

II CORINTHIANS 6:1-10
SERVING FAITHFULLY!

Please turn in your Bibles this morning to II Corinthians chapter 6 as we continue our in-depth study of Paul's second letter to the church in Corinth.

Let me set the stage for what we will be looking at this morning here in II Corinthians chapter 6.

Back in II Corinthians chapter 3 Paul speaks of how God has made us ministers of the New Covenant, and that is the Gospel of Jesus Christ. We called that study – ***GLORY TO GLORY!***

The reason for that is that once we come to saving faith, the Lord is transforming our lives into His image. His nature becomes our nature instead of that flesh nature.

That was something that the Old Covenant could never do and Paul was not speaking about the Law transforming our lives, but Jesus!

He speaks of the New Covenant or the Spirit of Life, and that is the ministry we are bringing to people. In fact, the Law was the ministry of death because the Law could never save you, but the Spirit of life, that New Covenant brings to us everlasting life!

The Law never had the power to change a person's life, but the Spirit of life does because when we come to Christ the Holy Spirit indwells us and enables us to walk worthy of the high calling by which we have been called. It gives to us the power to live a life that is pleasing to God.

And, since we have this ministry, given to us by the Lord, we are to share our faith.

Listen to what Paul says in II Corinthians chapter 4, **“Therefore, since we have this ministry, as we have received mercy, we do not lose heart . . . Therefore we do not lose heart. Even though our outward man is perishing, yet the inward man is being renewed day by day. For our light affliction, which is but for a moment, is working for us a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory, 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.”** II Corinthians 4:1, 16-18.

Since we have received this wonderful gift, don’t keep it for yourself, but share it with others.

Do we lose heart at times when people don’t want to hear what we have to say?

I am sure that we do at times, but Paul tells us not to lose heart, to keep focused on ministering this wonderful gift to people!

And, as you look at II Corinthians chapter 5 you see that God has made us new in Christ.

Listen to what Paul tells us in II Corinthians 5:17-21, **“Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation; old things have passed away; behold, all things have become new. Now all things are of God, who has reconciled us to Himself through Jesus Christ, and has given us the ministry of reconciliation, 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. 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. For He made Him who knew no sin to be sin for us, that we might become the righteousness of God in Him.”**

Why was this so important, this spreading and sharing forth the Gospel message?

Paul explains that in II Corinthians 5:11, when he wrote, “**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.**”

In other words, those who don't come to Christ, reject this free gift of life with Him, they will experience the terror of the Lord and in knowing that Paul says that we are to persuade men to come to that saving faith!

And look at all that God has done for us, and we truly don't deserve it, not even close! Now, since God has done this for us, we are now His ambassadors sharing with others this free gift of life that is found in Jesus Christ.

It is the hope we bring to a fallen world, and I think this world is getting more and more hopeless and they need to hear some good news, they need Jesus!

And that leads us into II Corinthians chapter 6 where Paul is going to challenge them in regard to how much they are willing to suffer for Christ. And to show them that this can be accomplished, that suffering is just a part of ministry, he lays out his life before them so that they can see what he went through so that the Gospel message can go forth and transform people's lives.

In other words, and what I have called our study – ***SERVING FAITHFULLY!***

Let me give you this example of someone who served faithfully in what he was called to do. We are told,

One of the most tragic events during the Reagan Presidency was the Sunday morning terrorist bombing of the Marine barracks in Beirut, in which hundreds of Americans were killed or wounded as they slept.

Many of us can still recall the terrible scenes as the dazed survivors worked to dig out their trapped brothers from beneath the rubble.

A few days after the tragedy, I recall coming across an extraordinary story. Marine Corps Commandant Paul X Kelly visited some of the wounded survivors then in a Frankfurt, Germany, hospital.

Among them was Corporal Jeffrey Lee Nashton, severely wounded in the incident.

Nashton had so many tubes running in and out of his body that a witness said he looked more like a machine than a man; yet he survived.

As Kelly neared him, Nashton, struggling to move and racked with pain, motioned for a piece of paper and a pen.

He wrote a brief note and passed it back to the Commandant.

