

PAUL ON MINISTRY
Lessons from 2 Corinthians

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Suffering: ***Preparation for Ministry*** **2 CORINTHIANS 1:3-11**

Objectives

1. To remind participants of the reality of suffering in the Christian experience.
2. To help participants understand some of the reasons for suffering.
3. To encourage participants to grow and minister through suffering.

Text (NKJV)

- 3 Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of mercies and God of all comfort,
- 4 who comforts us in all our tribulation, that we may be able to comfort those who are in any trouble, with the comfort with which we ourselves are comforted by God.
- 5 For as the sufferings of Christ abound in us, so our consolation also abounds through Christ.
- 6 Now if we are afflicted, it is for your consolation and salvation, which is effective for enduring the same sufferings which we also suffer. Or if we are comforted, it is for your consolation and salvation.
- 7 And our hope for you is steadfast, because we know that as you are partakers of the sufferings, so also you will partake of the consolation.
- 8 For we do not want you to be ignorant, brethren, of our trouble which came to us in Asia: that we were burdened beyond measure, above strength, so that we despaired even of life.
- 9 Yes, we had the sentence of death in ourselves, that we should not trust in ourselves but in God who raises the dead,
- 10 who delivered us from so great a death, and does deliver us; in whom we trust that He will still deliver us,
- 11 you also helping together in prayer for us, that thanks may be given by many persons on our behalf for the gift granted to us through many.

Introduction

Life can be very uncertain. One thing is certain, however, and that is that we will face problems as long as we are in this life. You can probably identify one or more areas of difficulty in your personal and family life. In fact, the New Testament tells us that suffering plays a significant part in the Christian experience.

Peter devoted much of his first epistle to a discussion of suffering (e.g., 2:18ff). Paul told Timothy that “all who desire to live godly in Christ Jesus will suffer persecution” (2 Tim 3:12). Elsewhere he referred to his own experience of absorbing “in my flesh what is lacking in the afflictions of Christ, for the sake of His body, which is the church” (Col 1:24).

How can something that is so bitter and unbearable be associated with positive outcomes? Why does God subject His children to affliction? Suffering is a major theme of the book of 2 Corinthians. Today we will focus on a particular passage (1:3-11) that reveals four distinct purposes in our problems.

Receiving God’s Comfort (1:3-5)

God wills for us to experience “tribulation” (*thlipsis*: oppression, affliction, tribulation, distress) so that we can better know Him. We could not truly appreciate Him as “the Father of mercies and the God of all comfort” without being delivered from certain depths of pain. We are called to become acquainted with Christ’s “sufferings” (*pathema*: suffering, misfortune, calamity, evil, affliction) (cf. Phil 3:10) so that we can experience the blessing of His “comfort” (*paraklesis*: encouragement, consolation, comfort, solace).

Trusting in God's Comfort (1:8-10)

God intends for us to learn to trust Him more through suffering. When circumstances betray us--when we come to the end of our rope--we are more likely to recognize Him as the only One whose grace is sufficient for our needs (cf. 2 Cor 12:9-10). Paul experienced such a dark time in Asia that he was certain he would lose his life. He was completely overwhelmed, and in the midst of his uncertainty he learned to trust God for deliverance.

Offering Christian Comfort (1:4, 6-7, 11)

God's plan for suffering includes other Christians as well. One important reason why God allows us to experience trouble is that it prepares us to minister to others who are undergoing similar difficulties. Therefore, we should see both affliction and comfort as means of administering "consolation and salvation" to others. One of the ways we can help to comfort those who suffer is by lifting them up in prayer.

Receiving Christian Comfort (1:4, 6-7, 11)

If God is willing to use us to minister to others in their time of need, He certainly plans to use them to encourage us when we are down (cf. 1 Cor 12:26). There is a mutuality about the issue of suffering. Though Paul's suffering was directed at the Corinthians' spiritual growth, they contributed to his consolation by praying for him.

Conclusion

Salvation is no guarantee of a painless life. In fact, we are assured that following Christ will involve a share of difficulty. However, we can be certain that God does not recklessly subject us to suffering. Tribulation always has a purpose--in fact, several purposes. Apart from suffering we could neither know the fullness of God's grace; learn to trust Him implicitly; or minister to others as God desires.

Yes, you will encounter hardships as you live for the Lord. Learn to seize the riches of His comfort, and share them with others who are under the burden of suffering.

Confidence in Ministry: A Superior Covenant 2 CORINTHIANS 3:1-18

Objectives

1. To lead participants to understand the difference between the old and new covenants.
2. To persuade participants of the superiority of the new covenant.
3. To demonstrate that the glory of the new covenant is a source of confidence in ministry.

