

THE MAKING OF A TESTIMONY

2 Corinthians 6:1-10

January 21, 2018

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“We then, as workers together with Him also plead with you not to receive the grace of God in vain.

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.

We give no offense in anything, that our ministry may not be blamed. But in all things we commend ourselves as ministers of God: in much patience, in tribulations, in needs, in distresses, in stripes, in imprisonments, in tumults, in labors, in sleeplessness, in fastings; by purity, by knowledge, by longsuffering, by kindness, by the Holy Spirit, by sincere love, by the word of truth, by the power of God, by the armor of righteousness on the right hand and on the left, by honor and dishonor, by evil report and good report; as deceivers, and yet true; as unknown, and yet well known; as dying, and behold we live; as chastened, and yet not killed; as sorrowful, yet always rejoicing; as poor, yet making many rich; as having nothing, and yet possessing all things.”

INTRODUCTION: Paul was careful not to offend in anything, lest blame be laid on the gospel ministry. We must continually remember that our conduct either commends or discounts the message, which we seek to share with the world. Blame-worthy conduct brings reproach on Christ and His work.

God's grace enabled Paul to commend himself as a minister of God by his response to his trials and to the criticisms of his enemies.

Paul the Example: One of the greatest obstacles to the progress of the Gospel is the bad example of people who profess to be Christians. Unsaved people like to use the inconsistencies of the saints, especially preachers, as an excuse for rejecting Jesus Christ.

The Apostle Paul in his day was one of the most loved and respected of men, yet at the same time the most hated and despised.

To those who believe the gospel he preached, he is a revered spiritual father, mentor, and teacher. He proclaimed divine truth, encouraged them, gave them hope, and instructed them in applying God's Word.

To those who reject the gospel he preached, his is the judgmental voice of correction, irritation, and agitation.

Same was faced by our Lord Jesus Christ.

John 15:18-20

"If the world hates you, you know that it hated Me before it hated you. If you were of the world, the world would love its own. Yet because you are not of the world, but I chose you out of the world, therefore the world hates you. Remember the word that I said to you, 'A servant is not greater than his master.' If they persecuted Me, they will also persecute you. If they kept My word, they will keep yours also."

As believers, we are to be Christ's ambassadors (2 Corinthians 5:20). As Christ's messengers we are "a fragrance of Christ to God among those who are being saved and among those who are perishing; to the one an aroma from death to death, to the other an aroma from life to life (2 Corinthians 2:15-16).

The Bible speaks of the tension that's revealed when a Christ-follower is consistent in his walk with Christ.

1. Partnership 6:1

“working together” – to cooperate with someone; in partnership with God. God’s servants have the high privilege of partnering with Christ. Paul was grateful for his privilege of service as His servant.

It’s the **PRINCIPLE** of **1 Corinthians 15:10**, **Ephesians 3:20** and **Philippians 2:13**.

We have His power that works within us. Paul never lost the wonder he felt at the great privilege and partnership granted him as a gospel minister.

1 Timothy 1:12-16

“And I thank Christ Jesus our Lord who has enabled me, because He counted me faithful, putting me into the ministry, although I was formerly a blasphemer, a persecutor, and an insolent man; but I obtained mercy because I did it ignorantly in unbelief. And the grace of our Lord was exceedingly abundant, with faith and love which are in Christ Jesus. This is a faithful saying and worthy of all acceptance, that Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners, of whom I am chief. However, for this reason I obtained mercy, that in me first Jesus Christ might show all longsuffering, as a pattern to those who are going to believe on Him for everlasting life.”

This truth led Paul to pen this **DOXOLOGY**.

1 Timothy 1:17

“Now to the King eternal, immortal, invisible, to God who alone is wise, be honor and glory forever and ever. Amen.”

2. Passionate Concern 6:1-2

“Plead with you” – beg or urge; reflects a constant, passionate concert for the Corinthians. God’s ambassadors are privileged pleaders, begging their hearers to respond to the truth.

“don’t receive the grace of God in vain” – can mean to not turn away from the gospel of forgiveness.

