

II CORINTHIANS: MINISTERING TO BELIEVERS FACING FALSE TEACHERS

I. Paul's Relationship With The Church, 2 Corinthians 1-7

J. Some External Credentials Of True Spiritual Ministries (2 Corinthians 6:3-10)

I. Introduction

- A. False teachers, claiming to be apostles, had entered the Church at Corinth, and they had tried to promote their own views while discrediting the person and message of the Apostle Paul. (Bible Know. Com., N. T., p. 552)
- B. This was a difficult situation for Paul: his readers were immature believers who had been saved out of corrupt backgrounds in a city known for its vice, so they were easy prey for false teachers, and Paul had to be careful how he handled the situation lest his readers think he was being unjustly defensive and thus discredit himself.
- C. 2 Corinthians 1-7 deals with Paul's relationship with the church, and 2 Corinthians 6:3-10 shows some of the external credentials that mark true spiritual ministries. We view this passage for our insight and edification:

II. Some External Credentials Of True Spiritual Ministries, 2 Corinthians 6:3-10.

- A. Though Paul had taught that his readers should not have looked for external credentials of spiritual teachers such as letters of commendation (2 Corinthians 3:1), self-recommendations (2 Corinthians 10:18), or religious credentials (2 Corinthians 11:22), but the internal testimony of the Holy Spirit (cf. Romans 8:28-29) (Ibid., p. 569), there *are* nevertheless some "external credentials that mark a minister of God," but what many people would not think of seeking, for they involved "sufferings as a servant and the sustaining enablement of God to carry on (cf. 2 Cor. 4:8-10)." (Ibid.)
- B. Thus, Paul listed such "credentials" that characterized him and his ministry team in 2 Corinthians 6:3-10 ESV:
 - 1. First, Paul's team was more concerned about defending the credibility of their ministries than in defending themselves, putting the work of God above how other people viewed them, resulting in their avoiding all behavior that would debase their ministry efforts before others, 2 Corinthians 6:3; Ibid.
 - 2. Second, Paul's team commended themselves as God's servants in validating their ministries by exhibiting endurance, a hallmark characteristic of God's true messengers, 2 Corinthians 6:4a,b; 2 Timothy 4:1-2.
 - 3. Third, they commended themselves as God's servants in validating their ministries by being willing to face all sorts of inconveniences. These included afflictions, hardships, calamities, beatings, imprisonments, riots, labors, sleepless nights, and hunger by exhibiting moral purity, knowledge, patience, kindness, the fruit of the Holy Spirit, genuine love, truthful speech, and by demonstrating the power of God with the weapons of righteousness for the right hand and for the left, 2 Corinthians 6:4c-7.
 - 4. Fourth, they commended themselves as God's servants in validating their ministries by enduring the emotional and mental rigors of facing sharply contrasting treatments by others. Thus, they experienced both honor from some and dishonor from others, both slander from some and praise from others, both being treated as impostors by some and yet as true by others, both as being unknown by some and yet being well known by others, both as dying to some but yet living to others, both as being punished by some but not killed to others, both as being viewed as sorrowful by some yet as always rejoicing by others, both as being poor to some and yet making many others spiritually rich, both as having nothing in the viewpoint of some yet possessing all things in Christ to others, 2 Corinthians 6:8-10.

Lesson: *There ARE some external credentials of true spiritual ministries by God's messengers, but they are NOT what people of this world generally use to evaluate one's ministry. These external credentials include (1) a greater concern for the credibility of one's ministry rather than for how people view the minister, (2) endurance amid all sorts of circumstances, (3) a willingness to face afflictions, hardships, calamities, beatings, imprisonments, riots, labors, sleepless nights, or hunger by exhibiting moral purity, knowledge, patience, kindness, the fruit of the Holy Spirit, true love, truthful speech, and the exhibition of the power of God with weapons of righteousness for all circumstances, (4) and a willingness to endure sharply contrasting treatment from other people. This contrasting treatment could be honor or dishonor, slander or praise, or being viewed as an imposter or as true, as unknown yet well known, as dying yet living, as being punished but not being killed, as being sorrowful yet always rejoicing, as being poor yet making many others rich, as having nothing yet possessing all things in Christ.*

Application: *(1) May we who serve God put the value of our work above ourselves to where it shows up to others in the rigors we are willing to endure to validate our service. (2) May we who sit under the ministries of others evaluate their workmanship by how far they are willing to go in enduring troubles just to justify their efforts.*