

The Corinthian Manual for Ministry

II Corinthians 6: 3-10

An initial reading of this second letter to the church at Corinth reveals that it was a most difficult place for the apostle Paul to pastor and minister. He faced great adversity and opposition by some very influential people within the church. He was under constant attack by unfounded accusations. Things were difficult, but Paul refused to succumb to the pressure. He was determined to carry out the work he had been called to do at Corinth.

I am confident that Paul was aware that he wasn't the first to face such opposition and he would not be the last. The Bible is filled with those who surrendered to the call of God and suffered great persecution for the cause. I think of Jeremiah languishing in a pit; Daniel cast into a lion's den; John the Baptist suffering at the hand of Herod for preaching against sin. Paul would ultimately give his life for the gospel, along with ten of the original disciples, excluding John.

History records many others who faced adversity and harsh persecution for their faith. The world has never embraced the gospel or those who are committed to sharing the good news. Difficulty comes with the calling, but that does not excuse us from the work we have been placed in. We have an obligation to continue by God's grace and for His glory.

In the midst of such difficulty Paul reveals an outline for Christian service. These verses reveal the [particular aspects](#) of ministry. I want to consider Paul's exhortation as we think on: [The Corinthian Manual for Ministry](#).

I. The Priority of Ministry (3-4a) – Giving no offence in any thing, that the ministry be not blamed: [4] [But in all things approving ourselves as the ministers of God](#). Paul was well acquainted with the adversity. He had faced those who sought to destroy his ministry and mar his character. He knew that they sought any means necessary to defeat him and his work.

- Paul was determined to rise above the adversity and carry himself with integrity and confidence. He was committed to preventing any occasion for a substantiated accusation.
- We too need to realize that our lives are being watched and closely scrutinized by the world. They have heard the claims of others. They have encountered those who claimed Christ and yet lived as wicked and ungodly as the world. We are to live our lives and serve the Lord in such a way that we [give no offence in any thing, that the ministry of God be not blamed](#). The word offence has the idea of "*a stumbling block; to lead someone astray.*"
- In every area of life we are to present ourselves in a way that pleases, honors, and testifies to the goodness of our Lord. This is not a call that is limited to Sunday morning or Wednesday evening. It is a call to [approve ourselves in all things as the ministers of God](#). We are to represent the Lord in every area of life, wherever we are at all times.

I. The Priority of Ministry (3-4a)

II. The Pressures of Ministry (4b-5) – *in much patience, in afflictions, in necessities, in distresses, [5] In stripes, in imprisonments, in tumults, in labours, in watchings, in fastings*; If anyone understood the pressures of ministry, Paul did. He had endured much affliction and persecution for the cause of Christ.

▪ Here he charges the believer to face such difficulty with dignity and honor. The world is watching to see how we handle difficulties. We are never a better witness than when we maintain our commitment to the Lord in the midst of a trial or storm. Let's consider the pressures Paul mentioned.

- **Much Patience** – *steadfast endurance even in adversity.*
- **Afflictions** – *pressure, strain, or tension that comes from without and within.*
- **Necessities** – *inescapable hardships; the day to day sorrows and struggles of life.*
- **Distresses** – *calamities, tight places, or inescapable situations. Being backed into a corner with no means of escape.*
- **Stripes** – *scourging, beatings, lashings, or whipping. The whip was made of leather straps that had pieces of rough lead or sharp bone attached to their end. The Jews allowed 40 lashes with the whip. Paul was beaten with stripes 5 times.*
- **Imprisonments** – *Paul was imprisoned 7 times for preaching the gospel.*
- **Tumults** – *an uprising or attack from a fierce and angry mob.*
- **Labours** – *laboring to the point of exhaustion.*
- **Watchings** – *sleepless nights keeping watch. (We need to watch in prayer. How long has it been since we gave up sleep for the cause of Christ?)*
- **Fastings** – *depriving the body of food. This was not only intentional, but by becoming so consumed with one's work that time was not taken to eat.* ¹

▪ Much of what Paul speaks of in these verses is completely foreign to us. We live in a land where we are free to serve the Lord and worship Him. We have never faced much of what Paul did. We ought to thank the Lord that we have been spared such difficulty. However, we ought to be ashamed that we accomplish no more than we do for the Lord!

▪ Many today are seeking a reason to abandon the work of the Lord. We have all had our feelings hurt by someone's comments. We have all been ridiculed for our faith, but that is no reason to give up on ministry. We have suffered nothing compared to many who have gone before us.

Heb.12:3-4 – For consider him that endured such contradiction of sinners against himself, lest ye be wearied and faint in your minds. [4] Ye have not yet resisted unto blood, striving against sin. 2 Tim.3:12 – Yea, and all that will live godly in Christ Jesus shall suffer persecution. If our lives are never challenged or resisted by the world, then we are not doing much for the cause of Christ!

