

The passing of our dear brothers Seizo and Don remind us that our journey through this life will one day come to an end, and we will all stand before the judgment seat of Christ and give an account of what we did with this brief life we were given (5:10ⁱ). In our passage for today, Paul was under compulsion to explain the difference between his team and the false teachers. He did not like to boast and knew that boasting in anything other than the Lord was ungodly (10:17,18ⁱⁱ), but **he needed to help the Corinthians see the heart and not the outward appearances**. We are often tempted to be impressed by how things appear from a worldly perspective, but it is the heart that matters to God and therefore should matter to us as well (5:12ⁱⁱⁱ). Paul wanted them to understand his heart and that of his ministry team for them for the sake of the gospel message he proclaimed.

³ We put no obstacle in anyone's way, so that no fault may be found with our ministry, 2 Corinthians 6:3 In these verses Paul concludes his defense of his ministry by bearing his soul to them. He is sharing what his team has endured because of their love for Jesus and the church. He did not want to boast in himself but was compelled to point out the difference between his ministry and the false teachers. It had to be spelled out because they were not mature enough to discern it.

This passage makes me weep over the hardness of the hearts in some congregations. It is certainly not true of this fellowship, for you have been such a blessing to me and to one another. I know how painful this experience of rejection is because I have witnessed it in other churches. I have heard pastors share their broken hearts.

One pastor and his wife came here to recover from the abuse of their congregation. It was a small church so they both worked additional jobs to make ends meet. Trying to give the flock their time, their love, thoughtful counsel, and the sincere milk of the Word while also raising a family and working at a secular job was demanding. And yet, for that congregation, they never felt the pastor was good enough. It was so devastating to this couple that they had lost the desire to shepherd another congregation. It happens all the time. Praise God, they are now restored and shepherding a godly church.

I was in fellowship with another pastor here in Sedona who was scarred from his last congregation. He was fired after giving them his time, effort, and love. He was met in his present congregation with a little more kindness but at the same time an apathetic response to his message. He felt he was getting nowhere with them and retired, but he continued to preach filling in for pastors on leave in his new community.

Lifeway Research asks us to “consider for a moment the fact that almost every task a pastor has is by nature complex: studying for a sermon, giving marital advice, providing leadership to a volunteer organization, having budget responsibility, helping those who are grieving, etc. That diverse complexity alone is taxing. But the demands on a pastor require them to quickly switch between different complex tasks that require completely different knowledge, skills, or abilities.

This list of tasks for a pastor never ends. There is always another complex task to switch to and to pour your all into. A congregation's needs, demands, and desires seem never-ending and are often ill-timed. Yet, few pastors quit. In a given year only about 1% leave the ministry before retirement.”

For those who are visiting or online I can tell you what can make a great difference and has enabled me to continue here for 21 years. First is of course dependence on the Holy Spirit and discipline to study the Word. Next, I would say is a team of godly elders who meet the qualifications of Titus 1 and 1 Timothy 3. A godly wife who is willing to work with women is a huge plus. And finally, four weeks away each year with an additional four-week sabbatical once every five years. Not only has the above made it possible to endure, but it has made it a joy. That does not mean it is easy!

I encourage young men to pray about ministry, and I also discourage them from it. I tell them if they can be satisfied doing anything else, then do that instead. That is because the call from God to minister will burn in the heart of a person who is called and cause them to be dissatisfied doing anything else. Despite the hardship of ministry, most will endure for that very reason. They may leave one church to serve somewhere else, or change their role within the church, but they carry on. Compared to the Apostle Paul, our burdens are miniscule. But like the Apostle, we strive to put no obstacle in anyone's way, so that no fault may be found with our ministry. And you can be sure that there is always someone trying to find fault. Some people think a critical spirit is a gift of the Spirit. Ministers will not please everyone nor should we try. They should always strive to please the Lord.

No matter what we do, someone will be dissatisfied because we all have some unique convictions, many of which are inconsequential to the gospel, but are some people's favorite hobbyhorse: age of the earth, when Christ will return, Calvinism versus Armenianism, interpretation of Revelation, the Nephilim, and on and on. We need to focus on one thing: Jesus! We are told by the Apostle, *²For I decided to know nothing among you except Jesus Christ and him crucified.* 1 Corinthians 2:2

How can we surrender more fully to Him (Romans 12:1,2^{iv})? How can we die to self and let Him be our life (Galatians 2:20^v)? How can we be His instrument to point others to Him? How can we be pleasing to Him (5:9^{vi})? Abiding in Christ is our goal.

