

II Corinthians Lesson 06

II Cor. Chapter 6

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Memory verses for this week: *1 Pet 5:6 Humble yourselves therefore under the mighty hand of God, that he may exalt you in due time: 7Casting all your care upon him; for he careth for you.*

Introduction: Last week in Chapter 5, we studied about how the earthly tabernacle (our body) will be changed into a glorious body fashioned after the Lord Jesus Christ. This will happen when Christ returns to take His children out of this old world at the rapture, which may be any day. This week we discuss what we will face as ambassadors for God.

I. The Trials of the True Gospel Ministry

2 Corinthians 6:1 We then, as workers together with him, beseech you also that ye receive not the grace of God in vain. 2 (For he saith, I have heard thee in a time accepted, and in the day of salvation have I succoured thee: behold, now is the accepted time; behold, now is the day of salvation.)

Paul urges his Corinthian brethren to continue on. Notice he refers to himself and his associates as “workers together”. Paul’s concern was that they would fail as ambassadors of Christ. He encouraged them in taking the gospel to others.

In these first three verses of Chapter 6, Paul undertakes to show what sorts of trials that true ambassadors for Christ must face. We in the church work together to urge men and women to receive the gospel. We never want to see someone believe in vain, and miss the opportunity to be saved. And if Satan can trick or blind us, he will try to do so and keep us from knowing the truth. A few years ago, we visited a man on visitation that made a profession of faith when he was six years old, and either he believed in vain, or Satan has him so confused that he doubts his salvation.

We should so know God’s word, that we have confidence in our salvation. And if we don’t, we should turn to Christ and accept Him for our salvation. It is a gift of God, and 100% of God. We have to have faith, we have to repent, but these two are truly gifts from God also. Many who truly have been saved don’t live like they are. God would have all men to be saved, and after that to take up their cross daily and live for the honor and glory of the Lord. Verse 2 comes from Isaiah 49:8.

Isaiah 49:8 Thus saith the LORD, In an acceptable time have I heard thee, and in a day of salvation have I helped thee: and I will preserve thee, and give thee for

a covenant of the people, to establish the earth, to cause to inherit the desolate heritages;

Those that would put off salvation after being drawn to God by the Holy Spirit frustrate the purpose of the gospel. Now is the acceptable time. Putting it off one more day may be an eternal mistake.

Paul's point is that there is urgency in presenting the gospel. Though this verse is often used to persuade sinners of the urgency to receive Christ, the context rather is of the urgency in taking the gospel to sinners. There is urgency in taking the gospel of the grace of God to a lost world. We are the ambassadors of Christ. Let not the grace of God be in vain by failing to effect the ministry of reconciliation committed to us. It is urgent. Now is the time! Now is the day of salvation!

2 Cor 6: 3 Giving no offence in any thing, that the ministry be not blamed:

To fail to be an urgent ambassador of Christ is to receive the grace of God in vain. We then risk becoming an offence. (to give an occasion for stumbling). His concern was that the ministry of the gospel be not blamed, diminished, or neutralized, particularly to young believers. Paul and all other true ministers seek to give no offense. In other words, they do their best to not cause a stumbling block before any person. If the saved live like the lost, the service of God may be blamed.

Remember that when others look upon your life and my life, they picture Jesus Christ. Is that a good image they see? It should be. But our arch enemy is out to destroy each of us daily. If he can get us to sin and fall, he destroys our testimony and we become of non effect.

2 Cor 6:4 But in all things approving ourselves as the ministers of God, in much patience, in afflictions, in necessities, in distresses, 5 In stripes, in imprisonments, in tumults, in labours, in watchings, in fastings;

Paul sought to demonstrate himself a minister of God by his life and begins a lengthy list of situations in which he might so demonstrate (approve) himself as a minister of God: "in much patience, in afflictions, in necessities, in distresses." The word patience ('*upomonh hupomone*) here has the sense of 'perseverance.' Distresses are just that: distress. Even in difficult circumstance, he intended to show himself a minister of Christ by persevering through troubles and hardship.

These verses go over some of the testings and trials that a minister of God faces. Paul was a man who had faced adversity on virtually every hand. Here afflictions necessities, and distresses refer to things more or less providential and outside the direct agency of men. Stripes, imprisonments, tumults, and troubles are brought on the servant of Christ by evil men. Labors, watchings, and

fastings are things which the gospel minister willingly takes on himself in order to further the work of God.

