

# Paul the Apostle - a Vibrant Life (Part 2)

by Denny Kenaston

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*Paul's ministry was motivated by God's approval, the terror of the Lord, love, and the possibility of change, and was characterized by the miracle working power of the Spirit of God.*

**Duration:** 1:02:51

**Scripture:** 2 Corinthians 3:8-9, 2 Corinthians 6:4-5, 2 Corinthians 6:17

**Topics:** "Paul The Apostle"

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## Description

In this sermon, the speaker focuses on the spiritual nature of the Apostle Paul's ministry. He emphasizes that studying Paul's life is essentially studying the life of Jesus, as Paul's testimony reflects his deep connection to Christ. The speaker highlights four sanctified motivations that drove Paul's ministry, including his desire for God's approval and his endurance through hardships. The sermon draws from 2 Corinthians chapter five and Galatians chapter two to provide biblical support for Paul's motivations.

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## Transcript

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These messages are offered to all without charge by the freewill offerings of God's people. A special thank you to all who support this ministry. This morning we come again in the name of your precious Son, Jesus Christ.

We want to labor here this morning, Father. We want to labor from that place of rest that is in Christ Jesus. Thank you for it, Lord.

You already bought it. You've already paid for it. And we receive that here this morning.

We bring our hearts to You, Father. Oh God, I trust open, clean hearts. Lord, would You write upon our hearts this morning.

Would You do that, Father? Fill us with the Holy Ghost, Lord. We can't do it. We can't.

We trust You. Thank You. In Jesus' name.

You may be seated. I tried to search for different titles for these messages, but with 15 points on the ministry of the Apostle Paul, it was a little hard to come up with titles. So, the title is simply, The Apostle Paul, A Vibrant Life, Part 2. I don't know any other way to do it.

I looked at my points and tried to pull them together and put them in a category so that I could give a title to it, but I couldn't do it. So, if some of you want to help me, God bless you. You do it.

I was thinking about the message yesterday, and in a sense, as I pondered the things we said yesterday, we are not studying the life of the Apostle Paul. We are, in actuality, studying the life of Jesus. Paul gives a staggering testimony of his life in the Scripture, which we all can probably quote by memory, in Galatians 2, verse 20.

He said, giving his testimony, not just giving a theology, not just quoting a verse, but giving his testimony, which was the experience of his life. He said these words, I, Paul, am crucified with Christ. Nevertheless, I, Paul, live.

Yet, not I, but Christ liveth in me. And the life I now live in the flesh, I live by the faith of the Son of God, who loved me and gave Himself for me. That was Paul's testimony.

I don't believe that he was a perfect man, and he never had any needs in his life, but it's very clear, as we follow this man's life, that he was a Christ-like man. He was a Christ-like man because Christ liveth in me. That was his testimony.

So, in a sense, we are studying the life of Christ, and how Christ lived His life out through a human vessel like you and me. Amen? I am crucified with Christ. Nevertheless, I live.

Yet, it's not I, but Christ liveth in me. You want a sanctification? Go for it, brother. Christ liveth in me.

Paul said. Also, this is just overflow from yesterday, so please bear with me. I was also meditating this morning on the simplicity of Paul's ministry again, and I came upon another example of this simple ministry and message in 2 Corinthians 6, verse 17.

If you want to just look there real quickly, and then we'll go on to the next point. But in 2 Corinthians 6, verse 17, Paul is addressing the issue of sanctification in the lives of the Corinthian believers. And he is pleading with them and tells them in verse 17, Wherefore, come out from among them, and be ye separate, saith the Lord.

He's pleading with the Corinthians that they would come out from among that which is not of God, that which is from the other camp, that which is from the devil's camp, that which is from the kingdom of darkness. And look at the way that he motivates these Corinthians to come out from among them and be ye separate. Very simple.

He tells them, And I will receive you, and I will be a father unto you, and ye shall be my sons and daughters, saith the Lord Almighty. Real simple theology again. Amen? Real simple.

