you, are we?

There are three questions in these 11 verses, and the first two occur here in verse 1.

Back in chap. 1:17 we had a similar phenomenon where the apostle asked two questions to surface the criticisms on that occasion.

Chap. 1:17

Therefore having this desire, I was not vacillating, was I? Of that which I am purposing, am I purposing according to the flesh, that with me there should be yes, yes and no, no at the same time?

QUESTION #1: “Are we beginning again to be commending ourselves?”

The apostle has just spoken of the triumph of the gospel and the victory in the latter part of chapter 2 and he in his thinking can just hear the Corinthians saying, Here we go again.

“ARE WE BEGINNING AGAIN TO BE COMMENDING OURSELVES?”

Are we going to have to go back to square 1 in our relationship? Everything we did during the eighteen months we were there in Corinth doesn't count?

QUESTION #2: “Or, we are not needing, as some, letters or commendation to you or from you?”

Do we have to defend our position:

1. by our word
2. by the word of others?

(Expository Studies in 2 Corinthians: Power Out of weakness by Ray C. Stedman)

I have often wondered how the apostle Paul would rate in ecclesiastical circles, whether he would be considered a success or not if he were carrying on his ministry today. It is hard to believe that a man who spent most of his time in jail, who never made enough salary to buy a home of his own, who never built a church building, never spoke on television, or even had a radio broadcast, who ran around so much that he had no permanent residence of his own, who frequently had to get a job to support himself, who admitted that he was a poor speaker and had a very unimpressive appearance, could ever be a successful pastor or minister. He just does not fit the accepted scheme of what makes for success in the ministry today. No wonder they had trouble with him in Corinth, and had difficulty believing that he was a real apostle.

p. 36

(Criticizing by William J. Diehm)

President Lincoln said, “If I were to try to read, much less answer, all the attacks made on me, this shop might as well be closed for any other business. I do the very best I know how – the very best I can, and I mean to keep doing so until the end. If the end brings me out all right, what is said against me won't amount to anything. If the end brings me out wrong, ten angels swearing I was right would make no difference.”

p. 102

I am learning that I decide who has bugging privileges and who does not. It's a wonderful feeling to learn how to be in charge of my emotions.

You do not have to respond to a rude, aggressive person who cuts in front of you in line. You can say to yourself, “Cool it. Save your emotional energy for someone more worthy.”

p. 105

If I am thankful and grateful for what I have, it is difficult for a critic to take anything away from me. Probably the most important way to keep from being destroyed by critics is to develop a sense of appreciation. Thank God for your gift of life. Be overwhelmed in gratitude for everything you have, and the critic will seem hardly worth the time of day.

Destructive critics are like thieves – they can take away your self-confidence, your achievement, and your personality. One of the ways you can preserve these precious commodities is by strongly tying them to your character with bonds of gratitude. If you are grateful for your achievements, someone who criticizes cannot steal them from you.

p. 107

Words can be used to destroy people. But words are also the chief means of molding our character. Evil words, however, cannot build good character. Criticism is like the vacuum cleaner which sucks up dirt from the rug of life. Criticism looks at what is wrong, and the with bitterness and sarcasm, calls it to the other person's attention.

Instead of leveling an attack at another person, you can choose to be an encourager. You can choose to be an affirmer. And when correction is necessary, you can criticize without arousing resentment. What a wonderful world this would be if we all worked on alternatives to giving criticism and developed strategies to survive it!

Someone once said, "What we weave in this world we shall wear in heaven." How becoming the garments of affirmation and encouragement will be on us!

p. 123

(Encouragement: The Key to Caring by Lawrence Crabb and Dan Allender)

God intends that we be people who use words to encourage one another. A well-timed word has the power to urge a runner to finish the race, to rekindle hope when despair has set in, to spark a bit of warmth in an otherwise cold life, to trigger healthful self-evaluation in someone who doesn't think much about his shortcomings, to renew confidence when problems have the upper hand.

p. 25

Evidently, some of the critics in Corinth were saying, It would be nice, Paul, if you would get some letters of recommendation from Peter, James, or John, or one of the other apostles before you come again. It is just incredible because Paul has led many of these to Jesus Christ that they would have this critical spirit toward the apostle and his ministry in even suggesting this.

v. 2 You are our letter, which has been engraved in our hearts, which is being known and read by all men;

You Corinthians are our letter. If we ever need any letter of recommendation, the work that has gone on in the city of Corinth is adequate recommendation for our ministry, and

this letter has been engraved in our hearts.

2 Cor. 2:4

For out of much affliction and anguish of heart I wrote to you with many tears not in order that you may be made to grieve but in order that you might know the love which I am having especially for you.

“YOU ARE OUR LETTER, WHICH HAS BEEN ENGRAVED IN OUR HEARTS.”

This letter of commendation and recommendation has had wide circulation. It is being known and read by all men.