Text (NKJV)

- 1 Do we begin again to commend ourselves? Or do we need, as some others, epistles of commendation to you or letters of commendation from you?
- 2 You are our epistle written in our hearts, known and read by all men;
- 3 clearly you are an epistle of Christ, ministered by us, written not with ink but by the Spirit of the living God, not on tablets of stone but on tablets of flesh, that is, of the heart.
- 4 And we have such trust through Christ toward God.
- 5 Not that we are sufficient of ourselves to think of anything as being from ourselves, but our sufficiency is from God,
- 6 who also made us sufficient as ministers of the new covenant, not of the letter but of the Spirit; for the letter kills, but the Spirit gives life.
- 7 But if the ministry of death, written and engraved on stones, was glorious, so that the children of Israel could not look steadily at the face of Moses because of the glory of his countenance, which glory was passing away,
- 8 how will the ministry of the Spirit not be more glorious?
- 9 For if the ministry of condemnation had glory, the ministry of righteousness exceeds much more in glory.
- 10 For even what was made glorious had no glory in this respect, because of the glory that excels.
- 11 For if what is passing away was glorious, what remains is much more glorious.
- 12 Therefore, since we have such hope, we use great boldness of speech--
- 13 unlike Moses, who put a veil over his face so that the children of Israel could not look steadily at the end of what was passing away.
- 14 But their minds were blinded. For until this day the same veil remains unlifted in the reading of the Old Testament, because the veil is taken away in Christ.
- 15 But even to this day, when Moses is read, a veil lies on their heart.
- 16 Nevertheless when one turns to the Lord, the veil is taken away.
- 17 Now the Lord is the Spirit; and where the Spirit of the Lord is, there is liberty.
- 18 But we all, with unveiled face, beholding as in a mirror the glory of the Lord, are being transformed into the same image from glory to glory, just as by the Spirit of the Lord.

Introduction

In 2 Corinthians 3:5-18 Paul discusses the contrasts between two very different things: the ministry of the letter (i.e., the Old Testament law) and the ministry of the Spirit (i.e., the New Testament gospel).

The Gospel: A Superior Covenant

The contrasts between law and gospel mentioned in 2 Corinthians 3 are highlighted in the following table:

<u>Old covenant (14)</u>	<u>New covenant (6)</u>
Letter (6)	Spirit (6, 17-18)
Death (6)	Life (6)

Ministry of death (8)	Ministry of the Spirit (7)
Tablets of stone (3, 7)	Tablets of flesh (3)
Glory (7-11)	Greater glory (8-11)
Ministry of condemnation (9)	Ministry of righteousness (9)
Temporary (7, 11)	Enduring (11)
Veiled communication (13)	Clear communication (12)
Blindness (14-15)	Clear sight (14, 16-18)

The old and new covenants are decidedly different. In fact, the new covenant is superior to the old in every regard (2 Cor 3:6-11; Heb 8:6-13; 9:11-15; 12:18-24). The old covenant was served by the offering of sacrifices according to the law; the new covenant ministry is exercised by means of Spirit-led activity (2 Cor 3:2ff). The new covenant is founded on better promises than the old (Heb 8:6). Its atonement is not ceremonial but spiritual, purifying the conscience rather than the body (Heb 9:11-14). Its focus is not on earthly things, but on heavenly things (Heb 12:18-24).

The Gospel: A Source of Confidence in Ministry

2 Corinthians 3:5-18 is immersed in a ministerial context. The passage itself uses the word *ministry* four times. It is found in a letter whose predominant theme is ministry. In addition, ministry is mentioned before and after the passage.

Paul introduces this passage with a discussion of sufficiency (*ikanotes*: adequacy, sufficiency of number and quantity, sufficiency of ability) for ministry (2:16-17; 3:4-6). The fact that Paul moves abruptly from repeated mention of competence in ministry to a discussion of the glories of the new covenant suggests a relationship between the two. Indeed, the excelling glory of the gospel message is a source of confidence in ministry. Three implications follow from this principle:

- We should not doubt our ability for ministry when we are sincerely proclaiming the gospel. The gospel is powerful--powerful enough to transform lives (3:2-3; cf. Rom 1:16). The wonder of the gospel should inspire confidence in us (3:4; cf. 4:1).
- We should speak the gospel frankly (3:12). It is a wonderful message, for it holds the key to spiritual vitality (3:6), righteousness (3:9), true freedom (3:17), and intimacy with God (3:18).
- A person's fidelity in ministry should be judged in terms of his treatment of the gospel. Faithful ministry has little to do with personal charisma, attracting large crowds, or even accumulating numerous professions of faith. Rather, it is a matter of presenting the pure gospel in sincerity and integrity (2:17; 4:2ff).

Conclusion

As Christians we possess a wonderful treasure--the gospel message. We should seek to share it with others at every opportunity. We should do so with confidence, frankness, and sincerity.

Confidence in Ministry: ***A Sustaining Hope*** **2 CORINTHIANS 4:7-5:8**

Objectives

1. To convey to participants the biblical concept of hope.
2. To show how hope is a source of confidence in ministry.
3. To inspire participants to experience a deeper sense of hope.