Turn away from that which is out there. Why? God, the God of the universe, wants to be your Father. He wants to be intimately involved with you.

He wants to walk with you. He wants to talk with you. He wants to direct your steps every day.

Leave that world out there. There's something better than that. It's God Almighty living inside of your heart, moving in you, breathing in you, walking in you, living out His life in you.

Leave that world behind, Paul says. And then he finishes with these words in chapter 7, verse 1, Having therefore these promises, the promise that God wants to be your sweet and intimate and close Father, having therefore these promises, dearly beloved, let us cleanse ourselves, that's man's heart again, let us cleanse ourselves from all filthiness of the flesh and spirit, perfecting holiness in the fear of God, or bring holiness to maturity in our lives. Why? Because God wants to be my Father.

And I want God to be my Father. Isn't that beautiful? So simple. So beautiful.

Alright, let's move on to our fourth of fifteen points. Let's look at the motivation of Paul's ministry. And I get to do something here that maybe a lot of you have not been able to do yet.

I get to preach my son's outline this morning. He's sitting here so he can listen to his sermon. But a couple of years ago, he preached on the motivation of Paul's ministry in 2 Corinthians 5. And I was sitting there listening and I thought, you know, that'll preach.

And I put the little notes down on my Bible. And then when I came into this 2 Corinthians to prepare and to teach on the ministry of the Apostle Paul, I said, hey, there it is. I'm going to preach it.

So, Daniel, I'm giving credit where credit is due. The motivation of Paul's ministry. 2 Corinthians 5, verse 9. We look at this man's life and we gaze in wonder and we wonder what is driving him.

What makes him endure such hardships? What makes him rise above dozens of setbacks? And he just keeps right on going. I mean, remember the time when they stoned him there. And they left him for dead outside the city.

There he is lying underneath a big pile of stones and maybe even his brethren thought he was dead. I think the others left him for dead. I mean, they usually keep throwing the stones until the fellow's dead.

And they must have thought he was dead. But all of a sudden, in the midst of the tragedy of the whole thing, those stones started moving again. And up out of the rubble of those stones came a bruised and a beaten man.

Went in there back into the city, washed the blood off of his wounds and headed for the next city. Praise God! What a life! What motivated a man like this? What makes this man tick? May I give the simple answer first? The most profound simplicity? Christ! Let's look at the word motivation. There's a word in this word motivation which is rather searching, and it's the word motive.

We heard last night about God trying our reins. Ten years of grueling preparation in the Apostle Paul's life, but God was trying his reins. And this trying brought forth four sanctified motivations in the Apostle Paul's life.

Let's look at them. First of all, verse 9 and 10, he labored for God's approval. Look at these words.

Wherefore we labor, that whether present or absent, we may be accepted of Him. For we must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ, that everyone may receive the things done in his body according to that he hath done, whether it be good or bad. He labored for God's approval.

And I like to say it this way, this man had such a beautiful, intimate relationship with God, he walked close with God, that he labored that he might be approved of God in the present tense experience of his life. To say it in short, the longing of his heart was to please his Father. He was like the Lord Jesus, his elder brother in this.

He wanted to please his Father. And he labored for that approval. And that approval is reality, brothers.

That's not just something that you find written in the Bible somewhere that God is happy with what you're doing because the Word of God says so. But I believe he got God's sweet presence and approval upon his life. And he labored for that approval.

That he might be accepted of God, whether it be here or whether it be over there. Wherefore we labor, that whether present or absent, we may be accepted of Him. Now this is a two-fold approval, not a one-fold.

Approval now and approval in eternity. Paul saw the judgment seat of Christ. Paul knew that there is a day coming when we will stand before the judgment seat of Christ.

Yes, everyone in the world, everyone out there in the world, they shall also stand before God. But dear brethren, Paul knew that he also would stand before God someday. He would stand before the judgment seat of Jesus Christ and he would be judged for what he did, whether it was good or bad, just like anyone else.