On the slip of paper were but two words – “*Semper Fi*” the Latin motto of the Marines meaning “*forever faithful.*”

With those two simple words Nashton spoke for the millions of Americans who have sacrificed body and limb and their lives for their country - those who have remained faithful.

- J. Dobson & Gary Bauer, *Children at Risk*, Word, pp. 187-188

Here in II Corinthians chapter 6 that is what Paul will be speaking about, that he was faithful in ministry and he is admonishing the Corinthians believers to also be faithful in the work that God has called them to do.

And lastly, the Holy Spirit is showing us this lesson as well. It is not always easy, it can be discouraging, but don't give up, always be faithful in the work and understand that what you are doing for the Lord is not in vain, it is not empty, it will accomplish what God wants it to accomplish!

That is what Paul said back in I Corinthians 15:58, **“Therefore, my beloved brethren, be steadfast, immovable, always abounding in the work of the Lord, knowing that your labor is not in vain in the Lord.”**

I like the way that *The Amplified Bible* puts this verse. It says, **“Therefore, my beloved brethren, be firm (steadfast), immovable, always abounding in the work of the Lord [always being superior, excelling, doing more than enough in the service of the Lord], knowing and being continually aware that your labor in the Lord is not futile [it is never wasted or to no purpose].”**

May what we do for the Lord be done to the best of our ability and may the work we do for the Lord increase, grow, reach out more and more!

As I have said, I have called this study – ***SERVING FAITHFULLY!***

And I have broken down the verses we will be looking at into the following main points.

They are,

WORKING TOGETHER WITH CHRIST – II CORINTHIANS 6:1-2

BLAMELESS MINISTRY – II CORINTHIANS 6:3

MINISTERS OF GOD – II CORINTHIANS 6:4-10

With that as our introduction, let's begin reading in II Corinthians chapter 6, beginning in verse 1 and let's see what the Lord has for us as we study His Word and look at this topic –

SERVING FAITHFULLY!

II CORINTHIANS 6

VERSES 1-2

Notice the point that Paul is making here – ***WORKING TOGETHER WITH CHRIST!***

Remember what Paul said in II Corinthians 5:18-20, because this is the work that we are called to do. Paul wrote, **“Now all things are of God, who has reconciled us to Himself through Jesus Christ, and has given us the ministry of reconciliation, 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. 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.”**

In other words, Jesus came and reconciled the world to the Father through Him. Now that the work is done, Jesus has given us the commission to bring that message of reconciliation to the world, the Gospel message!

And don’t miss the point, this is important. You see, God does not work with us, but we work with Him!

If we are doing our own thing, then we are not doing the work that God has called us to do.

For instance. When God called me to be a pastor, that is all He told me. So I waited and waited and eleven years or so went by before God moved me here to Wisconsin to be the pastor of this church.

It was not my work, but He was working and I needed to get in step with the Lord and follow Him!

Also, for some reason people think that God needs them, that if they are not around, it would never get done.

Let me make this clear, God does not need any of us, but we do get to work with Him. It is our choice.

Sadly, many just sit on the sidelines and watch others serving the Lord. That is not a good thing.

Let me show you what I mean about working together with the Lord.

Have you ever seen a dad out cutting his lawn and right behind him is his son with his little lawnmower, just following after dad. It is very cute. But the reality is the little boy is not doing anything but following his dad. Yes, he is working, but it is the dad that is accomplishing the work, the results you might say!

In a sense, that is what we are doing. God is leading and we are following after Him. And keep in mind that back in II Corinthians chapter 5 Paul spoke of us being ambassadors for Christ, thus, we must go out and represent Him to a world in darkness, labor with Him for the souls of men!

And then Paul says that he is pleading with them, begging them “**. . . not to receive the grace of God in vain.**”

What does that mean?

Remember the parable of the soils and how some of the seeds fell on stony ground and the birds took the seed away.

And others fell on shallow soil and when the heat came up, the plant was destroyed, no fruit was born.

And still other seeds fell among thorns and weeds, and they choked out the life of the plant, it also did not produce fruit.

And of this Jesus said that the shallow soil that the seed fell upon was a picture of what happens when difficulty, tribulation, persecution comes upon their life. And they move away from the Lord. They started out with joy but there was no root in the Lord and there was no fruit in their life. They were not saved.

