

The Book of 2 Corinthians

2 Corinthians 6:9-10

Session 64 Notetaker: Concluding Truths, pt. 5

In Session 63, we left off discussing reasons why displaying grace while being reviled is rarely seen demonstrated in human conduct. The third reason is:

3) **Lack of Follow-Through** – To implement changed behavior in everyday life requires the disciplines already mentioned, such as reading, studying, meditating, and memorizing. We must then follow through by taking renewed thinking and turning it into godly living, choosing to live the doctrine we are studying even when the flesh resists. This denial of the flesh is a skill that sons and daughters need to develop.

Okay, back to the text at hand.

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

Let's begin with the "evil report." Paul continued his ministry and lived a holy life even when others accused him of evil, questioned his motives, and disparaged his character. Despite these attacks, his patient response in word and deed approved him as a minister of God, as stated in 2 Corinthians 6:4.

2 Corinthians 6:4 But **in all *things* approving ourselves as the ministers of God, in much patience**, in afflictions, in necessities, in distresses,

Wrongful accusations, slander, and defamation provide opportunities to display the power of grace; to manifest the life of Christ within us, and model the moral excellence of an edified son or daughter of God – whether in suffering or in glory.

What, then, is the "good report" in verse 8, and why does Paul mention it here? When others commend, praise, or honor us, holiness remains the proper response. Our conduct should show that we do not seek honor for ourselves, but desire Christ to be exalted for His work in us and for our Father to be glorified.

We must guard against pride and avoid thinking more highly of ourselves than we ought, as Romans 12:3 admonishes. We should not allow the praise of a “good report” to compromise our faithfulness to the work and the people we serve.

This brings us to the last part of our passage.

Second Corinthians 6:8b-10 covers the area of being defamed. This harkens back to 2 Corinthians 5:12-6:2.

2 Corinthians 6:8 ... 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.

Notice that Paul no longer uses the introductory word “by.” He now uses “as” to introduce each issue. This indicates that we have moved to the third issue in the fifth category of sufferings: being defamed. In the related passage, Paul was accused of being “beside himself.” He understood that the accusation arose in the context of evangelism, but it was not limited to his persistent preaching of the gospel.

As deceivers, and yet true is direct. This accusation may even come from fellow Believers. Whatever the reason for the disparagement, we are to bear it with patience and remain focused on the work before us.

Paul rarely turned aside to vindicate himself from such charges. He left his reputation in God’s hands. We are not deceivers or false ministers, even when accused as such. We show ourselves to be true and faithful sons and daughters by giving no offence and continuing in the ministry that drew the accusation. In short, we do not quit.

2 Corinthians 6:9 As unknown, and yet well known; as dying, and, behold, we live; as chastened, and not killed;

As unknown. Paul means that they brought the message and ministry to people who did not know them. They were strangers, and they had no rank or status to commend them to their audience, they were unknown.

The Christian world often seeks ways to commend itself but these ways are not biblical. For example, when I served as Youth Director at a church in Shreveport, La., we had a guy come in to preach a series of meetings. His notoriety was that he was a relative of a very famous singer who had died just a few years previous. Supposedly, being a Christian and a relative of someone famous gave him the credentials to preach meetings all over the country. I can remember his message on faith which he defined this way, "Faith is acting like something is so, when it is not so, in order that it might be so."

This idea that by our believing we can bring things into existence is not biblical and it certainly is not the definition of faith. He got this out of Hebrews 11:1.

Hebrews 11:1 Now faith is the substance of things hoped for, the evidence of things not seen.

The writer of Hebrews does not say that faith is the evidence of things that are not so, but it is the evidence of that for which we have a sure and certain hope. When it says "things not seen," it means we have not yet received that which we hope for. Remember the reference in Romans?

Romans 8:23 And not only *they*, but ourselves also, which have the firstfruits of the Spirit, even we ourselves groan within ourselves, waiting for the adoption, *to wit*, the redemption of our body. ²⁴ For we are saved by hope: but hope that is seen is not hope: for what a man seeth, why doth he yet hope for? ²⁵ But if we hope for that we see not, *then* do we with patience wait for *it*.

Paul is not teaching that our body will be redeemed if we have faith. Our faith does not make that redemption a reality. God says it is a reality, and therefore we have hope; (a confident expectation that our body will be redeemed). Faith is the substance of that hope and it is the evidence of that which we have not yet received, which is why Hebrews says "things not seen." That doesn't mean you can't see it with your eyes, it means, just as Romans 8 is talking about, we don't yet have it.