Paul knew that. And he labored that he might be accepted in that day. Paul knew this has to do with motives.

He knew how I will be judged in that day has something to do with motives. It's not just what I do, but it is how I do it and why I do it. This was the motivation of his ministry.

Someday I am going to stand and look into the face of Jesus Christ and give an account for what I did when I was on this earth. Dear brethren, so will we. But I thank God this morning that we don't have to wait until that judgment day.

We can also join in with the Apostle Paul with such a sweet and intimate relationship with God that God can put His hand upon our head like a father does his son at times and say, I am pleased, my son. I am pleased with what you did. I am pleased with what you said and how you said it.

You have represented me rightly. Oh, what sweet blessings that is! Paul labored for that. What will it be in judgment day? Gold, silver, precious stones, or wood, hay, and stubble? Number two, motivations for Paul's ministry.

He was motivated because of the terror of the Lord. Paul says in verse 11a, he says this, knowing therefore the terror of the Lord, we persuade men. This motivated him.

And Paul is saying that in an experiential way. He didn't say here, knowing that God will be terrible in that day. No, he said knowing the terror of the Lord.

Paul believed in hell. Paul believed in hell. Do you believe in hell? Do you? Do we? Oh, I know.

We've all got our theology rights. That's not a problem in this room. But do you believe in hell? Do you, deep in your soul, know the terror of the Lord? Paul said, I know the terror of the Lord.

Therefore, I persuade men. This was a motivation in his ministry. A wise preacher once said to me many, many years ago, we only truly believe that which moves us to action.

We only truly believe that which moves us to action. Do we believe in hell? Paul did. And it motivated him.

It motivated him to become a persuader of men. And if you study that word persuade there, it's a strong word. It's an active word.

It's not just share a little testimony here or there as you go through life. No, it's a stronger word than that. It's a word that has the connotation of going right to somebody and engaging them and even debating with them and pleading with them.

Why? Because I believe in hell. Because I believe in hell. The third motivation in Paul's ministry, found in verses 13 and 14, he was motivated by love.

Look at these words. And I like verse 13 also. I can unite with the word in verse 13.

For whether we be beside ourselves, it is to God. Or whether we be sober, it is for your cause. For the love of Christ constraineth us, because we thus judge, that if one died for all, then we're all dead.

If one died for all, and we know that he did, then all are dead. And now, not out of knowing the terror of the Lord, not out of fear of judgment for man, but just out of the fact that all are dead, he's motivated by love. This was a motivation in his ministry.

And I want us to notice here, this is not Paul's love. It's the love of Christ that constraineth him. Your love, my love, you know, it can come and go, and sometimes it's there, and sometimes it's not there.

But this is not Paul's love. This is the love of Christ that is working in this man's life. And you know, some years ago, I studied that word, constraineth.

And it means simply this. The love of Christ drags me wherever it wants me to go. It drags me around.

Paul was a slave. His body was a slave. And he found himself being drugged into all kinds of situations because the love of Christ was in him, constraining him.

This motivated him. Tremendously motivated him. Maybe that's what it was that day when he shook those stones off of his wounded body and got up again and kept on going.

The next town. The next town. We've got to keep going.

The next town. Not by any fleshly determination in his own mind, but by the grace of God working in his heart, he said. The next town.

And lastly, the fourth motivation. We find in verse 15 and 17, because of the possibility of change. Verse 15.

He says, And that He died for all, that they which live should not henceforth live unto themselves, but unto Him which died for them and rose again. What is Paul saying here? He's simply explaining why Jesus came and died. And he's explaining it as an understanding in his own heart.

And brethren, I think we need to grasp some of the deeper reasons why Jesus Christ went to the cross. We have been so infected with evangelical theology in this our day, that we actually, some of us, think that Jesus died just so we could go to heaven. That's not true.

Yes, it's true. But it's not all true. It's not the only reason why He died.

