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“New Creation: Born of Water and the Spirit”
Part 8. Fragrance of Life
2 Corinthians 2:14-3:6

We have been talking about New Creation for our spiritual life through the church. This morning we are going to talk about **the ministry of the church** that should be fun, joyful, successful, and should NEVER be discouraged at any rate as **a ministry of new covenant**, as defined by Apostle Paul.

Apostle Paul tells us about **beauty of ministry** that a church should do through a rhetorical expression. **God spreads the fragrance of the knowledge of him through us, the Christian believers.**

2 Corinthians 2:12-13 ¹² Now when I went to **Troas** to preach the gospel of Christ and found that the Lord had opened a door for me, ¹³ I still had no peace of mind, because I did not find my brother Titus there. So I said good-by to them and went on to **Macedonia**.

¹⁴ But thanks be to God, who always leads us in triumphal procession in Christ and through us **spreads everywhere the fragrance of the knowledge of him**. ¹⁵ For we are to God **the aroma of Christ** among those who are being saved and those who are perishing. ¹⁶ To the one we are the smell of death; to the other, **the fragrance of life**. And who is equal to such a task? ¹⁷ Unlike so many, we do not peddle the word of God for profit. On the contrary, in Christ we speak before God with sincerity, like men sent from God.

^{NIV} **2 Corinthians 3:1** Are we beginning to commend ourselves again? Or do we need, like some people, letters of recommendation to you or from you? ² **You yourselves are our letter, written on our hearts, known and read by everybody**. ³ You show that you are **a letter from Christ**, the result of our ministry, written not with

ink but with the Spirit of the living God, not on tablets of stone but on tablets of human hearts.

⁴ Such confidence as this is ours through Christ before God. ⁵ Not that we are competent in ourselves to claim anything for ourselves, but our competence comes from God. ⁶ **He has made us competent as ministers of a new covenant**-- not of the letter but of the Spirit; for the letter kills, but the Spirit gives life.

The scripture lesson this morning reveals **some difficulty in ministry of the early days of the church**. Given text is too short to inform you what actually problems are the Apostle Paul struggled with the church in Corinth. On a surface of the metropolitan city of Corinth, linking north and south of Macedonia, there were some issues of immorality, idolatry, and huge gap between the have and the have-not.

- Divisions within the church (1 Corinthians 1:10-17)
- Lawsuits among believers (1 Corinthians 6:1-11),
- Sexual Immortality (6:12-20),
- Unhealthy marriage life (1 Corinthians 7:1-40)
- Idolatry and food (1 Corinthians 8, 10)
- Rights of an apostle (1 Corinthians 9)
- Right act of worship and Communion (1 Corinthians 11)

Around this time in A.D. 54, worse was a group of people within the church who opposed the ministry of the church the Apostle Paul established. Among the opponents, a group called **“Judaizer”** was a headache to Paul and His church. The scripture doesn’t reveal any declination of worship attendance or financial hardship as many other churches face in

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these days. Somehow the scripture this morning talks about a crisis of the church.

In the opening remarks of his 2nd letter to the Corinthians, the Apostle Paul expresses the situation as people living under great pressure.

1. We (“the world”) are under great pressure far beyond our ability to endure (2 Corinthians 1:9).

The concern the Apostle Paul had sounds like today’s concerns of the churches that are struggling with a series of issues, 1) lack of mission and vision – direction of their work, 2) lack of their roles in the community in which they are, 3) conflicts and divisions within the church, 4) declination of their numbers, 5) financial hardship, and so forth.

We (“the world”) are under great pressure far beyond our ability to endure (2 Corinthians 1:9). The situation that that “we the church are under great pressure far beyond our ability to endure” also means that the world should be under the great pressure.

Throughout the ages, the church has opened its door as the agent of the gospel. It sought to bring forth a time and place where God is in charge, neither a small numbers of people in power are in charge, nor 1 percent of the wealthiest are.

[September 13, 2013], Sunday after Labor Day weekend, many churches had a special event, called, “Back to Church Sunday.” Here is an article back in October:

This Sunday is “[National Back to Church Sunday](#),” a coordinated effort by more than 20,000 churches of various Christian denominations to reach out to people who rarely attend worship services. The percentage of Americans who say they “seldom” or “never” attend religious services (aside from weddings and funerals) has risen modestly in the past decade.

Worship Attendance

	2003	2004	2005	2006	2007	2008	2009	2010	2011	2012	2013
	%	%	%	%	%	%	%	%	%	%	%
Weekly or more	39	39	39	39	38	38	38	37	36	37	37
Monthly/yearly	34	34	33	32	34	33	33	34	34	33	33
Seldom/never	25	26	26	28	27	27	28	28	28	29	29
DK/Refused	1	1	1	1	1	2	1	1	1	1	1

N 8,446 21,902 20,716 24,417 20,580 26,045 22,159 21,462 17,992 25,051 10,509

Source: Aggregated data from surveys conducted by the Pew Research Center for the People & the Press, 2003-2013.