And the seed that fell in the soil that was thorny, full of weeds, Jesus said that speaks of the person who gets entangled with the cares of this world and eventually just goes back to the world. They had no fruit in their life. They were not saved.

And yes, there are those who are just *“playing church,”* they know the truth, they know of Jesus, they may even be working for Jesus, in their mind, but Jesus is not their Lord and Savior.

Paul is calling for them to get saved, don’t let another day pass by, you may not get another chance to enter in.

Regarding those that have a vain relationship with Jesus, listen carefully to what Jesus said in Matthew 7:21-23, **“Not everyone who says to Me, ‘Lord, Lord,’ shall enter the kingdom of heaven, but he who does the will of My Father in heaven. Many will say to Me in that day, ‘Lord, Lord, have we not prophesied in Your name, cast out demons in Your name, and done many wonders in Your name?’ And then I will declare to them, ‘I never knew you; depart from Me, you who practice lawlessness!’”**

Thus, Paul said, **“Behold, now is the accepted time; behold, now is the day of salvation.”**

In other words, don’t pass it up, you may not get another chance!

I also see Paul speaking of the days we have here on earth to bring the Gospel message to the lost. Now it is time to do that, not tomorrow, but today because tomorrow may never come!

One writer put it like this. He wrote,

Keep in mind salvation is a seasonal business. Like beach toys and Christmas ornaments there're only certain times of the year when a product gets sold.

Likewise, ***“now is the day of salvation . . .”***

When time ends and eternity begins you'll no longer be able to obtain salvation.

Today though shelves are stocked. Business is brisk. ***God needs help behind the counter!***

I use to work in a grocery store, and there was a rule . . . If customers were stacking up at the registers, even if you were on break or at lunch, you got back to work immediately. We never made the customer wait.

This is why today God is calling for all His people to come to the front of the store!

We've got customers trying to checkout, and they need to be told the gospel. And when I talk about the day ***“time ends and eternity begins,”*** I'm not just speaking of the day when Jesus returns.

Time ends and eternity begins every day for millions of people who die and meet their Maker.

Right this second, people all over the globe are checking out, and they desperately need Jesus.

You hear a lot of talk today about ***“near-death experiences.”*** Folks see bright lights and walk down long tunnels.

Well, I hate to burst your bubble, but that's not what you're going to see when you really die. ***Near-death experience*** isn't ***really-dead experience***.

C. S. Lewis describes what we'll see the first moment we die, ***"There will be God without disguise: something so overwhelming that it will strike either irresistible love or irresistible horror into every creature. It will be too late then to choose your side. That will not be the time for choosing: it will be the time when we discover which side we have really chosen, whether we realized it or not. Now, this moment, is our chance to choose the right side. God is holding back to give us that chance. It won't last forever. We must take it or leave it."***

This is why now is the day of salvation.

Everyone to the check-outs! We got customers!

- Sandy Adams, II Corinthians 6

I think most of us, and probably all of us, believe we are living in the last days. But many times, our actions don't reflect that!

What do I mean by that?

I mean if we truly believe that we are living in the last days and the Lord can come back at any moment, what are we doing about it?

Think about this. The world is drowning in sin and they are going under, and we are looking up waiting for God to come and bring us home and we are letting sinners drown in their sin without even throwing them a lifeline! And that lifeline is Jesus!

Thus, as Christians we can't sit on our laurels, but we must get up and get out and serve the Lord.

Paul put it this way in I Corinthians 15:10, **“But by the grace of God I am what I am, and His grace toward me was not in vain; but I labored more abundantly than they all, yet not I, but the grace of God which was with me.”**

Yes, grace is a free gift of God that we truly don’t deserve and yet that free gift of God should cause us to work or it is in vain, it is empty, it really doesn’t mean anything to us.

Think about that for a minute. When you get a present, do you take it to the bank and lock it in a vault, showing no one, telling no one about this gift you have received?

Of course not! You want to show everyone, you want to tell everyone, and I think that is Paul’s point here, working together with the Lord, being an ambassador for Christ!