(The Letters to the Corinthians by William Barclay)

Dick Sheppard, after years of talking in the open air to people who were outside the Church, declared that he had discovered that “the greatest handicap the church has is the unsatisfactory lives of professing Christians.” When we go out into the world we have the awe-inspiring responsibility of being open letters, advertisements, for Christ and His church.

p. 209

(A Theology of Personal Ministry by Lawrence O. Richards and Gib Martin)

To incarnate Jesus in this world, the Christian must experience an inner transformation in which he not only behaves as Jesus behaved, but also shares His love, His valuing of persons, His compassion, and His zeal for justice and righteousness. This character, stamped indelibly on his heart and mind, will be read by all men (2 Cor. 3:2).

p. 101

(No More Mr. Nice Guy! By Stephen Brown)

If they don’t hate us, they think that we are a relatively benign institution set apart to “hatch, match, and dispatch.”

(A Spiritual Autobiography by William Barclay)

Of two people must still speak. The first is G. H. C. Macgregor, my predecessor in the New Testament chair in Glasgow. I was his lecturer for seventeen years. I never knew a man who was at one and the same time so much the mystic and the scholar. He was never strong. Throughout the years I came to love him. I went to see him in his last illness to tell him not to worry, that all was well with the department. He was a highlander with the Gaelic, and highlanders – I am one myself – can say things that lowlanders would shrink from saying. I did not know I was not to see him again, and as I left his bedroom, he put his hand on mine and said: “Willie, when I die they’ll find your name written on my heart.” In one of Socrates’ scenes Socrates asked a simple old man

for what he was most thankful, for what he most wanted to thank God, and the old man answered: "That being such as I am I have had the friends I have had." And as I look back that is exactly how I feel.

p. 20

(Quality Friendship: The Risks and Rewards by Gary Inrig)

Out of the furnaces of war come many true stories of sacrificial friendship. One such story tells of two friends in World War I, who were inseparable. They had enlisted together, trained together, were shipped overseas together, and fought side-by-side in the trenches. During an attack, one of the men was critically wounded in a field filled with barbed wire obstacles, and he was unable to crawl back to his foxhole. The entire area was under withering enemy crossfire, and it was suicidal to try to reach him. Yet his friend decided to try. Before he could get out of his own trench, his sergeant yanked him back inside and ordered him not to go. "It's too late. You can't do him any good, and you'll only get yourself killed."

A few minutes later, the officer turned his back, and instantly the man was gone after his friend. A few minutes later he staggered back, mortally wounded, with his friend, now dead, in his arms. The sergeant was both angry and deeply moved. "What a waste," he blurted out. "He's dead and you're dying. It just wasn't worth it."

With almost his last breath, the dying man replied, "Oh, yes, it was, Sarge. When I got to him, the only he said was, 'I knew you'd come, Jim!'"

Paul, in answering the criticism about the letters of commendation and recommendation, tells the Corinthians they are their own letter of recommendation, engraved on the hearts of the men who have labored there in that city.

- v. 3 who are openly being shown that you are a letter of Christ having been cared for by us, not having been written with ink but with the Spirit of the living God, not on tablets of stone but on tablets of human hearts.

All men are openly being shown that you are a letter of Christ.

A letter of Christ that has been engraved in our hearts.

The apostle then uses a phrase "HAVING BEEN CARED FOR BY US."

How do you do this? How were the Corinthians cared for by the apostle Paul's team? I came up with three answers to that question:

1. To meet their needs
2. To minister the word
3. To make intercession

You could say:

1. To PROVIDE
2. To PREACH
3. To PRAY

In the apostle Paul's argument in these verses, he uses a series of four negative and positive statements:

1. The first one is used here in verse 3:

Negatively: "NOT HAVING BEEN WRITTEN WITH INK"
 Positively: "BUT WITH THE SPIRIT OF THE LIVING GOD"

This wasn't the kind of letter to be written with ink, but it was written with the Spirit of the living God upon the human heart.

It is the Spirit of God who brings and gives life and who indwells the heart of the believer and who is the central member of the Trinity involved in the new birth.

2. The second negative and positive statement is in the latter part of this verse:

Negatively: "NOT ON TABLETS OF STONE"
 Positively: "BUT ON TABLETS OF HUMAN HEARTS"

(If Those Who Reach Could Touch by Gail and Gordon MacDonald)

E. Stanley Jones writes:

You can judge how far you have risen in the scale of life by asking one question: How wisely and how deeply do I care?...To be Christianized is to be sensitized: Christians are people who care. No one, anywhere, can come into authentic contact with Jesus Christ in personal surrender and obedience without beginning to care. It was the first reaction I felt when I arose from my knees in the hour of conversion. I felt as though I wanted to put my arms around the world and share this with everybody.

p. 47

(Balancing Life's Demands by J. Grant Howard)

One evening after supper, I settled into my easy chair with a good book and began to immerse myself in its stimulating, stretching, theological insights. Down the hall and into the room came our three-year-old blond bombshell, Juli. "Daddy," she said, "will you read to me?" I looked at the book I was reading – The Providence of God by G. C. Berkouwer, translated from the Dutch. I looked at the book she was holding in her pudgy little hand – Myrtle the Turtle!

