



A LETTER FROM YOUR PASTOR: DECEMBER 2023

by Lee Shipp

THE DAY OF GODLESS CHRISTIANITY

Paul had to fight. He said he did. He almost bragged that he did. He did not consider his fights, his afflictions, nor the satanic strategies as some queer event happening to him. He never considered that God forsook him.

And in these fights, he felt the blows of Satan. He said that men did real evil to him. In his second letter to the Corinthians, he said he was pressed, even knocked down. His first letter to the Corinthians reveals he fought the beasts of Ephesus. He never considers himself less than a conqueror in Christ in all these engagements.

Paul pointed to these conflicts as proof of his apostleship, authority, and victory in Christ. Far from the persecutions discouraging him as a follower of Jesus, he pointed to them as proof of his relationship with Jesus. When Paul's life in Christ was attacked, he acted! He listed his credentials, "If I must need glory, I will glory of the things which concern mine infirmities" (2 Corinthians 11:30). Wow, you do not hear preaching like this today!

Paul described his ministry as follows: I am exhausted from the work, beaten beyond measure, frequently in prison, dying constantly. I have been beaten with rods and stoned, and three times, I suffered a shipwreck. For a whole day and night, I floated in the ocean. I am frequently on the go; this puts me in constant danger from robbers, my countrymen, and the heathens. I face perils in the city, the wilderness, the sea, and among false brothers. Shall I go on? Okay. I am weary and suffer much pain. I sleep very little. I am often hungry and thirsty. I suffer from exposure to nature, being both cold and naked. Wait, that's not all: every day, I am overwhelmed with the care of

the churches.

The modern preacher thinks, "Poor Paul; he just lacks faith." Wait! Paul is not finished with his credentials: God allowed a demon to hinder him! Oh my, preach that today! Paul said God explained it was to keep him humble. Again, the contemporary preacher would insist, "If Paul only knew who he was in Christ, he could have enjoyed such a greater victory."

Modern preachers would renounce Paul because he confesses weakness and humility and is the worst of sinners; this humility is foreign to them. They would insinuate that Paul does not know who he is in Christ. He speaks too much about suffering and brokenness. Where is his victory and power?

Will the contemporary preacher teach Paul the right way to believe? I imagine the contemporary preacher delivering his message of power and victory to Paul. Let them explain to Paul how great they are. Let them explain to Paul that they cannot confess weakness or defeat. They cannot suffer brokenness, for we are the head and not the tail; we hold the keys to the Kingdom; we are the power of God on earth. I could see them instructing Paul that his churches suffered such division, satanic attack, sickness, and suffering due to Paul's ignorance to preach who we are in Christ.

Paul has an answer for you! Here it is, "Most gladly therefore will I rather glory in my infirmities, that the power of Christ may rest upon me. "... Therefore, I take pleasure in infirmities, reproaches, necessities, persecutions, distresses for Christ's sake: for when I am weak, then am I strong. I am become a fool in glorying; ye have compelled me: for I ought to have been commended of you: for in nothing am I behind the very chiefest apostles, though I be nothing" (2 Corinthians 12:9-11).

There you have it; Paul says he is nothing. But the modern preacher, with his skewed dominion theology and the exultation of man, would rebuke Paul and say, "How can you say you are nothing? Do you not know who you are in Christ?" Furthermore, they cannot understand how anyone in Christ could celebrate infirmities, reproaches, lack, persecution, distress, and weaknesses, for they cannot comprehend how the grace of God works in a broken man.

Recently, I was confronted by one of these false preachers. They rebuked me because believers in our Church were facing times of affliction. Some of our people battled sickness. Some are struggling in their marriage. Those condemning me were blind to the grace of God in our lives, blind to the presence of God among us, the testimonies of miracles, the joy of God's

presence, and the powerful salvation of people coming into the Kingdom of God. They could not even see they were suffering and sick. They had been married multiple times and watched their loved ones die from sicknesses.

No doubt Timothy struggled with Paul's persecution. Timothy was enticed to forsake Paul and join the ranks of those preachers who seemed to find the easy way of serving the gospel. Paul addressed these in 1 Corinthians 4. He said that God had exhibited the apostles as last and not first: like men sentenced to death, a spectacle to the world, to angels, and men. But other preachers, who thought they knew better than Paul, bragged about how wise they were in Christ. Paul said, "We are fools for Christ's sake, but you are wise ... We are weak, but you are strong. You are held in honor, but we in disrepute." This sounds so familiar today.

What an embarrassment Paul must have been to so many in his day; no wonder Timothy suffered because of Paul's sufferings. Just look at Paul's life in Christ: We hunger and thirst. We are poorly dressed and buffeted and homeless. Hold on to your seats because Paul is about to make an incredible appeal, "I urge you, then, be imitators of me" (1 Corinthians 4:16). I assure you that this modern religious system will not follow Paul!

Today's modern orthodoxy runs counter to the scriptures and the testimony of Paul. Instead of suffering, brokenness, and affliction, they twist God's Word, much like Satan did to Eve. They are so consumed with their identity in Christ that they don't need Christ. They are so focused on what "I am" that they don't need the "I Am." They talk so much of "Self" that they don't need "Him." They rely so much on their "anointing" that they have no intimacy with the Holy Ghost. There is so much mixture of Kingdom Now because they don't understand the "Kingdom" now.

This current charade has made Jesus the means to our greatness, just like Satan's apple to Eve. However, I protest because Jesus is not my means to greatness; He is my greatness. It is not what I am, but Christ is the hope of glory in me. I must decrease, and He must increase.

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Paul foresaw the Church being overrun with godly performances but barren of actual power (2 Timothy 3). Sadly, these religious zealots do not know they are without power; they do not know that the show, the riches, and the performances have pushed Jesus out. "We are rich and increased with goods," they say. "We have need of nothing," they say; all the while, Jesus is knocking on the door to be invited back in. They gauge their power based on their ability to prevail over the people, not their ability to prevail with God, as when Jacob became Israel.

They demand, "We are the ones. This is our day. We shall take over. We are the victors;" however, they have no concept of what the victory of Jesus even entails or how it occurs. They deny brokenness, which is the only way to power. They deny weakness, which is the means of grace (2 Corinthians 12:9). Paul gloried in his infirmity. Still, these modern preachers believe that if you have infirmity, you lack the understanding of who you are in Christ.