2 Corinthians 13:5

“Examine yourselves as to whether you are in the faith. Test yourselves. Do you not know yourselves, that Jesus Christ is in you? — unless indeed you are disqualified.”

To the believer (in vain) is to turn away from being in the power of the Holy Spirit.

Galatians 3:3

“Are you so foolish? Having begun in the Spirit, are you now being made perfect by the flesh? “

The grace of God is not calling us to follow an external set of rules but from a Spirit-generated, heartfelt love for and obedience to the Lord Jesus Christ.

Some of the Corinthians were being led astray by a **“salvation by work”** not a **“salvation through obedience.”**

God’s grace was empty and in danger of being nullified; the enemy uses a corrupting influence instead of the truth of God.

2 Corinthians 6:2

“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.”**

Paul is stressing the urgency of time. This is not a time to waste gospel opportunity, or to be weak, vacillating, or even deceived.

John 9:4

**“I must work the works of Him who sent Me
while it is day; the night is coming when no one
can work.”**

3. PROTECTION 6:3

2 Corinthians 6:3

**“We give no offense in anything, that our
ministry may not be blamed.”**

Don’t allow any stain on his virtue undermine the integrity of his gospel.

“no offense” – no, not at all; not anything. Speak of cause of stumbling.

Avoid anything that would bring disgrace on Christ or cause someone to find fault with the truth and the purity of the gospel.

“we commend ourselves as minsters of God” – his life is the only letter of commendation that matters.

I. THE WAR HE WAGED 4-5 (TRIALS)

He had been a man of endurance.

A. Emotional 4

1. Patience

One of the most magnificent New Testament virtues, bearing up under hard labor; not quitting when things get tough. It carries the idea of a future glory; develops an anticipation of something greater. Enduring temptations, threats, and trouble. Faith not wavering, hope not diminished, joy not abated.

Romans 8:18

“For I consider that the sufferings of this present time are not worthy to be compared with the glory which shall be revealed in us.”

7

ILLUSTRATION: Exodus 15

**SONG OF MIRIAM, STORY OF
MARA AND ELIM- CONTRAST OF
PLACE OF BITTER WATER
VERSUS A PLACE OF OASIS
(Exodus 15:22-27).**

**HELPFUL LESSON: THERE WERE
ONLY 5 MILES BETWEEN THEM.**

**TRUTH: GOD DID LEAD THEM
ALRIGHT!**

2. Tribulations

(There are 3 **internal results** of external pressures)

To be pressed down by circumstances;
trials under pressure; rubbed on all sides.
Starts out emotionally, can continue to
affect you physically and mentally.
Reason we need **endurance**.

3. Needs

Speaks of hardships and difficulties; has a
sense of inevitability; compulsion
(necessities). You have it, wrong
dependence; (**2 Corinthians 9:7**) in giving
(God loves a cheerful giver). I choose to

voluntarily obey, not of compulsion
(**Philemon 14**).

4. Distresses

A narrow place; experiences that push us into a corner, where there is no escape; being confined.

B. Physical 5 (EXTERNAL THREATS)

1. Stripes

Blows from fists, rods, or whips.

5 times by Jews – 3 times by Gentiles.

2. Imprisonments

Several prison letters

John Bunyan's allegory *Pilgrims Progress*

Philippians penned with joy from prison.

3. Tumults

RIOTS, much violence, civil disturbances.

C. MENTAL 5 (Self-Inflicted Trials)

1. Labors

Work resulting from weariness;
bi-vocational.

2. Sleeplessness

Paul tirelessly ministered to the churches
under his care; life's demands.

3. Fastings

Speaks also of hunger; the apostle gladly
endured hardship

Acts 20:24

**“But none of these things move me; nor
do I count my life dear to myself, so that
I may finish my race with joy, and the
ministry which I received from the Lord
Jesus, to testify to the gospel of the
grace of God.”**

II. THE WEAPONS HE USED 6-7 (TOOLS)

The believers attitude and resources provided by
grace are more than a match for any difficulty.
However, we must appropriate these by faith in
God and His Word. Apart from these, life's
difficulties will overwhelm us.