That's when love stops being sentiment and theory. Are you going to shoo the kid off with some lame excuse, or put your book down and let her crawl into your lap

while you crawl into her world of turtles? That's a sacrifice for an adult who has long since graduated from children's literature. That night I sacrificed Berkouwer for Myrtle and we labored through the eighteen pages of a not very thick plot. I could see the end coming. I started reaching for my book, waiting for Juli to slip down off my lap and run and play. No way. Instead, she looked up at me with those big blue eyes and said, "Daddy, read it again." That's because a child needs repetition. I don't. Once through Myrtle the Turtle meets my needs for months. But parental love must be willing to sacrifice some of its own needs in order to meet the needs of the child.
pp. 95-96

(No More Mr. Nice Guy! By Stephen Brown)

I like that because it reflects the awareness that (as a friend of mine expresses it) if you see a turtle on a gatepost, you know he didn't get there by himself.
p. 185

(Serving One Another by Gene Getz)

One day a patient was admitted to John Hopkins Hospital. She was a middle-aged lady from a rural area and very ill. Dr. Howard Kelly, the chief surgeon, seeing her condition, spared no effort to help her. After surgery he outlined a program for special care, including a private room and a private nurse.

Finally, the day came when the patient was well enough to go home. Though happy with her recovery, she dreaded getting the bill. It would be enormous! Determined, however, to face reality, she insisted that the nurse bring it immediately. When she received it she began to read the items one by one. Her heart became heavy and when she saw the total cost, she almost had a relapse. But then her eyes caught a glimpse of a brief notation at the bottom of the bill that overwhelmed her.

Her mind quickly went back many years to a summer day when a young medical student who was selling books to help pay his way through medical school, stopped at her home and asked for a glass of water. A young girl then, she came to the door. When he asked for the water, she offered him a glass of fresh milk instead. He, of course, accepted it and enjoyed it to the full.

Years had passed when she entered John Hopkins Hospital. The young man who had stopped at her door many years before had eventually become Dr. Howard Kelly and the chief surgeon at the hospital. And that day the notation on the bottom of her bill simply read: "Paid in full with one glass of milk." And it was signed, "Howard A. Kelly, M. D."
pp. 143-44

God's Pay

Who does God's work will get God's pay,
However long may seem the day,
However weary be the way;
Though powers and princes thunder "Nay,"

Who does God's work will get God's pay.

He does not pay as other pay,
In gold or land or raiment gay;
In goods that vanish and decay;
But God in wisdom knows a way;
And that is sure, let come what may,
Who does God's work will get God's pay.
Author unknown

p. 153

(Helping Those Who Don't Want Help by Marshall Shelley)

At times, people may not want help because they are unable to want it – at least for the time being.

Vernon Grounds says one Bible text especially important to him is Job 6:14 – “A despairing man should have the devotion of his friends, even though he forsakes the fear of the Almighty.”

“One of the ministries I consider my most meaningful,” he says, “has been keeping in touch with friends who, over the years, have deviated from the faith – leaving the ministry or getting embroiled in a moral issue. I try to hang on to them without being obnoxious. I maintain some contact—sending a birthday card, dropping them an occasional note – always nonjudgmental, simply letting them know someone cares and is willing to listen. They know where I stand, but I’m not going to force myself or certain clichés on them.”

Sin's effects can be described in two ways: indirect damage and direct damage. Indirect damage is the effect the sin has on people affected by the sinner. Direct damage is the person's increasing insensitivity to God, a growing blindness to the effects of his own sin. Conscience can become seared and eventually die.

pp. 36-37

(Feeling Free by Archibald D. Hart)

Have you ever wondered why it is possible to love animals so much more easily than human beings? Literally millions of people shower love and affection on a wide range of pets from dogs to little mice. I have always felt that there was something tragic about this. Not that we should stop loving animals. I just adore them, and there can be a lot of therapeutic value in having pets. A number of psychiatric facilities are even providing pets for psychotics and those with serious emotional disorders. Having something to love and love you back can heal broken minds – and we are discovering this truth at last!

But why is it so much easier to love pets? I think it's because animals know only one way to love, and that is the unconditional way. And we can love them because they will always receive that love whenever it is given, without playing games or setting up subtle resistances. Even when we have scolded them or withheld their food, they will respond to the slightest show of affection with immediate pleasure and give no hint of

any desire to get revenge or hurt us back. Why, even completely strange dog can come up to me and begin receiving my love as if it were entitled to it. I would like people to do this also, but somehow they find it difficult.

pp. 162-63

(A Spiritual Autobiography by William Barclay)

I do not know how Kate has put up with me for forty years. All I know is that I have been cared for and protected for all my days with a care and a protection which no man could deserve, and for which no thanks are adequate, and which I can only acknowledge. One of the greatest sins in life is to take things for granted. I said that Kate did not read my books. I hope that she will read this one, for I want her to know, and I want everyone to know, that without her life for me would be impossible.

p. 23

You Corinthians are a letter of Christ. You have been cared for by us. Negatively: “Not having been written with ink but with the Spirit of the living God, not on tablets of stone but on tablets of human hearts.”

v. 4 And such confidence we are having through Christ toward God.

Philippians 1:6

For I am confident of this very thing, that He who began a good work in you will perfect it until the day of Christ Jesus.

Here in this verse we get the answer to the question asked back in chap. 2:16:

“AND WHO IS QUALIFIED FOR THESE THINGS?”

“AND SUCH CONFIDENCE WE ARE HAVING THROUGH CHRIST”

One is reminded of Philippians 4:13

I am ready for anything through the strength of the One who indwells me.

v. 5 Not that we are adequate in ourselves to evaluate anything as coming from ourselves but our adequacy is from God.

This is the third negative and positive statement in this passage.

