

“Spiritual Stamina,” Part 3 - 2 Corinthians 6:1-10 – October 16th, 2016

- Today's teaching will be part three of a series I've titled, "Spiritual Stamina."
- Here in the beginning of chapter six, the Apostle Paul continues his thought concerning being an ambassador for Jesus Christ.
- In so doing, he shows us, how it is, and why it is, that he never burned out, or gave up, in spite of all the trials he went through.

1. He didn't receive God's grace in vain (Verses 1-2)

- v1 Paul tells them that they are co-workers together with God, and as such, he urges them not to receive God's grace in vain.
- v2 He goes on to say he heard them in his favor, and helped them in their salvation, then tells them that now is the time for both.
- What the Apostle Paul says here can at first read seem somewhat confusing as it relates to receiving the grace of God in vain.

- I suppose it would be helpful to first understand what Paul is not saying, so as to better understand what it is that Paul is saying.
- Paul is not saying Christians may not actually be saved because in receiving the grace of God, it was all in vain; null and void.
- What Paul is saying is that having received the grace of God a born again Christian can in some measure hinder God's grace.

As one commentator explained it, "Receiving God's grace in vain means that we've received the goodness and favor of God, yet we've hindered the work of grace in our life."

Paul actually spoke to this back in 1 Corinthians 15:10, where he says, "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."

- The reason Paul could say that God's grace toward him was not in vain was because God's grace propelled him to labor on.
- In other words, the grace of God was the fuel in Paul's tank that drove him onward to labor more abundantly than anyone else.
- It's for this reason that Paul urges them to make every effort to do the same lest they become barren and fruitless Christians.

Alan Redpath of this 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."

2. He lived his life above reproach (Verse 3)

- v3 Paul tells them that he has not put a stumbling block in anyone's path, so that his ministry would in no way be discredited.
- What Paul says here is interesting for a number of reasons not the least of which is there were those who tried to discredit him.
- However, Paul lived his life in a way that he didn't stumble anyone by exercising a liberty that he would be unjustly blamed for.

I like how one commentator said it, "Of course, Paul's ministry was blamed and discredited by the Corinthian Christians. What Paul means is that our ministry may not rightly be blamed. Paul could not do anything about false accusations except live in such a way that any fair-minded person would see such accusations as false."

3. He had great endurance (Verses 4-5)

- v4 Paul says instead of his ministry being discredited, it was commended by virtue of great endurance in troubles and distress.
- v5 He goes on to say the great endurance was in spite of beatings, imprisonments riots hard work sleepless nights and hunger.
- This begs the question of how? Here we're told "that" Paul had great endurance and much patience, but "how" did Paul do it?

4. He had the Holy Spirit and love (Verses 6-10)

- v6 Paul says he was able to endure in purity, understanding, patience and kindness in and by the Holy Spirit and in sincere love.
- v7-8 He says it was in truth, power, with weapons of righteousness and glory in spite of dishonor being regarded as imposters.
- v9-10 He says he's been beaten yet not killed, sorrowful yet rejoicing, poor yet rich, having nothing yet possessing everything.

- Simply put, Paul was able to handle unspeakable stress by the power of the Holy Spirit and the fruit of love from the Holy Spirit.
- One of the most valuable lessons that I'm learning in the ministry as a pastor is that I have to completely rely on the Holy Spirit.
- Absent this utter reliance upon the Holy Spirit, it's only a matter of time before the stress will take you down and burn you out.

- I'd like to close with by sharing with you something that has been a tremendous help to me over the years concerning burn out.
- It's written by Dr. Archibald Hart and he pinpoints the differences between burn out and stress, as it relates to the affect on us.
- Burnout is a defense characterized by disengagement, whereas stress is characterized by over-engagement
- In Burnout the emotions become blunted, whereas in stress the emotions become over-reactive
- In Burnout the emotional damage is primary, whereas in stress the physical damage is primary
- The exhaustion of burnout affects motivation and drive, whereas the exhaustion of stress affects physical energy
- Burnout produces demoralization, whereas stress produces disintegration
- Burnout is a loss of ideals and hope, whereas stress is a loss of fuel and energy
- Burnout produces a sense of helplessness and hopelessness, whereas stress produces a sense of urgency and hyperactivity
- Burnout produces paranoia, depersonalization and detachment; stress produces panic, phobic, and anxiety-type disorders
- Burnout may not kill you but quality of your life is diminished, stress may kill you prematurely without enough time to finish well