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Living as a Servant

6: 1-10

Living as a servant DIG: How does Paul defend the authenticity of his ministry here? How does this differ from the ways the false apostles asserted their authority (3:1, 4:2, 5:12, 11:23-29)? By appealing to his servanthood rather than his supernatural conversion or to the miracles that he performed, what is Paul saying about the true test of faith? What does it mean to receive God's grace in vain? How does Paul's willingness to endure suffering for the sake of Messiah prove that he tried not to put obstacles in anyone's path? What are some of the ways that Paul and his fellow ministers of the gospel commend themselves to the people they served? Paul notes that the role of a servant of God is to preserve and endure even in the midst of struggles. But what internal qualities does a servant also need to possess? How does living a blameless life before God give a believer freedom?

REFLECT: What are some of the reasons people may give for waiting to accept the gospel? What can you do to emphasize to others the urgency for accepting Messiah? Why do you think many believers are reluctant to roll up their sleeves and minister to others? What ironies and paradoxes does Paul cite as he describes his complicated, roller-coaster life as a committed servant of God? Some people protest that Paul's words only apply to "full-time Messianic rabbis and ministers" and that the average believer can't be expected to live like that. How do you respond to this claim? Paul was devoted to living in such a way that his life did not contradict the gospel. What attitudes, values, actions, or habits can tarnish the reputation of Messiah or His Church? What link did Paul see between undergoing affliction and developing into a productive servant of God? What did Paul learn through his trials? Why does being a servant of God matter so much?

Shepherds don't produce sheep; sheep produce sheep.

Earlier, **Paul** began a defense of **his** ministry (**to see link click [Bd](#) - A New Creation**), which, in turn, led to an explanation of **his** message. Now **he** returned to the topic of **his** ministry and its difficulties, mirroring that of **his Lord**. During **His** earthly ministry, **Yeshua** faced the extremes of being adored and despised. While some acclaimed **Him** as **the Lord**

of heaven, others despised **Him** as a **demon-possessed** counterfeit **Messiah**. Since **Yeshua** was treated in such completely opposite ways, **His** followers can expect no less (**John 15:18-20**).

As **ambassadors** (see [Be - The Ministry of Reconciliation](#)), believers bring the message of **reconciliation** to an alienated world. Those who hear **the message** embrace the truth of **it** and cherish **the messengers** or reject both **the message** and **those** who proclaim **it**. Thus, **Messiah's** messengers **are the aroma of the Messiah, both among those being saved and among those being lost; to the latter, we are the smell of death leading only to more death; but to the former, we are the sweet smell of life leading to more life (2:15-16a)**. Those who proclaim **the true gospel** from the pulpit or the pew with power and conviction cannot expect to be popular with everyone. To be **honored** and **dishonored**, respected and reviled, is their lot; to experience the most profound blessing and at the same time suffer the most severe disappointment usually comes to the most faithful and zealous believers.

None is a better example of this than **Paul**, who was caught up in those conflicting realities when **he** wrote [Second Corinthians](#). Despite **their** shortcomings, **the Corinthians** were still a blessing to **him**. Earlier in his letter **he** wrote of **the love which he had especially for them (2:4)**; later **he** added: **I do not speak to condemn you, for I have said before that you are in our hearts to die together and to live together (7:3)**. **His** heart was filled with joy because many of **them** had believed **the gospel**. Yet, the **Corinthians** had also caused **Paul** much pain. **He** had been savagely attacked by **false apostles** who had infiltrated **their** church (see [Af - The Problem of the False Apostles](#)). And a trip to **Corinth** had not gone well for **Paul**, turning into a **painful**, sorrowful visit (see [Ao - Paul's Painful Visit](#)). **He** experienced the full range of emotions, from the heights of **joy** to the depths of sorrow in **his** dealing with **them**.¹⁴⁸

Paul the evangelist (6:1-2): It was **Paul** who had gone to **Corinth** with the good news of **the gospel**; and through **his** ministry, the church had been founded. Many of the believers in **Corinth** were **new creations in Messiah** all right, but they were not living like it. This sad reality really saddened **Paul** more than we could ever know. Just as **he** did throughout **First Corinthians**, **Paul** now urged **his** readers to live up to **the grace they** had received.

