

# Had Any Good Fights Lately?

*"...we were harassed at every turn-  
conflicts on the outside, fears within."  
2 Corinthians 7:5 (NIV)*

A fine young preacher friend of mine emailed me a link to what is a most fascinating article that deals with afflictions in the ministry.

This is not the first occasion when my friend has helped me in my work as a minister of Jesus Christ. He and I have had spirited debates on various things concerning Scripture and how to understand the message written for our comfort and instruction.

The article my friend referred me to addresses numerous comments by the apostle Paul on his suffering as a preacher. My understanding of how much Paul discussed about his personal suffering was enlarged as a result of reading the article.

I think that most people in the congregation today have the notion that a preacher is above the common suffering of individuals in the pew. They are seen as being well able to handle anything that comes to them in a fallen world.

Pastors are not supposed to have any doubts about their faith, they are to calmly pass through the furnace of affliction, and endure in a heroic manner what might cause the average Christian to collapse.

This way of looking at the Lord's servant in the pulpit is not only grossly unfair to the preacher, it is not true to life. Was there ever a preacher as fearless, bold, powerful in the faith as the mighty apostle Paul? Most of us think not. Yet even such a remarkable man as Paul had struggles and difficulties in the ministry for our Lord.

The most common way in which to understand what Paul is saying in our verse today is to recognise that he had many conflicts that could be seen by everyone who cared to examine his life. Then Paul uncovers his inner life and speaks about his internal fears in the work he did.

Paul's heart was in turmoil as he worked for Jesus and His church. Even such an amazing soldier in Christ's army had his battles that only he and the Lord really knew about in detail. Here Paul only makes a general statement about his "conflicts... [and] fears".

We are left to fill in the blanks concerning his inner struggles but elsewhere he carefully lists his external "conflicts" (1 Corinthians 4:11-13)

We go away on vacations to "get away from things". We sight-see to take our minds off our issues and have a reprieve from the

hassles of our circumstances. However, in the spiritual realm it seems that there are no vacations in this life. We are constantly on guard.

If you have grown weary with the inner conflicts of your situation, be assured that the rest of the Lord's people struggle in a similar manner, even the pastor.

At times we all experience fear, doubts and confusion of mind. Seek to hold on to some special promise of the Lord when your private thoughts overwhelm you.

The Lord has said, (Hebrews 13:5) "I will never leave you or forsake you."

Take this promise to the Lord and call on Him to fulfill it to you right now. Tell the Lord you want Him to assure you that you have not been forsaken by Him.

His tender heart is moved by the prayers of His children. Seek Him today whatever your issue that only you and the Lord know. He is nearer than you think.

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