There are many things that are clear in Scripture. We stand on those truths. On the more abstract and undefined we should hold our own opinions while listening to others who differ and hearing why they differ. But if we spend all our time there, we miss the essential purpose of our lives. It is not about being right and others being wrong, it is about being a living sacrifice to let the love of Christ minister to others through us.

What applies to pastors also has an application to all believers for we are all ministers desiring to share the truth of the gospel to others (1 Peter 2:5^{vii}). We should all strive not to put obstacles in the way of others. That does not mean we compromise the truth or agree with opinions that contradict the Scripture, but instead of arguing, present Jesus. Tell your testimony. Our tendency to push back is often a sign of our ego feeling hurt. Represent Jesus and His love. Just keep coming back to Jesus and how He loves us and can save our souls. Clarify any misunderstanding they might have about the Scripture, but there is no need to argue with those who are not open to thoughtful debate.

The reason we strive not to put an obstacle in anyone's way is that we do not want anything to hinder their journey to Christ or their spiritual growth. If I talk about politics, even if I am factual in my assertions, someone will take offense and may stop listening to the Word. They may instead find a church where their political opinion is lauded, which means that church's emphasis is politics rather than God's Word and being transformed into the likeness of Christ, who by the way said almost nothing about politics. Focus on

Jesus. When He returns, He will not check to see if your eschatology was correct. Only one thing will matter. Do you know Him (Matthew 7:23^{viii})? Which in biblical terms means are you intimate with Him. Did you receive His loving correction and embrace His gift of forgiveness *or* reject Him as Lord of your life?

Consider the fact that even though Jesus knew Judas would betray Him, He washed his feet, and He passed the sop to him, a sign of friendship. Jesus not only did not put an obstacle in Judas' way, He went out of His way to show God's love to him. Love is the defining nature of a born-again follower of Jesus (John 13:35^{ix}).

⁴ but as servants of God we commend ourselves in every way: by great endurance, in afflictions, hardships, calamities, ⁵ beatings, imprisonments, riots, labors, sleepless nights, hunger; 2 Corinthians 6:4,5 Why do these hardships commend (establish or prove) Paul and company to the Corinthian church? It is a declaration of how much they are willing to endure because they love Christ and His church. Thus, it is an example to all believers what they should be willing to endure as well. The first in the list is "great endurance." I would think that being chased out of numerous cities or being harassed over and over by the Judaizers one might decide it just is not worth the effort (Acts 13:50^x; 16:19^{xi}). But Paul always endured. The list of hardships tells us what things he and his team had endured.

The things endured come in groups of three. First, are general expressions. Afflictions heads the list. We think of afflictions as physical illness but the Greek word can mean any kind of tribulation. *Afflictions are common to all (Job 5:7^{xii}; 14:1^{xiii}; Psalm 34:19^{xiv}); are for the good of men (James 1:2,3^{xv}, 12^{xvi}; 2 Cor. 12:7^{xvii}) and the glory of God (2 Cor 12:7-10^{xviii}; 1 Peter 4:14^{xix}), and are to be borne with patience by the Lord's people (Ps 94:12^{xx}; Prov. 3:12^{xxi}). They are all directed by God (Lam. 3:33^{xxii}), and will result in the everlasting good of his people (2 Cor. 4:16-18^{xxiii}) in Christ Jesus (Romans 8:35-39^{xxiv})*^{xxv} Those scriptural truths and this whole paragraph we are studying directly contradict the prosperity gospel, which teaches that if you are in Christ, you will be prosperous and blessed physically. Every description in this passage denies that.

The next is *hardships*. It means to be pressed tightly or compelled. If we walk in the Spirit, we will regularly be compelled to do things our flesh does not want to do (Mark 1:12^{xxvi}). But this carries the idea of great pressure. Paul felt the Lord's heart for the churches and their wellbeing (11:28^{xxvii}). We cast our burdens on the Lord, but at times we also feel with Him for lost loved ones and people we have witnessed to. *Calamities* comes from a word that means being in a tight spot. In other words, there seems nowhere to turn. That can develop into depression if we are not trusting God.

