

Review of 6:1-2

Remember last time that we learned how important it is to take advantage of God's grace in the present. The **present offers the only opportunity** we have to grasp God's grace and take full advantage of it. Putting it off until tomorrow is not the right answer. Really Paul says by his pleading as a co-worker of God that it is urgently important that we do this right now and not delay. It makes no sense to live otherwise.

Of course, it is important to note that the mark of a Christian is that he/she takes consistent advantage of God's grace. That's the **normal way of Christian living!** Paul wants us to press on, not stopping at an initial reception of God's grace.

In the next section, the apostle tells the Corinthians, and us, how he tries to run his ministry so as to not deface the name of Christ. In all the circumstances he faces, by the graces he displays, and despite the world's wrong estimation of his ministry, he tries to demonstrate a sincere and honest ministry. We'll look at those ideas now.

1. Giving No Offense to Others, v. 3

To give no offense means to **not cast a stumbling block** out there for someone to trip over. For instance, 1 Cor. 16:1-3 tells of the situation where Paul wanted to make sure that no one could question his motives about the money in the collection for the saints in Jerusalem. So he carefully let other folks handle the funds. This same sensitivity is registered in 2 Cor. 8:20 where the apostle says that he is trying to avoid any suspicion that people might have as they collect a very generous offering. He wants to be honest, not only in the sight of God, but also in the sight of men. This attitude would go a long way in correcting financial problems, like treasurers who run off with the money.

Note the **distinction between an offense given and an offense taken**. Be objective about it, despite how hard that is to do in the heat of the moment. Sometimes both can happen; other times one or the other; hopefully neither. But it is possible for no offense to be given but you might have taken offense anyway. You could be totally in the wrong!

With respect to the giving no offense idea, what is at issue is not that no one *will* be offended. If you live with that as a goal, you will be forever running to and fro trying to keep everyone happy, not taking a strong stand for the truth, etc. The point is not that everyone will feel warm fuzzies, but that you do not throw anything in their way to cause them to **stumble unnecessarily** (the gospel is a stumbling block in itself already—1 Cor. 1:23). People will not like you if you take a stand for Jesus. But all of their charges should be completely baseless when examined in light of the character and actions of the person. There are enough difficulties in ministry without adding our own offenses to the mix to hurt people or damage our testimony.

The purpose of Paul's careful ministering is to **avoid shame or discredit** coming upon his ministry. He does not want to mar the name of Christ. And just as the office of president is larger than the president, the ministry is bigger than the minister. It's not that he doesn't want to be discredited just for his own sake, though such reproach does tend to cast a bad light over the whole of one's ministry, but he doesn't want that because of the terrible effect it has on His Name and on the testimony the Lord's church.

2. Demonstrating Yourself to be a Minister, v. 4a

Instead of throwing stumbling blocks into people's ways, Paul commends himself as a sincere minister of the gospel. The dictionary helps us understand that to approve or **commend here means to provide evidence of a personal characteristic or claim** through action; to demonstrate, show, bring out. He claims to be a minister; his life bears that out.

This gets back to the **credentials of Paul as an apostle**. The Corinthians seemed to have a recurring inability to understand that Paul was a true apostle and gospel minister. But in this section he gives us more proof that he is genuine. He has many "commendatory letters" in things that have happened to him or that he has done for the sake of the gospel ministry. He truly is a *servant* of God.

3. How Demonstrate the Ministry? V. 4b-10

The following notes will provide some assistance in understanding what is going on in this long section. The verses **do not form a random list**, but there is a coherent structure to the text. You can see that it has a heading (in much patience), followed by three lists of nine items each, all demonstratives of how the minister should be.

A. Introduction

in much patience,

Much patience means **not giving up**, having a patient steadfastness. This is needed in ministry and in Christian life in general. So we should not just give up after a few years (the average pastor moves on after about 5 years).

Then the text gives three lists which tell us the circumstances, means, and paradoxical nature of how one demonstrates such endurance and sincerity in the ministry.