And Paul quotes out of Isaiah 49:8 to show that for us Christians there is no time to sit around and do nothing, live a life of ease, it is time to go out and serve the Lord!

In fact, as you read this you see a sense of urgency in Paul’s words, that this day of salvation will not last forever. Thus, we need to get busy for the Lord, working together with Him to see lives changed.

I am sorry, but it truly is not about us, our comfort, our ease, but the work that God has called us to do.

When you go out to eat, leave a gospel track with the waitress. Share your faith. The time is short and the work is overwhelming, but what seems impossible for us, it is not impossible with God, and we are working with Him to complete this work before we go home to be with the Lord!

Let me share this story with you because I think many times we are looking for instant results and we may not even see all that God is doing. The point is, as you will see, never give up, the Lord is working and the work you are doing is not in vain, not at all. Not because I said it, but because the Lord said it through Paul! (I Corinthians 15:58)

It is as James 1:22 tells us, **“But be doers of the word, and not hearers only, deceiving yourselves.”**

We are told,

An elderly preacher was rebuked by one of his deacons one Sunday morning before the service.

“Pastor,” said the man, “something must be wrong with your preaching and your work. There’s been only one person added to the church in a whole year, and he’s just a boy.”

The minister listened, his eyes moistening and his thin hand trembling. ***“I feel it all,”*** he replied, ***“but God knows I’ve tried to do my duty.”***

On that day the minister’s heart was heavy as he stood before his flock. As he finished the message, he felt a strong inclination to resign.

After everyone else had left, that one boy came to him and asked, ***“Do you think if I worked hard for an education, I could become a preacher - perhaps a missionary?”***

Again tears welled up in the minister’s eyes. ***“Ah, this heals the ache I feel,”*** he said. ***“Robert, I see the Divine hand now. May God bless you, my boy. Yes, I think you will become a preacher.”***

Many years later an aged missionary returned to London from Africa. His name was spoken with reverence. Nobles invited him to their homes. He had added many souls to the church of Jesus Christ, reaching even some of Africa’s most savage chiefs.

His name was Robert Moffat, the same Robert who years before had spoken to the pastor that Sunday morning in the old Scottish kirk.

Lord, help us to be faithful. Then give us the grace to leave the results to you.

- Unknown

I can't tell you how many times I have struggled with the results and in the end, I fall back on what the Lord promised, that our work is not in vain!

It truly is all about the grace that God has bestowed upon us, we don't deserve it, but He freely pours that grace upon our lives and the work we are doing for Him!

Listen to what Redpath tells us regarding God's grace.

He wrote, *"God's grace is always coming to my heart and life in very wonderful and blessed experience of now. Yesterday's grace is totally inadequate for the burden of today, and if I do not learn to lay hold of heavenly resources every day of my life for the little things as well as the big things, as a Christian I soon become stale, barren, and fruitless in the service of the Lord."*

A good lesson to remember and then, go out and share your faith!

We don't do this work on our own, as I have said, but we are – **WORKING TOGETHER WITH CHRIST!**

As we read on, we will be looking at Paul and how he had a – **BLAMELESS MINISTRY!**

VERSE 3

First of all, Paul is saying that his ministry was one that was blameless, he would not let his style, his liberty get in the way of ministering the Gospel of Jesus Christ.

This is so important and yet, today we see many leaders fall into all kinds of sin and it is disheartening!

The most recent one, and one that hit me hard was with the lead singer of Newsboys who was involved in sexual sin.

And when other Christian artists stood up and spoke about this problem with the Newsboys, the other members, because they were not getting any more events to sing at, is suing those who were exposing this truth!

How messed up are we. We should fall on our faces and weep for these people.

This music group was amazing, their faith looked strong, they were involved with movies as well, and touched many lives and now, all that is gone because they were not blameless!

I am not saying we are going to be perfect, we are not, but let's not use that as an excuse to sin!

One writer put it like this,

We can now add Tony Evans and Robert Morris to the list of disgraced Christian celebrities and megachurch pastors.

With each new scandal I feel a wave of sadness and anger. My heart breaks for those who have been wounded by trusted men in ministry who have abused their platform for evil desires.