1. The first one was: “NOT HAVING BEEN WRITTEN WITH INK BUT WITH THE SPIRIT OF THE LIVING GOD.”
2. The second one was: “NOT ON TABLETS OF STONE BUT ON TABLETS OF HUMAN HEARTS.”

3. and now: “NOT THAT WE ARE ADEQUATE IN OURSELVES TO EVALUATE ANYTHING AS COMING FROM OURSELVES BUT—“

Positively: “OUR ADEQUACY IS FROM GOD.”

John 15:5

“I am the vine, you are the branches; he who abides in Me, and I in him, he bears much fruit; for apart from Me you can do nothing.

John 12:24, 25

“Truly, truly, I say to you, unless a grain of wheat fall into the earth and dies, it remains by itself alone; but if it dies, it bears much fruit. He who loves his life loses it; and he who hates his life in this world shall keep it to live eternal.

2 Chron. 20:12, 17

O our God, will you not judge them? For we have no power to face this vast army that is attacking us. We do not know what to do, but our eyes are upon you.” “You will not have to fight this battle. Take up your positions; stand firm and see the deliverance the Lord will give you, O Judah and Jerusalem. Do not be afraid; do not be discouraged. Go out to face them tomorrow, and the Lord will be with you.”

Exodus 14:13, 14

Moses answered the people, “Do not be afraid. Stand firm and you will see the deliverance the Lord will bring you today. The Egyptians you see today will never see again. The Lord will fight for you; you need only to be still.”

Joshua 10:8

The Lord said to Joshua, “Do not be afraid of them; I have given them into your hand. Not one of them will be able to withstand you.”

1 Samuel 17:47

All those gathered here will know that it is not by sword or spear that the Lord saves; for the battle is the Lord’s and he will give all of you into our hands.”

2 Chron. 32:7, 8

“Be strong and courageous. Do not be afraid or discouraged because of the king of Assyria and the vast army with him, for there is a greater power with us than

with him. With him is only the arm of flesh, but with us is the Lord our God to help us and to fight our battles.” And the people gained confidence from what Hezekiah the king of Judah said.

Paul is right on target with the Corinthians when he says:

Negatively: “NOT THAT WE ARE ADEQUATE IN OURSELVES TO EVALUATE ANYTHING AS COMING FROM OURSELVES BUT”

On the other hand, positively: “OUR ADEQUACY IS FROM GOD.”

(Spiritual Awakening, Sherwood Eliot Wirt, editor)

Humility does not consist in telling our faults, but in bearing to be told of them, in hearing them patiently and even thankfully, in correcting ourselves when told, and in not hating those who tell us of them. If we were little in our own eyes, and felt our real insignificance, we should avoid false humility as much as more obvious vanity; but we seldom dwell on our faults except in an indefinite way, and rarely on those of which we are really guilty. We do it then in the hope of being contradicted, and thus of being confirmed in the secret good opinion we entertain of ourselves.

p. 74

-- Hannah More

(The Be (Happy) Attitudes by Roberts Schuller)

Let me share with you a valuable sentence I committed to memory long ago: “God can do tremendous things through the person who doesn’t care who gets the credit.”

p. 22

In all areas of our lives, the principle is the same: “Happiness comes when you admit where you are lacking and where you have a need.

I remember years ago, when E. Stanley Jones used to conduct “ashrams” as he called them. And ashram is a term from India. It means a time of spiritual growth and expansion. Dr. Jones always began his ashrams by passing out pieces of paper and saying, “No one will see what you are about to write on this paper. I want you to write what your need is today.”

It happened at every ashram. While people were thinking and praying and writing, someone would say, “Brother Stanley, I don’t have a need. What do you write down if you don’t have a need?” And Brother Stanley would say, “If you think you don’t have a need, then that’s your need!”

pp. 28-29

If you’re too proud
(or too afraid)
To admit
You are hurting...

Don't be surprised
If
Nobody seems
To care.

p. 32

Matt. 5:3

Blessed are the poor in spirit, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven.

(The Be (Happy) Attitudes by Robert Schuller)

When you discover the secret of the first Be-Happy Attitude, when you are able to say "I need help!" or "I'm sorry!" or "I have a lack!", then you will have taken the important first step toward being truly happy. For then you will have the attitude that can free you to move into the other Be-Happy Attitudes.

I strongly believe that there is a logical progression to the Beatitudes. Jesus gave them to us in the order He did for a very important reason: They are interdependent on each other, and one is a prerequisite for the next.

Think about it. Before Jesus can comfort us, before He can help us and heal us, we must have the attitude that we are willing to be helped! He cannot make us happy unless we want to be happy.

p. 43

"BUT OUR ADEQUACY IS FROM GOD"

We see this in His STRENGTH
The source is His SPIRIT
And the SWORD is the Scriptures.

Ephesians 6:17

And take the helmet of salvation, and the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God.

Ephesians 6:10

Finally, be strong in the Lord, and in the strength of His might.

Isaiah 40:30, 31

Even youths grow tired and weary,
and young men stumble and fall;
but those who hope in the Lord
will renew their strength.
They will soar on wings like eagles;

they will run and not grow weary,
they will walk and not be faint.

- v. 6 Who also made us adequate as servants of a new covenant, not of the letter, but of the Spirit; for the letter is killing, but the Spirit is giving life.