Text (NKJV)

Chapter 4

- 7 But we have this treasure in earthen vessels, that the excellence of the power may be of God and not of us.
- 8 We are hard pressed on every side, yet not crushed; we are perplexed, but not in despair;
- 9 persecuted, but not forsaken; struck down, but not destroyed--
- 10 always carrying about in the body the dying of the Lord Jesus, that the life of Jesus also may be manifested in our body.
- 11 For we who live are always delivered to death for Jesus' sake, that the life of Jesus also may be manifested in our mortal flesh.
- 12 So then death is working in us, but life in you.
- 13 And since we have the same spirit of faith, according to what is written, "I believed and therefore I spoke," we also believe and therefore speak,
- 14 knowing that He who raised up the Lord Jesus will also raise us up with Jesus, and will present us with you.
- 15 For all things are for your sakes, that grace, having spread through the many, may cause thanksgiving to abound to the glory of God.
- 16 Therefore we do not lose heart. Even though our outward man is perishing, yet the inward man is being renewed day by day.
- 17 For our light affliction, which is but for a moment, is working for us a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory,
- 18 while we do not look at the things which are seen, but at the things which are not seen. For the things which are seen are temporary, but the things which are not seen are eternal.

Chapter 5

- 1 For we know that if our earthly house, this tent, is destroyed, we have a building from God, a house not made with hands, eternal in the heavens.
- 2 For in this we groan, earnestly desiring to be clothed with our habitation which is from heaven, if indeed, having been clothed, we shall not be found naked.
- 3 For we who are in this tent groan, being burdened, not because we want to be unclothed, but further clothed, that mortality may be swallowed up by life.
- 4 Now He who has prepared us for this very thing is God, who also has given us the Spirit as a guarantee.
- 5 So we are always confident, knowing that while we are at home in the body we are absent from the Lord.
- 6 For we walk by faith, not by sight.
- 7 We are confident, yes, well pleased rather to be absent from the body and to be present with the Lord.

Introduction

In the previous lesson we began to discover what qualifies us for ministry. The most important source of competence in ministry is the gospel message. However, Paul highlights two other sources of competence in the chapters that follow last week's text. Today we will uncover a second factor that gives us confidence as we seek to minister to others. That factor is *hope*. Paul does not actually use this term in the text, but the idea is pervasive.

Value of Defeat (4:7-18)

Defeat may seem to some to be incompatible with the idea of hope. But Paul tells us otherwise. Very graphically he refers to our weakness in ministry: "We are hard-pressed on every side [. . .]; we are perplexed [. . .]; persecuted [. . .]; struck down [. . .]--always carrying about in the body the dying of the Lord Jesus" (4:8-10; cf. 12:10).

To put it plainly, as we experience defeat we identify with Jesus's suffering on the cross (cf. Phil 3:10). Just as His suffering was redemptive (that is, it brought about positive outcomes), so it is with ours. God uses us to administer spiritual benefit to others even as we are experiencing pain. Death works in us, but life is granted around us in such a way that God gets the glory (2 Cor 4:12, 15; cf. 1:4-7). Christ wants us to participate in his afflictions for the advancement of His church (cf. Col 1:24ff).

Our hope, then, is that God will use circumstances that appear unreasonable--even out of control--for His purposes. The New Testament idea of hope is the "expectation of good" (Unger 585). It is not something questionable; God has made promises, and we can depend on Him to honor them even when it appears hope is lost.

Paul transitions to another idea toward the end of chapter four. He says, in essence, that despite the presence of outward defeat, our inward being is constantly being renewed (v 16). As we focus on eternal things, we realize that the present affliction is not worthy of comparison with the glory that awaits us (vv 17-18; cf. Rom 8:18).

Victory over Death (5:1-8)

One of the most important elements of future glory is that of bodily redemption, which Paul addresses in chapter 5. Our present mortal bodies--tents of sorts--stand in contrast to our future, heavenly bodies (vv 1-3). Knowing the glory that awaits us, we groan in anticipation of physical deliverance (vv 2, 4; cf. Rom 8:22-25).

The presence of the Holy Spirit in our lives assures us that God will indeed free us from the physical effects of sin (v 5). Therefore, we are confident that death is a doorway to the presence of God (vv 6-8).

Conclusion

As Christians we truly do have a hope that the world does not have. Not only are we certain of God's presence and power in our suffering, but we know that Christ has given us the victory over death. Our hope is the basis for confident ministry.

Confidence in Ministry: *Spiritual Motives* **2 CORINTHIANS 5:9-6:2**

Objectives

1. To encourage participants to be(come) involved in one or more ministries in the church.
2. To encourage participants to minister with confidence by appropriating the right motives.
3. To distinguish between right and wrong motives for ministry.

Text (NKJV)

Chapter 5

- 9 Therefore we make it our aim, whether present or absent, to be well pleasing to Him.
- 10 For we must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ, that each one may receive the things done in the body, according to what he has done, whether good or bad.
- 11 Knowing, therefore, the terror of the Lord, we persuade men; but we are well known to God, and I also trust are well known in your consciences.
- 12 For we do not commend ourselves again to you, but give you opportunity to boast on our behalf, that you may have an answer for those who boast in appearance and not in heart.
- 13 For if we are beside ourselves, it is for God; or if we are of sound mind, it is for you.
- 14 For the love of Christ compels us, because we judge thus: that if One died for all, then all died; and He died for all, that those who live should live no longer for themselves, but for Him who died for them and rose again.
- 16 Therefore, from now on, we regard no one according to the flesh. Even though we have known Christ according to the flesh, yet now we know Him thus no longer.
- 17 Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation; old things have passed away; behold, all things have become new.
- 18 Now all things are of God, who has reconciled us to Himself through Jesus Christ, and has given us the ministry of reconciliation,
- 19 that is, that God was in Christ reconciling the world to Himself, not imputing their trespasses to them, and has committed to us the word of reconciliation.
- 20 Now then, we are ambassadors for Christ, as though God were pleading through us: we implore you on Christ's behalf, be reconciled to God.
- 21 For He made Him who knew no sin to be sin for us, that we might become the righteousness of God in Him.

