

2 Corinthians 6:1-10

Pastor John Miller

I. Introduction

- A. There's this new chain letter going around among churches. No cost is involved. You send a copy of the letter to six other churches that are tired of their ministers. Then you bundle up your pastor and send him to the church at the bottom of the list. In one week you will receive 16,436 ministers, one of whom should be a dandy! But beware, one church broke the chain and got their old minister back. Paul Lee Tan, Encyclopedia of 7,700 Illustrations
- B. Note Paul's defense of his ministry! Why?
- C. The Church did not really appreciate Paul!
- D. Ministry or service to God involves hardships
 - 1. Illustration: My own ministry
 - 2. *A.W. Tozer: It is doubtful God can use any man greatly until He has hurt him deeply
- E. So, in our text today, Paul is making an appeal for appreciation in two ways:
 - 1. 1st - He pleads with them to receive his ministry (vv. 1-2)
 - 2. 2nd - He puts before them the hardships he faced in the performance of his ministry (vv. 3-10).

II. Paul's plea to receive his ministry (vv. 1-2)

- A. Before giving a list of hardships which had characterized his ministry, Paul exhorted the Corinthian Christians to receive his ministry.
- B. His admonition is based on the truth explained in verses 5:20-21 (to God), verses 6:11-13, and verse 7:2 (to himself)
- C. (v. 2) - Illustration: A pastor was dealing with a young lady who was arguing that she had plenty of time to decide for Jesus Christ. He handed her a piece of paper and said, "Would you sign a statement that you would be willing to postpone salvation for a year?" No, she would not do that. "Six months?" No again. "One month?" She hesitated, but said no. Then she began to see the folly of her argument because she had assurance of opportunity only for today; and she trusted Christ without delay.

III. Paul's hardships in performing his ministry (vv. 3-10)

- A. Picture "The Perfect Minister"
 - 1. Paul's ministry before God (vv. 3-4a)
 - a) In giving no offense (v. 3)
 - 1) To Paul, "the ministry" was greater than himself
 - 2) Illustration: It's impossible for any minister to live without hurting someone's feelings.... Who Changed? There was a preacher whom I used to like. I thought that he was great. His sermons were wonderful – as long as I liked him. His speech was passing fair – as long as I liked him. He lived a clean life - as long as I liked him. He was a hard worker - as long as I liked him. He was the man for the job - as long as I liked him. In fact, I was strong for him – as long as I liked him. But he offended me one day. Whether he knew

it or not, I do not know. Since that day, he has ceased to be a good preacher. His sermons are not so wonderful – since he offended me. His speech is of no account – since he offended me. His faults are more prominent – since he offended me. He is not a hard worker – since he offended me. He’s not the man for the job – since he offended me. In fact, I am trying to turn everybody against him and get rid of him – since he offended me. It’s really a shame he’s changed so much. Glen Wheeler, 1010 Illustrations, Poems, and Quotes

b) Approving himself (v. 4a)

B. Paul’s hardships (vv. 4-5)

1. “Patience” (v. 4) – It’s “endurance” (“in much”)
 - a) It’s not quitting when things get tough
 - 1) Do you give up easily?
2. “Afflictions” (v. 4) – It’s trials under pressure
 - a) It’s being pressed down by circumstances
 - 1) The minister is not above affliction
3. “Necessities” (v. 4) – Financial and physical hardships that result from everyday life
 - a) So, under pressure
4. “Distresses” (v. 4) – Literally, no room to turn around (bringing frustration & depression)
 - a) What to do?
 - 1) Psalm 118:5 – “I called upon the Lord in distress: the Lord answered me, and set me in a large place.”
 - b) “The School of Hard Knocks”
5. “Stripes” or “Beatings” (v. 5)
 - a) Illustration: Acts 16:23 – “Laid many stripes upon them.”
6. “Imprisonments” (v. 5)
 - a) Paul was imprisoned illegally
7. “Tumults” or “Riots” (v. 5)
 - a) Illustration: “Revivals” or “Riots”
8. “Labors” (v. 5) - Fatigue created by strenuous effort (in ministry)
 - a) The making of a minister!
9. “Watchings” (v. 5) – Times of sleeplessness
 - a) To bed late and up early; or he could not sleep because of the pain in his body
10. “Fasting” or “Hunger” (v. 5)
 - a) It’s not a religious fast; it’s going without food in order to minister
 - b) Illustration: Paul by today’s standards: Gentlemen, understanding your pulpit is vacant, I should like to apply for the position. I have many qualifications: I’ve been a preacher with much success and also had some success as a writer. Some say I’m a good organizer. I’ve been a leader most places I’ve been. I’m over 50 years of age. I have never preached in one place for more than three years. In some places I have left town after my work has caused riots and disturbances. I must admit I have been in jail three or four times, but not because of any real wrongdoing. My health is not good, though I still get a great deal done. The churches I have preached in have been small, though located in several large cities. I’ve not got along well with religious leaders in towns where I have preached.

