

THRU THE BIBLE EXPOSITION
2 Corinthians: God's Pattern For Victory Over Severe Ministry Opposition
Part IX: Focusing On And Exposing The True External Marks Of Godly Ministries
(2 Corinthians 6:3-10)

I. Introduction

- A. In discerning whether a ministry is credibly led and empowered by God as opposed to mere human effort, Paul had taught 2 Corinthians 4:16-18 that true ministries deal with the unseen, spiritual realm.
- B. However, **can STILL DISCERN EXTERNAL** characteristics of God-led, God-empowered ministries, a subject of great importance in practical ministry and life as explained in 2 Corinthians 6:3-10 as follows:

II. Focusing On And Exposing The True External Marks Of Godly Ministries, 2 Corinthians 6:3-10.

- A. The Apostle Paul explained that in all things, he and his ministry team sought to clarify the validity of their ministries that they not become spiritual stumbling blocks to the discipling process in bringing "disrepute to God or spiritual ruin to a fellow Christian," 2 Cor. 6:3; Bible Know. Com., N. T., p. 569.
- B. There were specific external characteristics by which the unseen presence and power of a Holy Spirit in a ministry would be discerned, characteristics onlookers could use to realize they were of the Lord so as not to "stumble" in disillusionment, 2 Cor. 6:4a. Paul listed a number of these in 2 Corinthians 6:4b-10:
 - 1. Godly ministries are marked by great "steadfastness," *hypomone* (Ibid.; 2 Cor. 6:4b NIV) applied to various trials like beatings, imprisonment, riots, hard work, insomnia and hunger, 2 Cor. 6:4c-5 NIV.
 - 2. Godly ministries are marked by purity in terms of practical righteousness, 2 Corinthians 6:6a NIV; Ibid.
 - 3. Godly ministries are marked by understanding, i.e., practical knowledge displayed in sensitivity in dealing with other people, 2 Corinthians 6:6b NIV; Ibid.
 - 4. Godly ministries are marked by patience, the capacity to "bear up under the oversights and wrongs afflicted by others without retaliating," 2 Corinthians 6:6c and *makrothymia* "lit., long temper", Ibid.
 - 5. Godly ministries are marked by kindness (*chrestoteti*), "love in action," 2 Corinthians 6:6d; Ibid.
 - 6. Godly ministries are marked by the Holy Spirit's love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness and self-control (Gal. 5:22-23 NIV) or control (Eph. 5:18), 2 Cor. 6:6e, Ibid.
 - 7. Godly ministries are marked by an unhyphocritical love, 2 Corinthians 6:6f; Ibid.
 - 8. Godly ministries are marked by truthful speech, 2 Corinthians 6:7a; Ibid.
 - 9. Godly ministries are marked by evidences of the power of God in the ministry itself, 2 Cor. 6:7b.
 - 10. Godly ministries are marked by evidences of one's reliance on God to function victoriously with spiritual weapons of righteousness from angelic attacks in any realm of his life, 2 Cor. 6:7c,d; Ibid.
 - 11. Godly ministries are marked by notable paradoxes in experience as explained in 2 Corinthians 6:8-10:
 - a. Godly ministries are marked by *paradoxes* of **conflicting responses by onlookers**, 2 Cor. 6:8: (1) some dishonor while others honor the one ministering, 2 Corinthians 6:8a; (2) some give a good report while others give a bad report of the ministry, 2 Corinthians 6:8b; (3) some view the true servants of God as deceivers while others see them as genuinely led of God, 2 Corinthians 6:8c.
 - b. Godly ministries are marked by *paradoxes* of **conflicting responses to trouble**, 2 Cor. 6:9: (1) though such godly ministries are unacknowledged by the ungodly, they are approved by the Lord, 2 Cor. 6:9a; Ibid., p. 570; (2) though such ministries are often viewed as dying by an ungodly viewpoint (2 Cor. 1:8-9), they still survive, 2 Cor. 6:9b; (3) though such ministries suffer abuse from the ungodly, they are still not destroyed, 2 Corinthians 6:9c.
 - c. Godly ministries are marked by *paradoxes* in **the effects of the ministry efforts**, 2 Cor. 6:10: (1) such ministries are expected to be sorrowful from the world's perspective, but those involved always rejoice, 2 Cor. 6:10a; (2) such ministries are often marked by financial poverty from the world's perspective though they make so many spiritually rich, 2 Cor. 6:10b; (3) such ministries are often marked by material lack, but their spiritual blessings are abundant, 2 Corinthians 6:10c.

Lesson: *Though a true, godly ministry is an inward, spiritual one rather than an externalistic show, it still produces observable characteristics as listed above that one can use to verify its credibility.*

Application: *May we TEST all questionable ministries that WE or OTHERS have by these practical, external markers listed in 2 Corinthians 6:3-10 for our edifying insight and direction!*