I'm sure many of you have heard of the great preacher of old named Harry Ironside. Dr. Harry Ironside tells about the time he as a young preacher preached in a place for three days and didn't have a thing to eat during those three days. He was preaching to a group of people who thought he was living by faith, and they surely did let him do it. No money was given him for food. On the fourth morning he was debating whether to stay in bed for breakfast or to get up and tighten up his belt another notch when he noticed a letter being slipped under the door. He got up and opened it and all it said was, "Enclosed is an expression of Christian fellowship," and there was a ten dollar bill in it. That morning he went out and had the best breakfast he had ever had in his life.

"In afflictions, in necessities, in distresses." There are a great many folk living today who know what these are. The younger generation doesn't know. That is what has made the generation gap.

2 Cor 6:6 By pureness, by knowledge, by longsuffering, by kindness, by the Holy Ghost, by love unfeigned, 7 By the word of truth, by the power of God, by the armour of righteousness on the right hand and on the left,

It was Paul's intent to do so by demonstrating the very same virtues that Jesus demonstrated during His ministry while here on earth. "Pureness appears only once in the New Testament and is a direct derivative of the concept of holiness. His intent was to exhibit the purity of holiness. Paul intended to serve God in the gospel ministry with adequate knowledge. He likely never ended learning more about Christ and His Word. He intended to minister in longsuffering. The word has the sense of 'forbearance' or 'slowness in becoming impatient.' It has to do with putting up with people and their weaknesses. He also determined to serve in kindness. Moreover, he determined to infuse his ministry with the guidance, help, and power of the Holy Ghost.

Except the Lord build the house, they labor in vain who build it. It is not by might nor by power, but my Spirit saith the Lord. Paul further determined to fulfill his ministry by the word of truth. The Word of God was the foundation as well as the cutting edge of his message. He intended to serve God whether in honour or in dishonour. At times, the ministry brings honor. At other times, it brings reproach. Regardless, Paul determined to continue. He likewise was determined to continue whether he was known by evil report or by good report. Even when accused of being deceivers, yet he knew he was true.

These are characteristics that the true minister should have. The word translated "pureness" comes from a root meaning holy. Holy speaks of being pure and not defiled with things that contaminate. Being set apart and sanctified

for the Master's use. The knowledge is speaking of knowing the Word of God, while "longsuffering" refers to the patience we should exhibit in face of the trying circumstances that befall us. "Kindness" makes others feel at ease with us as we love others as we desire to be loved.

Paul wanted his message to go forth with power from God, and that is what that line "by the Holy Ghost" denotes. By preaching the truth with sincerity in the power of God, the message came over "loved unfeigned." This means with sincerity of love from the heart and without pretence. And when we preach the truth God's way, and work through the power of the Holy Spirit, we will bring forth results of this work.

2 Cor 6:8 By honour and dishonour, by evil report and good report: as deceivers, and yet true; 9 As unknown, and yet well known; as dying, and, behold, we live; as chastened, and not killed; 10 As sorrowful, yet always rejoicing; as poor, yet making many rich; as having nothing, and yet possessing all things.

Paul pressed on "as unknown." A preacher true to the Word of God more often than not will be ignored by the world. Notwithstanding, he knew he was "well known" in heaven. He frequently had faced the prospect of death, nevertheless, God had spared him. Though he had more than once been *chastened* (i.e., beaten), yet he had not been *killed*.

Paul speaks of many things in these verses, pairing things with others that seem to be the exact opposite of the other. Yet all of these things spoke of what Paul faced and how he lived in his day-to-day life. Paul was both honored and dishonored. Those that knew him and perceived him for who he was truly honored him. But Paul had his enemies also. Because of this, both good and evil reports were circulated on him. He is called a deceiver and yet he spoke the truth. In the world, Paul was practically unknown. But in true Christian circles, he was a man well known. In his trials, many times he came near death, yet God delivered him and he lived on. He was chastened, but not killed. He was sorrowful, and yet was always rejoicing.

Romans 9:2 That I have great heaviness and continual sorrow in my heart.

Philippians 4:4 Rejoice in the Lord always: and again I say, Rejoice.

