

Last week I closed the section by speaking of patience and endurance.

Jeremiah asked the question that many have asked since, and that is, “Why do the wicked seem to prosper while so many of the righteous suffer?”

It’s easy to praise God when things are going well,

but when we’re in difficulty,

- things become a bit more challenging for us.

But never have we experienced the trials of ministry to the extent that Paul did.

2 Cor 6:3-10

3 We give no offense in anything, that our ministry may not be blamed. 4 But in all things we commend ourselves as ministers of God: in much patience, in tribulations, in needs, in distresses, 5 in stripes, in imprisonments, in tumults, in labors, in sleeplessness, in fastings; 6 by purity, by knowledge, by longsuffering, by kindness, by the Holy Spirit, by sincere love, 7 by the word of truth, by the power of God, by the armor of righteousness on the right hand and on the left, 8 by honor and dishonor, by evil report and good report; as deceivers, and yet true; 9 as unknown, and yet well known; as dying, and behold we live; as chastened, and yet not killed; 10 as sorrowful, yet always rejoicing; as poor, yet making many rich; as having nothing, and yet possessing all things.

In verses 4 & 5 Paul lists 9 of his trials

- then in verses 6 & 7 he lists 9 inner qualities
- followed by 9 pairs of paradoxes in verses 8-10.

A paradox is a statement which seems contradictory or opposed to common sense and yet is perhaps true.

Tribulation refers to pressing troubles from without.

Paul encourages us to:

(be ministers of God) in (times of) tribulations (thilipsis, pressing pressure),

in (times of) needs (“every day hardships of life”)

Phil 4:11-12 he said that he’d learned to be content in whatever state he was in, he knew what it was to have little and to have much),

2 Cor 12:10

10 Therefore I take pleasure in infirmities, in reproaches, in needs, in persecutions, in distresses, for Christ’s sake. For when I am weak, then I am strong.

(be ministers of God) in (times of) distresses,

- for Paul there were the internal distresses
- but what about the external hardships or trials
- he endured in verse 5.

5 in stripes, in imprisonments, in tumults (describes violence of a mob), in labors, in sleeplessness, in fastings;

The hardships Paul face were pretty severe. First of all he was beaten!

Paul was beaten

- on 5 different occasions by the Jews
- and each time receiving forty stripes minus one. 2 Cor 11:24.

In acts 16:23 Paul and Silas were both whipped.

We also know that Paul was imprisoned many times during his ministry.

Prison seemed to be his local hotel.

Verse seems to describe what he faced prior to going to jail and while in jail.

Being a minister of God has its challenges.

Someone once said that a Pastor will die the death of a thousand expectations: People have different expectations of what a Pastor should be.

Fifty Years Ago

Pastors were expected to:

- Study the Bible
- Pray for the members
- Be friendly
- Preach
- Visit the sick
- Witness to lost people
- Marry and bury

Thirty Years Ago

Church members added these expectations:

- Visionary leader
- Aggressive entrepreneur, who could begin new ministries
- Able manager of staff and volunteers
- Active participant in community organizations and activities
- Maintain a family lifestyle that would make James Dobson proud

Church members today have added:

- Produce and preach fascinating internet sermons
- Be thoroughly missional
- Master and use social media
- Model a radical Christian lifestyle
- Be a master counselor, able to save troubled marriages in a single conversation
- Discourse with confidence on current ethical issues

In verses 6 & 7 he mentions 9 inner qualities.

2 Cor 6:6

6 by purity (referred to practical righteousness, sincerity),

by knowledge (the Lord gave him an understanding when dealing with others),

by longsuffering

- refers to patience with difficult people

whereas in verse 4 longsuffering referred to

- endurance in difficult circumstances,

by kindness (this is one of the fruits of the Spirit. Put love into action),

and how do we do this? It's by the Holy Spirit, by sincere love,

7 by the word of truth, by the power of God, by the armor of righteousness on the right hand and on the left,

In his letter to the Ephesians,

- Paul spoke about putting on the armor of God,
- in Romans the armor of light

and now in Corinthians

- the armor of righteousness.

We are to put God's armor on!

Why? So that you may be able to stand against the wiles (tactics) of the devil.

One of my favorite verses in scripture is:

2 Cor 10:4

4 For the weapons of our warfare are not carnal (not of the fleshy nature) but mighty (Dunatos - inherent unequalled power to do anything) in God for pulling down (to demolish by force) strongholds,

It is “quick, and powerful, and sharper than any two-edged sword, piercing even to the dividing asunder of soul and spirit, and of the joints and marrow, and is a discerner of the thoughts and intents of the heart” (Heb. 4:12).

Next we come across some of the paradoxes I mentioned earlier.

8 by honor and dishonor, by evil report and good report; as deceivers, and yet true;

9 as unknown, and yet well known; as dying, and behold we live; as chastened, and yet not killed;

He’s quoting directly from the book of Psalms 118:18.