The apostle says in verse 5: “our adequacy is from God,” and then he begins verse 6 with “WHO,” referring back to God, “ALSO MADE US ADEQUATE AS SERVANTS OF A NEW COVENANT.”

We want to focus on the question here for a minute:

HOW DO YOU MAKE ADEQUATE SERVANTS?

I have four answers to that question:

1. BY EXAMPLE – Jesus certainly did this with His words in Mark 10:45

For even the Son of Man did not come to be served, but to serve, and to give His life a ransom for many.”

It is also seen in His works:

John 13:4, 5

(He) rose from supper, and laid aside His garments; and taking a towel, girded Himself about. Then He poured water into the basin, and began to wash the disciples’ feet, and to wipe them with the towel with which He was girded.

2. BY EXPERIENCE – The Lord gave them many opportunities to demonstrate their acts of service through the ministry that He performed during the times He was with them.
3. BY EXHORTATION
4. BY ENCOURAGEMENT

(A Theology of Personal Ministry by Lawrence O. Richards and Gib Martin)

Each of the people of God is called to ministry. No clergy-laity distinction exists in the mind of God. Every believer is party of the laos. Everyone is to find personal significance in understanding what it means to be one of God’s called-out people. Everyone is to shake off the shackles clamped on by past and present distortions. Everyone is to find freedom to be who he is through affirming that identity that is shared by all the people of God.

p. 14

The biblical concept of the laos of God demands that we, like Moses and Joshua and Josiah, call the whole community of faith together to confront their true identity. Like them we are to show all believers the root of their identity in God's mighty acts and in His calling. Like them we are to invite all the people of God to a personal commitment to live out their identity as His own people by responsive obedience to a God whose voice calls each one to minister and serve.

p. 18

Wherever Jesus is shown in His servant character, there are exhortations to us to Follow His example. "Whoever wants to become great among you must be your servant," Jesus taught, "and whoever want to be first must be your slave --- just as the Son of Man did not come to be served, but to serve, and give his life as a ransom for many" (Matt. 20:26-28).

This servant attitude was reflected in everything Jesus did, and especially in the way He reached out in compassion to those in need. It was reflected in His ultimate self-giving, foreshadowed by the portrait of the cross in Isaiah 53.

The disciples were never too comfortable with Jesus' servant approach to life. They knew who He was, the Son of God, so when He chose to take a Servant posture among them they were embarrassed. This embarrassment was brought into focus by an act of Jesus at the Last Supper. What Jesus did was both symbolic and didactic. His actions graphically symbolized His whole approach to ministry. At the same time they taught His disciples that they were to adopt His attitude in their relationship with each other.

p. 79

(If Those Who Reach Could Touch by Gail and Gordon MacDonald)

This is what commitment is all about – enormous inconvenience at times for the good of someone else.

p. 19

(Quality Friendship: The Risks and Rewards by Gary Inrig)

At an early stage in the history of Moody Bible Institute, D. L. Moody organized a Bible conference that brought guests from as far away as Europe. Late the first night, Moody was walking through the corridors when he noticed that his European guests had, in accordance with their custom, left their shoes in the hall to be cleaned overnight. Moody did not want to disappoint them, so he went down the hall to explain the situation to some of his students and to ask them to help. The first student, "Mr. Moody, I came here to study for the ministry. I didn't come here to shine shoes." The rest added their agreement, so Moody graciously dismissed them, and spent the rest of the night polishing those shoes himself.

Mr. Moody could have insisted on his rights and coerced the students into serving, or he could have refused to honor a foreign custom. But he was a man with a servant's heart, who had spent time with the One who said, "The Son of Man did not

come to be served, but to serve, and to give His life a ransom for many: (Matthew 20:28). One of the great struggles of the believers life is to have a servant's heart, but such a heart is essential to be a biblical lover, since love "does not seek its own."

p. 180

(Serving One Another by Gene Getz)

A budding artist once painted a picture of the Last Supper. He took it to the write Leo Tolstoy for his opinion. Carefully and understandingly, the Russian master of words studied the canvas. Then pointing to the central figure, he declared, "You do not love Him."

"Why, that is the Lord Jesus Christ," exclaimed the artist.

"I know," insisted Tolstoy, "but you do not love Him. If you loved Him more, you would paint Him better."

Few of us are budding artists in this sense, but the Bible teachers we're all to be servants – servants of the Lord Jesus Christ and one another. With this in mind, we can easily reword Tolstoy's statement to read, "If you loved Him more, you would serve Him better." And the next step, particularly in view of our subject, is to reword the statement even further: "If we loved one another more, we would serve one another better." Thus Paul wrote to the Galatians, "You, my brothers, were called to be free. But do not use your freedom to indulge the sinful nature; rather, serve one another in love" (Gal. 5:13). pp. 9-10

However, there are many other factors involved in serving. There are Christians who:

- Have received the Gospel freely, but never share it with anyone else.
- Learn the Word of God regularly, but never teach it to others.
- Let other Christians minister to their own children, but never minister to other Christians' children.
- Receive compliments, but never compliment others.
- Wait for people to reach out to them, but never reach out to others.
- Receive gifts of love from others, but never share gifts of love in return.
- Receive notes of appreciation, but never write notes themselves.

pp. 15-16

Love, as it is defined in Scripture, is the guiding principle in all Christian relationships, including the process of serving one another. Without Christlike love, our relationships can be dominated by selfishness and painful bondage. Serving others becomes a negative experience rather than a positive one. But guided by the divine principle of love, serving others becomes a powerful demonstration of corporate Christlikeness.

p. 15

"WHO ALSO MADE US ADEQUATE AS SERVANTS OF A NEW COVENANT"

4. The apostle describes this new covenant with the 4th negative and positive statement:

“NOT OF THE LETTER, BUT OF THE SPIRIT”

In other words, it's not of the letter of the law, but of the work of the Holy Spirit – as we had read back in verse 3:

“NOT HAVING BEEN WRITTEN WITH INK, BUT WITH THE SPIRIT OF THE LIVING GOD.”