He died because He looked down and He saw a self-centered humanity away from God, separated from God, going His own way, living His own self-centered life. And He went to the cross that they which have been living unto themselves should henceforth live unto Him. That's what Jesus came and died for.

And this was a motivation in the heart of the Apostle Paul. He realized, oh, when this powerful Gospel is preached in these heathen cities like Corinth, and these heathen get born again, that this Gospel takes them and turns them into a God-centered man instead of a self-centered man. And that was a tremendous motivation to him.

Yes. Therefore, if any man be in Christ, he is a new creature. Old things are passed away.

Behold, all things are become new. Now that is a motivation for ministry. Amen? We've got a Gospel that transforms from the inside to the outside, from the beginning of the life to the end of the life.

And bless God, when it's all said and done, we get a new glorified body and a home in Heaven where we can be with God for all of eternity. And praise God, yes, I am looking forward to going to Heaven. That isn't the only reason why God saved me.

He's got something for me to do down here. And it's not a self-centered life anymore. It's a God-centered life and a life that gives and lives for others.

This was a motivation in Paul's life. This is what motivated him to minister. He saw lives change.

Lives that did not glorify God now glorify God. Lives that did live for themselves in all their own self-centeredness now live for God and serve the living God. And man, that put fuel in his fire and he went for all he could go for to see that happen in another soul, in another soul, in another soul.

And I'll stop right there and we'll go on to the ministry of reconciliation another day. If any man, brethren, be in Christ, he is a new creature. Old things are passed away.

Behold, all things are become new. Amen? I mean, brethren, it's not just tacking a little Jesus onto a life that we already have. No, this salvation is a transformation salvation.

And that is exactly what the Apostle Paul believed and that's what motivated him. And I do believe if we'll get a glimpse of the power of this transformation salvation, we will also be motivated to go and tell. Oh, how my heart was touched as Brother Mose was sharing today and talking about the imputed righteousness and how things don't all change overnight and my mind went back to those first couple of months of my Christian life when I still had hair hanging down to here.

But God had saved my soul. And the changes just kept coming and coming and coming and they're still coming! God still takes me to the woodshed every now and then and cleans me up. This is a motivation for ministry.

Amen? Oh, brethren, let's get a glimpse of it deep in our own heart and realize what God can do through Christ Jesus our Lord. First of all, for our own lives and then for the lives of a world of people around us and we all have a different world around us. Alright, let's move on to the next one.

Point number five. The spiritual nature of Paul's ministry. And this point should have about five sermons on it and we're going to do it in 20 minutes.

And we're going to do it in 20 minutes. I didn't write any notes, so we'll be okay. The spiritual nature of Paul's ministry if you'll turn back to 2 Corinthians 3. Chapter 3. And we'll start reading in verse 2. Paul, writing to the Corinthians, makes some staggering statements here.

And I know we get pretty tough on the Corinthian church and we complain about all the carnality that was there and all that kind of stuff. And I know that those things were there. Paul wrote 1 Corinthians because there were some needs there in that church.

But if I could just put a plug in for the Corinthians this morning. Did you read 2 Corinthians 7 lately and see the kind of repentance that those converted heathens wrought in their hearts just when Paul wrote them a letter and gave them a scolding? This first verse here is a staggering statement and testimony of the power of the Gospel. Corinth was like Sodom, filled with all kinds of evil and licentiousness.

And from that, to take a people from that to be able to say that they are an epistle of Christ, that is a work of a miracle working God. And maybe you can't grasp that, but if you could just go over on the other side of the ocean once and see a people who once danced around an idol now bowing down to the Lord Jesus Christ and see how God has changed them. And oh no, they don't look like me yet and they don't talk like me yet and they don't act like me yet, but they love Jesus with all their heart.

Paul was writing to this group as he penned these words. He said, Ye are our epistle, written in our hearts, known and read of all men. What a tender word he wrote to them.