While Paul was poor in regards to earthly goods, he was truly rich when it came to spiritual wealth. To the world, he may have seemed to have nothing, yet actually he possessed all things. If you know Jesus as your Lord and Savior, you should never view yourself as poor. We are joint heirs with Christ, and have become the sons of God by the sacrifice Christ paid there on Calvary. We may have no money, but we are rich beyond belief when it comes to peace and spiritual gifts.

Romans 8:14 For as many as are led by the Spirit of God, they are the sons of God. ¹⁵For ye have not received the spirit of bondage again to

fear; but ye have received the Spirit of adoption, whereby we cry, Abba, Father. ¹⁶The Spirit itself beareth witness with our spirit, that we are the children of God:

¹⁷And if children, then heirs; heirs of God, and joint-heirs with Christ; if so be that we suffer with him, that we may be also glorified together. ¹⁸For I reckon that the sufferings of this present time are not worthy to be compared with the glory which shall be revealed in us. ¹⁹For the earnest expectation of the creature waiteth for the manifestation of the sons of God.

II. The Call to Separation

2 Cor 6:11 O ye Corinthians, our mouth is open unto you, our heart is enlarged. 12 Ye are not straitened in us, but ye are straitened in your own bowels. 13 Now for a recompence in the same, (I speak as unto my children,) be ye also enlarged.

Paul now shifts back to a personal note. Though he had been candid with them to the point of being sharp, nevertheless, he wished them to realize that he loved them and had deep concern for them. He continues in this regard: Ye are not straitened in us, but ye are straitened in your own bowels. Paul refers to the somewhat strained relationship between himself and his Corinthian brethren.

The thought literally is, 'Ye are not tightened in us, but you are tightened in your own bowels.' The ancients thought the personal emotions welled up from the intestines. In modern, western thought we would so refer to our heart. Paul's point is, whatever strain existed in their relationship, it was on their part and not Paul's.

Before urging the Corinthians to be Christians that were truly separated for the Lord, Paul makes an appeal for their love. Many in this church came to know the Lord through Paul's ministry, and Paul had a great love for these people. When you are involved in the spiritual birth (or even just the growth of spirituality), you have a bond with those with whom you are involved. And if our hearts are right before God, we want all of us to live that God might receive honor and glory through our lives.

J. Vernon McGee had this to say about these verses:

Paul is opening up his great heart of love, and he stirs up the hearts of those who love him. The interesting thing is that he apparently also stirred up the hearts of those who hated God and His Word and who tried to work injury upon those who loved Him and loved the Scripture. We find that was true in the early history of the church, and it is true today. If you stand for God, you will find that it will really cost you something.

We come now to an important passage of Scripture. It is a section which has been often abused and misinterpreted. Some folk try to make it hard

as nails, unyielding and unloving. Yet what Paul is saying here is coming from the tender heart of a man whose heart was almost breaking because of his great concern for the Corinthian believers.

2 Cor 6:14 Be ye not unequally yoked together with unbelievers: for what fellowship hath righteousness with unrighteousness? and what communion hath light with darkness? 15 And what concord hath Christ with Belial? or what part hath he that believeth with an infidel? 16 And what agreement hath the temple of God with idols? for ye are the temple of the living God; as God hath said, I will dwell in them, and walk in them; and I will be their God, and they shall be my people.

Having paused briefly to touch on his heartfelt concern, the Apostle now returns to a crucial truth that likely was as contentious then as it is today. “Be ye not unequally yoked together with unbelievers.” In developing a major truth, Paul touches upon an illustration of everyday life of that time—yoked animals. Until the twentieth century, such was a common scene in any setting. In urban areas there were teams of harnessed horses. In rural areas, there were teams of yoked oxen.

An unequal yoke would amount to the harnessing a donkey with a horse or yoking a horse with an ox. Not only was it incongruous and unworkable, such yokes would injure the weaker creature. It was not only practical but compassionate to form as equal a yoke of draft animals as possible. Even the law of Moses taught such in Deuteronomy 22:10.

Paul asks: “What fellowship hath righteousness with unrighteousness? and what communion hath light with darkness?” The answers to these rhetorical questions are obvious. There is not and ought not be fellowship between righteousness and unrighteousness. His reference to light and darkness clearly is spiritual in nature.

