

Christian Responsibilities and Struggles

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Date: 10 February 2021

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[0 : 0 0] and we'll turn back to 2nd Corinthians chapter 6 and I want us tonight just it's quite a few verses won't look in detail at all of it but from verse 3 the apostle says we put no obstacle in anyone's way so that no fault may be found without ministry but as servants of Christ we commend ourselves in every way and he says by great endurance and so on and then in verse 6 by purity and knowledge and patience and kindness and so on and in the previous chapter at the very end of chapter 5 he tells us that therefore we are ambassadors for Christ and so on so you see how the apostle is highlighting the huge responsibility that is placed upon us in fact the great privilege that we have of being an ambassador for the Lord Jesus Christ but he also shows us that tied in with the great privilege of being an ambassador for Jesus Christ that our great responsibilities come with it as well now of course we know that an ambassador is somebody who represents the kingdom and an ambassador is there to promote the country that he or she represents and if he or she fails to do that then obviously they're not fulfilling the role of an ambassador and an ambassador isn't free to give his or her own opinion about how things are or what they think they're there to give the opinion or whatever of the particular country that they represent and they don't act on their own authority and they're not the kind of people that sort of refuse to take orders or directives from their own government and again it's imperative if a person was an ambassador that they would keep in touch with the kingdom that they represent and these things are all true spiritually because as ambassadors of Jesus Christ that is part of the great aim the great work that we're called to is to promote the kingdom of God and we are also in life we must make God's word a rule as we debate with people and as people sometimes ask us about what is the hope that is within us people will often question why we do what we do why do Christians do this and why Christians don't and it's important that we know God's word so that we base all our arguments upon what God says and not just upon what our own fancies or opinions might be and again we don't act on our own authority and it's vital of course that we don't remain out of touch with the kingdom that we represent because if we're not in touch with the king then very soon we won't be good ambassadors at all so Paul is aware of the fact that we have this ambassadorial role ambassadorial role as Christians in this world but that's why he says in verse 3 since we are ambassadors we mustn't put any obstacles in the way of the gospel and that's something that's very very challenging to us all because we have to ask ourselves is it possible

that by what I say or don't say or by what I do or don't do that I am putting people off from accepting the Lord Jesus Christ because you see we're all workers together that's one of the things Paul keeps talking about elsewhere as well that we are we're all in it together we're in it with God we're in it with one another that we're not in isolation that we are a community of workers and whether that work involves praying or whether it involves preaching or witnessing or it doesn't matter what every everything that we do for the Lord everything by faith is part of this great work and so that's really what Paul goes on highlighting in this chapter so he's at great pains that we don't give people excuse as to why they should remain outside the kingdom because you and I know that one of the reasons that many people will give and you say you say to people you know you should really think about becoming a Christian you should why do you not come to church and quite often people will say and they'll pick out a Christian that they know and a Christian maybe that has done something wrong or maybe a Christian that has done them in some way maybe some dishonest actor done something in some way and they'll say yeah that's a Christian for you if that's a Christian I don't want anything to do I would even have hassle in the world you're saying you come into the church and the church is a place that's God blessing and so on well and so they would they're great at picking and sometimes what they pick at is so off beam but sometimes they they do pick up things maybe some of the inconsistencies and some of the faults and some of the failings that that

do that are highlighted in Christians lives and the world is very quick to pick up on these things and use them as an excuse for remaining outside the kingdom so that's what Paul is really saying don't give people any reason to hide away it's absolutely important and vital that we are consistent in our Christian behaviour because if if we are unjust in our ways or if we're falling out and if we're angry and if we're divided and spiteful and all these things the world's going to say hey Paul

I don't want anything to do with that you're telling me that the church is a place to come to and I'm looking at the church and all I see is squabbling and division count me out I don't want that you know I don't know that we can ever take seriously enough the impact that church division has on people as they might see the division that takes place amongst Christians I don't know that we can quantify the amount of harm that it does but it does do harm and that is why it is so important that we we always try to to work together and then verse 6 Paul shows that we are to show and he gives this list in verse 6 of how we should how we should be as Christians and he says that it is we are to work by purity and knowledge now again when you think of purity straight away we think of in fact when you read that little list there that's given to us immediately you think of Jesus

Christ because that's who he was in this world with his purity and knowledge and patience and kindness the Holy Spirit and genuine love by truthful speech and the power of God and you say to yourself whoa that's that's talking about Jesus but Paul is actually at this point he's really talking about his own ministry because in verse 4 he says but as servants of God we commend ourselves in every way and he goes on by what he talks there by great endurance and you see that this is one of the things that's absolutely essential in the Christian faith is the importance of endurance of keeping going the Christian faith is not for quitters and I know that you have along the way there will be times where Satan and your own heart and the world will tell you to give up