And I feel exasperated by the way the name of Jesus and his church are soiled by these acts.

Unfortunately, the list of fallen Christian leaders seems to grow with every passing week.

In recent years there has been an avalanche of scandal: Bill Hybels, James MacDonald, Bruxy Cavey, Carl Lentz, Brian Houston, and Mike Bickle, just to name a few.

As someone who grew up in the heart of 80s and 90s evangelical culture, this onslaught of revelations, whether of sexual sin, criminal activity, or spiritual abuse, has felt overwhelming at times.

The one that brought me to a boiling point was Ravi Zacharias. During college I mowed lawns as a side job in the summer, and nine times out of ten it was Ravi's voice in my headphones during those hours on the mower. His ministry shaped me.

I once drove four hours one way and back the same night to hear him speak. With the surfacing of hidden sin after his death I had to wrestle with the complexity of discovering someone I had respected and allowed to speak into my life was not the man I thought he was . . .

While I would never want to suggest anything that undermines the personal culpability of those who have perpetrated evil, I do have the sense that those of us in the larger Christian world who have helped shape this subculture are not blameless.

We have created a church that desires "*winners*" above all else. Much like in the American sports scene or our appalling political landscape, we in the church have a tendency to look the other way for those we think will get us closer to the end we desire.

Never mind if someone is a terrible human; just help us hang another championship banner in the arena. Disregard any personal depravity, just as long as we win the election and pass preferred policies.

In the church growth era, where success has been measured by attendance rather than the depth of sacrificial discipleship, this is not surprising. We are reaping the fruit of the shallow seeds we have sown for decades.

- <https://bit.ly/4w3P478>

I agree, and it is very sad. That is why Paul wrote here in II Corinthians 6:3, and this is from *The Amplified Bible*, **“We put no obstruction in anybody’s way [we give no offense in anything], so that no fault may be found and [our] ministry blamed and discredited.”**

Keep in mind that the Gospel message is offensive to many and we don’t need to add to that our actions, our sin, we are to be blameless so that the Gospel message can go forward.

Remember when David sinned with Bathsheba and Nathan the prophet exposed that sin to David. It wasn’t that David didn’t know that he sinned, he just tried to hide it and Nathan exposed it.

And Nathan said to David, **“However, because by this deed you have given great occasion to the enemies of the Lord to blaspheme . . .”** II Samuel 12:14.

We need to remember that by our actions, when we sin, we give the enemies of God reasons to mock God, to blaspheme God!

Just look at church leaders that have walked into sexual sin and how the news media, the comedians, those that reject God will mock God because of it.

And Paul’s life was an example of someone who was blameless, he did not discredit the ministry that God had given to him.

Back in I Corinthians 9:3-15 Paul refused a salary for the work he was doing.

He didn’t care if others were seen as more prominent than he was.

He worked hard, enduring hardships.

He didn't let these things get in the way of the work and as people looked at his ministry, he was blameless, even though some might try to accuse him of wrongdoing, those were false accusations, like the Corinthians were doing, at least some of them.

Peter put it this way in I Peter 3:14-17, **“But even if you should suffer for righteousness’ sake, you are blessed. ‘And do not be afraid of their threats, nor be troubled.’ But sanctify the Lord God in your hearts, and always be ready to give a defense to everyone who asks you a reason for the hope that is in you, with meekness and fear; having a good conscience, that when they defame you as evildoers, those who revile your good conduct in Christ may be ashamed. For it is better, if it is the will of God, to suffer for doing good than for doing evil.”**

Peter is admonishing us to speak the truth, give a defense for what we believe, and may our lives match up to what we are sharing that they can see our faith is real and not just empty words!

And make no mistake about this, Paul did not water down the Gospel message so people would not be offended.

Let's face it, the Gospel is offensive to people as I have said, it cuts right to the heart of the matter and when some hear it, they repent and when some hear it, they revolt!