As God's fellow-workers [with Him] we also urge you not to receive His grace and then do nothing with it, literally **receive His grace** in vain, that is, then not to live for **Him (6:1)**. There is a line that needs to be rubbed out, and that is the line between the pulpit and the pew. There are certain believers who have been given certain **spiritual gifts**

(see the commentary on [First Corinthians Ch - Unwrapping Your Spiritual Gifts](#)). So there shouldn't be the distinction between the pulpit and the pew that is so prevalent today. We are all **fellow-workers [with Him]**. If you are one who sits in the pew, may I say that you are as responsible to give out and live out **the Word of God** as those in the pulpit. You may be a bank president or the president of a large corporation, a truck driver, or a mother and housewife (the toughest job description of all), but you are responsible today to get out **the Word of God**. Remember: Shepherds don't produce sheep; sheep produce sheep. You may not have the gift of evangelism, but you need to evangelize.

I want to raise the issue again, and I know I am being very personal about it. What are you doing today to get **the Word of God** out to others? You can do something that your Messianic rabbi or your pastor cannot do. There are people that only you can reach. They trust you. They have confidence in you. They will listen to you. Therefore, as **God's fellow-workers [with Him]**, do not wait. Get started **today**.¹⁴⁹

*Dear Heavenly **Father**, **You** are a wise and wonderful Heavenly **Father**! Praise **You** for making an eternal home of peace and joy for **Your** children. **You** are a loving and patient **God**. **The Lord is not slow in keeping His promise, as some consider slowness. Rather, He is being patient toward you - not wanting anyone to perish, but for all to come to repentance. (2 Peter 3:9)**. My heart is heavy for family and friends who know about **You**, but do not yet have a relationship of love with **You**. They are nice people, but being nice cannot get anyone into heaven. **You** opened the door to heaven by giving **Your** righteousness to all who love and follow you as their **Lord and Savior**. **For if you confess with your mouth that Yeshua is Lord, and believe in your heart that God raised Him from the dead, you will be saved. For with the heart it is believed for righteousness, and with the mouth it is confessed for salvation. For the Scripture says, "Whoever trusts in Him will not be put to shame" (Romans 10:9-11)**.*

*Please give me the words, opportunity, and heart of compassion to share the old, old story with them about **You** and what **You** have already done for them. Help me to tear down the lies and unbelief that have held them captive for too long. **For the weapons of our warfare are not fleshly but powerful through God for the tearing down of strongholds. We are tearing down false arguments and every high-minded thing that exalts itself against the knowledge of God (Second Corinthians 10:4-5a)**. Thank **You** for helping me. I look forward to praising **Your** name forever in heaven! In **Yeshua's** holy name and power of **His** resurrection. Amen*

To underline the gravity and urgency of **his** appeal, **Paul** introduces, with the words: **For**

He says, “At the acceptable time I heard you; in the day of salvation I helped you” (6:2). Isra’el’s release from exile in Babylon was the original context of these words; however, **Paul** made his own application. If the time of the exiles’ return was a **day of salvation**, then the time when **ADONAI** has acted in **Messiah** to reconcile the world to **Himself** is an even greater **day of salvation!**¹⁵⁰ Thus, **the apostolic herald** of a new era (see the commentary on **Hebrews Bp - The Dispensation of Grace**) that stood before **the Corinthians**. As **ADONAI** had raised up **Isaiah** as a prophet to speak through **Him** to **comfort, comfort God’s people (Isaiah 41:1)**, so within this new Dispensation, **God** had called **Paul** to be **His coworker** and instrument to **reconcile** the world to **Ha’Shem**. This statement, therefore, must take its place with others (**1:1, 3:12, 4:1, 2 and 6**) through which **Paul** makes the highest claims for **his apostleship**. **He** was claiming an authority similar to that of **the prophets** of the TaNaKh who spoke for **God**. **The LORD** made one appeal through **His prophet Isaiah** (see **Ac - Second Corinthians from a Messianic Jewish Perspective: The Background of Isaiah 40-55**); now **He** was making another appeal through **the apostle Paul (5:20)**.¹⁵¹

Paul the example (6:3-10): We try not to put obstacles in anyone’s path, so that no one can find fault with the work we do (6:3). One of the greatest obstacles to the progress of the gospel is the bad example of people who profess to be believers. Unsaved people like to use the inconsistencies of believers - especially Messianic rabbis and pastors - as an excuse for rejecting **Yeshua Messiah**. **Paul** was careful not to do anything that would put a stumbling block in the way of either sinners or the righteous (**Titus 2:1-10**). **He** didn’t want **his** ministry to be discredited in any way because of **his** life.¹⁵²



