

2 Corinthians 6 – Chapter Study

I. Greeting • 1:1-11

II. Paul's Ministry • 1:12-7:16

D. The Ministry's Nature • 2:14-6:10

As we'll see this coming Sunday, ch. 5 ends with Paul saying his ministry was like that of an ambassador.

The King he represented was Jesus, the Kingdom was the Kingdom of God. Just as an ambassador's mission was to look out for the interests of his king, so Paul's mission was to preach the message of reconciliation between God & man through faith in Jesus Christ because that's what Jesus had commissioned his followers to do.

Paul continues in that same vein . . .

8. The conduct of the ministry • 6:1-10

¹ We then, as workers together with Him . . .

Paul's spent considerable time talking about his calling, motives, mission & ministry.

But he doesn't want to leave the Corinthians with the impression that he & his team perform it alone.

Jesus works with them – as He said in Matthew 28 – that He is with us, to the end of the age.

This ought to bring us great comfort & confidence as both grow in our personal walk with the Lord a& as we share the Faith withy others.

We aren't left to our own devices, our own strength alone. God is at work.

Philippians 2:12-13 – ¹². . . work out your own salvation with fear and trembling; ¹³ for it is God who works in you both to will and to do for His good pleasure.

¹ We then, as workers together with Him also plead with you not to receive the grace of God in vain.

Vain = empty, without result.

The Corinthians *had* received the grace of God when they'd originally come to faith a few years before.

But their *growth* in grace, their *spiritual fruitfulness* had been hindered, thwarted by endless controversies & distractions, not the least of which was their falling prey to the attacks on Paul's calling & character.

For Paul & the other writers of the NT, there's a necessary connection between being born again & living a life that honors God & blesses others.

The grace that saves also produces changes & produces spiritual fruit – love, joy, peace, gentleness, kindness, self-control.

² For He says: "In an acceptable time I have heard you, And in the day of salvation I have helped you." Behold, now is the accepted time; behold, now is the day of salvation.

Paul quotes from the prophet Isaiah, 49:8.

The context there is the Messiah who suffers & dies but God raises form the

dead.

His resurrection becomes the means of salvation, the event that opens the door to eternal life.

Paul issues an urgent call to the Corinthians to be done with the distractions that have kept them from laying hold of God's grace and really going for it with God.

This, right now is the time of salvation.

Because of the cross & resurrection, the door to heaven is wide open to all who will put their faith in Christ.

But that door is 2-way. Not only can we GO TO heaven, but the power of God comes through that door down to us and transform our lives in the here & now.

How much like Jesus do you want to be?

There's ample grace available to us right now to obtain that.

Lord, enlarge my desire for You! Let me not be content to go half-way.

Since today is the day of salvation & there's ample grace, save more of me; my thoughts, opinions, motives, desires, longings, ambitions, attitudes, habits.

³ We give no offense in anything, that our ministry may not be blamed.

This sums up all that's come before in Paul's defense of his ministry & calling.

Far from the accusations made by his opponent that he was a corrupt fraud, Paul & his team had always been careful to make sure they did nothing that would cause their message to lose it's impact.

We could wish that other well-known teachers with a large TV & broadcast presence lived with as great a carefulness about their behavior & lifestyle as that exhibited by Paul.

He knew he was under scrutiny by the enemies of Christ & those who wanted to promote their own agenda, so he made sure there was nothing in his life that they could blame him for.

Yet there are many well-known Christian leaders today whose lifestyle is reprehensible!

They get on their TV program & weep crocodile tears over the need for funds for some orphanage they sponsor in Haiti, yet they own a half-dozen large estates on prime real estate on both coasts, a private jet, & a fleet of luxury limos.

Very different from the attitude & example of Paul. Look; he lists 30 different ways in which he sought to live with an integrity that honored Christ.

⁴ But in all things we commend ourselves as ministers of God: in much patience, in tribulations, in needs, in distresses, ⁵ in stripes [lashing of the whip], in imprisonments, in tumults, in labors, in sleeplessness, in fastings; ⁶ by purity, by knowledge, by longsuffering, by kindness, by the Holy Spirit, by sincere love, ⁷ by the word of truth, by the power of God, by the armor of righteousness on the right hand and on the left, ⁸ by honor and dishonor, 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 yet not killed; ¹⁰ as sorrowful, yet always rejoicing; as poor, yet making many rich; as having nothing, and yet possessing all things.

The bottom line for all this is this – Paul didn't evaluate his life from a worldly perspective.

His ever present concern was – “How does God view this? May my evaluation align with His.”

E. The Corinthians Exhorted • 6:11-7:16

1. To open their hearts to Paul • 6:11-13

Now we get a glimpse of just how personal Paul is in this letter.

¹¹ O Corinthians! We have spoken openly to you, our heart is wide open. ¹² You are not restricted by us, but you are restricted by your own affections. ¹³ Now in return for the same (I speak as to children), you also be open.

Paul admits that he's being far more open with them than usual.