Paul, in I Corinthians 1:18-25 put it this way, **“For the message of the cross is foolishness to those who are perishing, but to us who are being saved it is the power of God. For it is written: ‘I will destroy the wisdom of the wise, And bring to nothing the understanding of the prudent.’ Where is the wise? Where is the scribe? Where is the disputer of this age? Has not God made foolish the wisdom of this world? For since, in the wisdom of God, the world through wisdom did not know God, it pleased God through the foolishness of the message preached to save those who believe. For Jews request a sign, and Greeks seek after wisdom; but we preach Christ crucified, to the Jews a stumbling block and to the Greeks foolishness, but to those who are called, both Jews and Greeks, Christ the power of God and the wisdom of God. Because the foolishness of God is wiser than men, and the weakness of God is stronger than men.”**

Thus, Paul was not afraid to offend anyone with the Gospel of Jesus Christ, but he was not going to offend anyone by his style of ministry, by his liberty that he had in Christ, the things that he did in his life.

Now, how does that apply to us today?

Don’t do anything that would discredit Christ and the ministry.

Now, obviously you are not going to be able to please everybody, but here’s the thing! You please the Lord and the rest will fall into place.

A big turn-off for me is when people in the ministry will continually beg for money or their ministry will end. Maybe it is supposed to end, don’t keep it on life-support!

Keep your life simple, serve in humility and you will do okay!

As we move on, we are going to see Paul show what it is like to be – ***MINISTERS OF GOD!***

And to do this Paul is going to open his life before them so they can see what he did for the Lord.

And we will see in II Corinthians 6:4-5 Paul describe the physical sufferings that he endured. And those physical sufferings were a demonstration of his faith, that it was genuine, that he was a faithful servant of the Lord.

Then, in II Corinthians 6:6-7 Paul lists some nine qualities that he exhibited in the face of all the hardships he endured in his ministry.

And lastly, in II Corinthians 6:8-10 Paul lists some nine contrasting experiences which are very typical of the Christian ministry.

We have seen that Paul had a – ***BLAMELESS MINISTRY!***

And now we will look at that fact that we all are – ***MINISTERS OF GOD!***

Some important lessons for us to look at.

To set the stage, let me share this with you.

We are told,

Paul's discussion about ministry wasn't him tooting his own horn. The Corinthians have questioned him.

Paul just wanted his friends in Corinth to know what he'd endure for their sake.

Like all humans he needed to be respected, and have his efforts appreciated.

And I gotta tell you I know how Paul feels. Been there, done that, and got the T-shirt.

The toughest times in ministry are when folks criticize what they see, while you're making sacrifices they can't see.

They don't trust your heart or appreciate your effort. It's not right - It's not fair - but neither was the cross.

Several years ago I came under attack from a group of critics within our church. I'll never forget going to my dad for advice and spilling my guts, ***“Dad, you’d think that after 13 years I wouldn’t have to prove myself.”***

I'll never forget what dad told me. He said, ***“Sandy, in this world, you’ve got to prove yourself every day!”***

And that’s true. Paul didn’t have to prove himself to Jesus, but he had to prove himself to people every day.

- Sandy Adams, II Corinthians 6

Let’s read on and see what the Lord has for us in these verses.

VERSES 4-10

Here in II Corinthians 6:4-5 Paul describes the physical sufferings that he endured.

And those physical sufferings were a demonstration of his faith, that it was genuine, that he was a faithful servant of the Lord.

And this is important. Notice how Paul opens up this section of – ***MINISTERS OF GOD!***

He says, ***“But in all things we commend ourselves as ministers of God.”***

This Greek word that Paul uses for ***“commend”*** speaks of, ***“to present to God as worthy of confidence.”***

What are we to have that kind of confidence in, to give it to God and rest in Him, what are the things that Paul is speaking of?

We don't have to guess, and we don't have to know Greek, because Paul made it very plain and very simple. He said, "**But in all things.**"

"But what about this, you can't say that it fits into that, can you?"

"But in all things."

In other words, it really didn't matter what people thought about what Paul was doing, the situations that he was facing, his conscience was clear before the Lord, the One he was serving!

In all things Paul presented it to God as worthy of confidence, and he could continue on in the work!

If your service for the Lord is based upon how people treat you, you are going to be in trouble.

If you serve the Lord, nothing will move you from the course that God has for you. You will serve Him faithfully!