For as much as ye are manifestly declared to be the epistle of Christ, your life is manifesting and declaring Christ. That's what he said. Now, that's a miracle.

Well, we'll see how it happens as we read on here. Ministered by us. Written not with ink, but with the Spirit of the living God.

Not on tables of stone, but in the fleshly tables of the heart. We're looking at the spiritual nature of Paul's ministry. Paul understood the miracle working power of the Spirit of God working in the life of a believer.

He understood that mysterious things take place by the Spirit of the living God. And the Spirit of God writes on the fleshly tables of the hearts of men the Word of God, the will of God, the heart of God. And as that is written on the fleshly tables of the heart, that heart changes.

Paul understood that. Paul knew how those men became living epistles. He knew.

He didn't sit them down and say, okay, fellas, I want you to get up every morning now. I want you to do this. I want you to do this.

And I want you to do this. You got it? Everything will be okay. That's not how he worked with them.

He preached Christ Jesus and Him crucified in the midst of those people. He preached the Word of God to those people. And he preached the Word of God in the power of the Spirit of God.

And change took place. Do you see that? Paul understood what spiritual ministry was. He understood these verses over here in Ezekiel 36.

And I'm sure that Brother Moses will probably read these verses, but Paul understood these verses in Ezekiel 36 where God was prophesying, promising, looking ahead into the future and giving a revelation of the reality of the new covenant, the reality of salvation that was coming to mankind. Paul understood what God meant when he said through the prophet Ezekiel in 36 and 25, as God said, then will I sprinkle clean water upon you and ye shall be clean. You shall be clean from all your filthiness.

You shall be clean from all your idols. I will cleanse you, he said. A new heart also will I give you.

Ah, that's good news. A new heart also will I give you. And a new spirit will I put within you.

And I will take away the stony heart out of your flesh. And I, God, will give you an heart of flesh. And I will put My Spirit within you and cause you to walk in My statutes and ye shall keep My judgments and do them.

Paul understood also what Jeremiah said. Also prophesying of this day that we now live in when God said through Jeremiah, I will write My laws upon your heart and cause you to walk in My ways. Paul understood that the way that a person is changed is by the Spirit of the living God.

It is by the Spirit of the living God that we are saved. And it is by the Spirit of the living God that we are sanctified. Yes, we have things we need to do.

Yes, we have responses. Yes, our hearts need to say amen. Yes, sometimes we need to hit the altar and humble ourselves.

But when it's all said and done, we'll all turn around and look back and say, Grace! Grace! Grace! It was grace! And I know that Brother Moses believes that. And he'll say it tomorrow. The spiritual nature of Paul's ministry.

It was by the Spirit of God that these people were changed. Written. Ministered by us.

Written, not with ink, but by the Spirit of the living God. Did you get that? And I like what he says in verse 5. And he's so right. Not that we are sufficient of ourselves.

This is not something that any man can do. I mean, it takes ministry out of the realm of the flesh completely. Not that we are sufficient of ourselves to think anything as of ourselves, but our sufficiency is of God.

Who also hath made us able ministers of the New Testament. Not of the letter, but of the Spirit. For the letter killeth, but the Spirit giveth life.

Paul saw himself as a minister of the Spirit. He ministered the Spirit of God to the people. He understood the spiritual nature of ministry.

These things take place in the deep recesses of the heart of man by the Spirit of God when the Word of God is quickened by the Spirit of God and written upon the fleshly tables of man's heart. You say, well, Brother Denny, you're over my head this morning. Yeah, well, I'm over my own head too.

But this is the ministry of the Apostle Paul. We're not going to read all these verses, but I want you to consider just a couple of them. Verse 8, Paul says, How shall not the ministration of the Spirit be rather glorious? So there he speaks about spiritual ministry again.

And he calls it the ministration or the administration of the Spirit. And in verse 9, he goes on and calls it the ministration of righteousness. And by the way, those are synonymous.

