

The Book of 2 Corinthians

2 Corinthians 6:7-9

Session 63: Concluding Truths, pt. 4

We are going to do two things in today's lesson: 1) we are going to talk about Paul's credentials whereby he lived a holy life without being "holier than thou," and 2) we are going to talk about faith.

You know, I often talk about these verses as though Paul is the only one in view, but that is not the case. There are others with Paul, so it is not just him. In 2 Corinthians 6:4-10, we have a list of things which Paul and his companions have all been enduring with much patience. They are doing it for the sake of the ministry, so that the message is not rejected because of the way they live their lives.

I mentioned that Paul was advocating a holy life without being holier than thou. What does it mean to be "holier than thou?" It means to possess an attitude which is:

- 1) Judgmental: Looking down on people
- 2) Self-righteous: Believing you are intrinsically better
- 3) Lecturing: Arrogantly instructing others

The phrase actually comes from Isaiah 65:5 in the Authorized Version.

Isaiah 65:2 I have spread out my hands all the day unto a rebellious people, which walketh in a way *that was* not good, after their own thoughts; ³ A people that provoketh me to anger continually to my face; that sacrificeth in gardens, and burneth incense upon altars of brick; ⁴ Which remain among the graves, and lodge in the monuments, which eat swine's flesh, and broth of abominable *things is in* their vessels; ⁵ Which say, Stand by thyself, come not near to me; for I am holier than thou. These *are* a smoke in my nose, a fire that burneth all the day.

But Paul's reaction to the accusations against him is anything but arrogance, self-righteousness or judgmental. He endures all of these criticisms with much patience.

The subject matter of verses 6-8a hearkens back to 2 Corinthians 5:9-11, where Paul is renouncing unrighteous living and promoting a holy and separated life. The accusation against Paul was that he was self-righteous, prudish, judgmental and intolerant. In connection with that, verses 6-8a are the things that Paul and his companions endured with much patience.

2 Corinthians 6:6 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, ⁸**By honour and dishonour**, by evil report and good report:

We have been working our way through this list and now we are up to verse 8. But first, I want to say something else about the armor of righteousness.

Paul does not just say, “by the armor of righteousness,” he adds the phrase “on the right hand and on the left.” What does that mean? Unlike physical armor, this is God's provision of moral integrity and Christ's purity that guards the Believer. But guards us against what? It guards us against every conceivable situation which the world, the flesh and the devil may throw at us.

Without trying to delve into the speculations of what is on the right hand and what is on the left, we can say that by using this terminology, the believer, by the doctrines given to him in Paul's epistles, is completely capable of defending himself against the attack of the policy of evil; 360-degree readiness.

2 Corinthians 6:8 **By honour and dishonour**, by evil report and good report: as deceivers, and yet true;

By honor and dishonor, speaks of Paul's continued life of holiness, whether he was in circumstances of honor or dishonor. Whichever esteem he might be held by the world, he gave no offence, so there was not given a chance to blame his ministry.

Paul and his companions were not honored everywhere they went. The churches which they founded honored them, but not the world at large. Few men are not corrupted by honor and the flattery that often accompanies it. You recognize the difference, right?

Flattery praises someone for something over which they have no control. “You have such beautiful eyes,” “you are so tall,” etc. Genuine praise or honor comes by issues of character which are developed on the inside. Praise your children and grandchildren for their character. Praise other adults for the same.

But for those who receive honor, we should be quick to remember that if there is anything “good” seen in us, it is the result of the word of God working in us by His Spirit. Satan will even use “honor” to destroy a servant of God.

As for dishonor, Paul and his companions still were careful to give no offence as they lived their lives of holiness. They received all expressions of contempt with meekness, not allowing them to interfere with the faithful discharge of their ministry. They rose above those things and put the power of God’s grace on display. They returned good for evil, blessings for curses, and sought to save, not to destroy those who tried to overwhelm them. In our flesh, this is difficult if not impossible to do, but this is the manner of a holy life where the power is not of us, but of God.

By evil report and good report. Paul was often slandered. His motives were called into question, and his reputation was attacked. He was represented as a deceiver. He suffered reproach. And in the midst of all this, he continued to “give no offence.” Why? Because Paul was afraid of confrontation? No, he did this so that the ministry would not be adversely affected by his conduct in the face of these things.

To live a holy life while being reviled is a powerful opportunity to display grace to a world that rarely sees it demonstrated in human conduct. It is one of the clearest ways to put the life of Christ on display and, through that response, be conformed to the image of God’s Son.

Why is this not often seen? I believe there are several reasons:

- 1) **Ignorance** – They don’t know how. Because many saints do not understand how edification works, they spend their lives wanting to do better but cannot seem to find the wherewithal to do it. They are like what Paul describes in

Romans 7; trying to live for God in the power of their flesh because it is the only way they know.

Romans 7:15 For that which I do I allow not: for what I would, that do I not; but what I hate, that do I.

2) **Lack of Effort** – To live the kind of life Paul describes in 2 Corinthians 6:4-10 requires transformed thinking, which comes by spending time with doctrine. Yet many do not consistently read, study, meditate on, and memorize the Scriptures. Instead, they give their time to watching television or scrolling through social media; leaving too little effort for doctrine to effect godly change within them.

Again, this means setting aside time every day to engage with doctrine so that the Spirit of God within you can use the Scriptures to transform you inwardly and form the life of Christ in you.

If you are reading / watching this session, do you know you can join us live on Zoom? We publish session notes and note-takers that allow you to interact with the lesson. You can request these resources or inquire about how to join us live on Sundays or Tuesdays by contacting us by phone at (888) 605-3202, or email staff@mbiworldwide.org.

If you are not sure about where you will spend eternity, we care about you and we want you to have eternal life. Scan the QR code below to watch a short video that will explain how you can have salvation through Jesus Christ.



The Most Important Decision