

I. Read II Corinthians 6:3-10

- A. To establish the context of verse 3, begin with verse 1a, “And working together with Him...” The Apostle Paul is declaring that in the course of doing the work of the ministry, he and his associates are being careful not to give “offense in anything.” Read Romans 9:31-33, 1 Peter 2:6-8, and 1 Peter 2:12 and explain why Paul says he was being careful not to “give offense”, yet he and Peter clearly declare that Christ’s gospel is offensive to many.

In 1 Peter 2:12, Peter explains that though unbelievers will attack and accuse Christ’s witnesses, it is important that the accusations not be for wrongdoing. Paul is expressing the same thought in II Corinthians 6:3 in that it is important to be careful not to be offensive unnecessarily in sharing the gospel of Christ. Implicit in this is the fact that the lost will often take offense initially at the suggestion that they are sinners in need of a Savior. It is only when God the Holy Spirit convicts the lost sinner that he is able to recognize the truth of Romans 3:23.

- B. In verses 4-5, Paul explains that his ministry has been difficult. List the difficulties or challenges he cites.

1. **through much endurance, implying long periods of difficulty**
2. **in afflictions**
3. **in hardships**
4. **in distresses**
5. **in beatings**
6. **in imprisonments**
7. **in tumults**
8. **in labors**
9. **in sleeplessness**
10. **in hunger**

There is a *large and loud* segment of evangelicalism, particularly associated with popular televangelists, that claim serving God in faithfulness and obedience *always* brings the blessings of prosperity and good health. Often referred to as the Word of Faith Movement, the Health and Wealth Gospel, or Prosperity Preaching, how does their teaching compare with Paul’s description of his ministry?

It clearly contradicts Paul’s teaching. It is unbiblical and shallow, with only the vaguest notion of what it means to serve God in the shadow of the Fall.

Read Matthew 5:10-12 and John 16:33 and explain how the words of Christ compare with Paul’s description of trials while serving God.

The Words of Christ are fulfilled and realized in the ministry of Paul. In other words, Jesus explained clearly the world’s response to the truth and to truth-tellers. Paul suffered for being a truth-teller.

How are Christ’s words recorded in Acts 9:15-16 fulfilled in II Corinthians 6:4-5?

In calling Paul as an Apostle and a missionary. He told him that he would experience suffering. Some of that suffering which Paul did indeed experience is described in II Corinthians 6:4-5.

Should Paul’s circumstance be considered to be unique?

Certainly Paul was unique. He was an Apostle. Yet his trials and tribulations, though perhaps greater than most believers will ever suffer, still reflect the clear teaching of Scripture that believers living in a fallen world amongst fallen people should expect some degree of hardship and even persecution.

- C. In verse 6-7, Paul describes the manner in which he tried to carry out his ministry. Read Galatians 5:22-23 and explain how he could respond to the trials and tribulations as he did. **The answer is found in verse 6 – “in the Holy Spirit”. The Galatians passage also makes clear that the fruit of the Holy Spirit is the result of the indwelling presence of God the Holy Spirit.**

Read Ephesians 5:18 and discuss how it supports the point above.

The willing and deliberate submission to the Lordship of Christ, also called *being filled with the Holy Spirit*, is the only way to respond as Paul did to the trials he faced.

- D. In verses 8-10, Paul continues to explain the difficulties he faced, particularly in contrasting the reality of the blessing of God with the trials of this world. Read James 1:2-4 and discuss how the brother of Christ describes the same sort of thing. **James makes it clear that while we will all face “various trials” and the “testing of...our...faith”, we can still experience joy.**

Look at II Corinthians 6:8-10 and identify the nine contrasts listed there.

1. **Paul shared the “glory” of Christ in the midst of being dishonored by the world (v8).**
2. **He has the “good report” of God while having the “bad report” of the world (v 8).**
3. **He was accused of being a “deceiver” though he was absolutely secure in his knowledge of the truth (v8).**
4. **He was often “unknown” (misunderstood) by the world, yet God Himself knew Him well (v9).**
5. **He died to many things, both of the world and in the flesh, yet in dying he truly lived (v9).**
6. **He experienced punishment from the world, but the world could not destroy him (v9).**
7. **He knew sorrow and sadness, yet he also knew that joy comes in the morning (v9).**
8. **He had little or no money, yet what he was able to share with others gave them riches beyond anything the world could offer (v9).**
9. **He possessed little or nothing in the material things of the world, yet he knew that he was a joint heir with Christ and so he shared in Christ’s ownership of all creation!**