

A THE WORK OF THE PASTOR

❖ Competent Ministers

- Some things don't change much over time. Letters of recommendation still open doors today, just as they did in the first century. Did Paul need a letter of recommendation to be accepted by the church in Corinth? (2 Corinthians 3:1)
- He possessed the best letter of recommendation available: The Corinthians themselves (2 Cor. 3:2). Their hearts had been transformed by the grace of God, through the preaching of the apostle and his collaborators (2 Cor. 3:3).
- Paul and his assistants were “competent as ministers of a new covenant” (2 Cor. 3:6 NIV). A glorious covenant, written by the Spirit on the heart for eternal life.
- But some followed another covenant, that of salvation by the works of the Law written in stone, which prevented them from perceiving the glory of grace (2 Cor. 3:7-9).

❖ The risks of ministry

- Paul understood and endured the risks of ministry. But he knew these risks were worthwhile, and he bore them out of love for the people to whom he gave the opportunity to attain salvation (2 Corinthians 4:15). Moreover, he had the assurance of divine help (2 Corinthians 4:7-9): We are hard-pressed, perplexed, persecuted, struck down; but not crushed, not in despair, not forsaken, not destroyed.
- The gospel is preached through frail human beings so that the glory may be for God alone.
- Sufferings are a “light affliction, which is but for a moment” compared with the “exceeding and eternal weight of glory” that we will obtain on the day of resurrection (2 Cor. 4:14-18).

B THE DUTIES OF THE MEMBERS

❖ Ambassadors of reconciliation

- The driving force that should govern the life of the church (and of each member) is this: “For Christ’s love compels us” (2 Corinthians 5:14 NIV). What does this love consist of, and what compels us?
 - (1) Christ gave his life out of love. This compels us to live for Him (2 Corinthians 5:14-15).
 - (2) Christ has made us new creatures. This compels us to leave our old life behind (2 Cor. 5:17)
 - (3) Christ has reconciled us to God. This compels us to be ambassadors of reconciliation (2 Cor. 5:18-20).
- The love of Christ, therefore, leads us to a radical change of life. Living the love of Christ also leads us to share that love with others, urging them to accept the message of hope: “Be reconciled to God” (2 Cor. 5:20).

❖ The call to holiness

- The call to holiness affects the daily lives of both ministers and members:
 - (1) Endure difficulties (2 Cor. 6:4-5)
 - (2) To bear the fruit of the Spirit (2 Cor. 6:6)
 - (3) To be truthful and just (2 Cor. 6:7)
 - (4) Standing firm in any circumstance (2 Cor. 6:8-10)
 - (5) Opening our hearts to others (2 Cor. 6:11-13 NIV)
 - (6) To separate ourselves from the harmful influence of unbelievers (2 Cor. 6:14-15)
- Combining various passages from the Old Testament, Paul summarizes the call to holiness and its consequences (2 Cor. 6:16-18):
 - (1) Call: Come out of the places of sin; separate yourselves from sinners; do not touch what is unclean.
 - (2) Consequences: I will dwell with you; I will be your God; you will be my people; I will receive you; I will be your Father.

C THE RESULT OF JOINT EFFORT

❖ Comfort and joy

- Despite the problems he faced, Paul was overjoyed (2 Cor. 7:4). What caused this joy?
- Paul had written a harsh letter to the Corinthians, which had saddened them (2 Cor. 7:8). But that sadness led them to repentance (2 Cor. 7:9-10). This produced a complete change in their relationship with Paul, and with one another (2 Cor. 7:11-12).
- Thus, there was comfort for all. Titus, Paul's companion, was comforted (2 Cor. 7:7). Paul was comforted by Titus's arrival (2 Cor. 7:6). The Corinthians had been comforted, which also brought comfort to Paul. (2 Cor. 7:13).
- But Paul took no credit for it. If pastors and members can enjoy joy and comfort, it is because God “comforts the humble” (2 Cor. 7:6a).