[9 : 05] I don't believe there's ever been a Christian or there will be very few Christians who have never been tempted at some point or another along the way to give up but you can't give up because the Holy Spirit who is within you will not allow you to give up you can back slide you can go to the far country you can be away for a day a week a month a year years and you'll come back because the Lord will not leave you there and that's a great evidence of the great mark of the Christian is that the Christian will keep going we'll all we'll be there at the end that's what will happen the Christian will be there to the very end although there might be dips and slips and falls but we we endure we keep going and maybe tonight some of you you might say you've you might even feel let down by God and you might be saying what what has God done with me why why has God allowed this and that into my life and we may feel sometimes that God is letting us down and that's part of the beauty again we've said it so often the honesty of the Bible and particularly the Psalms as the

Psalms wrestle with these things but sometimes what they feel is God being unfair about God forgetting about them you can enter into their pain that's why often in times of distress and anguish the Psalms are such a balm to people's souls because they say I can identify that I can identify exactly with what is being said here but the thing is that irrespective of what we're going through we keep on going and that's what Paul says that this is part of how we are as Christians that we endure that's what one of the things that he talks about by great endurance and then he gives this list in afflictions hardships calamities beatings imprisonments riots labor sleepless nights hunger so he's talking about experiences that he's gone through but he says by purity now as I was saying that a little ago when you look at the definition of that life you say that's the life of Jesus

Christ but Paul is saying this is our life this is how we should be and again that's something scripture is so challenging and direct and you say to yourself when you come to it and you think by purity because so often we feel impure and we're aware of the impurities that are so much part and partial of our lives and sometimes we have to say to ourselves even the right things that we do sometimes even the motive might be impure and of course we know that God knows exactly what our motives are like and how we are in all these things so it says there that we are by purity knowledge that is I think maybe more the sense of an insight into things patience is there a Christian who hasn't prayed for patience so often we you know when everything is going well it's easy to be patient we don't know what our patience is like when everything is going smoothly and our journey through the

Christian faith is like one sweet plain walk but it's when we're being when there's everything is going wrong and we're becoming frustrated and irritated and grumpy through all these things and the Bible says Christian you're supposed to be patient and that's why we need to be praying for the

grace of patience and we need to ask the Lord to help me Lord to be patient because it's only it's only when we're when our patience is put to the test that we discover so often how impatient we actually are so we're to be patient and kind with the Holy Spirit genuine love by truthful speech you see that our speech our speech in the gospel what we say in the gospel must really match up with our life because if we if we're telling people about how how the Christian ought to live but we don't live like that then people will say hey you you don't practice what you preach and I think we're all guilty I'll tell you there's nobody who finds that more difficult than a preacher because when you go and you preach and the thing about preaching is you have to preach things that are often uncomfortable and challenging to yourself as well because you realize as you're preparing as you're reading and preparing and you're saying oh my how far short I come from what is required here but that doesn't mean that we aren't that we're to shy away from it because we're preaching to ourselves in the same way that we're preaching to everybody else we're telling simply telling people and opening out what God's word is saying to us so there has to be this honesty about our we have to be truthful in speech but we must seek that the word of [14:42] God lived in our life will indeed speak so that we cannot be living a dishonest life at one hand and then trying to tell people the truth of God see if a person is dishonest if they've got a dishonest character supposing a Christian is dishonest in his or her dealings and then tries to witness to somebody they're going to say hold on you're telling me that what you're saying is absolutely true but I can see from your life that you're not honest so this doesn't match up I can't believe I don't know if what you're saying is true because I know that in your life some of what you do is not true and honest so this is the sort of thing Paul is talking about which puts huge responsibility upon us that we seek to be honest and truthful in our dealings with one another and if we are then we are able to tell what the word of God is actually saying and then it goes on then to say that by truthful speech and by the power of

God and it tells us here then that the weapons that are given to us the weapons of our warfare the weapons of righteousness for the right hand and for the left so this is a great thing that the Lord has equipped us for the journey and for the battle God doesn't leave us ever on our own and Paul elsewhere tells us more of how God has equipped us remember in Ephesians chapter 6 we have a list there of how we have the helmet of salvation and the breastplate of righteousness and the shield of faith and we have the sword of the spirit and all the armoury is given to us but here we're told in this particular place that the weapons of righteousness are for the right hand and for the left you know we have to make sure every day that we go out that we engage that we begin the day clothing ourselves with the armour otherwise we're going to come a cropper very quickly and it's sometimes as we're all very aware sometimes mornings can be very rushed things can happen and you're part of you there's a part of you saying