The fourth and final negative/positive contrast in the passage is here recorded.

1. The first was back in verse 3:

“NOT HAVING BEEN WRITTEN WITH INK, BUT WITH THE SPIRIT OF THE LIVING GOD.”

2. “NOT ON TABLETS OF STONE BUT ON TABLETS OF HUMAN HEARTS.”
3. “NOT THAT WE ARE ADEQUATE IN OURSELVES TO EVALUATE ANYTHING AS COMING FROM OURSELVES BUT OUR ADEQUACY IS FROM GOD.”
4. “NOT OF THE LETTER, BUT OF THE SPIRIT.”

The reason is given at the end of the verse:

“FOR THE LETTER IS KILLING, BUT THE SPIRIT IS GIVING LIFE.”

John 6:63

It is the Spirit who gives life; the flesh profits nothing; the words that I have spoken to you are spirit and are life.

Romans 3:19, 20

Now we know that whatever the Law says, it speaks to those who are under the Law, that every mouth may be closed, and all the world may become accountable to God; because by the works of the Law no flesh will be justified in His sight; for through the Law comes the knowledge of sin.

Romans 6:23

For the wages of sin is death, but the free gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord.

- v. 7 But if the ministry of death, which has been engraved by means of letters on stones, came with glory, so that the sons of Israel were not able to look intently at the face of Moses because of the glory of his face, fading as it was.

Paul is pointing out here that the ministry of death, or the giving of the law, which had been engraved by means of letters on stones, came with glory; and the result of that glory was so that the sons of Israel were not able to look intently at the face of Moses because of the glory of his face, fading as it was.

Exodus 34:29ff

When Moses came down from Mount Sinai with the two tablets of the Testimony in his hands, he was not aware that his face was radiant because he had spoken with the Lord. When Aaron and all the Israelites saw Moses, his face was radiant, and they were afraid to come near him. But Moses called to them; so Aaron and all the leaders of the community came back to him, and he spoke to them. Afterward all the Israelites came near him, and he gave them all the commands the Lord had given him on Mount Sinai.

When Moses finished speaking to them, he put a veil over his face. But whenever he entered the Lord's presence to speak with him, he removed the veil until he came out. And when he came out and told the Israelites what he had been commanded, they saw that his face was radiant. Then Moses would put the veil back over his face until he went in to speak with the Lord

(II Corinthians by H. A. Ironside)

The thought many of us have had was that Moses put a veil over his face because the glory was so bright that the people could not look upon him, but here we are told by the Holy Spirit that he put a veil over his face because he knew that that glory was fading and passing, and he did not want the people to see the glory disappear. The glory of the covenant could not last because too much depended upon sinful men. And the glory faded and judgment took its place, and so even that second giving of the law proved to be a ministration of death instead of salvation, because of the sinfulness of man's heart. But, says the apostle if even that ministration came to the people in glory, how much more shall the ministration of the Spirit, the glad wondrous gospel of pure grace, excel in glory! And so we go today to a lost world to tell men that God's face is shining with love and compassion upon mankind.

“OH, the glory of His grace
Shining in the Saviour's face,
Telling sinners from above,
God is light, and God is love.”

p. 83

(Second Corinthians – Where Life Endures by Roy L. Laurin)

The law came by Moses --- grace came by Jesus Christ. The law says: “Do, and live” --- grace says: “Live, and do.” The law says: “The wages of sin is death” --- grace says: “The gift of God is eternal life.” The law pronounces condemnation and death --- grace proclaims justification and life. The law says: “Cursed is every one that continueth not in all things which are written in the book of the law to do them”---grace says: “Blessed [is the man] whose iniquities are forgiven , and whose sins are covered. Blessed is the man to whom the Lord will not impute sin.”
p. 59

The picture here, then, is a picture of the veil covering the inevitable – and that is, the fading radiance on Moses’ face.

John 3:30

He must increase, but I must decrease.

v. 8 How shall the ministry of the Spirit fail to be even more with glory?

We now have the third question in the passage, and the question is HOW:

QUESTION #3: “How shall the ministry of the Spirit fail to be even more with glory?”

The word GLORY occurs 10 times in this passage.

After the question is raised, there are three reasons given. Verses 9, 10, and 11 all begin with the word FOR.

v. 9 For if the ministry of condemnation has glory, much more is the ministry of righteousness abounding in glory.

The word MORE occurs in verse 8:

“HOW SHALL THE MINISTRY OF THE SPIRIT FAIL TO BE EVEN MORE WITH GLORY”

And the words MUCH MORE are seen in verse 9.