In fact, some have threatened me and even attacked me physically. I am not too good at keeping records. I have been known to forget whom I have baptized. However, if you can use me, I shall do my best for you. Paul Lee Tan, Encyclopedia of 7,700 Illustrations

C. Paul's Spiritual Response (vv. 6-7)

1. "Purenness" (v. 6)
 - a) Are you?
2. "Knowledge" (v. 6)
 - a) Of God's word & spiritual wisdom
3. "Longsuffering" (v. 6) - With people
 - a) To put anger far away
4. "Kindness" (v. 6) – it's grace in action
 - a) How? By the Holy Spirit
 - 1) So us too! It's His fruit
5. "Love that is sincere" (v. 6)
6. "The Word of Truth" (v. 7)
 - a) Love and the Word of God
7. "The Power of God" (v. 7)
8. "The Armor of Righteousness" (v. 7)
 - a) Right hand (sword), and Left hand (shield)
 - 1) Trials; for our good

D. The paradox of Paul's ministry (vv. 8-10)

1. "Honor and dishonor" (v. 8)
2. "Evil report and good report" (v. 8)
3. "Deceivers and yet true" (v. 8)
4. "Unknown" and yet "well known" (v. 9)
 - a) Illustration: A pastor dies versus a movie star
5. "Dying" and behold we "live" (v. 9)
 - a) To self / Unto God
6. "Chastened" and not "killed" (v. 9)
7. "Sorrowful" yet "always rejoicing" (v. 10)
 - a) Looking at the world / Jesus is in control; He will reign!
8. "Poor" yet "making many rich" (v. 10)
 - a) Illustration: Acts 3 – "Silver and gold have I none"
9. "Having nothing" and yet "possessing all things" (v. 10)
 - a) Prov. 13:7 – "There is a man that maketh himself rich, yet hath nothing; there is that maketh himself poor, yet hath great riches."
 - b) What is a Pastor? If the pastor is young, they say he lacks experience. If his hair is gray, he's getting too old for the young people. If he has five children, he has too many. If he has no children, he's setting a bad example. If he preaches from his notes, he has canned sermons and he's dry. And if his messages are extemporaneous, he isn't deep. If he's attentive to the poor people of the church, they claim he's playing to the grandstand. If he pays attention to the wealthy, he's trying to be an aristocrat. If he uses too many illustrations, he neglects the text. If he doesn't use enough stories, he isn't clear. If he condemns wrong, he's cranky. If he doesn't preach against sin, he's a compromiser. If he preaches the truth, he's offensive. If he doesn't preach the truth, he's a hypocrite. If he fails to please everybody, he's hurting the church and ought to leave. If he does please everybody, he has no convictions. If he

drives an old car, he shames his congregation. If he drives a new car, he's setting his affection on earthly things. If he preaches all the time, then the people get tired of hearing one man. If he invites guest preachers, he's shirking his responsibility. If he receives a large salary, he's a mercenary. If he receives a small salary, well, they say he isn't worth much anyway.
Richard DeHaan, Men Sent from God

c) THE OLD DITCH DIGGER

Once there was a rich lady. This rich lady has everything she could wish for. One day she called her chauffeur and said, "I want you to take me for a ride, we are going over in the Slum district, and see how the poor old outcasts are doing." The chauffeur pulled out and was driving along an old rough, bumpy street, but the rich lady had such a fine limousine she hardly knew there was a rough place. All at once they drove by a place where they saw an old, rugged dirty-faced man shoveling away in a muddy ditch. He was singing a song, and it struck the rich lady with such force she called her chauffeur to stop the car; then the rich lady could hear very plainly the words to the beautiful song the old ditch digger was singing.

My father is rich in houses and lands, He holdeth the wealth of the world in his hands. The rubies and diamonds, the silver and gold of the earth all are His, He has riches untold.

CHORUS: I'm a child of a king, the child of a king. With Jesus my Savior, I'm a child of a King.

By this time she had gotten out of her car and was standing near the old ditch digger. Then she said, "What? You a child of a King. Huh, don't make me laugh, you're not a child of a King. You don't look like a King's son to me. Why, look at those old, ragged trousers and old worn-out boots, and those rough chapped hands of yours, you can't be a child of a king and dress the way you are." But the old ditch digger kept on singing.

My Father's own Son, the Savior of men, once wandered o'er earth as the poorest of them, But now He is reigning forever on high, and will give me a home in the sweet by and by.

The rich lady looked across the ditch and there stood an old rough run-down, un-painted shack where the poor old ditch digger and his family had to live. No screen doors, cardboard in over half of the windows as the glasses were broken out. She said, "Listen man, you aren't a child of a king, look at that old shack you live in. If you were a child of a king you would attend the big balls and wine parties we have at the King's palace. You couldn't be a king's son. Don't fool yourself. You're just an old ditch digger." But the old ditch digger kept on singing.

A tent or a cottage, oh, why should I care, They're building a place for me over there, Though exiled from home, yet, still I can sing, Oh, glory to God, I'm a child of a king.

The rich old lady got in the car and the chauffeur drove away. She said, "I don't see how anyone could claim so much and yet have so little." The old ditch digger leaned on his shovel and watched her ride away. He said, "I don't see how anyone can claim so much and yet have nothing."

– Arranged by Al Ragsdale