Chapter 6

- 1 We then, as workers together with Him also plead with you not to receive the grace of God in vain.
- 2 For He says: "In an acceptable time I have heard you, And in the day of salvation I have helped you." Behold, now is the accepted time; behold, now is the day of salvation.

Introduction

In the last two lessons we have discussed how we can gain confidence in ministry. First, we discovered that the authority of the gospel message itself is a source of confidence. Second, we found that the hope we have in Christ gives us a stable foundation for ministering to those who have no such hope. Today we will examine a third source of confidence in ministry: spiritual motives.

In 2 Corinthians 5:9, Paul states his purpose in life: to please God. In the following verses, he elaborates on this theme by discussing three proper motives for serving the Lord. These motives stand in contrast with carnal ones that we may see in ourselves or in others.

The Fear of the Lord (5:9-13)

Paul was motivated to serve the Lord out of fear--though not in a negative sense. The word *terror* (5:11) translates *phobos*, the common Greek word for fear, from which we get the English word *phobia*. The precise nature of Paul's fear is explained in verse 10: "we must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ."

Elsewhere Paul explains in greater detail what the judgment seat of Christ entails. It is not to be confused with the great white throne judgment of Revelation 20:11-15. Rather, it is a judgment of believers' works, with rewards being given to those whose faithful conduct has earned them. Paul's fear had nothing to do with a loss of salvation, but rather a loss of rewards (Rom 14:10-12; 1 Cor 3:9-15).

Paul had a healthy sense of accountability. He realized he would one day stand before Christ and give account for his actions in his earthly life. Not wanting to be ashamed in the Lord's presence (1 Jn 2:28), he labored for the Lord with purpose. In so doing he assured himself of receiving rewards from the Lord's hand (cf. 2 Tim 4:8).

The Love of Christ (5:14-17)

Perhaps a nobler motive for service is that of gratitude for Christ's love. In recognition of what Christ had graciously done for him, Paul could do no less than offer humble service. In his own words, "the love of Christ compels us" (5:14).

Paul's entire life had been transformed through his encounter with Jesus on the road to Damascus. The old life had passed away, and all things had been made new (5:17). He had died with Christ so that he could spend the rest of his life in service to the Lord (5:14-15).

1 John 4:19 plainly says, "We love Him because He first loved us." This was Paul's spirit. His service was reciprocal. The debt he had incurred at salvation obligated him for the rest of his life (cf. Rom 1:14). What better reason do we need to serve the Lord than our deliverance from the penalty, power, and presence of sin?

The Commission of Christ (5:18-6:2)

Third, Paul was motivated by Christ's commission. Paul alluded to this commission when he said that God "has given us the ministry of reconciliation" (2 Cor 5:18). Notice that this ministry is naturally given to those who are themselves reconciled to God. To be saved is to be called to witness of God's saving grace.

Jesus's final instructions to His disciples were for them to "be witnesses to Me in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the end of the earth" (Acts 1:8). As spiritual ambassadors they were to carry "the word of reconciliation" to those who were at odds with God. The essence of the gospel is expressed in 2 Corinthians 5:21: God provided a way for us to possess His righteousness by sending His Son to bear the penalty for our sins.

Conclusion

On what basis can we claim the authority to minister? We can certainly do so because of the superiority of the gospel message and the hope that it brings. We can also gain assurance in ministry by evaluating our motives. Paul's adversaries carried out "ministry" for the wrong reasons, much as some do today (e.g., 2 Cor 2:17; 5:12; cf. Phil 1:15-17). We would do well to learn from his testimony: We should be motivated by fear of Christ's judgment; gratitude for His love; and obedience to His commission.

A Brief Introduction to Ministry: *Stressful Conditions* 2 CORINTHIANS 6:3-5

Objectives

1. To help participants recognize the stressful conditions that accompany ministry.
2. To motivate participants who are called to ministry to prepare for the difficulties they will face in it.
3. To motivate participants who are not called to ministry to help their spiritual leaders through the stresses of their work.

Text (NKJV)

- 3 We give no offense in anything, that our ministry may not be blamed.
- 4 But in all things we commend ourselves as ministers of God: in much patience, in tribulations, in needs, in distresses,
- 5 in stripes, in imprisonments, in tumults, in labors, in sleeplessness, in fastings;

Introduction

2 Corinthians 6:3-10 summarizes the basic facts about what it means to be a minister. Perhaps no other passage in the New Testament captures the essence of ministry so precisely and concisely. Briefly, yet powerfully, it describes the conditions of, resources for, and outcomes of ministry. Since each word in this passage conveys deep meaning, we will study it in three lessons.

Verses 3 and 4 introduce the discussion, informing us that the subject to be addressed is the conduct of the minister. Verse 4 states that one's ministry is proven "in much patience." The Greek word rendered "patience" is *hupomone*, which denotes steadfastness, constancy, endurance, patience, or perseverance. It is also used in 2 Corinthians 1:6, where it is translated "enduring."