I need time I need to get alone with the Lord and then there's other voices saying leave that afterwards you've got to get this has got to be done that's got to be done you can pick up your Bible after and pick up your devotional book afterwards and you haven't time this has got to be done and you and I know that if we leave the devotional at the start it's very very unlikely that we'll be picking it up until evening because the day is gone and when we if we go out unclothed without the armour of God without the shield and without the Lord and without being equipped then we're in a dangerous place because we're journeying through enemy territory where everything is opposed to us the world is opposed to us the devil is opposed to us our own human our own fleshly heart is opposed so it's important that we are indeed clothed and we have the weapons with us as we go as we go on now Paul then gives a list of situations and experiences that are really kind of paradoxes and I'm not going to go through them all here but then he says that through honour and dishonour through slander and praise we are treated as imposters and yet are true this is a strange way that the

Christian is in this world that at one level the world hates the Christian the world has no place for the Christian and yet side by side with that God has such a place for the Christian as well because on the one hand through honour and dishonour you see when God God will honour those who honour him the Bible tells us that those who honour me I will honour the Lord says and although the world might dishonour us and try to dishonour us and for times does dishonour yet the Lord if we honour him will honour us in this world through slander and praise you couldn't have really greater opposites and yet this is how it is for the Christian we are treated as imposters and yet we are through you see in God's sight we are through even though the world might have such a different

impression of us and then it says as unknown and yet well known you know it's almost it's kind of funny to a certain extent known and unknown unknown you know many of the Christians there are Christians in this world who are really well known as Christians some of them become world famous like I suppose probably the most famous Christian of recent times of course it's not that terribly long since he died was Billy Graham I'm sure there were very few people that didn't know who Billy Graham was there are very few Christians that reached such world renowned as him but many Christians when you think about it are known and the world doesn't often care for the Christian you know often when a person becomes a Christian the world doesn't care any more about them they kind of the world doesn't always turn its back upon the Christian but many in the world do they no longer want anything really to do with that person so at one level they are kind of unknown but they're known to God the Lord knows everything about them and there's another way in which you can almost say with regard to the

[21 : 13] Christian it's unknown nobody knows the work that goes on inside a Christian and often we don't know the work that the Christian does you and I don't know the the temptations that all the other Christians around you are facing you don't know my temptations today I don't know yours you don't know the way that God works inwardly the lessons the spiritual lessons that we're learning we don't know the the humbling that may have gone on this very day where God has humbled us in a way that has really flattened us and lowered us and yet through that we have come to understand even a wee bit more about who God is and his dealings with us and so there's an unknown work going on all the time it's the same as when a person has been converted now Jesus said the wind blows where it wants and you hear the sound thereof but you can't tell where it's coming from or where it's going so is everyone that is born of the spirit

God is often working away quietly in people's hearts and we don't know until eventually we begin to see the outworking in that life of the secret silent work of God's spirit so there's that level of where we don't know what's happening and again there's a lot of work goes on privately quietly that the vast majority of people don't know about it's one of the beauties of our community I know just now it's very difficult because of lockdown but it's amazing how many Christians do for other people not ever to be known by anybody else their left hand doesn't know what their right hand is doing God knows God is taking note and you know it's one of the wonderful things is you know sometimes I'll have to say over the course of time sometimes you'll go to a house where the elderly and they'll say oh do you know and they'll say so and so you have no idea how good he is how good she is to me and I've often been blown away by hearing so many acts of kindness that have been done by so many of the individuals in this congregation nobody knows about it but you see it's part of the unknown but everything is known by God there's not even a cup of water given in his name to a brother or sister but it will receive its reward so while it's unknown everything is known to God God the Father has known us he has loved us he cannot love us without knowing us and because he knows us he has loved us he has chosen us and we are known and we are loved by him and Jesus Christ died for us knowing who we were he didn't die a death for a random number of people they were known he tasted death as we're told for every man the Holy Spirit hasn't come and just randomly just touched a person here and there no specifically this person that person known because they're known and unknown maybe we'll follow on again with this let us pray Lord our God we give thanks that you are our God you are patient with us you are kind to us and as we look at your word we realise how far short we come from what we ought to be but we give thanks for your patience with us and we pray that you will bless us pray for all who are in need tonight we commit them to your care and keeping put you over us and do us good and cleanse us from our sin we pray in Jesus name
Amen and and