Look at all the physical attacks against Paul and he served the Lord faithfully.

And the question for us is simple, *"How much are we willing to suffer to bring the Gospel of Jesus Christ to the Lost?"*

It is something you have to answer for yourself!

And when Paul speaks of "**patience**" it means endurance or *"to bear up under pressure."*

The reason this is so important is because people are watching us live out our faith. And thus; as tribulations, needs, distresses, stripes, imprisonments, tumults, labors, sleeplessness, fastings come upon our lives, what are people seeing?

Paul was a living epistle for people to read and as they looked at Paul, they saw Jesus because the love of God not only flowed into Paul's life but through Paul's life to touch others.

And nothing, not even all these physical things, were going to change Paul for his mission!

And did you notice that Paul didn't speak of wearing gold chains, having a flashy car, a mansion in town and a summer home in the country, his hair was not dyed blue to cover the gray, he didn't wear designer clothes, he did not have a jet to take him all over the world, and his ministry was not about money but about seeing people come into the kingdom of God by grace through faith in Jesus Christ.

Many have we gone astray today as we see some of these ministries on television and the way they behave.

That was not Paul.

Remember what Jesus said in Matthew 5:16, **"Let your light so shine before men, that they may see your good works and glorify your Father in heaven."**

Notice the light is to shine of Jesus, bring glory to the Father, and too often we let the light shine upon us and let others see us.

Not Paul as we see in these verses.

But Paul is not done yet.

He is going to show us in II Corinthians 6:6-7 some nine qualities that he exhibited in the face of all the hardships he endured in his ministry.

Let me read these verses again because he is going to show us how he was able to live this kind of life, to do this kind of service unto the Lord in spite of all that was coming against him!

He wrote, **“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.”** II Corinthians 6:6-7.

Let me ask you this.

What is the key to living a life of service unto the Lord?

There may be many ideas out there, but it is not complicated, we just have to do it.

You see, the key to living a life of service unto the Lord is being empowered by the Holy Spirit!

You must utilize the resources that are at your disposal as Paul did!

One writer put it like this. He wrote,

What courses did Paul take in the school of patience and persecution?

Homiletics? No.

Systematic theology? No.

Hermeneutics? No.

Greek? No. Hebrew? No.

Church growth? No.

He enrolled in pureness, intimacy, kindness, longsuffering, and love unfeigned.

Wouldn't those be great course requirements in a seminary?

- Jon Courson, Jon Courson's Application Commentary – NT, p. 1121

He faced these things in his life and, with the power of the Holy Spirit in his life he lived what he said he believed.

You see, Paul shows us that yes, he had trials, he had tribulation, but he had the fruit of the Spirit flowing from his life as he surrendered his will to the will of God, which empowered him for the work that God had called him to do.

Why do we think that the work that God started in our lives by the Spirit can now be accomplished by the power of our flesh?

Folks, it can't!

It is as we are told in Zechariah 4:6, **“... ‘Not by might nor by power, but by My Spirit,’ Says the LORD of hosts.”**

May we not forget that no matter what we are going through!

And not only does God's Spirit strengthen us, but so does God's Word as we trust in the promises of God.

Remember when Joshua was preparing to lead the children of Israel into the Promise Land and the Lord told Joshua, **“Only be strong and very courageous, that you may observe to do according to all the law which Moses My servant commanded you; do not turn from it to the right hand or to the left, that you may prosper wherever you go. This Book of the Law shall not depart from your mouth, but you shall meditate in it day and night, that you may observe to do according to all that is written in it. For then you will make your way prosperous, and then you will have good success. Have I not commanded you? Be strong and of good courage; do not be afraid, nor be dismayed, for the LORD your God is with you wherever you go.”** Joshua 1:7-9.

Follow the Lord, stay on the path that He has for you, be in the Word of God and not only read it but meditate upon it and then do it! We are to be strong *IN* the Lord and not *APART* from the Lord!

And here in II Corinthians Paul not only speaks of the “**word of truth**” but also “**the armor of righteousness on the right and on the left.**”

Now many commentators are not sure what that means, but again, let's not make this complicated.