After introducing the idea of endurance as a key to ministry, Paul sets forth nine stressful conditions that demand such endurance. F. F. Bruce described the order of these conditions: "Nine forms of suffering are arranged in three sets of three: (a) general suffering (afflictions, hardships, calamities), (b) suffering endured at the hands of men (beatings, imprisonments, riotous onsets), (c) sufferings endured by way of self-discipline (labours, wakeful nights, fastings)" (212).

Tribulations

- Comes from Greek *thlipsis*--pressure, oppression, affliction, tribulation, distress
- Also used in 2 Cor 1:4, 8; 2:4; 4:17; 7:4
- Also translated "afflictions" (KJV, NASB) and "troubles" (NIV)

Needs

- Comes from Greek *anangke*--necessity, calamity, distress
- Also used in 2 Cor 12:10
- Also translated "necessities" (KJV) and "hardships" (NASB, NIV)

Distresses

- Comes from Greek *stenochoria*--narrowness of place, dire calamity, extreme affliction
- Also used in 2 Cor 12:10
- Consistently translated "distresses" (KJV, NASB, NIV)

Stripes

- Comes from Greek *plege*--blow, stripe, wound, public calamity, heavy affliction, plague
- Also used in 2 Cor 11:23
- Translated “stripes” (KJV) and “beatings” (NASB, NIV)

Imprisonments

- Comes from Greek *phulake*--guard, watch, prison
- Also used in 2 Cor 11:23
- Consistently translated “imprisonments” (KJV, NASB, NIV)

Tumults

- Comes from Greek *akatastasia*--instability, disorder, disturbance, confusion
- Also used in 2 Cor 12:20
- Translated “tumults” (KJV, NASB) and “riots” (NIV)

Labors

- Comes from Greek *kopos*--beating, labor, trouble
- Also used in 2 Cor 11:23, 27
- Translated “labors” (KJV, NASB) and “hard work” (NIV)

Sleeplessness

- Comes from Greek *agrupnia*--sleeplessness, watching
- Also used in 2 Cor 11:27
- Translated “watchings” (KJV), “sleeplessness” (NASB), and “sleepless nights” (NIV)

Fastings

- Comes from Greek *nesteia*--fasting, fast
- Also used in 2 Cor 11:27
- Translated “fastings” (KJV) and “hunger” (NASB, NIV)

Conclusion

2 Corinthians 6:3-5 shows us that the minister’s life is no bed of roses. From every direction he faces pressures. This theme saturates 2 Corinthians. Two passages that exhibit strong parallels are 11:23-28 and 12:10.

How should we respond to all of this? Obviously, those among us who have been called to ministry can learn some very valuable lessons from Paul’s testimony. We should expect to face adversity throughout the course of our service to the Lord. Indeed, we should prepare spiritually and emotionally for such difficulty.

There are also lessons here for those of us who have not acknowledged a call to ministry. Most of the original readers of this letter were ordinary church members. We should learn that as we serve within the body of Christ we will face stressful conditions. In addition, we should be sensitive to the unique pressures that impact those who provide spiritual leadership in the church. Understanding the nature of their work should motivate us to pray for, encourage, and be less critical of them.

A Brief Introduction to Ministry: *Powerful Resources* 2 CORINTHIANS 6:6-8

Objectives

1. To aid participants in recognizing the resources that underlie genuine ministry.
2. To motivate participants to understand the Holy Spirit's pivotal role in ministry.

Text (NKJV)

- 6 by purity, by knowledge, by longsuffering, by kindness, by the Holy Spirit, by sincere love,
7 by the word of truth, by the power of God, by the armor of righteousness on the right hand and on
the left,
8 by honor and dishonor, by evil report and good report; as deceivers, and yet true;

Introduction

“Philosophers [. . .] often described themselves by catalogs of virtues, which made their lives models for those of their readers. Because charlatans were abundant, true teachers had to stress their pure motives and that they acted on knowledge of what was real. Paul’s defense here would impress a Greek audience who thought that Paul was out of touch with their culture’s proper speaking conventions” (Keener 502).

Purity

- Comes from Greek *hagnotes*--purity, chastity, uprightness of life
- Translated “pureness” (KJV) and “purity” (NASB, NIV)
- Cognate adjective used in 2 Cor 11:2

Knowledge

- Comes from Greek *gnosis*--knowledge, intelligence, understanding, moral wisdom
- Translated “knowledge” (KJV, NASB) and “understanding” (NIV)
- Also used in 2 Cor 2:14; 4:6; 8:7; 10:5; 11:6

Longsuffering

- Comes from Greek *makrothumia*--patience, endurance, steadfastness, forbearance, long-suffering
- Translated “longsuffering” (KJV) and “patience” (NASB, NIV)
- Also used in Gal 5:22; 2 Tim 3:10

Kindness

- Comes from Greek *chrestotes*--moral goodness, integrity, benignity, kindness
- Consistently translated “kindness” (KJV, NASB, NIV)
- Also used in Gal 5:22; Col 3:12

