

2 Corinthians
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Chapter Six

2Cor 6:1 And working together with Him, we also urge you not to receive the grace of God in vain—

It is a wonderful privilege to be working with God! It is awesome that He wants to work with us in the process of bringing His children home. Paul was very aware that it was God who produced the new life:

1Cor 3:6 I planted, Apollos watered, but God was causing the growth.

1Cor 3:7 So then neither the one who plants nor the one who waters is anything, but God who causes the growth.

1Cor 3:8 Now he who plants and he who waters are one; but each will receive his own reward according to his own labor.

1Cor 3:9 For we are God's fellow workers; you are God's field, God's building.

It is inconceivable to me that God chose me. It is equally inconceivable that He wants to work through me in His gardening process. We should all take such an assignment to heart and humbly follow His lead as we walk in the world. Paul urged them to not receive the grace of God in vain. The grace of God could be received in vain in two ways. One way is to not be redeemed. The second way is to miss out on some sanctification because of being led astray by false teachers. Certainly there are many people in churches now who fit both categories. We will read later (2 Cor 13:5) where Paul urges the people in the church to test themselves to see if they are really in Christ. The great commission (Matt 28:19, 20) is not to just evangelize but to disciple, teach, and baptize. Paul was very concerned that many members of the church were following false teachers and thus missing out on proper disciple discipline.

2Cor 6:2 for He says, "At the acceptable time I listened to you, And on the day of salvation I helped you"; behold, now is "the acceptable time," behold, now is "the day of salvation"—

Paul is here quoting Isaiah 49:8 and there is a time in God's timetable when people can be saved from His wrath. God warned people in the time of Noah also:

Gen 6:3 Then the Lord said, "My Spirit shall not strive with man forever, because he also is flesh; nevertheless his days shall be one hundred and twenty years."

There is urgency to the time of salvation. God will certainly redeem whom He chooses and do it when He chooses but the time when we can work during the time is limited. Jesus warned also of a time coming when nobody could do His work:

John 9:4 "We must work the works of Him who sent Me, as long as it is day; night is coming, when no man can work."

2Cor 6:3 giving no cause for offense in anything, in order that the ministry be not discredited,

2Cor 6:4 but in everything commending ourselves as servants of God, in much endurance, in afflictions, in hardships, in distresses,

2Cor 6:5 in beatings, in imprisonments, in tumults, in labors, in sleeplessness, in hunger,

2Cor 6:6 in purity, in knowledge, in patience, in kindness, in the Holy Spirit, in genuine love,

2Cor 6:7 in the word of truth, in the power of God; by the weapons of righteousness for the right hand and the left,

Paul was very concerned that he might cause someone to stumble so he was very careful to not be an offense in the spreading of the Gospel. He certainly did not want to be the cause of anyone saying that his teaching was against God as God said about Israel:

Rom 2:23 You who boast in the Law, through your breaking the Law, do you dishonor God?

Rom 2:24 For "the name of God is blasphemed among the Gentiles because of you," just as it is written.

Paul was very aware that the true measure of a disciple of Jesus is his endurance during the ministry. He lifted himself up only as a servant of God and then he outlined some of his afflictions during which he practiced endurance for proclaiming the truth of the Gospel. He never lost sight of his true purpose in life and neither should we. There are no afflictions that are worthy of being compared to the glory that will be revealed to us:

Rom 8:18 For I consider that the sufferings of this present time are not worthy to be compared with the glory that is to be revealed to us.

“Afflictions” refers to spiritual, physical, or emotional sufferings. Hardships are the difficulties encountered in a fallen world and the word has the sense of inevitability. Distresses literally describes being in a confined space and could be used to mean difficulties from which there is no escape. Verse five recounts some of all the problems he endured for his proclamation of the Gospel. There were no restaurants like we go for food and what was available were mostly filthy brothels. There were no motels like we utilize so what sleep he could obtain during his travels was often under the stars and not nearly as accommodating as what modern campers have available.