The law is given as a ministry of condemnation, and the ministry of the Spirit is the ministry of righteousness; and it is abounding in glory.

Romans 1:16, 17

For I am not ashamed of the gospel, for it is the power of God for salvation to every one who believes, to the Jew first and also to the Greek. For in it the

righteousness of God is revealed from faith to faith; as it is written, “But the righteous man shall live by faith.”

(Expository Studies in 2 Corinthians: Power Out of Weakness by Ray C. Stedman)

Righteousness means being fully accepted, having a sense of being approved by God, of being honored and cherished by him. The nearest word I know to describe this is the word “worth.” God gives you a position of worth in his eyes. You don’t have to earn it; you start with it. In the new covenant, God tells you, “I have loved you, I have forgiven you, I have cleansed you. You are my dearly beloved child. I intend to use you; you are part of my program; your life is significant. There is nothing more you can add to that. Now, on that basis, with the security of that acceptance, go back to your work.” And you go with a sense of approval and security. Psychologists tell us that the only way we can function in the world today is with this sense of approval. If parents do not give their children a sense of security, they are torn apart by life, ravaged by whatever happens. And it is true of us as well. We need it all the time. We need this sense of being approved, accepted, loved, cherished. And this is what the new covenant gives to us.

p. 44

(Birthright by David C. Needham)

At the risk of oversimplification, the differences between old covenant righteousness and new covenant righteousness could be compared to the difference between “God, be my Helper,” and “God, be my life.”

p. 103

God’s purpose for humans is that they become actual extensions of His life through a dependent relationship with Him. This, above all else, is new covenant righteousness. Of course such a life will express itself in righteous acts, but the foundation for those acts is dependence. Not in the sense of God helping us, but in God living through us.

p. 104

- v. 10 For indeed what had glory, in this case has no glory on account of the glory that is surpassing it.

The first reason is in verse 9, and now the second one is in verse 10:

“FOR INDEED (the apostle uses an exclamation here) WHAT HAD GLORY, IN THIS CASE (he is making reference to the law) HAS NO GLORY ON ACCOUNT OF THE GLORY THAT IS SURPASSING IT.”

In essence, he is saying, There is no glory in comparison to the glory of the gospel.

The lesser light of the moon fades into insignificance with the glorious rising of the sun.

Romans 8:18

For I consider that the sufferings of this present time are not worthy to be compared with the glory that is to be revealed to us.

Rev. 19:6, 7

And I heard, as it were, the voice of a great multitude and as the sound of many waters and as the sound of might peals of thunder, saying, "Hallelujah! For the Lord our God, the Almighty reigns. Let us rejoice and be glad and give the glory to Him, for the marriage of the Lamb has come and His bride has made herself ready."

- v. 11 For if that which is fading away was with the glory, much more that which is remaining is in glory.

Now we have the third reason.

1. The first was in verse 9.
2. The second in verse 10.
3. Now the third in verse 11:

"IF THAT WHICH IS FADING (that is, the glory of the law spoken of back in verse 7: because of the glory of his face, fading as it was)—

Since "THAT WHICH IS FADING AWAY WAS WITH GLORY (that is, the law)—

Once again we have the use of the words "MUCH MORE" even as we did back in verse 9 and the word MORE in verse 8—

"THAT WHICH IS REMAINING IS IN GLORY"—

And of course, he has reference here to the gospel of Jesus Christ and the new covenant that he spoke of back in verse 6, that covenant which is not of the letter but of the Spirit.

There are several contrasts between law and grace that are given in these verses:

Whereas the law is by the letter,
Grace is by the Spirit.

The law is killing;
Grace is giving life.

In the law is death;

In grace is the Spirit.

The law: condemnation
Grace: righteousness

The law: fading away
Grace: remaining

CONCLUSION:

What are some of the lessons that we can learn from this particular study?

LESSON #1: Paul's love for the Corinthians is likened to a letter engraved upon his heart.

LESSON #2: When you care for someone, you meet their needs, minister the word, and make intercession for them.

LESSON #3: Have you learned to find your adequacy in Jesus Christ.

LESSON #4: Have you made a commitment to become His servant?

LESSON #5: The law kills but the Spirit gives life.

LESSON #6: The glory of the law is fading away, but the glory of the new covenant is becoming greater and greater.

(Serving One Another by Gene Getz)

A scene between Tevye and Goldie from Fiddler on the Roof illustrates these points. Their world of security, held together by their traditions, was crumbling around them as their daughters one by one "fell in love" and then married outside of their Jewish culture. In the Jewish community in which they lived in Russia, it just didn't happen that way. Your mate was predetermined by your parents and hopefully you would learn to love one another after you were married.

On one occasion, Tevye turned to Goldie, his wife of 25 years, and asked her if she loved him. Goldie avoided the question as long as she could. Then she named all the chores she'd done for her husband over the years. But Tevye still wanted to know if she loved him. Finally, Goldie reminded him that they had lived together, fought together, and starved together for 25 years. If that didn't prove her love, what would?