The next three are more specific examples of what they endured. *Beatings*, Paul was physically attacked by mobs and sometimes sentenced to being beaten with rods (11:25^{xxviii}). He was imprisoned in Philippi, Jerusalem, Caesarea, and Rome. Prisons in those days were dark, dank, cells often underground. No food was provided. It had to be brought by a friend or relative. Disturbances implies instability, confusion, or chaos often brought about by riots.

The final group of three include situations they voluntarily endured. *Troubles*, all of these things sound like troubles, but this word implies very hard physical labor. *Sleepless nights*, surely brought about by some of the above, but also wondering if you will be executed in the morning, nights of prayer for the churches, or situations in which it is impossible to sleep (11:27^{xxix}). *Going hungry* is the last in Paul's list of things he

endured. Paul had spent his family's wealth in serving the Lord, then he either worked to provide food for himself or relied on the generosity of the churches. But there were times when neither was possible resulting in a forced fast. All these difficulties were experienced in just the first half of his ministry! He still had nine years to go!

When the Holy Spirit draws us to surrender to Christ, our flesh will object because it does not want to go through hardship. However, life is full of hardship in whatever path we choose. If we could see inside the hearts of the wealthy who seem to have it all together, we would realize the heart agony of those we sometimes envy is just as difficult as what we may endure for Jesus, but theirs does not end in reward. Look at the suicides and overdoses of the rich and famous and you will realize it is true. We live in a fallen world, which is why trouble and pain are inevitable. You can choose to go through it without purpose and try to escape as much as possible, but life is not in our control. The end of such a life is to stand before a just and holy God and face His wrath on our selfish lives. Or we can suffer for Christ, count it all joy, and realize it is light and momentary compared to what is the joy that is to come (James 1:2^{xxx}; 2 Corinthians 4:17^{xxxi}).

⁶ *by purity, knowledge, patience, kindness, the Holy Spirit, genuine love;* 2 Corinthians 6:6 Now Paul turns to tell of the heart of his team responding to what they endured. It is not just about him. See how it starts with "we" in verse 3. By *purity*, implies that they are free from defilement, which in this case may refer to any false motives. *Knowledge*, the Holy Spirit has given them insight into the Scriptures. They understand the amazing grace of God and that we are freed from the Law to serve in newness of life. *Patience*, a quality of spirit that will endure testing with faith. This letter is an example of the patience Paul and his team have with the Corinthians because of their love for them and for Christ. This is a much-needed spiritual gift that helps us to live out the command in 5:16a, *from now on therefore, we regard no one according to the flesh*. Our flesh is bound to be offended by comments or arguments from our brothers and sisters. Patience does not hold it against them. Just as we would like God and others to be patient with us, so we should be patient with them (Matthew 5:7^{xxxii}). Always remember we are all works in progress. Only Jesus is perfect! *Kindness* is also a gift of the Spirit (Galatians 5:22,23^{xxxiii}). We are not naturally kind. It means goodness of heart, not just outwardly being amenable. KJV sometimes translates it as gentleness. What a needed attribute in the contentious world of today.

In the Holy Spirit, Paul's team did not operate simply by their impulses or intelligence. They were led by the Holy Spirit. Teaching that is not Holy Spirit led may fascinate the mind, and talented speakers can stir the emotions, but Holy Spirit inspired teaching will change us. It imparts something of Christ, renewing our minds and changing our behavior. It is alive. We go away knowing we have met with the Lord.

Genuine love, God's love, *agape* which is love that is sincere and sees the value within the one that love is set upon. It is a choice, not a feeling. It sees with eyes of faith and with hope in what God can do in a life. This kind of love does not give up. The word for *genuine* in this verse is literally "not hypocritical." It is not just appearing to love but love that comes from God and flows through our hearts.

⁷ *by truthful speech, and the power of God; with the weapons of righteousness for the right hand and for the left;* 2 Corinthians 6:7 By *truthful speech*, which is literally "in the word of truth." It is difficult to tell when the Greek word *logos* is referring to speech or God's Word. In this context, I believe Paul is referring to the gospel according to the

Scriptures. Paul was a master at pointing out the revelation of grace and salvation in the Old Testament. The false teachers tried to mix the grace of Christ with the Law. They are still trying to do it today.