We call Hebrews 11 the faith chapter. Well, take a look at it.

Hebrews 11:7 By faith Noah, being warned of God of things not seen as yet, moved with fear, prepared an ark to the saving of his house; by the which he condemned the world, and became heir of the righteousness which is by faith.

Hebrews 11:8 By faith Abraham, when **he was called to go** out into a place which he should after receive for an inheritance, **obeyed; and he went out**, not knowing whither he went.

Hebrews 11:17 By faith Abraham, when he was tried, offered up Isaac: and he that had **received the promises** offered up his only begotten son,

I had an interesting conversation with Susan Pinyan a few weeks back about this verse. She was talking about how difficult it would be to sacrifice a child and she wasn't sure she could do it. But I reminded her that she could for the same reason that Abraham could.

By the way, God's purpose was not to engage in child sacrifice, but it was the testing of Abraham ("when he was tried"). While God had no intention of allowing such a thing, Abraham needed to believe God would allow him to kill his son in order to demonstrate his faith in God.

Abraham could sacrifice his son because, as verse 17 says, he "received the promises." What promises? All we have to do is look back to Genesis 17, and we will see the promises that God made to Abram when he changed his name to Abraham and made a covenant with him.

Genesis 17:1 And when Abram was ninety years old and nine, the LORD appeared to Abram, and said unto him, *I am* the Almighty God; walk before me, and be thou perfect. ² And **I will make my covenant between me and thee, and will multiply thee exceedingly.** ³ And Abram fell on his face: and God talked with him, saying, ⁴ As for me, behold, my covenant *is* with thee, and **thou shalt be a father of many nations.** ⁵ Neither shall thy name any more be called Abram, but thy name shall be Abraham; for **a father of many nations have I made thee.** ⁶ And **I will make thee exceeding fruitful, and I will make nations of thee, and kings shall come out of thee.** ⁷ And I will

establish my covenant between me and thee and **thy seed after thee in their generations for an everlasting covenant**, to be a God unto thee, and to thy seed after thee. ⁸ And **I will give unto thee, and to thy seed after thee, the land** wherein thou art a stranger, all the land of Canaan, for an everlasting possession; and I will be their God. ⁹ And God said unto Abraham, **Thou shalt keep my covenant therefore, thou, and thy seed after thee in their generations.**

Genesis 17:19 And God said, **Sarah thy wife shall bear thee a son indeed; and thou shalt call his name Isaac:** and I will establish my covenant with him for an everlasting covenant, **and with his seed after him.**

Abraham knows he will have a son, and his son will have children and those children will become a great nation and God will make an everlasting covenant with them.

So, while Isaac is still young, when God instructs Abraham to sacrifice him, what was going on in Abraham's mind? He knows that when he and Sarah were too old to have children, God gave them a son, just as He promised. He knows this son will also have a son, and on and on it will go until a great nation is formed.

Now there are two things to keep in mind here. The first one has to do with the way God communicated with people back then as opposed to how He communicates today. Today, it is by His written word. But Abraham had no scriptures to look at. God spoke to him directly. When Abraham was told about Isaac, it was not a dream, but a direct communication from God.

In that communication God promised not just a son, but a nation would come through Isaac and his seed after him. So when Abraham was told by God to go and sacrifice Isaac, he obeyed without hesitation because he believed the promises of God, even though Isaac did not yet have any children. But here is what Abraham thought, if I kill him, I am so sure that God will keep His promise that Isaac will have a seed; that God will raise him from the dead and God will keep His promise. And that is exactly what Hebrews says Abraham thought.

Hebrews 11:17 By faith Abraham, when he was tried, offered up Isaac: and **he that had received the promises** offered up his only begotten *son*, ¹⁸ Of whom it was said, That **in Isaac shall thy seed be called:** ¹⁹ **Accounting that God was able to raise *him* up, even from the dead;** from whence also he received him in a figure.

Here is the point: Abraham offered up Isaac by faith based on the promises God had made. Noah, Moses, Abraham, Sarah, none of them brought anything into being by their faith. Their faith was the evidence that they believed a promise which had not yet taken place – their faith was evidence that they believed it would.

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The Most Important Decision