The Holy Spirit

- Also used in 2 Cor 3:3; 13:14

Sincere Love

- Comes from Greek *anupokritos*--unfeigned, undisguised
- Translated “love unfeigned” (KJV), “genuine love” (NASB), and “sincere love” (NIV)
- Also used in Rom 12:9; 2 Tim 1:5; 1 Pet 1:22; Jas 3:17

The Word of Truth

- Translated “the word of truth” (KJV, NASB) and “truthful speech” (NIV)
- Phrase also used in Eph 1:13; 2 Tim 2:15; Jas 1:18

The Power of God

- Consistently translated “the power of God” (KJV, NASB, NIV)
- Phrase also used in Rom 1:16; 1 Cor 1:18, 24; 2:5; 2 Cor 13:4; cf. 2 Cor 4:7

The Armor of Righteousness on the Right Hand and on the Left

- Comes from Greek *hoplon*--arm, weapon, instrument
- Translated “the armor of righteousness on the right hand and on the left” (KJV), “the weapons of righteousness for the right hand and the left” (NASB), “weapons of righteousness in the right hand and in the left” (NIV)
- Also used in 2 Cor 10:4; cf. Eph 6:11-18

Honor and Dishonor

- Comes from Greek *doxa*--praise, honor, glory--and *atimia*--dishonor, ignominy, disgrace
- Translated “honor and dishonor” (KJV) and “glory and dishonor” (NASB, NIV)
- *Doxa* also used in 2 Cor 3:7ff; 4:17; *atimia* also used in 1 Cor 11:14; 15:43; 2 Cor 11:21

Evil Report and Good Report

- Comes from Greek *dusphemia*--ill repute, defamation, reproach--and *euphemia*--good report, praise
- Translated “evil report and good report” (KJV, NASB) and “bad report and good report” (NIV)
- *Dusphemia* and *euphemia* used only here in the New Testament; *euphemos* used in Phil 4:8

A Brief Introduction to Ministry: *Paradoxical Results* 2 CORINTHIANS 6:8-10

Objectives

[Not drafted]

Text (NKJV)

- 8 by honor and dishonor, by evil report and good report; as deceivers, and yet true;
9 as unknown, and yet well known; as dying, and behold we live; as chastened, and yet not killed;
10 as sorrowful, yet always rejoicing; as poor, yet making many rich; as having nothing, and yet possessing all things.

Introduction

[Consult/cite Keener on the subject of paradoxes]

[Introduce a series of outcomes/paradoxes/enigmas]

Deceivers, and Yet True

- [Consult sources regarding meaning of term(s) in original Greek.]
- Translated “deceivers[,] and yet true” (KJV, NASB) and “genuine, yet regarded as impostors” (NIV)

Unknown, and Yet Well Known

- [Consult sources regarding meaning of term(s) in original Greek.]
- Translated “unknown, and yet well known” (KJV), “unknown yet well-known” (NASB), and “known, yet regarded as unknown” (NIV)
- Cf. 5:11

Dying, and Behold We Live

- [Consult sources regarding meaning of term(s) in original Greek.]
- Translated “dying, and, behold, we live” (KJV), “dying yet behold, we live” (NASB), and “dying, and yet we live on” (NIV)
- Cf. 1:8-10

Chastened, and Yet Not Killed

- [Consult sources regarding meaning of term(s) in original Greek.]
- Translated “chastened, and not killed” (KJV), “punished yet not put to death” (NASB), and “beaten, and yet not killed” (NIV)
- Cf. Heb 12:5-11

Sorrowful, Yet Always Rejoicing

- [Consult sources regarding meaning of term(s) in original Greek.]
- Consistently translated “sorrowful[,] yet always rejoicing” (KJV, NASB, NIV)

Poor, Yet Making Many Rich

- [Consult sources regarding meaning of term(s) in original Greek.]
- Consistently translated “poor[,] yet making many rich” (KJV, NASB, NIV)
- Cf. Eph 3:8

Having Nothing, and Yet Possessing All Things

- [Consult sources regarding meaning of term(s) in original Greek.]
- Translated “having nothing, and yet possessing all things” (KJV), “having nothing yet possessing all things” (NASB), and “having nothing, and yet possessing everything” (NIV)
- Cf. Eph 1:3ff; Phil 3:7ff

Missions Giving: ***Ministry through Generosity*** **2 CORINTHIANS 8:1-9:15**

Objectives

1. To help participants understand the New Testament plan for missions giving.
2. To motivate participants to increase their involvement in missions giving.

Text (NKJV)