In the power of God! Paul declared his speech and preaching was not from the wisdom of men but a demonstration of the power of God (1 Corinthians 2:4^{xxxiv}). We should see this as the power that touches hearts and wins souls to Christ. The apostles demonstrated miraculous powers in the physical realm as well. We also have the power of God working through us. We have been given the authority of Jesus' name. But the apostles had an abundance of miraculous signs which confirmed they were the official ones appointed by Jesus to convey the new covenant to us. They had the same Holy Spirit power we have today, but it was more frequently manifest in the miraculous to establish the truth of the message for the establishment of the church. God promised through the prophet Joel that this would happen again in the latter days (Joel 2:28-31^{xxxv}). Peter quoted it at Pentecost (Acts 2:16-18^{xxxvi}), and in part it has been and is fulfilled even now, yet the sun has not yet been turned into darkness nor the moon turned into blood. Perhaps in those very final days, signs and wonders will again be frequent to turn the last converts to Christ and counter the miracles of the Antichrist (Revelation 13:13,14^{xxxvii}).

With weapons of righteousness for the right hand and the left hand. While some see this as the sword of the Spirit and shield of faith, offensive and defensive weapons (Ephesians 6:16,17^{xxxviii}), I think Paul may have in mind the rebuilding of the walls of Jerusalem in the days of Nehemiah. Because of the threat of attack from their enemies, the men had to work with a sword in one hand and a trowel in the other (Nehemiah 4:17,18^{xxxix}). In a spiritual sense, the apostles and their teams worked with the sword of the Spirit to attack the realm of darkness. In the other hand they had the trowel of the Word to build up the church. It is a fitting analogy. We do the same thing. We should always be pushing back the darkness with the Word while helping one another grow in Christ with the Word. The sense is of double duty for the perilous conditions we are in. Just as the enemies of Jerusalem were looking for gaps in the wall or a lack of readiness in the soldiers at the wall, so the enemy of our souls looks for weaknesses. We defend our own position with the Word, and we are ready to assist wherever the trumpet is blown when our brothers or sisters are spiritually attacked (Nehemiah 4:20^{xl}; 2 Corinthians 10:3-5^{xli})

We can see from our text today that the Christian life is not a bed of roses, but then no life really is. It is a life full of meaning, purpose, joy in the Holy Spirit, freedom from the fear of death (Hebrews 2:15^{xlii}), communion with God now and eternal bliss in the presence of our Savior forever. Why would anyone choose such a hard life? Because Jesus chose to rescue us from this fallen world and died for our sins. The love of Christ controls us. Not only did His sacrifice save us from the power of sin, but He invites us into a love relationship with our Savior, a relationship which makes all this world has to offer nothing by comparison. May God work through us to open more and more eyes to the wonder of His love for us and His invitation to truly live. May we, by the grace of God, follow Paul's example, willing to endure hardship to be God's ambassadors to a lost world.

Questions:

- 1 What is Paul's thrust in this passage?
- 2 Why do we strive to have no fault found in our ministry?
- 3 Why should we avoid arguing about minor topics?
- 4 Review Easton's comments on afflictions?
- 5 Review the list of afflictions.
- 6 Can we escape all trouble? What are our choices?
- 7 List what was in the heart of Paul's team.
- 8 How many of those can you say God is working into your heart?
- 9 What may "for the right hand and for the left" refer to?
- 10 Why would anyone choose such a life?

ⁱ **2 Corinthians 5:10 (ESV)**

¹⁰ For we must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ, so that each one may receive what is due for what he has done in the body, whether good or evil.

ⁱⁱ **2 Corinthians 10:17-18 (ESV)**

¹⁷ "Let the one who boasts, boast in the Lord." ¹⁸ For it is not the one who commends himself who is approved, but the one whom the Lord commends.

ⁱⁱⁱ **2 Corinthians 5:12 (ESV)**

¹² We are not commending ourselves to you again but giving you cause to boast about us, so that you may be able to answer those who boast about outward appearance and not about what is in the heart.

^{iv} **Romans 12:1-2 (ESV)**

¹ I appeal to you therefore, brothers, by the mercies of God, to present your bodies as a living sacrifice, holy and acceptable to God, which is your spiritual worship. ² Do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewal of your mind, that by testing you may discern what is the will of God, what is good and acceptable and perfect.