Paul reminded **his readers** of the trials **he** had endured for **them**. **On the contrary, we try to commend ourselves in every way as servants of God by continually enduring troubles, hardships, calamities, beatings, imprisonments, riots, overwork, lack of sleep and food (6:4-5)**. When **Paul** says that **he** and **his fellow-workers** were **commending themselves, he** picks up a vitally important thread that had been woven throughout the letter (**3:1, 4:2, 5:12, 7:11, 10:12 and 18, 12:11**), one that lies at the heart of **the apostle's** intentions for writing **Second Corinthians** in the first place. It played an important part in **commending Paul's** mission to **them**, arguing for **their** full affirmation of **the apostle, his ministry, and his gospel** (see the commentary on **Romans As - Paul's Gospel**).¹⁵³ **He** had been a man of endurance and had not quit when things got tough. **Paul's** remarkable **endurance** manifested itself in nine positive qualities **he** had used in **his** ministry. **We commend ourselves by our purity, knowledge, patience and kindness; by the Ruach Ha'Kodesh; by genuineness of love and truthfulness of speech; and by God's power (6:6-7a)**. **Paul** depended on the power of **the Spirit of God** so that **he** might manifest the fruit of **the Spirit**, such as **kindness** and **love**.

Finally, **he** reminded **the Corinthians** of the testimony **he** bore, listing the paradoxical character of the ministry in a series of contrasts. **We commend ourselves through our use of righteous weapons, whether for pressing our cause or defending it**. Faithful **ambassadors of the LORD** can expect to **be honored and dishonored, praised and blamed, considered deceptive and sincere, unknown and famous (6:7b-9a)**. **Paul's** enemies gave an evil report of **him** as a man who was a **dishonorable deceiver**; but **God** gave **him** a good report of **Paul** as a man who was **honorable** and true. **He** was **famous**, and yet at the same time, **unknown**.

What a price **Paul** paid to be faithful in **his** ministry! And yet, **the Corinthians** really didn't fully appreciate all **he** did for **them**.¹⁵⁴ **And we commend ourselves as God's workers headed for death, yet look! we're alive! as punished, yet not killed (6:9b)**. They brought sorrow to **his** heart; still, even though **he** had a **reason to be sad, he** was **always filled with joy in Yeshua Messiah**. **Paul** had a deep, unending joy because of **God's** grace, power, and goodness. Therefore, **he** could write: **Rejoice in the Lord always; again I will say, rejoice (Philippians 4:4)**, and frequently ended **his** letters with doxologies of praise. Life for **Paul** was a seeming paradox of unending sorrow mingled with continual joy.

Paul was undeniably **poor** in terms of **his** worldly possessions. Some have speculated that his family disinherited **him** after **he** became a believer in **Yeshua**. Certainly, **he** had no large bank account to fall back on, but had to rely on financial support from churches (**Philippians 4:16**) and **his** own hard work (**First Thessalonians 2:9**) to support **himself**.

Yet, he made those **people** who believed **his** message eternally **rich** with an eternal inheritance (**Second Corinthians 8:9; Ephesians 1:11 and 3:8; Colossians 1:12; First Peter 1:4**). But making **himself poor** and others **rich** didn't bother **Paul** in the least. Though it appeared that **he had nothing**, in reality **he** possessed **everything** that really mattered (**6:10**)!¹⁵⁵

The more **Adam and Eve** pondered the lies of **the Evil One**, the more **they** doubted the goodness of **ADONAI**. Finally, declaring **their** independence, **they** struck out on **their** own to try to find "life" - to make it work on **their** own terms without **God**. **They** would do this by trying to control things. Aren't we chips off the old block? Don't we approach life the same way? Enter **Yeshua**, who says: **Whoever wants to save their own life will lose it, but whoever loses their life for My sake will find it (Matthew 16:25)**. In other words, the path to **joy** and fulfillment isn't found in *control* . . . but in *surrender*. Those who choose to be **servants** of **God**, giving up control and yielding fully to **His** will and **His** work, are those who find true life - now and forever.¹⁵⁶