

Expendables

Week 30: July 23-29 – 2 Corinthians 10-13; Romans 1:1-15

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Helpful Resources

Map of Paul's Missionary Journeys

Making Sense of It All

- The Big Picture

Much of Paul's second letter to the Corinthians was dedicated to his defense against the false teachers who were undermining his ministry and message. They not only distorted his teaching, but they also tried to discredit him as a teacher. Thus, Paul felt it necessary to participate in "a little foolishness" and boast of what God had done through him (11:1). Through Paul's boasting, we not only learn more about him, but we can also learn more about ourselves, as to our purpose and duty regarding God's mission.

In defense of the gospel and the church, Paul wrote, "I will gladly spend and be expended for your souls..." (12:15). Though Paul boasted to appease the Corinthians and combat their enemies, he viewed himself as expendable. To be expendable means to be spent, disbursed, used up, or consumed on someone else's behalf, to sacrifice resources, energy, time, and even life for the wellbeing of others. For one to consider himself expendable, he must first view something else worthy of being expended. He must also view himself as less valuable than that object and commit himself to be used up for its survival or success.

Jesus, of course, was the perfect example of this principle. Though He enjoyed the position of privilege in heaven, He humbled Himself and took on flesh as a human (Phil. 3:5-8). He became obedient to the Father and sacrificed Himself on the cross "to be a ransom for many" (Mark 10:45). Jesus became expendable. God the Father loved and valued people so much that He gave His only Son on their behalf. The ransomed Church was purchased by His blood.

Since God has placed such value on the Church and the souls of men, where does that put us? We are one of the ransomed, but we are also called by Him to "make disciples of all nations" (Matt. 28:19, 20). Like Paul, we are called to expend ourselves for the church and the gospel. Let's consider his example of how he became expendable for the Lord.

- Paul's Example
 1. **What Are We Worth?** (2 Cor. 10:1-18): Enemies of the church value themselves more highly than God's people. They measure themselves by themselves, and in their minds, the church is expendable. But Paul did not measure himself by his own standard, but by God's measuring stick (v.13). He sought to be commended by the Lord and not by men. Since God highly values the Church, Paul viewed himself as expendable for her sake.
 2. **Concern for the Church** (2 Cor. 11:1-15; 13:1-14): Paul expressed his concern for the church as jealousy, doing everything he could to prevent the Corinthians from being deceived. He preached for free, and he was not a burden to them while he stayed in Corinth. He was willing to sacrifice his resources for the good of the church.

3. **Battle Scars** (2 Cor. 11:16-33): Paul had endured terrible persecution and hardship for the sake of the gospel. He viewed himself as expendable. His constant concern was for the wellbeing of the church. He was willing to be used up in her service.
4. **Thorns and Thistles** (2 Cor. 12:1-10): Though Paul was privileged as an apostle, often witnessing incredible visions and exhibiting the Spirit's power through miracles, he was often tormented with weaknesses. However, he welcomed difficulty and weakness so that through them he would experience God's grace and strength.
5. **Using or Being Used?** (2 Cor. 12:11-21): Evidently, the false teachers were abusing the Corinthians, charging money, and becoming a burden to them. But Paul did not seek what was theirs; rather he sought them, their souls. He was not a child seeking to be cared for by parents. He was a parent seeking to care for his children. Enemies of the church are looking for something to gain, while true believers are looking for something to give.
6. **Always Striving** (Rom. 1:1-15): In Paul's introduction of his letter to the Romans, he expressed his constant efforts to pray for them, to visit them, and to preach the gospel to them. They were always on his mind, and he never ceased striving for their success.

- The Loss of All Things

Perhaps, Paul described his expendability best in *Philippians 3:7, 8*.

"Whatever things were gain to me, those things I have counted as loss for the sake of Christ. More than that, I count all things to be loss in view of the surpassing value of knowing Christ Jesus my Lord, *for whom I have suffered the loss of all things* and count them as rubbish so that I may gain Christ."

If Jesus would give His life for us, for the Church, how can we ever view anything as gain to us. If we truly see the value of what God is doing here on the earth, is there anything we would not give, even our lives, for the sake of the gospel? Are we ready to lose all things?

The Bottom Line

Just as the Lord expended Himself for us, we are called to expend ourselves for Him and His Church.

Questions to Consider

1. How should we view ourselves, with our own mirror, others' mirrors, or God's mirror? What does that mean to view ourselves in God's mirror? What does He say of us?
2. What is your view of the church? Do you value it highly? Are you seeking to gain from it or give yourself to it?
3. What battle scars do you bear for the gospel? What sacrifices have you made on the Lord's behalf? What have you given for His work on earth?
4. What does it mean if you do not view yourself as expendable? What does it take to have the mindset of expendability?
5. Consider your church. Who is taking from it rather than giving to it? Who are those people focused only on their own needs, desires, and preferences, rather than seeking the good of others?
6. If you view yourself as expendable for Christ and His Church, is there any room for grumbling or complaining? Why or why not?
7. Is there anything else in this life for which we should be expendable? Explain.