He's made himself vulnerable & revealed his deepest inner motives & thoughts with them.

It was a risky move because whenever you do that with someone, you open yourself to major disappointment & hurt.

So Paul pleads with them to take care in how they respond.

The proper response would be for them to open up to him as he'd done with them.

In v. 12, he repeats what he'd said up in v. 2 –their growth in grace was limited only by their desire for it.

Now he's going to share a key to making sure their spiritual growth isn't stunted.

2. To separate themselves from unbelievers • 6:14-7:1

¹⁴ Do not be unequally yoked together with unbelievers. For what fellowship has righteousness with lawlessness? And what communion has light with darkness?

This verse is often used in reference to romantic relationships.

Christians are warned not to become romantically involved with unbelievers & that is certainly one very practical application for this but it's wider than that.

Let's be clear first on what this does NOT mean.

Paul is *not* saying Christians ought not talk to our have any contact with the lost.

In 1 Corinthians 5, he said *specifically* that the separation we're called to as the followers of Christ is *not a physical departure* but a *spiritual difference*, from the world.

When he says here to not be “unequally yoked with unbelievers,” he uses an image from farming; the linking of 2 oxen by a wooden gang called a yoke.

The yoke allowed 2 oxen to combine their strength & pull a plow.

But the trick was, they had to be in harmony; they had to both pull at the same time in the same direction.

In successful teams, one ox was always dominant, the other submissive & followed the direction of the other.

If each ox vied for dominance they'd pull in different directions & no work would get done.

Paul uses that image here.

The man or woman who's growing in grace has a totally different set of values & priorities than the person who's lost and dominated by the world.

Since they aren't going in the same life-direction, they ought not be linked by **any kind of formal bond**, whether it's the **emotional** bond of **romance**, or a **contractual** bond of **business**.

I'm not talking about loans or a mortgage or something like that, that's not a "yoke."

A yoke speaks of a partnership where a mutuality is required in the relationship for it to work.

Look, Paul goes on to qualify what he means when he says -

For what fellowship has righteousness with lawlessness? And what communion has light with darkness?

The word "fellowship" is *metokay*; it refers to a **mutual sharing**.

"Communion" is *koinonia*; **joint participation**.

As Paul poses these questions he means, since righteousness & lawlessness, light & darkness are **opposites**, there's no agreement between them.

They stand for different things so they can't stand together.

In the same way, believers & unbelievers are going in different directions, they stand for different things, so they can't **participate** in one another's lives.

Of course they have **contact** with one another because they live in the same city, but the believer must not grant access to the lost to bring a worldly influence to bear upon them.

15 And what accord has Christ with Belial?

Belial was a Hebrew synonym for the devil; it means **worthless**.

"Accord" is the Greek word from which we get **symphony**; to sound together.

If Jesus is playing sweet & melodious music, the devil makes a worthless screeching racket.

The saved ought to sing with Jesus, the lost can do not but make noise.

Or what part has a believer with an unbeliever? 16 And what agreement has the temple of God with idols?

None!

For you are the temple of the living God. As God has said: "I will dwell in them And walk among them. I will be their God, And they shall be My people."

Paul quotes from 3 different places – Exodus 29, Leviticus 26 & Ezekiel 37.

What God promised was fulfilled in the giving of the Holy Spirit who comes to indwell the believer at the moment they are born again.

17 Therefore "Come out from among them

Who? All those just mentioned – unbelievers, the lawless, those who dwell in darkness, those governed by the devil.

Paul quotes from the prophet Isaiah, 52:11 here. He says . . .

And be separate, says the Lord. Do not touch what is unclean, And I will receive you.”¹⁸ “I will be a Father to you, And you shall be My sons and daughters, Says the LORD Almighty.”

Paul cannot mean a literal, physical departure because he himself didn't isolate himself.

Nor did Jesus.

And as we saw earlier, he'd already sent them a letter telling them that they were not to physically distance themselves from the lost.

What he's calling for here is a **conscious determination** to exit a lifestyle dictated by the forms & fashions of this lost world in favor of the norms & priorities of the Kingdom of God.

7:1 Therefore, having these promises, beloved,

The things he's just written of, the promise of grace, of righteousness, of reconciliation to God.

let us cleanse ourselves from all filthiness of the flesh and spirit, perfecting [carrying to completion] holiness in the fear of God.

I'm a member of a local gym & workout 3 times a week.

My goal is to stay in decent shape for health reasons.

But there are some guys & gals who spend hours & hours there trying to perfect themselves.

Some people go to college for 4 years to get a bachelor's degree, another 2 for a master's then another 4 to 6 for a doctorate.

Others work inordinately long hours at their jobs trying to climb the corporate ladder.

Some sit at their computer for endless hours trying to make the high score on a game, or working on their MySpace or Facebook page.

All of these things people pour their lives into are temporary.

Holiness is eternal and if there's anything we ought to pour ourselves into it's the pursuit of God.

We'll end there.