Keep in mind that the soldier would carry his sword on the right hand, and it speaks of the Word of God being our offensive weapon against the enemy.

Also, the shield was carried in the left hand, and it is our defensive weapon, the shield of faith, to quench the fiery darts that the enemy will shoot at us!

Thus, to stand strong you must be empowered by the Spirit of God, and you must use the spiritual weapons that God has given to us to win this battle, to minister the Gospel of Jesus Christ to the lost.

And now, as we finish this up looking at II Corinthians 6:8-10, we will see Paul list some nine contrasting experiences which are very typical of the Christian ministry.

Listen to what he says in these verses, “**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.**” II Corinthians 6:8-10.

Why the contrasting points here?

One is a view of how the world views Paul and the things he was going through, including some of the Corinthian believers who looked down on Paul's life.

The other view is from God and how He sees things, and you can see the two views are completely opposite.

Notice how the world sees Paul: *in dishonor . . . by evil report . . . as deceivers . . . as unknown . . . as dying . . . as chastened . . . as sorrowful . . . as poor . . . as having nothing.*

Not too impressive but that is how the world looks at us, just as they looked at the life of Paul and what he was doing for the Lord!

The problem today is that we don't want to be like that, and we try to be like the world and in doing that we compromise our faith.

But here is the thing. Listen to how God looks upon our lives and the things we are doing for Him.

God looks upon our lives like this: *by honor . . . good report . . . true . . . well-known . . . behold we live . . . not killed . . . rejoicing . . . making many rich . . . possessing all things.*

I like that!

And here is the thing, and maybe this is my fault for not expressing this enough to people.

Folks, this is ministry! And before you get into any ministry, you better count the cost. That is what Jesus told us to do.

It will cost you not only your time, but many times ministry will break your heart, it will cause others to not like you. Are you willing to sacrifice to serve?

And let me say this. As Christians, we are all in the ministry so we all better count the cost of being in the ministry!

You see, if you are in ministry for fame and fortune, or whatever, then when things don't go your way, you will drop out, you will stop serving.

You might think I am taking this too far, but believe me, I have seen this over and over with those who have been in ministry and have dropped out.

You better be in love with the Lord, you better be directed by the Lord, and you better have a love for those you are serving. If you don't, ministry will be tough, tougher than it already is, and eventually, you will drop out.

So the big question I will give to you is this. ***“What is driving you to serve?”***

And if you think this is not fair, that you should not have to go through all those things if you are serving the Lord, then listen to what Paul said back in II Corinthians 4:17-18, **“For our light affliction, which is but for a moment, is working for us a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory, 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.”**

And here's the thing. Are you looking at ministry through the world's eyes with all the problems that come your way?

Or are you looking at ministry through the eyes of God seeing the difficulty but not focused on that, you are focused on what God sees?

What does God see?

Remember: *by honor . . . good report . . . true . . . well-known . . . behold we live . . . not killed . . . rejoicing . . . making many rich . . . possessing all things.*

What perspective are you looking at in the ministry you are in?

Look to the eternal!

We might not think that what we are doing for the Lord really matters. If you feel that way, listen to this.

We are told,

I recently read about an old man, walking the beach at dawn, who noticed a young man ahead of him picking up starfish and flinging them into the sea.

Catching up with the youth, he asked what he was doing.

The answer was that the stranded starfish would die if left in the morning sun.

“But the beach goes on for miles and miles, and there are millions of starfish,”

countered the man. ***“How can your effort make any difference?”***

The young man looked at the starfish in his hand and then threw it to safety in the waves.

“It makes a difference to this one,” he said.

- Hugh Duncan, Leadership Journal

You are making a difference in people’s lives even though you might not yet see it and you might never see it. But that is a promise from God.

Remember, we are – ***WORKING TOGETHER WITH CHRIST!***

And because of our faith, may we have a – ***BLAMELESS MINISTRY!***

And never forget that we are all – ***MINISTERS OF GOD!***

Remember the story we opened with about the wounded Marine and what he said to his commander, ***“Semper Fi!”***

And that Latin motto of the Marines meaning ***“forever faithful.”***

May we serve our Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ that way – ***SERVING FAITHFULLY!***