

“Spiritual Stamina,” Part 1 - 2 Corinthians 5:9-13 – October 2nd, 2016

- Today's teaching will be part one of a series I've titled, "Spiritual Stamina."
- If you're anything like me and I suspect that you are, you've really come to appreciate the indomitable spirit of the Apostle Paul.
- By indomitable I mean, that in spite of the unspeakable adversity in his life, he never burned out or gave up, he just kept going.

- The question becomes not so much "how," but "why" he was able to fight the good fight, finish the race, and keep the faith.

2 Timothy 4:7-8 (NKJV) — 7 I have fought the good fight, I have finished the race, I have kept the faith. 8 Finally, there is laid up for me the crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous Judge, will give to me on that Day, and not to me only but also to all who have loved His appearing.

- I would suggest that the answer as to why Paul never burned out, or gave up is because he lived his life in light of eternal life.
- I'll take it a step further and suggest not only did he live his life with his eyes fixed on the eternal he longed for the Lord's return.
- Paul had become so heavenly minded, that he was of such earthly good. As such he shows us his secret to spiritual stamina.

1. He lived to please God not man (Verse 9)

- v9 Paul tells them that in light of the new body awaiting us, we keep going by making it our goal to please God.
- One of the most valuable lessons I'm learning in my walk with the Lord is living your life to please man will eventually crush you.
- If the goal of my life is seeking to win the approval of man, it's only a matter of time before I'm crushed under the weight of it.

Galatians 1:10 (NKJV) — 10 For do I now persuade men, or God? Or do I seek to please men? For if I still pleased men, I would not be a bondservant of Christ.

John 12:42-43 (NKJV) — 42 Nevertheless even among the rulers many believed in Him, but because of the Pharisees they did not confess Him, lest they should be put out of the synagogue; 43 for they loved the praise of men more than the praise of God.

2. He kept his eyes on the prize (Verse 10)

- v10 Paul says we'll all appear before the judgment seat of Christ, so that each of us may receive what is due us for things done.
- What Paul is referring to here is the bema seat of Christ, where Christians receive their crowns and rewards for what they did.
- The Corinthians would have known exactly what Paul was talking about, such that, it was likened to the judges at the Olympics.

1 Corinthians 9:24-27 (NKJV) — 24 Do you not know that those who run in a race all run, but one receives the prize? Run in such a way that you may obtain it. 25 And everyone who competes for the prize is temperate in all things. Now they do it to obtain a perishable crown, but we for an imperishable crown. 26 Therefore I run thus: not with uncertainty. Thus I fight: not as one who beats the air. 27 But I discipline my body and bring it into subjection, lest, when I have preached to others, I myself should become disqualified.

3. He knew what it is to fear the Lord (Verse 11)

- v11 Paul says since they know what it is to fear the Lord, they try to persuade others hoping it is also plain to their conscience.
- In order to better understand what Paul is saying here, I think it would be helpful to first understand that which he is not saying.
- Paul isn't saying he fears the Lord would punish him if he doesn't remain faithful, rather, he feared he would grieve the Lord.

I like how one commentator put it; The fear of the Lord motivated Paul in ministry. This was not fear that God would hurt him, but rather that he would hurt God through his sin and stupidity. Having been caught up into the third heaven, Paul knew that one day we will all stand before the Lion of the Tribe of Judah and see Him in His majesty and love. Paul wanted to spare anyone from saying, "Why did I waste my time on that hobby, spend my money on that insignificant trinket, squander my energy so foolishly? Why did I take so lightly that which Jesus did for me on the Cross of Calvary?"

Proverbs 9:10 "The fear of the LORD is the beginning of wisdom, And the knowledge of the Holy One is understanding.

Proverbs 8:13 The fear of the LORD is to hate evil; Pride and arrogance and the evil way And the perverse mouth I hate.

Proverbs 1:7 The fear of the LORD is the beginning of knowledge, But fools despise wisdom and instruction.

4. He didn't take false accusations to heart (Verses 12-13)

- v12 Paul says they're not trying to commend themselves again, rather he wants them to take pride in them an answer the critics.
- v13 He goes on to say if they're out of their mind, as it appears some where accusing them of, it's for God, if not, it's for them.
- What Paul is saying is I'm not telling you the secret to my stamina to boast it's for you to answer those who criticize and accuse.

- If you were to ask me what I thought was one of the fastest ways for Satan to take us down, this would be at the top of the list.
- Sadly, the enemy is met with success in the life of a Christian, by using those with a critical and accusatory spirit of antagonism
- I've personally witnessed this dynamic destroy a family, and worse yet, a church family more times than I care to remember.

So as to not end on such a sour note, I'll close with a quote from D. Martin Lloyd Jones in his book *Spiritual Depression, Its Causes and Its Cure*. Speaking of the Savior, he writes, "How did Jesus do it? For the joy that was set before Him, He endured even the cross, despising the shame." That is how He did it. It was the joy that was set before Him, He knew about the crowning day that was coming, He saw the harvest that He was going to reap, and, seeing that, He was able not to see these other things but to go through them gloriously and triumphantly. And you and I have the privilege of being like Him.