I. The Priority of Ministry (3-4a)

II. The Pressures of Ministry (4b-5)

III. The Power of Ministry (6-7) – As we have considered approving our-selves in ministry and enduring the pressures associated with it, you have probably wondered how that is possible. God does not give us a command without providing instruction to carry it out. Paul reveals this with the little word *by*: *By pureness, by knowledge, by longsuffering, by kindness, by the Holy Ghost, by love unfeigned, [7] By the word of truth, by the power of God, by the armour of righteousness on the right hand and on the left.* This is a sure way to endure in ministry, but it will require effort and commitment. Let's take a moment to consider the elements of that power.

- **Purity** – *innocence, cleanliness; free from the dirt, filth, and pollution of the world; free from immoral and unjust behavior and motive. It means to be spotless, holy, righteous, godly, and just.*
- **Knowledge** – *study and understanding of the Word of God, achieved through the commitment to study and meditation upon the Word.*
- **Longsuffering** – *patience, bearing and suffering a long time with people, especially when they were wrong, unjust, abusive, slanderous, and injurious.*
- **Kindness** – *goodness and benevolence of heart and behavior. It is being kind and good, gentle and sweet even when others are abusive and evil, severe and hurting, unappreciative and unthankful.*
- **By the Holy Ghost** – *in the presence, power, and gifts of the Spirit.*
- **Love Unfeigned** – *love that is not counterfeited or faked; love that is sincere, genuine, and pure; love that is unlimited, selfless, and sacrificial.*
- **By the Word of Truth** – *the preaching and teaching of the truth, that is, of the gospel, of the Word of God. Paul preached the truth of God's Word, not the thinking, philosophies, and ideas of men.*

- **By the Power of God** – *the power of God was essential in Paul's ministry. He was dealing with the eternal souls of men, engaged in a spiritual warfare. Without the power of God, he would have been able to do nothing of lasting value.*
- **By the Armour of Righteousness** – *the righteousness and justification of Christ; the power to live a life of righteousness; the acts of righteousness to which Christ had called him; being clothed in the spiritual armour of maturity and sanctification.* ²

▪ This may not be an exhaustive list of the elements necessary for the power of God in ministry, but these are essential. We will never achieve power and victory if we aren't committed to securing these in our lives!

I. The Priority of Ministry (3-4a)

II. The Pressures of Ministry (4b-5)

III. The Power of Ministry (6-7)

IV. The Passion for Ministry (8-10) – *By honour and dishonour, 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 not killed; [10] As sorrowful, yet always rejoicing; as poor, yet making many rich; as having nothing, and yet possessing all things.* Here Paul reveals his passion for ministry through several paradoxes, apparent contradictions that in fact reveal great truth. This confirms:

A. The Reality – Paul speaks of several opposites in the verses. He reveals that life is filled with ups and downs. We are faced with acceptance as well as rejection. At times we are embraced and at others we are ridiculed or mocked. There are times of rejoicing and times of sorrow. We all face the changes that life brings, but even in the midst of these changes we are still upheld by the hand of the Lord. We are never forsaken by Him.

B. The Responsibility – As we face the changes and difficulties of life, we must desire to make the most of those opportunities as well. Paul was determined to use every opportunity as a chance to share the gospel. When he was honored and when he was dishonored, when in sorrow or rejoicing, it made no difference, Paul desired to share the love of Christ!

- If we are waiting on the perfect opportunity to be used of the Lord, we likely won't be used much. If we wait until everything is just as we desire, we likely won't share our faith or witness often. We need to search every circumstance for an opportunity to be a witness and minister for Christ.

C. The Reward (10b) – [as having nothing, and yet possessing all things](#). If anyone had the chance to be negative and give up, Paul did. He faced as much adversity as any servant of the Lord. Paul didn't look at things from the typical perspective. He may have had nothing as far as this world was concerned, he may have been mistreated and rejected by his own brethren, but Paul realized that even in loss he possessed all things in Christ.

- We likely won't receive much reward from this world or even in this life, but the Lord has prepared a blessing beyond our comprehension in the life to come. Even in this life we may face adversity, but we are rich in the goodness and grace of our Lord.

I trust that you have been enlightened concerning the ministry of our Lord. I have been called to preach the gospel, but preachers are not the only ones with a work to do. All of God's children are expected and obligated to minister to those who are lost or needy. We must learn to overcome the pressures through the power of God and develop a passion for ministry. If there is a need in your life, why not seek the Lord today?

¹ Adapted from: Preacher's Outline and Sermon Bible - Commentary - 1 & 2 Corinthians.

² Ibid