Chapter 8

- 1 Moreover, brethren, we make known to you the grace of God bestowed on the churches of Macedonia:
- 2 that in a great trial of affliction the abundance of their joy and their deep poverty abounded in the riches of their liberality.
- 3 For I bear witness that according to their ability, yes, and beyond their ability, they were freely willing,
- 4 imploring us with much urgency that we would receive the gift and the fellowship of the ministering to the saints.
- 5 And not only as we had hoped, but they first gave themselves to the Lord, and then to us by the will of God.
- 6 So we urged Titus, that as he had begun, so he would also complete this grace in you as well.
- 7 But as you abound in everything--in faith, in speech, in knowledge, in all diligence, and in your love for us--see that you abound in this grace also.
- 8 I speak not by commandment, but I am testing the sincerity of your love by the diligence of others.
- 9 For you know the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, that though He was rich, yet for your sakes He became poor, that you through His poverty might become rich.
- 10 And in this I give advice: It is to your advantage not only to be doing what you began and were desiring to do a year ago;
- 11 but now you also must complete the doing of it; that as there was a readiness to desire it, so there also may be a completion out of what you have.
- 12 For if there is first a willing mind, it is accepted according to what one has, and not according to what he does not have.
- 13 For I do not mean that others should be eased and you burdened;
- 14 but by an equality, that now at this time your abundance may supply their lack, that their abundance also may supply your lack--that there may be equality.
- 15 As it is written, "He who gathered much had nothing left over, and he who gathered little had no lack."
- 16 But thanks be to God who puts the same earnest care for you into the heart of Titus.
- 17 For he not only accepted the exhortation, but being more diligent, he went to you of his own accord.
- 18 And we have sent with him the brother whose praise is in the gospel throughout all the churches, and not only that, but who was also chosen by the churches to travel with us with this gift, which is administered by us to the glory of the Lord Himself and to show your ready mind,
- 19 avoiding this: that anyone should blame us in this lavish gift which is administered by us--
- 20 providing honorable things, not only in the sight of the Lord, but also in the sight of men.
- 21 And we have sent with them our brother whom we have often proved diligent in many things, but now much more diligent, because of the great confidence which we have in you.
- 22 If anyone inquires about Titus, he is my partner and fellow worker concerning you. Or if our brethren are inquired about, they are messengers of the churches, the glory of Christ.

- 24 Therefore show to them, and before the churches the proof of your love and of our boasting on your behalf.

Chapter 9

- 1 Now concerning the ministering to the saints, it is superfluous for me to write to you;
 2 for I know your willingness, about which I boast of you to the Macedonians, that Achaia was ready a year ago; and your zeal has stirred up the majority.
 3 Yet I have sent the brethren, lest our boasting of you should be in vain in this respect, that, as I said, you may be ready;
 4 lest if some Macedonians come with me and find you unprepared, we (not to mention you!) should be ashamed of this confident boasting.
 5 Therefore I thought it necessary to exhort the brethren to go to you ahead of time, and prepare your generous gift beforehand, which you had previously promised, that it may be ready as a matter of generosity and not as a grudging obligation.
 6 But this I say: He who sows sparingly will also reap sparingly, and he who sows bountifully will also reap bountifully.
 7 So let each one give as he purposes in his heart, not grudgingly or of necessity; for God loves a cheerful giver.
 8 And God is able to make all grace abound toward you, that you, always having all sufficiency in all things, may have an abundance for every good work.
 9 As it is written: "He has dispersed abroad, He has given to the poor; His righteousness endures forever."
 10 Now may He who supplies seed to the sower, and bread for food, supply and multiply the seed you have sown and increase the fruits of your righteousness,
 11 while you are enriched in everything for all liberality, which causes thanksgiving through us to God.
 12 For the administration of this service not only supplies the needs of the saints, but also is abounding through many thanksgivings to God,
 13 while, through the proof of this ministry, they glorify God for the obedience of your confession to the gospel of Christ, and for your liberal sharing with them and all men,
 14 and by their prayer for you, who long for you because of the exceeding grace of God in you.
 15 Thanks be to God for His indescribable gift!

Introduction

This passage refers to an offering Paul was collecting for the poor Christians in Jerusalem. It is mentioned in several other parts of the New Testament (Rom 15:25-28; 1 Cor 16:1-4; Gal 2:10). Contributors included the churches of Achaia, Macedonia, and Galatia. Paul explained to the Romans that it was only fitting that the Gentiles share their material resources with the Christian Jews, for they had received spiritual blessings from the Jews who had spread the gospel to them.

Paul was collecting a gift from several churches to be used to provide the needs of Christians in faraway places. Today we would probably refer to this as missions giving. Paul's extended discussion of this collection in 2 Corinthians 8-9 gives us unique insight about how missions money should be collected and handled.

Motivation for the Gift (8:1-9)

Paul gave at least three reasons why the Corinthians should contribute to the collection:

- Other Christians' diligence (1-5, 8)
- Our own spiritual growth (6-7)
- Christ's example (9)

Collection of the Gift (8:10-24)

Paul discussed some principles that would guide the collection of the Corinthian offering:

- Fulfillment of stated goals (10-12)
- Oversight of the process (16-17; cf. v 6)
- Accountability and honesty (18-24)

Contribution of the Gift (9:1-7)

Paul told the Corinthians how they should offer their gift:

- According to plan (1-5)
- Generously (6)
- Cheerfully (7)

Fruition of the Gift (9:8-15)

Paul informed the Corinthian church that giving produces positive effects:

- Prosperity of givers (8-11a)
- Gratitude of receivers (11b-13)
- Satisfaction of receivers' needs (12)
- Fellowship between giver and receiver (13-14)

Humility: *A Prerequisite for Ministry* 2 CORINTHIANS 11:22-12:10

Objectives

1. To demonstrate the need for Christians in general, and ministers in particular, to exhibit humility.
2. To encourage participants to recognize the value of “thorns” in their lives.
3. To encourage participants to cultivate humble dependence on God.