^v **Galatians 2:20 (ESV)**

²⁰ I have been crucified with Christ. It is no longer I who live, but Christ who lives in me. And the life I now live in the flesh I live by faith in the Son of God, who loved me and gave himself for me.

^{vi} **2 Corinthians 5:9 (ESV)**

⁹ So whether we are at home or away, we make it our aim to please him.

^{vii} **1 Peter 2:5 (ESV)**

⁵ you yourselves like living stones are being built up as a spiritual house, to be a holy priesthood, to offer spiritual sacrifices acceptable to God through Jesus Christ.

^{viii} **Matthew 7:23 (ESV)**

²³ And then will I declare to them, 'I never knew you; depart from me, you workers of lawlessness.'

^{ix} **John 13:35 (ESV)**

³⁵ By this all people will know that you are my disciples, if you have love for one another."

^x **Acts 13:50 (ESV)**

⁵⁰ But the Jews incited the devout women of high standing and the leading men of the city, stirred up persecution against Paul and Barnabas, and drove them out of their district.

^{xi} **Acts 16:19 (ESV)**

¹⁹ But when her owners saw that their hope of gain was gone, they seized Paul and Silas and dragged them into the marketplace before the rulers.

^{xii} **Job 5:7 (ESV)**

⁷ but man is born to trouble as the sparks fly upward.

^{xiii} **Job 14:1 (ESV)**

¹ "Man who is born of a woman is few of days and full of trouble.

^{xiv} **Psalms 34:19 (ESV)**

¹⁹ Many are the afflictions of the righteous, but the LORD delivers him out of them all.

^{xv} **James 1:2-3 (ESV)**

² Count it all joy, my brothers, when you meet trials of various kinds, ³ for you know that the testing of your faith produces steadfastness.

^{xvi} **James 1:12 (ESV)**

¹² Blessed is the man who remains steadfast under trial, for when he has stood the test he will receive the crown of life, which God has promised to those who love him.

^{xvii} **2 Corinthians 12:7 (ESV)**

⁷ So to keep me from becoming conceited because of the surpassing greatness of the revelations, a thorn was given me in the flesh, a messenger of Satan to harass me, to keep me from becoming conceited.

^{xviii} **2 Corinthians 12:7-10 (ESV)**

⁷ So to keep me from becoming conceited because of the surpassing greatness of the revelations, a thorn was given me in the flesh, a messenger of Satan to harass me, to keep me from becoming conceited. ⁸ Three times I pleaded with the Lord about this, that it should leave me. ⁹ But he said to me, "My grace is sufficient for you, for my power is made perfect in weakness." Therefore I will boast all the more gladly of my weaknesses, so that the power of Christ may rest upon me. ¹⁰ For the sake of Christ, then, I am content with weaknesses, insults, hardships, persecutions, and calamities. For when I am weak, then I am strong.

^{xix} **1 Peter 4:14 (ESV)**

¹⁴ If you are insulted for the name of Christ, you are blessed, because the Spirit of glory and of God rests upon you.

^{xx} **Psalms 94:12 (ESV)**

¹² Blessed is the man whom you discipline, O LORD, and whom you teach out of your law,

^{xxi} **Proverbs 3:12 (ESV)**

¹² for the LORD reproves him whom he loves, as a father the son in whom he delights.

^{xxii} **Lamentations 3:33 (ESV)**

³³ for he does not afflict from his heart or grieve the children of men.

^{xxiii} **2 Corinthians 4:16-18 (ESV)**

¹⁶ So we do not lose heart. Though our outer self is wasting away, our inner self is being renewed day by day.

¹⁷ For this light momentary affliction is preparing for us an eternal weight of glory beyond all comparison,

¹⁸ as we look not to the things that are seen but to the things that are unseen. For the things that are seen are transient, but the things that are unseen are eternal.

^{xxiv} **Romans 8:35-39 (ESV)**

³⁵ Who shall separate us from the love of Christ? Shall tribulation, or distress, or persecution, or famine, or nakedness, or danger, or sword? ³⁶ As it is written, "For your sake we are being killed all the day long; we are regarded as sheep to be slaughtered." ³⁷ No, in all these things we are more than conquerors through him who loved us. ³⁸ For I am sure that neither death nor life, nor angels nor rulers, nor things present nor things to come, nor powers, ³⁹ nor height nor depth, nor anything else in all creation, will be able to separate us from the love of God in Christ Jesus our Lord.

