**Paradoxes of the Ministry**

*2 Corinthians 6:8-10*

**Introduction**

1. The apostle Paul loved the Corinthians dearly, and it showed in his ministry. (This was the case with all the Christians, and churches he ministered unto before the Lord.)
	1. He was like a father to them – **cf. 1 Corinthians 4:14-16**.
	2. He suffered in his ministry as an apostle for their sake – **cf. 2 Corinthians 4:11-12.**
	3. Despite all his troubles, his main concern was for the brethren – **cf. 2 Corinthians 11:28.**
2. Thus, one can only imagine Paul’s disappointment to hear of their turning from him and the true gospel he preached to them, to false teachers who spoke ill of him (**cf. 2 Corinthians 11:1-4).**
	1. They charged him with duplicity because of his change in plans – **cf. 2 Corinthians 1:12-24** (However, Paul was sincere, and changed his plans for their benefit – to spare them.)
	2. They suggested he was weak – **cf. 2 Corinthians 10:10-11** (He would bring a rod if he had to.)
	3. Etc.
3. 2 Corinthians is in large part a defense of Paul’s character and ministry. He beckons the Corinthians to turn away from the “false apostles,” and back to him, an apostle in truth – **thus back to God** (**cf. 2 Corinthians 5:20-6:2** – ambassadors with the ministry of reconciliation. Don’t reject the grace we offer through inspiration.)
4. **2 Corinthians 6:3-10** includes some of Paul’s defense concerning his ministry – included are negatives he went through willingly, and positives he possessed through the negatives **(vv. 4-7).**
5. Included in his commendation of he and the other apostles as ministers, he mentioned some paradoxes that were evident in their ministry (**vv. 8-10).**
	1. **Paradox** – a statement that is seemingly contradictory or opposed to common sense and yet is perhaps true.
	2. **These paradoxes mentioned by Paul can help us understand what it will be to be followers of Christ. 🡪**
6. Paradoxes of the Ministry
7. By honor and dishonor.
	1. The ministry is honorable – **cf. 2 Corinthians 4:6**.
		1. The one who ministers well, as God would have him to, should be treated with honor.
		2. **The Corinthians weren’t doing so with Paul.**
	2. His heart was open, but theirs were closed to him – **cf. 2 Corinthians 6:11-12.**
		1. This is due to the evil reports from the ***“false apostles.”***
		2. **They listened to those who spoke falsely, instead of recognizing Paul’s sincerity in action and love in his ministry.**
		3. ***“by evil report and good report.”***
	3. **Despite the dishonor, and evil reports, Paul received honor, and his report was good before God.**
		1. **Galatians 1:10** – does not seek to please men.
		2. God knew and acknowledged him.
8. As deceivers, and yet true.
	1. **Cf. 2 Corinthians 4:2** – Paul was accused of deception for personal gain, but that was not true.
	2. It was the ***“false apostles”*** who were being deceptive for personal gain – ***“we are not, as so many, peddling the word of God; but as of sincerity, but as from God, we speak in the sight of God in Christ” (2:17)***.
	3. **Those opposed to truth will often accuse teachers of truth of being deceitful for gain. Paul was true – came with the truth, and was honest himself.**
9. As unknown, and yet well known.
	1. **Cf. 1 Corinthians 1:26-31** – Ministers of the gospel and Christians in general are not famous, and well known – for, glory goes to God – they are humbled in His sight.
	2. **However, we are well known among each other, and especially before God.**
	3. ***“The solid foundation of God stands, having this seal: ‘The Lord knows those who are His’” (2 Timothy 2:19).***
10. As dying, and behold we live.
	1. **2 Corinthians 4:16-18** – Living for Christ and preaching His gospel leads to suffering and mistreatment. However, it is working for us toward something better.
	2. **The world sees our suffering for Christ as folly, but we know better.**
11. As chastened, and yet not killed.
	1. Similar to ***“as dying, and behold we live,”*** we are disciplined by God, but it is for our benefit – the world sees this as folly.
	2. **Cf. Hebrews 12:11** – painful for the present, but then it is beneficial.
12. As sorrowful, yet always rejoicing.
	1. Paul sorrowed over unfaithful brethren, and also despaired in his suffering. However, because of the hope he had in Christ, he continually rejoiced.
	2. ***“Rejoice in the Lord always. Again I will say, rejoice” (Philippians 4:4)!***
13. As poor, yet making many rich.
	1. **2 Corinthians 8:9** – Example of Christ. He became poor so we could be rich.
	2. **1 Corinthians 4:11-13** – Paul and the apostles were poor, and less fortunate in their ministry on behalf of the Corinthians.
	3. **1 Corinthians 1:4-9** – Made rich spiritually by his ministry in the gospel.
14. As having nothing, and yet possessing all things.
	1. **Matthew 16:24-27** – Christians give up all things for Christ, but in doing so, they gain all things.
	2. This is true for Paul and the apostles in their ministry, as well as for all Christians.
15. As we live for Christ, spread His gospel, and live according to truth we must recognize the positive that is beneath the surface of the negative. God has promised us great things, and we need to have the faith to see it.

**Conclusion** – The life of a Christian appears to be somewhat negative from without. However, those who have become children of God know better, and are comforted by the promises of God.