(Charles Hansen Music and Books, Inc. pp. 40-43)

The point of application of this exchange is that sometimes we serve another, not in love, but out of duty and a sense of responsibility and obligation. When that happens, "serving" becomes a negative experience rather than a positive one as God intended.
pp. 16-17

(Balancing Life's Demands by J. Grant Howard)

One evening after supper, I settled into my easy chair with a good book and began to immerse myself in its stimulating, stretching, theological insights. Down the hall and into the room came our three-year-old blond bombshell, Juli. "Daddy," she said, "will you read to me?" I looked at the book I was reading – The Providence of God by G. C. Berkouwer, translated from the Dutch. I looked at the book she was holding in her pudgy little hand – Myrtle the Turtle!

That's when love stops being sentiment and theory. Are you going to shoo the kid off with some lame excuse, or put your book down and let her crawl into your lap while you crawl into her world of turtles? That's a sacrifice for an adult who has long since graduated from children's literature. That night I sacrificed Berkouwer for Myrtle and we labored through the eighteen pages of a not very thick plot. I could see the end coming. I started reaching for my book, waiting for Juli to slip down off my lap and run and play. No way. Instead, she looked up at me with those big blue eyes and said, "Daddy, read it again." That's because a child needs repetition. I don't. Once through Myrtle the Turtle meets my needs for months. But parental love must be willing to sacrifice some of its own needs in order to meet the needs of the child.
pp. 95-96

(No More Mr. Nice Guy! By Stephen Brown)

I like that because it reflects the awareness that (as a friend of mine expresses it) if you see a turtle on a gatepost, you know he didn't get there by himself.
p. 185

(Serving One Another by Gene Getz)

One day a patient was admitted to John Hopkins Hospital. She was a middle-aged lady from a rural area and very ill. Dr. Howard Kelly, the chief surgeon, seeing her condition, spared no effort to help her. After surgery he outlined a program for special care, including a private room and a private nurse.

Finally, the day came when the patient was well enough to go home. Though happy with her recovery, she dreaded getting the bill. It would be enormous! Determined, however, to face reality, she insisted that the nurse bring it immediately. When she received it she began to read the items one by one. Her heart became heavy and when she saw the total cost, she almost had a relapse. But then her eyes caught a glimpse of a brief notation at the bottom of the bill that overwhelmed her.

Her mind quickly went back many years to a summer day when a young medical student who was selling books to help pay his way through medical school, stopped at her home and asked for a glass of water. A young girl then, she came to the door. When he asked for the water, she offered him a glass of fresh milk instead. He, of course, accepted it and enjoyed it to the full.

Years had passed when she entered John Hopkins Hospital. The young man who had stopped at her door many years before had eventually become Dr. Howard Kelly and the chief surgeon at the hospital. And that day the notation on the bottom of her bill

simply read: "Paid in full with one glass of milk." And it was signed, "Howard A. Kelly, M. D."
pp. 143-44

God's Pay

Who does God's work will get God's pay,
However long may seem the day,
However weary be the way;
Though powers and princes thunder "Nay,"
Who does God's work will get God's pay.

He does not pay as other pay,
In gold or land or raiment gay;
In goods that vanish and decay;
But God in wisdom knows a way;
And that is sure, let come what may,
Who does God's work will get God's pay.
Author unknown

p. 153

Good message from Billy Graham

In January 2000, leaders in Charlotte, North Carolina, invited their favorite son, Billy Graham, to a luncheon in his honor. Billy initially hesitated to accept the invitation because he struggles with Parkinson's disease. But the Charlotte leaders said, "We don't expect a major address. Just come and let us honor you." So he agreed.

After wonderful things were said about him, Dr. Graham stepped to the rostrum, looked at the crowd, and said, "I'm reminded today of Albert Einstein, the great physicist who this month has been honored by Time magazine as the Man of the Century.

Einstein was once traveling from Princeton on a train when the conductor came down the aisle, punching the tickets of each passenger. When he came to Einstein, Einstein reached in his vest pocket. He couldn't find his ticket, so he reached in his other pocket. It wasn't there, so he looked in his briefcase but couldn't find it. Then he looked in the seat by him. He couldn't find it.

The conductor said, 'Dr. Einstein, I know who you are. We all know who you are. I'm sure you bought a ticket. Don't worry about it.' Einstein nodded appreciatively.

The conductor continued down the aisle punching tickets. As he was ready to move to the next car, he turned around and saw the great physicist down on his hands and knees looking under his seat for his ticket.

The conductor rushed back and said, ‘Dr. Einstein, Dr. Einstein, don’t worry. I know who you are. No problem. You don’t need a ticket. I’m sure you bought one.’

Einstein looked at him and said, ‘Young man, I too know who I am. What I don’t know is where I’m going.’

Having said that Billy Graham continued, “See the suit I’m wearing? It’s a brand new suit. My wife, my children, and my grandchildren are telling me I’ve gotten a little slovenly in my old age. I used to be a bit more fastidious. So I went out and bought a new suit for this luncheon and one more occasion.

You know what that occasion is? This is the suit in which I’ll be buried. But when you hear I’m dead, I don’t want you to immediately remember the suit I’m wearing. I want you to remember this: I not only know who I am, I also know where I’m going.”

John Newton wrote his own epitaph:

“John Newton, clerk, once an infidel and libertine, a servant of slaves in Africa, was by the rich mercy of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ, preserved, restored, pardoned, and appointed to preach the faith He had long labored to destroy”...

“Amazing Grace how sweet the sound....