

1 CORINTHIANS: MOVING FROM THE CARNAL TO THE SPIRITUAL STATE

Part XLII: Our Need To Remain Long In Difficult Ministries

(1 Corinthians 16:5-9 et al.)

I. Introduction

- A. Christians in ministry efforts today are often tempted to think they should remain in a certain service for God only if they find it relaxing, peaceful or exciting, but withdraw from that work if they face trials in it.
- B. God has a different view of Christian ministry, and 1 Corinthians 16:5-9 with other passages clarifies this:

II. Our Need To Remain Long In Difficult Ministries, 1 Corinthians 16:5-9 et al.

- A. Paul tried to arrange his schedule that he might stay a while at the difficult Corinthian Church, 1 Cor. 16:5-7:
 - 1. The contents of 1 Corinthians reveals Paul faced "an astonishing variety" of "(a)berrant beliefs and practices" in the Church at Corinth that needed to be addressed, Ryrie Study Bible, KJV, 1978, p. 1619.
 - 2. Thus, when he wrote to this Church, he stated he would try to arrange his schedule so instead of quickly passing by them on his way to somewhere else, he would winter with them, to stay a while, 1 Cor. 16:5-7.
- B. Meanwhile, Paul planned to remain at Ephesus since a great opportunity for effective ministry had been opened to him there, and there were many adversaries who needed to be faced in that work, 1 Cor. 16:8-9.
- C. This belief that he needed to stay long in a difficult ministry had actually been taught to Paul by the Lord Himself in his past experience in ministry as we can discern from the Book of Acts:
 - 1. On his first missionary journey, Paul had been so opposed in his ministry that he had been stoned and left for dead at Lystra, a traumatic event caused by previous foes from Antioch and Iconium, Acts 14:1-20:
 - a. The stoning ordeal at Lystra had its roots in foes Paul had faced first at Antioch of Pisidia (Acts 13:14, 50) and later at Iconium where unbelieving Jews had so opposed his Gospel that they stirred up people against him to plan to stone him, Acts 14:1-5.
 - b. Thus, Paul and Barnabas had fled from Iconium to Lystra, preaching the Gospel (Acts 14:6-7, 8) until foes from Antioch and Iconium had come to persuade the people of Lystra to stone him, Acts 14:19.
 - 2. However, God had raised Paul up so that he could not only minister at the next nearby town of Derbe (Acts 14:20), but even return to Lystra where he had been stoned and even to Iconium where he could tell believers they must enter the kingdom of God through much tribulation, Acts 14:21-22!
 - 3. Accordingly, when Paul had then first arrived in Corinth on his second missionary journey, and ran into opposition there (Acts 18:1, 4-8), to counter Paul's temptation to shy away from ministry for fear of possibly being stoned again, God in a night vision had encouraged him to stay at Corinth, for no man would hurt him there as God had many people who were about to turn to Christ in that city, Acts 18:9-10.
 - 4. Paul had thus stayed on at Corinth for 18 more months (Acts 18:11), and when Jewish foes tried to trouble him at Corinth (Acts 18:12-13), and before Paul could open his mouth to defend himself before the official overseeing his trial (Acts 18:14a), the official dismissed the trial (Acts 18:14b-17) so that Paul could continue to minister at Corinth for another "good while," an extended period of time (Acts 18:18a KJV).
- D. Also, God via Paul produced enormous fruit growing out of his greatest hardship -- his stoning at Lystra:
 - 1. Lystra, where Paul was stoned, was the home of Timothy, Paul's beloved son in the faith, Acts 16:1-3. Thus, Paul in a letter to Timothy at 2 Timothy 3:10-11 could later refer to his stoning at Lystra in Acts 14:19 as guidance for Timothy, his son in the faith in view of Paul's imminent martyrdom, 2 Tim. 4:6-7.
 - 2. However, this ministry expands many times over if we realize that Paul's pastoral epistles, two of which were for Timothy from Lystra where Paul was stoned, have provided priceless guidance for countless servants of God regarding ministry trials: (1) Paul urged Timothy to stay at Ephesus where people erred so he might counter their error in 1 Timothy 1:3-4. (2) Paul illustrated by his own conversion of one who once persecuted the Church only to become an apostle as an example of the need for patience in discipling difficult people in 1 Timothy 1:12-17. (3) He urged Timothy to rely on the Holy Spirit to avoid being timid before imposing opponents in ministry in 2 Timothy 1:3-7. (4) Paul told Timothy to endure hardship as a good soldier in 2 Timothy 2:3 and how to do so in 2 Timothy 2:4-7, and (5) how to respond to Satan-influenced foes to his work in 2 Timothy 2:24-26 as he (6) worked "with all longsuffering and doctrine," preaching God's Word in accountability to God and Christ at His coming and kingdom in 2 Timothy 4:1-2.

Lesson: As seen in Paul's ministry and words, God wants His servants to stay put if they face difficult ministries.

Application: May we stay faithful to our calling from God in a difficult ministry until He alone would remove us!