B. List #1: In What Circumstances?

In all kinds of circumstances, be they general trials, involuntary and voluntary hardships, or whatever, the apostle maintains a good testimony. For some of the items listed, **mere participation for the sake of Christ commends Paul as a minister**. For instance, suffering persecution for the true faith would be in itself demonstrative that someone is serious about the ministry. It is the minister's proper handling of these circumstances that commends him as a minister. They would **not be commendatory if they were suffering as evil doers**, but only if they did good and suffered for it (1 Peter 2:20). Some self-proclaimed but false ministers could say they have afflictions or fastings or whatever, but they are not commending themselves as proper ministers—so you have to just look at the whole context to make a proper judgment.

	in afflictions,	<i>Three general trials.</i>	to suffer bad things; 2 Tim. 4:5
	in necessities,		Phil. 4:12
	in distresses,		Dire calamity; extreme affliction
5	in stripes,	<i>Three involuntary trials.</i>	Acts 16:23
	in imprisonments,		Acts 16:23; in Rome, etc.
	in tumults,		Disturbance, insurrection; Acts 19
	in labors,	<i>Three voluntary privations.</i>	1 Thess. 2:9, 2 Thess. 3:7-8
	in watchings,		Sleeplessness – to travel/work/preach
	in fastings;		Going on little food

C. List #2: By What Means?

Inner virtues and Divine provisions for the ministry are in view here. This is really how the servant conducts himself and makes his ministry obvious.

6	by purity,	<i>Six inner virtues.</i>	Uprightness, sinlessness of life
	by knowledge,		Understanding; insight
	by longsuffering,		Slow to become angry
	by kindness,		Goodness, generosity, attr. of God
	by the Holy Spirit,		Being filled with the Spirit
	by love unfeigned [sincere],		Un-hypocritical; not a sham; 1 Cor. 13
7	by the word of truth,	<i>Three provisions.</i>	The word of God (4:2); must focus on
	by the power of God,		There is no other way to do it
	by the armor of righteousness on the right hand and on the left,		

This refers to spiritual armor and weaponry (Eph. 6) characterized by righteousness instead of sin. The right and left hands indicate that he is **fully armed** and has all the equipment he needs.

D. List #3: In Spite of What Paradoxes?

Here we have the **worldly perspective** on Paul's ministry and the actual way it is. For instance, the world sees Paul as poor and is right in the material sense, yet he can offer spiritual riches that the world cannot offer.

8	by honor and dishonor, by evil report and good report; as deceivers, and <i>yet</i> true;	High and low opinion of some Conflicting stories about ministry Impostors but not impostors
9	as unknown, and <i>yet</i> well known; as dying, and behold we live; as chastened, and <i>yet</i> not killed;	Rom. 3:8; 1 Cor. 4:13 2 Cor. 4:8-12
10	as sorrowful, yet always rejoicing; as poor, yet making many rich; as having nothing, and <i>yet</i> possessing all things.	Sorrowful at lack of response Begging type of poverty; dependence

Conclusion

With so many characteristics of a good ministry (30 of them), we should not have any shortage of **ways to know if a ministry is genuine**. If there are no difficulties faced, no virtues displayed, and the world gives high marks to the ministry, something is seriously wrong!

MAP

NKJV text [KJV, NIV] or [comments]

3	We give no offense [place no stumbling block] in anything, <u>that</u> our ministry may not be blamed [to find fault, criticize, discredited]	
4	But in all <i>things</i> we commend [approving] [present, recommend] ourselves as ministers of God: ¹	
	in much patience,	Broad introductory descr
	in tribulations, [afflictions, troubles] in needs, [necessities, hardships] in distresses,	1. These 3 general trials
5	in stripes, [, beatings] in imprisonments, in tumults, [, riots] in labors, [, hard work] in sleeplessness, [in watchings, sleepless nights] in fastings; [, hunger]	2. These 3 involuntary 3. These 3 voluntary 1 Thess. 2:9, 2 Thess. 3:7-8
6	by purity, [pureness] by knowledge, [, understanding] by longsuffering, [, patience] by kindness, by the Holy Spirit, by sincere love, [love unfeigned]	4. These 6 inner virtues
7	by the word of truth, [, in truthful speech?] by the power of God, by the armor [, weapons] of righteousness on the right hand and on the left,	5. These 3 equipment
8	by honor [, glory] and dishonor, by evil report and good report; as deceivers, and <i>yet</i> true; [, genuine, yet regarded as impostors]	6. These 4 responses to him.
9	as unknown, and <i>yet</i> well known; as dying, and behold we live; as chastened [, beaten], and <i>yet</i> not killed;	Rom. 3:8; 1 Cor. 4:13 7. These 5 ministerial paradoxes.
10	as sorrowful, yet always rejoicing; as poor, yet making many rich; as having nothing, and <i>yet</i> possessing all things.	

¹ Following seems to be a listing of what "all things" refers to. They seem to fall into three groups of nine with one "in much patience" at the beginning.