

2 Corinthians 6:1-13 Endurance

The title of my message today is ENDURANCE –

A) What comes to mind when you hear that word –

B) Tri-athlete: Ironman Takes endurance to run – 2.4 mile swim / 112 mile Bike / 26.2 mile run

C) College student:

D) Giving birth:

E) Teacher:

F) Soldier:

Christian: Yes there is a certain amount of endurance that is needed in the Christian life – especially if you want to be used of God

A) Those who want to be used – opposition

B) Those who want to live Righteous life – Persecution

C) Those who want to grow – Trials

Now what is interesting to me in each of those things that I mentioned – there is a reward that motivates the effort

A) Triathlete: Finishing – is a huge achievement – break time – or win – well that is AMAZING

B) College student: Degree

C) Mom: when that kid comes

D) Teacher: Students learning – moving on

Soldier – Fulfilled mission – finishing the course

For the Christian there is definitely a reward for finishing the race – but also reward in the process – God allows us to work with him

Paul's heart today -

Chapter 6 opens up right where Ch. 5 left off – recall in the original writings there were no Chapter breaks – put there to help us find our place.

A) So the thought is continuing here – Paul ch. 5 declared that he was an Ambassador of Christ.

B) Ambassador represents his King in a foreign land – Speaks for his king Paul was representing Christ in the world –

1) Declaring the message of Christ to a world lost in sin:

C) The message? Be reconciled to God Don't be at war with God any more! Don't be fighting against God. Be reconciled. Receive the grace of God.

D) Because God has made provision for reconciliation through Jesus Christ. V.21 **For He has made Him, Christ, who knew no sin, to be sin for us, , that we might be made the righteousness of God in Him!**

E) What grace is manifested here! God's marvelous grace! It reaches its climax in this!

1) He allowed His Son to take all of our sin and impart to us His righteousness.

It doesn't get any better than that!

Paul continues on this thought right into to Chapter 6 We then, *as workers together with Him* also plead with *you* not to receive the grace of God in vain.

A) Now that is an interesting thought – a person can receive the grace of God in Vain. What does that mean.

B) God's grace is offered to the world – thru the message of the work of Christ

1) Grace is getting what we don't deserve – We don't deserve Salvation

C) Offer comes to the world – the message of Grace is given – People receive it in Vain by not trusting Christ. – Putting him off –

1) I will deal with that tomorrow – when I am older

D) But Paul is pleading with a sense of urgency – today is the day of salvation

1) Because tomorrow is promised to no man

E) Paul quotes directly here from Isaiah 49:8 **For He says: "In an acceptable time I have heard you, and in the day of salvation I have helped you."** Behold, now *is* the accepted time; behold, now *is* the day of salvation.

It's interesting and sort of unexplainable why so many people, who in their minds, intend one day to get right with God.

A) So often they will say, well, I plan to one day to straighten up my life. One day I'm going to get right with God.

B) But if your intention is to do it one day, why do they put it off? Why do they take chances?

C) Why would a person put off receiving this marvelous gift from God?

1) It's like you have a migraine headache and they've got a new medicine that will just knock that thing immediately, you'll feel great.

D) You say put the pill on the shelf, maybe tomorrow morning I'll take it. I'm going to suffer tonight, once more. { Why would someone do that?

1) A lot of people don't realize how sick they really are.

Think about Felix Acts 24 when Paul when witnessing with Felix, he was under such conviction of the Holy Spirit, he began to shake.

A)He said, go your way for now Paul, and on a *more convenient time*, I will call you again.

B)That really is the issue isn't it Not convenient for them right now.

2)Something would have to change – Quit sleeping with my girlfriend – quit hanging in the bars – quit looking at porn.

C)Are you really ready to take your Chances?– “ Sign a contract not receive Christ for one year – No way- no assurance – 6 mths – 1 mth – 1 week – 1 day

1)She received Christ – that day

Before we move on I think that it is important that we understand that we can still receive the grace of God in vain – after we are saved.

A)It means to receive the goodness and favor of God, yet to hinder the work of grace in one's life

B)Receive Grace of Salvation- In vain by dropping back into a performance mode

C)Receive Grace for daily living in vain by trusting in my own strength and smarts to get through.

1)Daily dependency upon the grace of God.

Alan Redpath put it well

v. “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, I will soon become stale, barren, and fruitless in the service of the Lord.” (Redpath)

So we are workers with Him – with Jesus!

A)**Incredible concept** – God gives us the privilege of working with Him

B)It is His work – not ours –

1)Privilege because He doesn't need us – Home project with your little kids

Bless them – not because you need them.