Paul then balances his presentation with nine positive qualities of serving the Lord. Purity heads the list and we know that he was above reproach as all believers should be. Paul’s knowledge of God was unparalleled in his arena and his knowledge is still viewed as foremost among followers of Christ. He had the highest Jewish education and then the education of Jesus, the promised Messiah. Patience refers mainly to tolerance for other people and although he sometimes would be rather sarcastic in his responses to people’s lack of pursuing the attaining of knowledge, he still loved them very much and endured in his work with them.

1Cor 3:2 I gave you milk to drink, not solid food; for you were not yet able to receive it. Indeed, even now you are not yet able,

Paul also was the model person for practicing kindness for no matter what people did to him he responded with acts of useful deeds for them.

Gal 6:10 So then, while we have opportunity, let us do good to all men, and especially to those who are of the household of the faith.

Of course it was the Holy Spirit who empowers endurance and the other Godly qualities practiced by Paul. The genuine love that he practiced was also provided by the Holy Spirit. The Word of truth is the Word of God which he honored and understood:

2Tim 2:15 Be diligent to present yourself approved to God as a workman who does not need to be ashamed, handling accurately the word of truth.

He certainly preached the Word in the power of God and not in his own cleverness.

Rom 1:16 For I am not ashamed of the gospel, for it is the power of God for salvation to everyone who believes, to the Jew first and also to the Greek.

Paul also fought the good fight using the weapons of righteousness for the right hand and the left.

*2Cor 10:3 For though we walk in the flesh, we do not war according to the flesh,
2Cor 10:4 for the weapons of our warfare are not of the flesh, but divinely powerful for the destruction of fortresses.*

The use of both hands just implies that he did not rely on any other weapons in his war.

2Cor 6:8 by glory and dishonor, by evil report and good report; regarded as deceivers and yet true;

2Cor 6:9 as unknown yet well-known, as dying yet behold, we live; as punished yet not put to death,

2Cor 6:10 as sorrowful yet always rejoicing, as poor yet making many rich, as having nothing yet possessing all things.

As most of us are painfully aware, carrying forth the Word of God in a fallen world is not without opposition. We receive some glory, good report, and being regarded as truthful expositors. But we also receive dishonor, evil report, and being regarded as deceivers to the population. We are particularly at war today regarding how mankind originated in the world: evolution or creation. When a scientist proclaims creation by whatever means (even ID) he is certainly going to receive the negative attributes above. Even Jesus received such negatives:

John 7:12 And there was much grumbling among the multitudes concerning Him; some were saying, "He is a good man"; others were saying, "No, on the contrary, He leads the multitude astray."

Satan will certainly seek to destroy the reputation of anyone proclaiming the truth. One can go from being well-known to being unknown rapidly in this secularized society today. Paul shifted from being well-known among the Jewish elite to being an outcast and from being feared and unknown among the Christians to being known and loved. He suffered a lot physically so that he was thought dead but he was alive. He was often punished but never put to death until the end of his ministry. Paul was sorrowful over the lost Jews:

Rom 9:1 I am telling the truth in Christ, I am not lying, my conscience bearing me witness in the Holy Spirit,

Rom 9:2 that I have great sorrow and unceasing grief in my heart.

Rom 9:3 For I could wish that I myself were accursed, separated from Christ for the sake of my brethren, my kinsmen according to the flesh,

Rom 9:4 who are Israelites, to whom belongs the adoption as sons and the glory and the covenants and the giving of the Law and the temple service and the promises,

But Paul was also always rejoicing as he proclaimed for others to so practice:

Phil 4:4 Rejoice in the Lord always; again I will say, rejoice!

1Thess 5:16 Rejoice always;

Paul was certainly very poor by worldly standards. There is speculation that his family disinherited him after his conversion and that is probably true. He relied upon gifts of churches:

Phil 4:16 for even in Thessalonica you sent a gift more than once for my needs.