Text (NKJV)

Chapter 11

- 22 Are they Hebrews? So am I. Are they Israelites? So am I. Are they the seed of Abraham? So am I.
 23 Are they ministers of Christ?--I speak as a fool--I am more: in labors more abundant, in stripes above measure, in prisons more frequently, in deaths often.
 24 From the Jews five times I received forty stripes minus one.
 25 Three times I was beaten with rods; once I was stoned; three times I was shipwrecked; a night and a day I have been in the deep;
 26 in journeys often, in perils of waters, in perils of robbers, in perils of my own countrymen, in perils of the Gentiles, in perils in the city, in perils in the wilderness, in perils in the sea, in perils among false brethren;
 27 in weariness and toil, in sleeplessness often, in hunger and thirst, in fastings often, in cold and nakedness--
 28 besides the other things, what comes upon me daily: my deep concern for all the churches.
 29 Who is weak, and I am not weak? Who is made to stumble, and I do not burn with indignation?
 30 If I must boast, I will boast in the things which concern my infirmity.
 31 The God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who is blessed forever, knows that I am not lying.
 32 In Damascus the governor, under Aretas the king, was guarding the city of the Damascenes with a garrison, desiring to arrest me;
 33 but I was let down in a basket through a window in the wall, and escaped from his hands.

Chapter 12

- 1 It is doubtless not profitable for me to boast. I will come to visions and revelations of the Lord:
 2 I know a man in Christ who fourteen years ago--whether in the body I do not know, or whether out of the body I do not know, God knows--such a one was caught up to the third heaven.
 3 And I know such a man--whether in the body or out of the body I do not know, God knows--
 4 how he was caught up into Paradise and heard inexpressible words, which it is not lawful for a man to utter.
 5 Of such a one I will boast; yet of myself I will not boast, except in my infirmities.
 6 For though I might desire to boast, I will not be a fool; for I will speak the truth. But I refrain, lest anyone should think of me above what he sees me to be or hears from me.
 7 And lest I should be exalted above measure by the abundance of the revelations, a thorn in the flesh was given to me, a messenger of Satan to buffet me, lest I be exalted above measure.
 8 Concerning this thing I pleaded with the Lord three times that it might depart from me.
 9 And He said to me, “My grace is sufficient for you, for My strength is made perfect in weakness.” Therefore most gladly I will rather boast in my infirmities, that the power of Christ may rest upon me.
 10 Therefore I take pleasure in infirmities, in reproaches, in needs, in persecutions, in distresses, for Christ’s sake. For when I am weak, then I am strong.

Introduction

People typically exhibit pride in relation to assets such as possessions, accomplishments, power, beauty, and intelligence. It is simply not natural to boast of one's weaknesses. Yet this is exactly what Paul advocates in today's text. How and why might one be proud of liabilities? What relation does humility bear to ministry? These questions are addressed in 2 Corinthians 11:22-12:10.

The Challenge of Humility (11:22-33)

Humility is a balance that is difficult to strike. We are prone to two extremes in our self-perception: pride and inferiority. Paul's own assets (11:22-33; cf. Phil 3:4ff) might have seemed to warrant boasting on his part. As we serve the Lord, we are likely to experience some measure of success, and we will be tempted to pat ourselves on the back as a result. On the other side of the coin, we will face some defeats as well, tempting us to see ourselves as inadequate.

The Wisdom of Humility (12:1-6)

Though Paul had made great sacrifices to serve Christ, he refused to allow his accomplishments to drive him to pride. Though God had chosen him to receive incredible revelations, he realized he would have been wrong to boast. God had taught him a difficult lesson in humility.

The Cultivation of Humility (12:7-10)

God was interested in keeping Paul confident yet humble. God did not wish for Paul to become high-minded in response to being chosen as His minister. As a result, God allowed Satan to afflict him with "a thorn in the flesh." Paul never specified what this thorn may have been, though his weakness may have been obvious to the Corinthians.

The thorn was a constant reminder of Paul's need for God's grace. He had pleaded three times for God to remove it, but his request was denied each time. Paul finally learned that his suffering was profitable, for it drove him to greater dependence on God. God's strength could only be perfected through his weakness. As a result, Paul literally boasted of the liabilities in his life; he knew that they illustrated best the grace of God toward him.

The Effect of Humility

Humility brought about several positive results in Paul's life. It enabled him to obtain God's grace in the face of adversity. He knew greater spiritual strength through humble dependence on God. Humility also advanced his ministry. Unlike his opponents, he could not rightfully be accused of self-aggrandizement. Pride did not prevent him from ministering to those who were unattractive in the eyes of the world.

Conclusion

Humility is essential to effective ministry. It is not a matter of putting ourselves down. Rather, it has to do with seeing ourselves from God's perspective--neither taking credit for our successes nor beating ourselves up on account of our failures. God wants us to have a healthy sense of self-esteem. When we have a distorted self-image (in either direction), our ability to minister is diminished. Paul learned to take pride in his liabilities--his weaknesses--so that Christ could reveal the fullness of His power in him. God has given each of us one or more "thorns" that remind us of our need to depend on Him for strength. As we learn to trust in His grace, we will become better suited to serve Him.

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