The ministration of the Spirit and the ministration of righteousness are the same thing. It is God, by His Spirit, writing His righteousness on the fleshly tables of the hearts of men. And then those men just are not the same anymore.

Oh, what a blessed opportunity we have this week, brethren, to sit here and let God write all over our hearts. And I trust that He is writing all over our hearts. Paul was seeing the reality of Ezekiel 36.

And he knew. I mean, how else could you go to a place like Corinth with any faith and confidence at all except to know that God has promised that He can take a man who is living in idolatry, who is living in filth, back to Ezekiel 36, who is living in all kinds of debauchery, take that person, clean their heart, wash the idolatry right out of their heart, take that filthy heart right out of them, put a new one in there, put the Holy Spirit in that heart, and then cause them to walk in holy ways. That's what motivated him.

He saw this is something that the Spirit of God can do. Sometimes, I'm not sure if we believe that God can still do that anymore. But I'm telling you, He can.

And He can take an old, drunken, drug-addict hippie and change that man so much that you would never know that's ever what he was. God can do that. Now, no man can do that.

And no religion can do that. And no denomination can do that. And no new system can do that.

But God can do that. And He will do that if we believe that He will. And Paul believed that he would do it.

And therefore, he went forth to Corinth and just stood up there and preached the simple Gospel of Jesus Christ. And those wicked people started coming to Christ. The spiritual nature of His ministry.

Look at v. 17. We ought to read v. 16 too. Ah, we better read v. 15 too.

Praise God. The Word of God is precious, isn't it? But Paul says these words. He says, But even unto this day, when Moses is read, the veil is upon their hearts.

And there's a lot of us in this room that can relate to that verse right there. Who sat in church for many, many years and saw not the Lord Jesus Christ. Though the Bible was being read, it was like a veil was over the eyes of your heart.

Amen? But then he goes on in v. 16 and says, Nevertheless, when it... that's pointing back to the heart. When it, the heart, shall turn to the Lord, the veil shall be taken away. Hallelujah.

And all of a sudden you see it's Christ. You see it. And many of you were so excited the first time you saw Him.

And you realized, it's not all this. It's Him. It's not all these things that I think I have to do.

It is finished. Oh, the glory of that revelation. The veil was taken out of the way.

Well, brethren, it's still the same today. When it, your heart, is turned to the Lord and it stays there, the veil is still taken out of the way. This is called spiritual ministry, brethren.

And now, where we want to go. V. 17 Now the Lord is that Spirit. And where the Spirit of the Lord is, there is liberty.

That is the power to live a holy, Christ-like life. Where the Spirit of the Lord is, there is power to live a holy, Christ-like life. It is a spiritual ministry.

And then He goes on to say, but we all with open face, beholding as in a glass the glory of the Lord, are changed into the same image from glory to glory, even as by the Spirit of the Lord. Now Paul is talking, I like to say it this way, Paul is talking here about the positive side of sanctification. There is a negative side.

Sometimes God needs to take us to the woodshed and show us a need in our life and we have to face that need and we have to get on our face and deal with it and repent of it and wrestle our way through it if we need to and leave it behind. But you know, you don't always have to go to the woodshed, brother. You can come to God with a heart that is turned to the Lord.

You can come to God with an open heart. You can come to God with an open face, with a clear heart, with a heart that has heaven open over it. You can come to God that way.

And God will show you what He is like beholding the glory of the Lord. And as you behold the glory of the Lord, guess what? God is writing that beautiful image on the fleshy tables of your heart. Paul saw that.

Paul knew that this happens. Paul knew it happens by the Spirit of God. Not just because somebody gets up and shares.

Not because somebody gets up to preach. No, it's by the Spirit of God that this takes place. This can happen in a church service with an open heart, or it can happen in your closet on Monday morning.

As you with an open face behold the glory of the Lord, you can be changed into the same image. It is a spiritual ministry. That was Paul's ministry.