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Roughly three-in-ten U.S. adults (29%) now say they seldom or never attend worship services, up from 25% in 2003, according to aggregated data from Pew Research Center surveys. The share of people who say they attend services at least once a week has remained relatively steady; 37% say they attend at least weekly today, compared with 39% a decade ago.

Of course, how often people *say* they usually attend services is not necessarily the same as how often they actually do attend. For example, [time diary studies](#), in which respondents report on concrete activities over a limited span of time, often show lower rates of church attendance than data from surveys, which perhaps better reflect how people see themselves (rather than how they behave).

Among the [growing share of religiously unaffiliated adults](#) in the U.S., the vast majority say they are not looking for a religion, and relatively few (5%) say they go to services weekly or more often. But what keeps people who have a

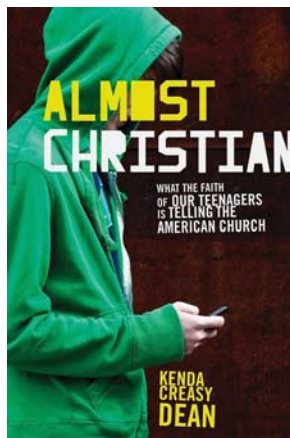
religious affiliation – that is, who identify with a particular religious group – out of the pews?

A 2012 **Pew Research poll** asked respondents to answer this question in their own words. Among religiously affiliated Americans who say that religion is at least somewhat important in their lives, but who attend worship services no more than a few times a year, 24% cite personal priorities – including 16%



who say they are too busy – as reasons they do not attend more often. Another 24% mention practical difficulties, including work conflicts, health problems or transportation difficulties.

Nearly four-in-ten (37%) point to an issue directly related to religion or church itself. The most common religion-related responses include disagreements with the beliefs of the religion or their church leaders, or beliefs that attending worship services is not important. Meanwhile, almost one-in-ten (9%) do not attribute their lack of attendance at religious services to anything in particular.



1. *Most American teenagers have a positive view of religion*

but otherwise don't give it much thought.

- the reason they are not hostile toward religion is that they just do not care about it very much. Religion is not a big deal to them. The society is full of problems. The religion barely cause a ripple in the lives of most teenagers.

2. *Most US teenagers mirror their parents' religious faith.*
3. *Teenagers lack a theological language that which to express their faith or interpret their experience of the world*
4. *A minority of American teenagers – but a significant minority – say religious faith is important, and that it makes a difference in their lives. These teenagers are doing better in life on a number of scales, compared to their less religious peers.*
5. *Many teenagers enact and espouse a religious outlook that is distinct from traditional teachings of most world religions – an outlook called Moralistic Therapeutic Deism.*
- help people be nice, feel good, and leaves God in the background.

Rev. Waylon Bailey, senior pastor of First Baptist Church, Covington, Louisiana.

Some of those that were predictable have to do with matters such as budgets, buildings, personnel, evangelism, and discipleship. The area that was most interesting to me has to do with what many of you have asked me from time to time. The question is this: what will the church look like in 25 to 30 years?

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You might be surprised to know that this is a question that is of intense interest for senior pastors of larger churches. Remember, almost none of these pastors will be actively serving as a pastor of a church in 30 years. Yet, they want to know as you do what the Church will look like in 30 years.

While I really care about this question, I feel it is really the wrong question. The right question is this: **What should the church look like today?** This is the right question because you and I can't do much about the church in the future, but we have very much to do with the church of the present. The question is not what others will do or not do in the future. The question is what you and I will do about the church today. While I won't be responsible for the church of tomorrow, I am very much responsible for the church of today. What you and I do today—our decisions and attitudes—will affect the future. The time will come when we will stand before our Lord to give account of our care for His church. We will be responsible for faithfulness in missions, evangelism, and discipleship. We will be responsible for our giving and worship and for the unity and harmony of the church.

May we be found faithful **as we care for the church of today!**

Let us have 100 worship attendance!

I would like to restore what the church should do; Praising God, Experiencing God, Serving God and Sharing God!

2. *The hardship we suffer happens that we may not rely on ourselves but on God.*

- *Church Rely on Ourselves:*
 - *From **Saving** (Healing, Teaching, Liberating) to **Oppressing** (Exclusive) Church*
 - *From **Reconciling** to **Judging***
 - *From **Uniting** to **Segregating***

- *Denominational; Compartmental*
 - *The Orthodoxy Way*
 - *The Catholic (“Universal”) Way*
 - *The Protestant Way*

- *Church Rely on GOD:*
 - *Praying; Reconciling ; Embracing; Serving; Sharing*

 - *Mark 6:12-13 They went out and preached that people should repent. They drove out many demons and anointed many sick people with oil and healed them.*

- *Restoration of Attractions and Vitality!*
- *Missional Goals*
 - *Overcome 100 Attendance!*
 - *Ownership of Ministry*
 - *Praise, Experience, Serve and Share!*

Beyond the local church boundary, I have worked for the congregational growth in the Baltimore-Washington Conference. **What I’VE learned over the last several years** is that we need to focus on **attractions and vitality of the church** – these are about **value** question!