However he was incredibly rich in heavenly rewards and he was involved in many other people also becoming rich in eternal rewards:

2Cor 8:9 For you know the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, that though He was rich, yet for your sake He became poor, that you through His poverty might become rich.

Eph 1:11 also we have obtained an inheritance, having been predestined according to His purpose who works all things after the counsel of His will,

Col 1:12 giving thanks to the Father, who has qualified us to share in the inheritance of the saints in light.

1Peter 1:3 Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who according to His great mercy has caused us to be born again to a living hope through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead,

1Peter 1:4 to obtain an inheritance which is imperishable and undefiled and will not fade away, reserved in heaven for you,

Paul and we possess all things of eternal worth:

Rom 8:32 He who did not spare His own Son, but delivered Him up for us all, how will He not also with Him freely give us all things?

2Cor 6:11 Our mouth has spoken freely to you, O Corinthians, our heart is opened wide.

**2Cor 6:12 You are not restrained by us, but you are restrained in your own affections.
2Cor 6:13 Now in a like exchange-- I speak as to children-- open wide to us also.**

Paul spoke freely of the truth to these people.

Acts 20:20 how I did not shrink from declaring to you anything that was profitable, and teaching you publicly and from house to house,

Acts 20:27 "For I did not shrink from declaring to you the whole purpose of God.

The word "restrained" means to make narrow or to confine and Paul certainly did not do that in his interactions with them. However they did not reciprocate as some were listening to the false teachers accusations against him and closing Paul out of their lives. This hurt him deeply but he did not back away and kept telling them the truth. He is now asking them to open up their heart to him and to list carefully to what he has to say.

2Cor 6:14 Do not be bound together with unbelievers; for what partnership have righteousness and lawlessness, or what fellowship has light with darkness?

2Cor 6:15 Or what harmony has Christ with Belial, or what has a believer in common with an unbeliever?

2Cor 6:16 Or what agreement has the temple of God with idols? For we are the temple of the living God; just as God said, "I will dwell in them and walk among them; And I will be their God, and they shall be My people.

2Cor 6:17 "Therefore, come out from their midst and be separate," says the Lord. "And do not touch what is unclean; And I will welcome you.

2Cor 6:18 "And I will be a father to you, And you shall be sons and daughters to Me," Says the Lord Almighty.

Becoming a Christian is becoming a new person with new desires and new actions toward others.

2Cor 5:17 Therefore if any man is in Christ, he is a new creature; the old things passed away; behold, new things have come.

Col 1:13 For He delivered us from the domain of darkness, and transferred us to the kingdom of His beloved Son,

Being a new creature is a radical transformation. There are two categories of people in the world: the ones destined for wrath and those freed from eternal wrath or the lost and the saved. The two categories are totally incompatible. We once were members of the lost people:

Eph 2:1 And you were dead in your trespasses and sins,

Eph 2:2 in which you formerly walked according to the course of this world, according to the prince of the power of the air, of the spirit that is now working in the sons of disobedience.

Eph 2:3 Among them we too all formerly lived in the lusts of our flesh, indulging the desires of the flesh and of the mind, and were by nature children of wrath, even as the rest.

But God made us alive (Eph 2:4-7) and now we do not want to be affiliated with the world of the lost. We are often commanded to not participate in the things of the world:

Rom 12:2 And do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind, that you may prove what the will of God is, that which is good and acceptable and perfect.
James 4:4 You adulteresses, do you not know that friendship with the world is hostility toward God? Therefore whoever wishes to be a friend of the world makes himself an enemy of God.

