

I Corinthians 4:6-13
Doing well and doing good

- The Old Covenant sometimes suggests that material blessing is a sign and reward for faithfulness to the covenant.

Proverbs 13:21-22 “Adversity pursues sinners, but **the righteous will be rewarded with prosperity**. A good man leaves an inheritance to his children’s children, and **the wealth of the sinner is stored up for the righteous.**”

- But the New Covenant offers a different perspective.

I Tim.6:5-6 “⁵ . . . men of depraved mind and deprived of the truth, who **suppose that godliness is a means of gain**. ⁶ But godliness {actually} is a means of great gain, when accompanied by contentment.”

Test your attitude

1. Do you expect God to keep you from harms way if you live a good life and pray?
2. Do you feel that those who go through hard times probably do so because God is trying to teach them something?
3. Do you look at the painful and unjust experiences of your life as an opportunity to develop and demonstrate character?
4. When you suffer, do you question God's love and / or power toward you?
5. When you are blessed do you often feel as though you have earned it?

A. Stick to Scriptural Principles

“⁶ Now these things, brethren, I have figuratively applied to myself and Apollos for your sakes, that in us you might learn **not to exceed what is written**, in order that no one of you might become arrogant in behalf of one against the other.

- Paul is teaching a universal principle with local application.
- Human tradition and culture can easily displace sound Scriptural principles. While tradition can often find a proof text for support this does not mean that there is a basis in sound Biblical teaching. **See apptoteach.org theology file #213, #214**

1. God is our judge (not man).

⁷ For who regards you as superior?

- The world's pecking order compares people with each other on superficial standards. **See apptoteach.org theology file #308, #802**
- One of the characteristics of worldly wisdom is its man centeredness.
- The ground is level at the foot of the cross. If you want to be lifted up, carry a cross!

2. God is our source (not self).

“⁷ . . . And what do you have that you did not receive? But if you did receive it, why do you boast as if you had not received it?”

- The worldly mind fails to see God's hand in life and credits man with both the good and the bad of life.
- Life's blessings call for worship and gratitude not pride and prejudice.

3. Our hope is in heaven (not this life).

“⁸ You are already filled, you have already become rich, you have become kings without us; and {I} would indeed that you had become kings so that we also might reign with you.”

- The key word here is “already.” The position of the believer as a rich ruler is not the problem. The question is when?
- Paul is mocking the carnal pride of the Corinthian Church.

4. Life in a fallen world means suffering (not comfort).

“⁹ For, I think, God has exhibited us apostles last of all, as men condemned to death; because we have become a spectacle to the world, both to angels and to men. ¹⁰ We are fools for Christ's sake, but you are prudent in Christ; we are weak, but you are strong; you are distinguished, but we are without honor. ¹¹ To this present hour we are both hungry and thirsty, and are poorly clothed, and are roughly treated, and are homeless; ¹² and we toil, working with our own hands;”

- **Rom.8:18** “For I consider that that sufferings of this present time are not worthy to be compared with the glory that is to be revealed to us.”
- **I Pet.4:13** “but to the degree that you share the sufferings of Christ, keep on rejoicing; so that also at the revelation of His glory, you may rejoice with exultation.”
- **Phil.3:10** “that I may know Him, and the power of His resurrection and the fellowship of His sufferings, being conformed to His death.”
- **II Cor.4:16-17** “¹⁶ therefore we do not lose heart, but through our outer man is decaying, yet our inner man is being renewed day by day. ¹⁷ For momentary, light affliction is producing for us an eternal weight of glory far beyond all comparison.”

5. Godly virtues are best developed and demonstrated in suffering (not comfort).

“¹² . . . when we are reviled, we bless; when we are persecuted, we endure; ¹³ when we are slandered, we try to conciliate; we have become as the scum of the world, the dregs of all things, {even} until now.”

- Suffering is not a virtue but how we respond to it can be.
- The Apostles counted it a privilege to share Christ's suffering.

B. The Corinthians while doing well, were not doing good.

- Paul mocks their pride in their blessings, which hide their true spiritual poverty.
- He points out the humble circumstances of the Apostles by way of contrast.
- The principles of Scripture call followers of Christ to show virtue and power as they suffer and wait.

C. The Point

While doing well in this life is not contrary to God's will it is not to be expected because we follow Christ and like him, show virtue and faith in the face of suffering.

D. Lessons from this text

- **Remember that God is our judge.** Do not play to the world's values and verdicts.
- **Don't be discouraged by suffering.** There are more opportunities for displays of Godly virtue in suffering than in blessing.
- **Use blessings as an opportunity for worship and giving of thanks.**