Series: Finding Strength When You’re Taking Fire

**Serving Others Without Losing Your Joy**

2 Corinthians 12:11-21 July 10 2016

1. You need patience to serve others without losing your joy.

(vv.11-13)

a. Leaders often face ungratefulness, disrespect and unfair criticism.

* V.11 *I ought to have been commended by you.*
* V.11 *I was not at all inferior to these super-apostles*
* Michael Andrus: If you’re one of those who has become enamored with today’s superstars among the clergy, just ask yourself how that individual is going to help you the next time you have a crisis in your marriage or your parent dies or your child gets into drugs.
* V.13 *in what were you less favored than the rest of the churches*

b. Great leaders need patience not just power.

* *V.12 The signs of a true apostle were performed among you with utmost patience*
* You would think someone who could perform *“signs and wonders and mighty works”* wouldn’t need patience. He could supernaturally fix anything that was wrong – but people aren’t so easily ‘fixed!’

Q. What does it mean to “commend” those who give themselves to lead you? What can you do to commend those who serve you?

Q. What is the balance between being discerning as a follower and not trying the patience of those who lead?

Q. Why is patience so important for those who lead (even for those who can perform miracles)?

2. You need sacrifice to serve others without losing your joy.

(vv.14-18)

a. Leaders seek people’s hearts not their possessions.

* V.14 *And I will not be a burden, for I seek not what is yours but you.*
* Richard Pratt: Paul’s motives were simple but profound. He did not want the Corinthians to think that their money was more important to him than they were.

b. Leaders imitate the sacrificial love of a parent for a child.

* V.14 *children are not obligated to save up for their parents, but parents for their children*
* V.15 *I will most gladly spend and be spent for your souls.*
* C. E. Arnold: Whereas the Corinthians would have liked to have been Paul’s patron/benefactor, providing for his needs and thus placing him under certain obligations, Paul explains their relationship with the metaphor of a family.
* Michael Andrus: He is simply stating the obvious–decent parents don’t exploit their children; they cheerfully accept the responsibility to rear them, educate them, and establish them as self-sufficient adults.
* 1 Thessalonians 2:7–8 *7But we were gentle among you, like a nursing mother taking care of her own children. 8So, being affectionately desirous of you, we were ready to share with you not only the gospel of God but also our own selves, because you had become very dear to us.*

c. Leaders must love those who often don’t love them back.

* V.15 *If I love you more, am I to be loved less?*
* Richard Pratt: This was the tender plea of a loving parent to his wayward children. He opened his heart to them in hopes that they would reciprocate his affection and commitment to them (compare 6:11-13).

Q. Who are the people in your life whose good you seek without any hope for a return?

Q. How does the sacrificial love of a parent help you to see your role in the lives of the people you serve differently?

3. You need God to serve others without losing your joy.

(vv.19-21)

a. Leaders will often be disappointed by the sin of those they serve.

* V.20 *I fear that perhaps when I come I may find you not as I wish*

b. Leaders are humbled when they see those whom they took pride in fall in sin.

* V.21 *I fear that when I come again my God may humble me before you*
* Notice that God uses even the sin and disappointments of the Corinthian church to accomplish something good in Paul’s life.

c. Serving God not people is the key to serving people with joy.

* V.19 *Have you been thinking all along that we have been defending ourselves to you?*
* V.19 *It is in the sight of God that we have been speaking in Christ*
* Hebrews 4:13 *And no creature is hidden from his sight, but all are naked and exposed to the eyes of him to whom we must give account.*
* 1 Peter 2:21 *For to this you have been called, because Christ also suffered for you, leaving you an example, so that you might follow in his steps.*

Q. When Paul faced the sins of those he served, he recognized that even this was a part of God’s good plan to mature and develop him. How can this change how you approach the sins of those you serve?

Q. How does serving people “in the sight of God” change your attitude towards your service?

Q. 1 Peter 2:21 speaks of following in the steps of Jesus who left us an example in suffering for others. Where have you seen that reflected in your life?

**Notes:**