Endurance manifested 9 qualities:

A. Inward 6

1. Purity

Morally clean; life and service, Purity rightly leads the list, also true with wisdom (**James 3:17**) says first is pure, **then**... Speaks of spiritual integrity and moral sincerity; heart motivation.

2. Knowledge

Comprehension of God's truth and God's ways. A clear understanding of truth, which in this context allowed **endurance** to be a reality.

3. Longsuffering

Patience with difficult people; enables one to avoid retaliation when opposed. Tolerance when tested by others.

B. Outward 6-7

1. Kindness

Goodness in action

2. Holy Spirit

Empowers for effective service; empowers endurance. Paul walked in the Spirit, filled with the Spirit, prayed through the Spirit, gifted for ministry with the Spirit he ministered in His power, followed His leading, was taught by Him, prayed in the Spirit, and worshipped in the Spirit.

He did not grieve the Spirit or quench Him.

3. Sincere Love

Genuine not hypocritical love
(Romans 5:5)

Sacrificial love, Submitting love

4. Word of Truth

Bible, the gospel, the message from God, all God's promises

5. Power of God

NOT OUR CLEVERNESS; the divine energizing which lifts our labors of the ministry above human efforts.

6. Armor of Righteousness

Spiritual armor for every sort of struggle; defensively and offensively; the sword and shield gave complete protection against the enemy's assault.

III. THE WORTHINESS HE GAINED 8-10 (TESTIMONY)

The grace of God so worked in Paul's life that it countered charges with glorious realities.

These truths are nothing short of spiritual **PARADOXES**.

- **Honor and Dishonor**

Some held him in high honor (opinion); others evaluated him as nothing. Loved/despised.

- **Evil Report and Good Report**

Gossiped; false information versus truth. Some told the truth about him, others slandered his name seeking to discredit his ministry.

- **Deceivers, Yet True**

Accused of concealing the truth in order to be popular (he was genuine). Some would say he was a good man, others would say he leads people astray. Satan, a father of lies, seeks to destroy the reputation of anyone who becomes a force for the truth.

- **Unknown – Yet Well Known**

Disciple of Jesus; some minimized his authority. God knew him and that was what counts in the end. Demons knew Paul (**Acts 19:15**).

- **Dying- Behold We Live**

God was preserving him. He constantly faced death threats yet he lived under God's protection.

- **Chastened-Yet Not Killed**

Often beaten, yet God spared his life (Lystra).

- **Sorrowful-Yet Always Rejoicing**

Sadness at response yet an abiding joy.
He had a deep, unfailing joy.

- **Poor-Yet Making Many Rich**

Materially versus Eternally

Destitute versus Spiritual Wealth

- **Having Nothing-Yet Possessing All Things**

Having what money can't buy and death can't steal.

CONCLUSION: Paul endured all this because he took the heavenly perspective. Sorrow may come to us, but it is temporary. Death may come, but it ushers you to a better life in heaven. You may not have much here, but you have a vast inheritance there. In reality, even this world will be ours ultimately. Harold Wilmington is right when he says the story of Jesus is a story of contrast and paradox:

He hungered, yet fed multitudes
(Matthew 4:2, John 6).

He thirsted, yet is the water of life
(John 19:28, 4:14).

He wearied, yet is our rest
(John 4:6, Matthew 11:29, 30).

He paid tribute, yet is the King of kings
(Matthew 17:27, Revelations 19:16).

He prayed, yet hears our prayers
(Mark 14:32-42, John 14:13,14).

He wept, yet dries our tears
(John 11:35, Revelations 21:4).

He was sold for thirty pieces of silver, yet redeems
the world **(Matthew 26:15, 1 Peter 1:18, 19)**.

He was led as a sheep to the slaughter, yet is the
Good Shepherd **(Isaiah 53:7, John 10:11)**.

He was put to death, yet raises the dead
(John 19:33).

You see it all depends upon one's perspective.