C)God doesn't need us – but chosen to bless us – allowing us to be used by Him.

D)But His workers will face hardships – so they need to learn to Endure

1)That is what Paul begins to discuss in the next section – Endurance is a big part of being affective in our walks and ministries.

3 We give no offense in anything, that our ministry may not be blamed.

A)Because of the importance and urgency of our calling, we cannot allow anything into our lives or ministry that would give people a reason not to respond.

B)This takes us back to the underlying theme in this epistle – Paul is defending his apostleship and ministry to the Corinthians – False accusations

1) Great truths in this letter – but this is underlying theme – Paul defending his calling – No offense – no real true accusations –

RD v. 4-10

No Christian can read verse 4 through verse 10, , without feeling a sense of humiliation.

“I don’t know what suffering is!”

A) Although it is true that it is much easier to be a Christian in this generation than when Paul was living

B) But that is not the point of this passage. – Paul is not speaking as a grandpa – who says –

“I walked 10 miles both ways to school in the snow”

1) So quit your belly aching – wimpy generation

C) No matter how small my problem might seem to someone else – it is big to me and because it is big to me – it is then important to God.

1) Knows the # hairs on my head.

So the focus is not to make us feel wimpy or discouraged because we will never be as strong or effective a Christian as Paul.

A) No the pt is to reveal to us – what helped Paul effectively endure all these things that he went thru for Christ.

B) That is the lesson we want to gather from this portion of scripture today

4 But in all things we commend ourselves as ministers of God: in much patience,

A) The word used in the original language of the NT for patience is *hupomone*, which has the idea of *endurance* instead of simply waiting.

B) We often think of **patience** as a passive thing – the ability to sit around & wait for something to happen.

1) That is not the idea of the word Paul uses here. It is an active endurance instead of a passive waiting.

C) This word literally means to "stay under the pressure."

1) We all feel pressure -- pressure to give in here, to give up there, pressure to go along with something.

D) But the mark of a Christian who has learned how to walk with God is that he stays under the pressure; he does not quit.

‘It describes the ability to bear things in such a triumphant way that it transfigures them.’ (Barclay)

E) Becomes stepping stone instead of stumbling block

Now Paul tells us here exactly what He endured and How!

A) Concerning what He endured - Chrysos/tom early Church father called this list as a “blizzard of troubles,

B) Paul divided what he endured into 3 sections

1) General troubles: Tribulations, needs, distresses.

C) **Tribulations = afflictions** it means anything that expresses pressure, the exerts pressure, physical, emotional, spiritual pressure.

D) **Those crushing experiences.** Those things that weigh us down and burden the heart, those crushing disappointments, those pains of life.

Needs= necessities or things you cannot help. Normal things you do not ask for but that you cannot get away from

A) **It could refer to all of his persecutions, the struggles of life in a fallen environment. Sickness**

B) **It has to do with difficulties that have no relief. Difficulties that have no exit. Just always there!**

And then he adds the word "distresses," a very interesting word. It literally means "to confine in a very narrow place where someone can't turn around."

Those confining things, those frustrating narrow places, suffocating, unrelenting difficulty with no escape and no way to get comfortable.

I am sure some of you have some of those things in your life right now!

#2 Troubles from others: in stripes, in imprisonments, in tumults,

A) **2 Corinthians 11 – 5 times 40 lashes minus 1 – Three times beaten with rods. – 8 beatings! Stoned once**

B) **Imprisoned countless times –**

1) **Tumults – Riots uproars – followed him { Shipwrecked several times**

#3 Self inflicted troubles: in labors, in sleeplessness, in fastings

A) **troubles that came to him voluntarily as he willingly worked to exhaustion and went without sleep and skipped meals to do gospel work.**

B) **Put this triple trio of troubles all together and we have the picture of Paul's life.**

C) **It was truly a blizzard of troubles from every perspective!**

D) **But Paul endured under the most pressing difficulties that came upon him from those who hated his ministry.**

1) **And he endured under the most pressing obligation that came from God in heaven and that held him to the greatest and highest standard. He endured it all.**

**The question is how? Was Paul just a better man than most of us ? Yes { GREAT MAN
But he tells us how – note the word **BY-** 2 Cor 6:6-8**

6 by purity, by knowledge, by longsuffering, by kindness, by the Holy Spirit, by sincere love, 7 by the word of truth, by the power of God, by the armor of righteousness on the right hand and on the left, 8 by honor and dishonor, by evil report and good report;

Now I want you to notice something that I believe is key to this passage.