And he said in chapter 4, verse 1, Therefore, after having said all that, seeing we have received this kind of ministry, as we have received mercy, we faint not. He's motivated, isn't he? And the next few verses talk about the integrity of his ministry, and we'll get to that later on this week. Let's move on to our last point for this morning's session.

The proof of Paul's ministry. In 2 Corinthians 6 is where we'll be reading there the proof of Paul's ministry. Remember, Paul is dealing with the Judaizers who are coming along behind him trying to confuse the work, trying to confuse the churches that he is starting.

And so Paul is writing to these Corinthians. And sometimes he speaks in defense of his ministry. And that's why we can draw so much out of this one book about his ministry is because he is speaking in defense of his ministry.

And here he gives his credentials. I mean, he doesn't have any B.A.'s or M.A.'s or D.D.'s on the wall. If you even know what those letters mean.

He doesn't have any of those on the wall. But he does have his credentials. The proof of his ministry.

And he gives that here in these verses in 2 Corinthians 6, 3 through 10. Look at what he says. Paul says, We are giving no offense in anything that the ministry be not blamed.

I am walking carefully in everything I do that the ministry be not blamed. But, in all things, approving ourselves as the ministers of God. He says by those words, We are proving that we are ministers of God.

And he is going to give us the list. But I want us just to note what he just said there. He said, We are proving that we are the ministers of God.

We are not doing it by argument. We are not doing it by carrying on. We are doing it by the way we live.

We are proving that we are the ministers of God. I want you to notice there that he is not just saying himself. You know, Paul always had a team of men with him.

And those men, they conducted themselves in like character. Just like their father, the Apostle Paul. But, in all things, approving ourselves as the ministers of God.

In much patience. In afflictions. In necessities.

In distresses. Look at that. How are you going to prove that you are a minister, Paul? By your good sermon? No.

In patience. In afflictions. And how I respond to those afflictions.

In necessities. No food to eat today. I guess we are fasting.

No place to sleep tonight. I guess we will find a rock somewhere for a pillow. No comfortable night for me tonight.

I will spend the night floating around in the Mediterranean Sea on a piece of wood. Necessities. In distresses.

Pressures coming upon him. In stripes. In imprisonments.

In tumults. In labors. In watchings.

In fastings. Watchings, by the way, is staying up all night. Or staying up half the night.

In fastings. By pureness. By knowledge.

By long-suffering. By kindness. Look at this list, brethren.

We will finish it. But just ponder it here with me. Do you want to be a minister? Amen.

Let's go for it. You want to be a bishop? No problem. I have no problem with you wanting to be a bishop.

Just know, this is where you will be going. If you have got any salt at all about you, this is where you will be going. It's not what you might think, young man, as you sit here today.

Oh, I'll get to stand up there behind the pulpit and share the Word. No. This is where you will be going.

You want to be a minister? Amen. Amen. But this is where God will take you.

If, in fact, you will truly be a minister, this is where God will take you. It is not an easy road. Amen? There are some men around here that can amen that.

It is not an easy road. Paul saw these difficult things as the proof of his ministry. We see in all these words, and we will read the rest of them, but we see in here mature character in the life of the Apostle Paul.

This is the proof of his ministry. There are no miracles in this list. Amen? Paul does list miracles in other places.

And I believe in miracles. I hope you do too. God hasn't changed.

But Paul doesn't list miracles in his list here as the proof of his ministry. He lists godly, seasoned character as the proof of his ministry by pureness, by knowledge, by long-suffering, by kindness, by the Holy Ghost. Look at that.

This is the proof of my ministry. The Holy Ghost is the proof of my ministry. By love unfeigned, or not put on.

That's what feigned means. You just put it on. When in reality, inside your heart, you don't feel that way at all.

But with Paul, love unfeigned, by the Word of Truth, by the power of God, by the armor of righteousness, a righteous life on the right hand and on the left. By honor. And sometimes dishonor.

Sometimes dishonor. You know, it's not always wrong to be dishonored. By honor and dishonor.