Many churches are confused with these two emphases: **“attractions and vitality of the church”** **The churches seek out attractions from their own tradition and styles don’t lead people to a better life.**

Why do we gather?

Beware of this question!

If the value of the church is for your own sake, you cannot grow. The value of the church should be of God, because the church is of God, not of you and me.

Apostle Paul lifted up his voice! **The hardship we suffer happens that we may not rely on ourselves but on God!** We all know the problems. We may make an effort to solve the problem. We do it for our own sake. We have to do it for the sake of God.

We should serve others to the glory of God, not for our own emotional sense of achievement.

2 Corinthians gives insights into Paul’s personal relationship with the Corinthian Christians, especially how he tries to answer physical and spiritual attacks that have been made against him. While many support him, **some challenged his authority as an apostle. Others criticize him for the way**

he speaks and writes, and still others think he is unfriendly and too harsh in his comments. As Paul defends himself as an apostle of Christ he shares a number of important teachings about:

- Forgiving others (2:5-17);
- God’s new agreement that comes from the Holy Spirit and not from the law (3:1-18);
- How anyone who belongs to Christ is a new person (5:17-21);
- Giving generously to help God’s people in Jerusalem (8:1-15; 9:1-15); and
- How God has changed Paul’s own life (12:1-9).

The Perceptions of Christianity

Perception	Outsiders, 16 to 29
Antihomosexual	91%
Judgmental	87%
Hypocritical	85%
Sheltered (old-fashioned, out of touch with reality)	78%
Too political	75%
Proselytizers (insensitive to others, not genuine)	70%

3. To God and His people we are the fragrance of life.

Here is what is expected from today’s church.

Apostle Paul speaks: **I am grateful that God always make it possible for Christ to lead us to victory. God also helps us spread the fragrance of the knowledge about**

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Christ everywhere, and this knowledge is like the smell of perfume.

In fact, God thinks of us as a perfume that brings Christ to everyone. For people who are being saved, this perfume has a sweet smell and leads them to a better life. But, for people who are lost, it has a bad smell and leads them to a horrible death.

Don't make anyone feel bad!

(2:6)

If people sin, you should forgive and comfort them, so they won't give up in despair.

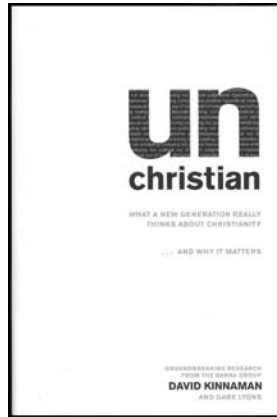
You should make them sure of your love for them (2:8).

4. *You are a letter from Christ, known and read by everybody.*

I am challenged by this word. **You are a letter from Christ.** I am an agent of Christ?

What scares me is the fact that **you and I, the letter from Christ** is known and read by everybody.

I am serving this church as a part-time pastor I come to the church twice a day: one in the morning and the other in the evening. At least three days a week including Sundays.



Whenever I come to church, I feel myself, known and seen by many people in the community. I also feel our church, known and seen by everybody in the community.

Question is how they feel about our church they see, whether they see our church and love to come and worship with us bitterly, or not.

You are a letter from Christ, known and read by everybody.

This statement makes me stop to think about "What good things can be known and read by everybody?"

*Giving of my time, talents, and treasures!
Loving God and Loving Neighbors!
Bring up our children right from wrong!
Speak truth in love!
Respect others!*

5. *He has made us competent as ministers of a new covenant.*

2 Corinthians 1:12 ¹² Now this is our boast: Our conscience testifies that we have conducted ourselves in the world, and especially in our relations with you, in the holiness and sincerity that are from God. We have done so not according to **worldly wisdom** but according to **God's grace**.

Apostle Paul finds out an exit to the dilemma of the early church with a word of encouragement. He has made us "competent" as ministers of a new covenant. You are God's

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sincere messengers. You and I are to God, the aroma of Christ, called out of the perishing and of the being saved.

May God bless you, so that you may spread the fragrance of life among people! May God bless our church with the ministry of new covenant and commitment!

[For Savage]

Let's us sing together Church's One Foundation! After the singing, I would like all of you to move to the next room and find seats around the table with the words: Praise, Experience, Serve and Share. I want you to take a seat where the word that draws your attention the most. We will conclude our worship over there.

[For Lanham]

Let's us sing together, "This Is the Day" and gather in the fellowship in the basement. When you get downstairs, you will find a round table with words: Praise, Experience, Serve, and Share. Please find a seat where the word that draws your attention the most. We will conclude our worship over there.

Keys: 1. pressure; 2. God; 3. fragrance; 4. known .. read; 5. competent