

2 CORINTHIANS: DEFENDING GOD'S SERVANT TO HIS CRITICS

Part XII: The Marks Of An Authentic Spiritual Ministry

(2 Corinthians 6:1-10)

I. Introduction

- A. 2 Corinthians was written "to defend the authenticity of " Paul's "apostleship and his message" to a church of believers who were susceptible to heeding false teachers who critiqued him, Bible Know. Com., N. T., p. 552.
- B. Paul noted that there **were** authenticating marks in a true spiritual ministry that made it very unique unlike a false, worldly ministry, the upright ministry seeing the sufferings a servant of God faced coupled with God's sustaining power amid such sufferings.
- C. We view these authenticating marks of a true spiritual ministry for our insight and edification (as follows):

II. The Marks Of An Authentic Spiritual Ministry, 2 Corinthians 6:1-10.

- A. Paul's team promoted the grace of God in salvation, 2 Corinthians 6:1-2:
 - 1. Opposite the false teachers who taught that salvation came by faith plus works of the Law, Paul appealed to his readers not to have received the grace of God in vain, for salvation was entirely of God's initiative, and the era of that initiative was the current Church era, 2 Cor. 6:1-2a; *Ibid.*, p. 568.
 - 2. Accordingly, Paul emphasized anew God's call graciously to save people by faith in Christ, 2 Cor. 6:2b.
- B. Paul's team protected their credibility by righteous living, 2 Corinthians 6:3.
- C. Paul's team provided for their authenticity by mingling sufferings with God's sustenance, 2 Cor. 6:4-10:
 - 1. His team exhibited great endurance in the face of persecution troubles, hardships, distresses, beatings, imprisonments and riots, 2 Corinthians 6:4-5a NIV.
 - 2. His team willingly shouldered difficulties the ministry itself handed them such as hard work, sleeplessness and hunger, 2 Corinthians 6:5b NIV.
 - 3. However, offsetting both persecution sufferings and hardships of ministry itself were qualities of the inner man provided by the Lord such as purity, understanding, patience, kindness, the Holy Spirit's fruits, a sincere love, truthful speech and the power of God to counter all Satanic attacks from all directions, 2 Cor. 6:6-7 NIV; *Ibid.*, p. 569.
 - 4. In 1 Corinthians 6:8-10, Paul described ongoing mixtures of paradoxical opposites, negative and positive, that his team faced likely due to the angelic conflict itself as met by God's opposing successes and encouragements such as (a) experiencing glory and dishonor, (b) having both bad and good reports made by others about them, (c) being genuine from God's perspective but being regarded by some people as impostors, (d) as being known of God yet unknown by men, (e) as dying but living on, (f) as being beaten but not killed, (g) as being sorrowful but rejoicing, (h) as being financially poor but making many rich and (i) as having nothing but possessing all things from God's viewpoint!

Lesson: *The marks of an authentic spiritual ministry, in sharp contrast to the WORLDLY perspective of ministry, involve (1) promoting the grace of God in salvation, (2) righteous living that protects the testimony of one's ministry and (3) the paradoxical mingling of sufferings with God's sustaining power as (a) one endures amid persecution and ministry difficulties, (b) exhibiting godly characteristics and power to offset all Satanic opposition and (c) the mingling of paradoxical opposites, negative and positive, with God's fitting and sustaining encouragements.*

Application: *(1) Positively, may we (a) promote the grace of God in Christ's salvation. (b) May we always back up our ministry efforts with righteous living no matter what the cost. (c) May we accept as normal the strange mingling of sufferings with God's sustenance -- persecution and ministry hardships coupled with inner character qualities produced by the Holy Spirit that always cause us to triumph in Christian ministry, and facing glory and dishonor, facing bad and good reports by others, being genuine in God's view but treated as impostors by men, being known of God yet unknown by men, as dying but yet still existing, as being beaten but not killed, as being sorrowful but yet rejoicing, as being poor but making many spiritually rich and as having nothing but possessing all things from God's viewpoint! (2) Negatively, (a) if everyone speaks well of us and our ministry, we should not rejoice, but realize we are in deep spiritual trouble somewhere, for the false prophets were well-honored and complimented by all, Luke 6:26! (b) If we are fudging on the grace of God in the salvation of Christ, we are not aligned with God's truth and must repent. (c) If we are not backing up our ministry teachings with a life of Biblical righteousness, we must repent. (d) If we know ONLY wealth, ONLY fulness, ONLY laughter and ONLY honor, may we realize we are in spiritual trouble somewhere in our ministry efforts and repent, cf. Luke 6:20-25.*