By evil report and by good report. You know, it's almost like what Paul is saying there is if all you have is honor, and you never have any dishonor, and if all you have is good report, and you never get any evil report, probably something not quite right there. Amen? And that's a little bit how it is, isn't it? Some of you brothers who've taken a few hard knocks already in the life of a minister.

You know, if all men speak well of you, and everything is wonderful, and nobody can ever say, I don't know about that guy, well, then we're not sure about you. You know. Maybe you're not saying everything that needs to be said.

You know, you can do that as a minister. You can say some of what needs to be said, but not all of what needs to be said. Someone wrote me a letter some time ago, and I can't remember who it was.

You know, but he challenged me. Not just me, but the whole ministry here. You know, the tape ministry.

He said, I have a problem with you fellows. I appreciate so much of what I hear when I listen to your sermons, but I never hear you guys say anything about the Catholic Church. What's wrong with you guys?

And I said, Amen.

Thank you, sir. That's right. I mean, one problem is, we don't have a whole lot of Catholics around here, you know, so give us a little patience and mercy.

But the point he was making was, I like all the good things you're saying, but there's a few things that you're not saying that you need to say. And so just for the record, I think the Catholic Church is not of God. It's just another religion.

And the Pope is not the Pope with honor and dishonor, with evil reports and good reports. And some people are saying, Amen. Wasn't that good? And somebody else is saying, I don't know about that guy.

Sheesh. You know, when you get both of those coming your way, you could pretty well say, I think I'm just going right down the middle. I think I'm okay.

Stay right there, you know. Right there in the middle. As deceivers, and yet true.

Look at that one. You stay away from that place. If you get in there once, you'll never leave.

The power of deception is so strong, you'll never leave if you go in there. Don't go. Don't go near them.

As deceivers, yet true. True, Paul says. As unknown and yet well known.

As dying and behold, we live. As chastened and not killed. As sorrowful, yet always rejoicing.

As poor, yet making many rich. As having nothing, and yet possessing all things. This is the proof of Paul's ministry.

Basically, what he's saying is simply this. The proof of my ministry is the life that Christ hath wrought through me. And it's one that you can see real clear.

And we'll say more about that later. The proof of his ministry. Oh, ye Corinthians.

Can't you just hear His heart overflowing this shepherd's heart? Oh, ye Corinthians, our mouth is open unto you. Our heart is enlarged. He is pleading with them.

Don't listen to those fellas. Don't listen to the Judaizers that are coming in behind me and telling you it's Jesus plus circumcision or it's Jesus plus the law of Moses. No, no, Corinthians.

God wants to have a personal relationship with you. Come out from among them and be ye separate, saith the Lord, and touch not the unclean thing, and I will be a father unto you, and you will be my sons and daughters, saith the Lord, the Lord Almighty. Thus was the ministry of the Apostle Paul.

Let's pray. Oh, Father. Lord, who is sufficient for these things? My, it's over our head, Lord.

But we do acknowledge here this morning before You, this God is our God. The way You worked in Paul's life, You want to work in my life. The way You worked in Paul's life, You want to work in every one of our lives.

God, I pray, help these men, Lord. Help them to get an open face. A heart that is turned to the Lord.

That You can be writing all week long all over their hearts. Lord, if all they take home with them is what they've written down on a piece of paper, Lord, it won't reach. You've got to write on the tables.

I pray this in Jesus Christ's name. Thank you, Brother Denny. One of the blessings of sitting under preaching that's over your head, and as well as the blessing of preaching what is over your own head.

Maybe some of you remember what it was like just to be an ordinary old carnal Christian in an evangelical church, or maybe you were just plain heathen, and you were just the same as everybody else. What a mundane, worthless life. And then, all of a sudden, I've got a vision of something higher.

Higher than me. Higher than the others around me. And I still can't attain to it.

And I can chase something for the rest of my life that's higher than me. That's a blessing. I praise God for it.

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