There is no unity of spirit between holiness (light) and wickedness (darkness). The greater point is the standing injunction, “be not unequally yoked together with unbelievers.” It is wrong. It is inconsistent. It is unscriptural. Some might protest, we live in a world of unbelievers. True indeed. But the scriptural injunction is to avoid being yoked with them. Such day-to-day applications of this principle undoubtedly are the marriage union, binding partnerships, and membership in ungodly institutions.

Apparently, those in the Corinthian church were hindered in their love for Paul due to having fellowship with unbelievers. You and I have to realize that we are to be the salt of the earth, and if we put our salt out in the wrong places continually, it will lose its effectiveness. We have a command from the Lord to not yoke our selves together with unbelievers. Does this mean we are to have no contact with the lost? Of course not. How could we be a witness to the lost

man or woman if we have an attitude of no concern. But when it comes to who we constantly fellowship with, and in a greater way, who we choose to become our partners for life, we are to select other Christians. That is not to say we can't have a group of people over and invite some of the lost to be a part of our group. But they need to be in the minority, with the Christians making up the major part of the group. If we don't do it that way, instead of us influencing the wicked to do good, they may entice us to do evil. So we must be careful.

2 Cor 6:17 Wherefore come out from among them, and be ye separate, saith the Lord, and touch not the unclean thing; and I will receive you, 18 And will be a Father unto you, and ye shall be my sons and daughters, saith the Lord Almighty.

We are commanded to:

(1) “come out from among them”—the unbelievers, the unrighteous, and those of spiritual darkness noted above. These, in their composite, form what collectively is called ‘the world’ throughout the New Testament. God’s people are commanded to come out of the world and its associations. We also are commanded

(2) to “be ye separate, saith the Lord.” The command clearly is from the Lord. It remains one of the most unpopular portions of the law of Christ to this day, but it is of crucial importance. Moreover, the Holy Spirit through Paul ordered

(3) that we “touch not the unclean *thing*.” Those of a Jewish background understood that of which he spoke. The law enumerated many things which were unclean for a Jew. Paul clearly applies this in the broader context of spiritual uncleanness—sinful things and activities. John wrote, “love not the world, neither the things *that* are in the world” (I John 2:15). In that day and this, there are numerous *things* in the world which are morally and spiritually unclean—in a word, impure.

Though the fifth chapter of this epistle may have been the height for doctrinal truth, this paragraph is probably the major thrust regarding day-to-day Christian living. It rests upon the bedrock foundation of holiness. *Separation* from the world, its crowd, its activities, and its things is a major avenue to personal holiness in the Christian life. Here it is set forth as a three part command.

As a result of such separation, God promises, “and I will receive you.” As God’s people separate themselves from the unrighteousness, uncleanness, and impurity of the world, we place ourselves into a position wherein we might have full fellowship with our heavenly Father.

We see contrasts between the Christian and the unbeliever in these verses. On the side of the Christian, there is righteousness, light, Christ, faith, and the temple of God. On the side of evil, we have lawlessness, darkness, Belial, unbelief, and worshipping of idols. God commands the Christian to come out from among the unbeliever. While we are in the world, we are not to be a part of it. The person who will separate himself from the world will be one who is blessed of the Lord.

I John 2:14 I have written unto you, fathers, because ye have known him that is from the beginning. I have written unto you, young men, because ye are strong, and the word of God abideth in you, and ye have overcome the wicked one. ¹⁵Love not the world, neither the things that are in the world. If any man love the world, the love of the Father is not in him. ¹⁶For all that is in the world, the lust of the flesh, and the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life, is not of the Father, but is of the world. ¹⁷And the world passeth away, and the lust thereof: but he that doeth the will of God abideth for ever.

In concluding the point in verse 18, Paul quotes from II Samuel 7:14, And (I) will be a Father unto you, and ye shall be my sons and daughters, saith the Lord Almighty.

The point is that as we separate ourselves from the world and its untoward influence, God will receive us to fellowship as sons and daughters. We are sons in our position in Christ. We should separate from the world and the things thereof to have fellowship with our heavenly Father. He has promised such as we separate.

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Prov 4:18 But the path of the just is as the shining light, that shineth more and more unto the perfect day.

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Practice Random Acts of Kindness. Each act spreads, and many will be blessed.