We are not to remove ourselves totally from the world (monasticism) but to not associate with any professing Christians who are walking in the world so that perhaps they might come back to the church:

1Cor 5:9 I wrote you in my letter not to associate with immoral people;
1Cor 5:10 I did not at all mean with the immoral people of this world, or with the covetous and swindlers, or with idolaters; for then you would have to go out of the world.
1Cor 5:11 But actually, I wrote to you not to associate with any so-called brother if he should be an immoral person, or covetous, or an idolater, or a reviler, or a drunkard, or a swindler-- not even to eat with such a one.
1Cor 5:12 For what have I to do with judging outsiders? Do you not judge those who are within the church?
1Cor 5:13 But those who are outside, God judges. Remove the wicked man from among yourselves.

However we must also recognize that evil influences can affect Christians' walks with the Lord. Associating closely with evil persons will influence us for the heart is the source of evil:

1Cor 15:33 Do not be deceived: "Bad company corrupts good morals."
Matt 15:19 "For out of the heart come evil thoughts, murders, adulteries, fornications, thefts, false witness, slanders.
Phil 3:2 Beware of the dogs, beware of the evil workers, beware of the false circumcision;

The church is to be pure and Satan certainly wants to defile it in any way that he can. Paul gets verse 14 from:

Deut 22:10 "You shall not plow with an ox and a donkey together.

One cannot do any effective plowing with those two animals yoked together and the people of God cannot affect His work if we are joined with unbelievers. I get very nervous when someone says that the church and the Mormons should work together for some common cause that both believe needs doing. We both are against abortion but if we work together on that issue we may then become desirous of joining in other ways. The purity of the church cannot be defiled to deal with some morality issue. Our primary purpose as the church of Jesus Christ is to worship Him in truth. Each member of the church must be involved in seeking purity in their lives:

Phil 2:12 So then, my beloved, just as you have always obeyed, not as in my presence only, but now much more in my absence, work out your salvation with fear and trembling;
1Peter 1:17 And if you address as Father the One who impartially judges according to each man's work, conduct yourselves in fear during the time of your stay upon earth;

Thus the primary thrust of these last five verses is that the church must remain pure from false worship and each member must strive for maximum sanctification. The following is an excellent recipe for our walk in the world:

Eph 5:1 Therefore be imitators of God, as beloved children;

Eph 5:2 and walk in love, just as Christ also loved you, and gave Himself up for us, an offering and a sacrifice to God as a fragrant aroma.

Eph 5:3 ¶ But do not let immorality or any impurity or greed even be named among you, as is proper among saints;

Eph 5:4 and there must be no filthiness and silly talk, or coarse jesting, which are not fitting, but rather giving of thanks.

Eph 5:5 For this you know with certainty, that no immoral or impure person or covetous man, who is an idolater, has an inheritance in the kingdom of Christ and God.

Eph 5:6 Let no one deceive you with empty words, for because of these things the wrath of God comes upon the sons of disobedience.

Eph 5:7 Therefore do not be partakers with them;

Eph 5:8 for you were formerly darkness, but now you are light in the Lord; walk as children of light

Eph 5:9 (for the fruit of the light consists in all goodness and righteousness and truth),

Eph 5:10 trying to learn what is pleasing to the Lord.

Eph 5:11 And do not participate in the unfruitful deeds of darkness, but instead even expose them;

Eph 5:12 for it is disgraceful even to speak of the things which are done by them in secret.

Eph 5:13 But all things become visible when they are exposed by the light, for everything that becomes visible is light.

Eph 5:14 For this reason it says, "Awake, sleeper, And arise from the dead, And Christ will shine on you."

Eph 5:15 ¶ Therefore be careful how you walk, not as unwise men, but as wise,

Eph 5:16 making the most of your time, because the days are evil.

Eph 5:17 So then do not be foolish, but understand what the will of the Lord is.

Eph 5:18 And do not get drunk with wine, for that is dissipation, but be filled with the Spirit,

Eph 5:19 speaking to one another in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing and making melody with your heart to the Lord;

Eph 5:20 always giving thanks for all things in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ to God, even the Father;

Eph 5:21 and be subject to one another in the fear of Christ.