A) Right in the middle of these graces that Paul mentions – is the person of the Holy Spirit.

B) I believe this is really the key to this whole thing – Paul dependency upon the spirit of God.

C) Everything else is connected to that His being yielded and Dependent on the HS

1) See must understand that these graces are not natural virtues, but Flow as gifts of the Holy Spirit.

D) These graces become stones in the foundation upon which the HS would build endurance into Paul's life.

E) The Holy Spirit would be His guide His teacher His supplier.

Paul wants us to Know that his great endurance in ministry is not an angry, tight-jawed, "I'll show you" endurance."

A) I will do this if it kills me –

B) No this is an endurance that was born out of His dependency upon the HS that brought a sweetness that enabled Paul to sing at midnight in Prison cell

C) Songs of Praise and not the blues

D) That enabled him to go back into Lystra

It was supernatural supply of the HS that was given to Him in His suffering – Like us

A) Jeff and Donna – Leg Amp – peace – not freaking out!

B) God by His grace supplying strength in our weakness

C) That was Key for Paul as well.

3 Groups: 1st group His conduct / 2nd His supernatural supply / 3rd His standing with God

1st His Conduct: By purity, by knowledge, by longsuffering, by kindness

A) Purity: Paul lived in a very immoral society – sexual immorality was rampant in every form. – idolatry – pagan as can be!

B) Easy in the midst of difficulty to give into the flesh – Paul didn't do that {

C) Paul endured by living a life of purity in the world before men. { No to his flesh

1) HS Alarm – Run flee

D) The more that a person resist temptation – the easier it gets to say no to it

1) Loses it's power – it attraction.

Knowledge: Understanding of life of people of man's problem and need.

A) This is what we might call Paul's world view !

B) Paul was able to endure because he had a clear knowledge and understanding of the big picture –

1) **Of life of pp their need.**

C) Of God and His faithfulness – Knowledge that flowed from experience of walking with God

Longsuffering: The word Paul uses here speaks of being patient with People

A) He endured those people who caused him personal pain, who inflicted wounds on his own body.

B) He endured those people who caused him grief, who made him cry, who broke his heart. He endured.

C) **BY Kindness** – Showing Grace to others!

1) Loving those who broke his heart

D) More I love the less love I receive in return – kept on giving -

2nd His supply: By the Holy Spirit, by sincere love, by the word of truth, by the power of God, by the Armor of righteousness.

Sincere love: Agape – The Love of God is shed abroad in our hearts by the Holy Spirit.

A) God's love flowing out of Paul to a lost world by the HS influence.

By the word of truth: Endurance is connected to an understanding of God's truth.

A) **The heart of God / the plan of God.**

B) **Understanding of the word of truth and how to apply it would come from the HS**

C) **Leaning on the promises**

By the power of God – Supernatural empowering – thru the Spirit

A) Nothing left – suddenly God supplies Power

B) Ephesians 6 Be strong in the Lord – Power of

By Armor of righteousness – Equipped with what He needed to stand – by the Holy Spirit.

A) Left and the right - Surrounded on all sides

3rd His Standing with God: By honor and dishonor, by evil report and good report;

A) reports what was being said as deceivers, and yet true; as unknown, and yet well known; as dying, and behold we live; as chastened, and yet not killed; as sorrowful, yet always rejoicing; as poor, yet making many rich; as having nothing, and yet possessing all things.

Paul was able to endure because in the midst of all the rumors and false accusations swirling about him he knew where he stood with God.

The world (including the worldly Corinthian Christians) described Paul with words like:

Accusations of the World

dishonor
evil report
deceivers
unknown
dying
chastened
sorrowful
poor
having nothing

Reality with God

Honor
Good report
True
Well known
We live
Not killed
Always rejoicing
Making many rich
Possessing all things

Paul was able to endure because He knew what His standing with God was in Christ!

Paul follows this testimony with another Plea

O Corinthians! We have spoken openly to you, our heart is wide open. You are not restricted by us, but you are restricted by your *own* affections. Now in return for the same (I speak as to children), you also be open.

A) Paul is saying the problem isn't that we have not been open to you – the problem is you haven't been open to us.

B) We speak to you as Children: That is not a put down – not saying – speaking to you as those who are immature.

C) We speak to you as Children – Endearing: As a parent trying to give instruction to his Child.

1) I have spoken plainly to you – not holding back anything – my heart is open to you

D) There is emotion in his voice – The problem is you're not open – your own affections are causing the problem

Isn't that God's heart toward us – Held back nothing – Given my son – not freely give you all things

Grace is available for every situation – if you just use it!