^{xxv} M. G. Easton, [*Illustrated Bible Dictionary and Treasury of Biblical History, Biography, Geography, Doctrine, and Literature*](#) (New York: Harper & Brothers, 1893), 23.

^{xxvi} **Mark 1:12 (ESV)**

¹² The Spirit immediately drove him out into the wilderness.

^{xxvii} **2 Corinthians 11:28 (ESV)**

²⁸ And, apart from other things, there is the daily pressure on me of my anxiety for all the churches.

^{xxviii} **2 Corinthians 11:25 (ESV)**

²⁵ Three times I was beaten with rods. Once I was stoned. Three times I was shipwrecked; a night and a day I was adrift at sea;

^{xxix} **2 Corinthians 11:27 (ESV)**

²⁷ in toil and hardship, through many a sleepless night, in hunger and thirst, often without food, in cold and exposure.

^{xxx} **James 1:2 (ESV)**

² Count it all joy, my brothers, when you meet trials of various kinds,

^{xxxi} **2 Corinthians 4:17 (ESV)**

¹⁷ For this light momentary affliction is preparing for us an eternal weight of glory beyond all comparison,

^{xxxii} **Matthew 5:7 (ESV)**

⁷ "Blessed are the merciful, for they shall receive mercy.

^{xxxiii} **Galatians 5:22-23 (ESV)**

²² But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, ²³ gentleness, self-control; against such things there is no law.

^{xxxiv} **1 Corinthians 2:4 (ESV)**

⁴ and my speech and my message were not in plausible words of wisdom, but in demonstration of the Spirit and of power,

^{xxxv} **Joel 2:28-31 (ESV)**

²⁸ “And it shall come to pass afterward, that I will pour out my Spirit on all flesh; your sons and your daughters shall prophesy, your old men shall dream dreams, and your young men shall see visions. ²⁹ Even on the male and female servants in those days I will pour out my Spirit. ³⁰ “And I will show wonders in the heavens and on the earth, blood and fire and columns of smoke. ³¹ The sun shall be turned to darkness, and the moon to blood, before the great and awesome day of the LORD comes.

^{xxxvi} **Acts 2:16-18 (ESV)**

¹⁶ But this is what was uttered through the prophet Joel: ¹⁷ “And in the last days it shall be, God declares, that I will pour out my Spirit on all flesh, and your sons and your daughters shall prophesy, and your young men shall see visions, and your old men shall dream dreams; ¹⁸ Even on my male servants and female servants in those days I will pour out my Spirit, and they shall prophesy.

^{xxxvii} **Revelation 13:13-14 (ESV)**

¹³ It performs great signs, even making fire come down from heaven to earth in front of people, ¹⁴ and by the signs that it is allowed to work in the presence of the beast it deceives those who dwell on earth, telling them to make an image for the beast that was wounded by the sword and yet lived.

^{xxxviii} **Ephesians 6:16-17 (ESV)**

¹⁶ In all circumstances take up the shield of faith, with which you can extinguish all the flaming darts of the evil one; ¹⁷ and take the helmet of salvation, and the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God,

^{xxxix} **Nehemiah 4:17-18 (ESV)**

¹⁷ who were building on the wall. Those who carried burdens were loaded in such a way that each labored on the work with one hand and held his weapon with the other. ¹⁸ And each of the builders had his sword strapped at his side while he built. The man who sounded the trumpet was beside me.

^{xli} **Nehemiah 4:20 (ESV)**

²⁰ In the place where you hear the sound of the trumpet, rally to us there. Our God will fight for us.”

^{xlii} **2 Corinthians 10:3-5 (ESV)**

³ For though we walk in the flesh, we are not waging war according to the flesh. ⁴ For the weapons of our warfare are not of the flesh but have divine power to destroy strongholds. ⁵ We destroy arguments and every lofty opinion raised against the knowledge of God, and take every thought captive to obey Christ,

^{xliii} **Hebrews 2:15 (ESV)**

¹⁵ and deliver all those who through fear of death were subject to lifelong slavery.