

LESSON 10 — FRUITS OF AN AUTHENTIC MINISTRY

1. MEMORY TEXT: THE PARADOX OF MINISTRY

- 2 Corinthians 4:8–10

- Paul describes ministry through contrasts:

- Troubled, yet not distressed
- Perplexed, yet not in despair
- Persecuted, yet not forsaken
- Cast down, yet not destroyed

- PRINCIPLE:

- Ministry is marked by tension between weakness and divine sustaining power

2. THE REALITY OF MINISTRY PARADOXES

- We are weak → yet sustained

- We are pressed → yet preserved

- We are suffering → yet victorious

- We are dying → yet living

- “Perplexed” (Greek: *aporeo*):

- Seeing no visible way out

- Yet:

- Not in despair because God provides deliverance

- PRINCIPLE:

- Authentic ministry depends on God, not circumstances

3. CONTEXT: PAUL DEFENDS HIS MINISTRY

- Begins in 2 Corinthians 2:12–17
- Continues through chapter 7
- Paul responds to accusations:
 - Inconsistency
 - Lack of love
- **RESULT:**
 - He explains what authentic ministry truly looks like

4. THE TRUE EVIDENCE OF MINISTRY

- Key principle (Acts of the Apostles, p. 328):
 - Conversion of sinners
 - Sanctification through truth
 - Transformed lives
- These are the strongest evidences of a divine calling
- **PRINCIPLE:**
 - Ministry is validated by spiritual fruit, not titles

5. UNDERSTANDING CALLING

- Two realities:
 - Some feel called, then begin the work
 - Others do the work, then realize they were called
- **PRINCIPLE:**
 - If God is using your life to bring transformation, He is working through you

6. THE PRINCIPLE OF FRUIT

- A tree is known by its fruit

- If it produces:

- Apples → it is an apple tree

- Pears → it is a pear tree

- **SPIRITUAL APPLICATION:**

- Fruit reveals identity

- Fruit is evidence of God's work

7. FALSE VALIDATION VS TRUE EVIDENCE

- **2 Corinthians 3:1**

- Some relied on letters of recommendation

- These letters were used to establish authority

- **PRINCIPLE:**

- External validation can be misleading

8. THE BELIEVER AS THE LETTER

- 2 Corinthians 3:2–3

- Paul's response:

- "Ye are our epistle"

- **Meaning:**

- The transformed lives of believers are the proof of ministry

- **KEY TRUTH:**

- Not written with ink

- Written by the Spirit on the heart

- **PRINCIPLE:**

- Changed lives are the evidence of authentic ministry

9. GOD IS THE SOURCE OF ALL SUFFICIENCY

- 2 Corinthians 3:5
- "Our sufficiency is of God"
- Greek: hikanos = competence, ability

- PRINCIPLE:

- God makes ministers
- God empowers ministry

- WARNING:

- Success can lead to subtle pride

- RESPONSE:

- Give all credit to God

10. BALANCE IN RECEIVING ENCOURAGEMENT

- When others express appreciation:
 - Receive it graciously
 - Do not dismiss encouragement

- THEN:

- Redirect glory to God

- PRINCIPLE:

- Maintain humility without rejecting affirmation

11. GOD MAKES MINISTERS

- 2 Corinthians 3:6

- Ministers are made by God, not by man

- PRINCIPLE:

- Calling is divine, not human

- ENCOURAGEMENT:

- In discouragement, criticism, or rejection:
- Remember: God appoints and sustains His workers

12. THE LAW AND THE SPIRIT

- 2 Corinthians 3:7

- “Ministration of death” refers to:
 - The law as misused or misunderstood

- CLARIFICATION:

- The law reveals sin
- The law cannot give life

- LIFE COMES THROUGH:

- Christ

- CONTRAST:

- Old covenant: written on stone, fading glory
- New covenant: written on hearts, enduring glory

13. THE FLOW OF PAUL’S ARGUMENT

- Step 1: No need for letters of recommendation
- Step 2: The believers are the letter
- Step 3: They are Christ’s letter
- Step 4: Written by the Spirit on the heart
- Step 5: This proves authentic ministry
- Step 6: The new covenant ministry is greater
- Step 7: The old system wrote on stone and condemned
- Step 8: The new writes on hearts and gives life

- Step 9: The old glory faded
- Step 10: The new glory endures through transformed lives

14. FINAL PRINCIPLE: TRUST THE PROCESS OF FRUIT

- Fruit is not always immediate
- At times:
 - You preach
 - You appeal
 - No visible response occurs

- PRINCIPLE:

- God is still working beneath the surface

- TRUTH:

- When fruit appears, it confirms God was working all along