

The Task of the Minister

Chapter 8

Audio Lesson: New Testament #51



Objective: To introduce Paul's second letter to the Corinthians and understand his purposes for writing.



If anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation; the old has gone, the new has come! All this is from God, who reconciled us to himself through Christ and gave us the ministry of reconciliation: that God was reconciling the world to himself in Christ, not counting men's sins against them. And he has committed to us the message of reconciliation. We are therefore Christ's ambassadors, as though God were making his appeal through us. We implore you on Christ's behalf: Be reconciled to God.

— 2 Corinthians 5:17-20

Many of the Corinthians received Paul's first letter with acceptance and support. But some people in the church had begun to attack Paul's apostleship, others criticized his speaking abilities, and still others thought he was a bit out of his mind. Many of them were offended that he hadn't come to visit them himself. But these critics never challenged any of the points Paul made in his letter because Paul's logic was irrefutable. Instead, they attacked Paul himself. And when Paul heard these things, he wrote this second letter to the Corinthians.

In 2 Corinthians, Paul defended his credential as an apostle and the nature of his ministry. He explained how suffering for the sake of the gospel, of which Paul had experienced very much, can be used to qualify us to be ministers of God's comfort. He described the task of the ministry as the life of Jesus working within us to change us as a testimony to who Christ is. And he said his whole life and his motivation were centered around Christ, who had given him—and all who believe in Jesus—a ministry of reconciliation to bring people back into fellowship with God.



1. True or false? In general, the church at Corinth reacted well to Paul's first letter to them.
2. True or false? Some people disliked Paul and thought he was weak, ineffective as a leader, and not a real apostle.
3. True or false? Paul never spent much effort defending his own ministry.
4. True or false? 2 Corinthians contains a lot of good advice for those who serve God in ministry.
5. True or false? Paul used the word "saint" to describe anyone who believes in Jesus.

Unless otherwise noted, choose one answer for each question.

6. What is the primary theme of 2 Corinthians?
 - a. Spiritual gifts
 - b. Division in the church
 - c. The credentials and mission of a minister
 - d. The second coming of Jesus
7. Who does the work of ministry?
 - a. Only pastors
 - b. Only pastors and other church leaders
 - c. Only Christians who have gone through the necessary training
 - d. All Christians
8. According to Paul, how does God often train us to be ministers?
 - a. Through a rigorous seminary education
 - b. By giving us divine revelation through visions and other supernatural experiences
 - c. By putting us in a position to suffer and experience His comfort so we can comfort others
 - d. By requiring us to spend a certain number of hours praying, preaching, telling people about Jesus, and reading the Bible
9. What is the essential task of a minister?
 - a. To be the "fragrance" of Christ
 - b. To tell others how to live
 - c. To impress people with our ministry skills
 - d. To use so many religious words that people will know what we believe
10. What was Paul's entire life centered on?
 - a. Himself
 - b. Jesus
 - c. His churches
 - d. Suffering

11. What kind of ministry has God given all who believe?

- a. A ministry of preaching and teaching
- b. A ministry of reconciliation between God and lost human beings
- c. A ministry of leadership
- d. A ministry of health and wealth



What do you think it means to be a minister of reconciliation? In what ways have you been reconciled to God? In what ways can you carry out a ministry of reconciliation in your life today?



Thank God for His comfort and His calling in your life. Ask Him to comfort you in all of your needs and to understand the calling He has given you. Pray that He would teach you and give you opportunities to be a minister of reconciliation among the people He brings into your life.



Going Deeper

1. How can God use suffering to give us a credential that equips us to be ministers? _____

2. Define and apply what Paul describes as a minister of comfort and how we become one. _____

3. How do you respond to and apply Paul's metaphor that we are little clay pots with a great Treasure inside? _____

4. Why does God permit or even direct great pressure to come against that little clay pot? _____

5. According to chapter 5, what has God committed to every believer who has been reconciled to God through Christ? Relate that to this question, "To whom has God committed the work of the ministry?" (Consider Ephesians 4:12) _____

6. Relate to and apply verses 17-18 to Psalm 51:10 and to the Gospel of John 3:3-5. _____

7. Relate to and apply verse 21 to Isaiah 53:6 and 1 Peter 2:24. _____