The Psalmist

- was alluding to the fact that
- God’s people had been blessed by the Lord,
- and the Lord was faithful to them.

Although God’s people had been disciplined by the Lord,

- He didn’t allow them to die.

10 as sorrowful, yet always rejoicing; as poor, yet making many rich; as having nothing, and yet possessing all things.

Paul’s sorrows may have been the result of him seeing people reject the gospel message.

It’s foolishness! But then there are the moments when we get to rejoice in God’s goodness!

He said in Phil 4:4 Rejoice in the Lord always. Again I will say, rejoice!

One time while in jail Paul and Silas were beaten, we’re told that they were praying and singing hymns to God, and the prisoners were listening to them. Acts 16:23-25. (Those are times of rejoicing!)

It’s that sort of thing Paul refers to in Corinthians when he says,

- “yet making many rich.”
- we are rich spiritually.
- He alluded to that in 1 Cor 3:21-23.

2 Cor 6:11-13

11 O Corinthians! We have spoken openly to you, our heart is wide open.

12 You are not restricted by us, but you are restricted by your own affections.

13 Now in return for the same (I speak as to children), you also be open.

This shows Paul's heart for the Corinthian church.

Phil 1:8

8 For God is my witness, how greatly I long for you all with the affection of Jesus Christ.

What was keeping the Corinthians from having the loving response which Paul called for in verse 13?

Probably the false apostles and pagan idolaters.

14 Do not be unequally yoked together with unbelievers. For what fellowship has righteousness with lawlessness? And what communion has light with darkness?

- Being unequally yoked would have been like tying two oxen together, one larger than the other, the larger being the stronger.

Some of the Corinthians were yoked with false teachers

- who were making their way into the church.

We can't walk with the Lord and with the world at the same time.

We can also take this verse and apply it to relationships today,

- For example: a couple considering marriage,
- one being a believer and the other a non-believer.

That is a recipe for disaster.

The two will have different values

- and different morals
- which ultimately lead to conflict.

1 cor 15 that "evil company corrupts good habits."

1 Tim 5:22 not to share in other people's sins; keep yourself pure.

If you want to remain pure in the Lord, Jesus said in:

Matt 11:29-30

29 Take My yoke upon you and learn from Me, for I am gentle and lowly in heart, and you will find rest for your souls. 30 For My yoke is easy and My burden is light."

There is no commonality with Christ and the world, vs 15:

15 And what accord has Christ with Belial? Or what part has a believer with an unbeliever?

The name Belial transliterated from Hebrew means

- “wickedness or worthless person.”

In the Greek it came to mean

- “a lawless person.”

It was a name used of Satan meaning worthless and lawless.

As Paul was reminding the church of his affection for them,

- Christ and Satan have nothing in common

Amos 3:3

3 Can two walk together, unless they are agreed?

Ps 1:1

1 Blessed is the man

Who walks not in the counsel of the ungodly,

Nor stands in the path of sinners,

Nor sits in the seat of the scornful;

This man is blessed if he doesn't do these things. But if he does do these things notice the progression:

First he walks, then he stands, then he sits. He is sitting comfortably in the seat of evil, the scornful.

Prov 4:14

14 Do not enter the path of the wicked,

And do not walk in the way of evil.

Prov 24:1

24 Do not be envious of evil men,

Nor desire to be with them;

16 And what agreement has the temple of God with idols? For you are the temple of the living God. As God has said:

"I will dwell in them

And walk among them.

I will be their God,

And they shall be My people."

17 Therefore

"Come out from among them

And be separate, says the Lord.  
Do not touch what is unclean,  
And I will receive you."

In the OT Num 33:51-56

- the Israelites to take possession
- of the promised land.
- they'd been wandering in the wilderness
- before they were allowed to enter the promise land
- God gave them 5 commands.

Drive out all of the enemies

- opposing them from entering the promise land.

All the opposition of God was to be rejected.

They were to live righteous lives

The Israelites were also to drive out all of the idols,

There is only one true God (Jehovah or Yahweh),

There is no life in idols

- therefore, God required they be destroyed!

All of the false worship sites were to be destroyed as well.

God issued a strong warning to the Israelites.

If they failed to drive out the enemies

- this would result in severe judgement.
- Then He would do to them
- what He planned on doing to the enemy.

This is why Paul said in verse 17

2 Cor 6:17

"Come out from among them  
And be separate, says the Lord.  
Do not touch what is unclean,  
And I will receive you."

This is the message for us today.

We are to be conformed to the very image of Christ.

However, we cannot take this to mean that

- we are so heavenly minded
- that we are no earthly good.

We are in the world, but we are not of the world.

Jesus was still a friend of the tax collectors and sinners Lk 7:34.

18 'I will be a Father to you,  
And you shall be My sons and daughters,  
Says the Lord Almighty."

John 1:12

12 But as many as received Him, to them He gave the right to become children of God, to those who believe in His name:

Rom 8:14

14 For as many as are led by the Spirit of God, these are sons of God.