

"Paul's Partnership with the Gospel"

Part 2

2 Corinthians 6:1-7:1

Introduction: Last week in our study of 2 Corinthians we stepped into chapter 6 and we looked at the first verse of the chapter.

Notice 2 Corinthians 6:1a

As we looked at this verse we considered the greatness of the ministry. Paul reminded his readers in this verse that all believers are **WORKERS TOGETHER WITH GOD**. In other words we have the greatest privilege in the world of working together with God in His work. It is not our work but it is God's work and He has graciously allowed you and me to join Him in the ministry.

Paul had stated in the previous chapter that we have been given the ministry of reconciliation and we are ambassadors for Jesus Christ. He also stated that we are walking the face of this earth **IN CHRIST'S STEAD**. This means we are to represent Jesus Christ to the world around us.

Notice 2 Corinthians 6:1b

At the end of this verse Paul pleaded with the Corinthians not to receive the grace of God in vain. The point Paul was making was that as workers together with God we have been given the grace to exercise our spiritual gifts and to do nothing with our spiritual gifts is to receive the grace of God in vain.

Ephesians 4:7

⁷ But unto every one of us is given grace according to the measure of the gift of Christ.

Paul was very careful in his life not to receive the grace of God in vain.

1 Corinthians 15:10

¹⁰ But by the grace of God I am what I am: and his grace which was bestowed upon me was not in vain; but I laboured more abundantly than they all: yet not I, but the grace of God which was with me.

So to sum up what we talked about last we can say that we are gifted and with the gift we have the grace we need to exercise the gift and therefore we have no excuse to not step into a life surrendered over to Jesus Christ. Now if that is not enough to motivate us to serve then we need to consider the next point tonight.

I. **The Greatness of the Message**

Notice 2 Corinthians 6:2

The first part of this verse is a quote from Isaiah 49:8 and the second part of the verse is Paul's interpretation of Isaiah 49:8. But there is so much more here. Isaiah 49:8 is a prophetic Psalm which is pointing to what our Lord would experience while He was a walking the face of this earth. Let me show you the verse but let me give you the background first.

Jesus the Messiah is represented as having asked for the grace of God in behalf of sinners; this verse contains God the Father's favorable answer.

Isaiah 49:8

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;

Jesus requested grace from the Father for Himself and for sinners. God the Father granted to Him the grace which He needed to endure the sufferings in His life including the cross and God the Father had provided the grace which was needed to bring the sinner into salvation.

Ephesians 2:8, 9

⁸ For by grace are ye saved through faith; and that not of yourselves: it is the gift of God:

⁹ Not of works, lest any man should boast.

Now let us notice the verse again to see how Paul interprets the verse.

Notice 2 Corinthians 6:2 again.

Paul tells the Corinthians that NOW is the acceptable time and NOW is the day of salvation. The first word in this verse connects it to the first verse so the thought here is continued about not receiving the grace of God in vain. So here is what Paul is saying; Just

as God the Father poured His grace upon Jesus so He could endure the difficulties of life on this earth so in the same way we too have been given the grace of God to face the difficulties which come with serving God. Jesus was living in the TIME ACCEPTED or we could say in the time appointed by God for Him to be on this earth. The 33 years which Jesus was on this earth was the appointed time for Jesus. In the same way we too are here at this ACCEPTABLE TIME which is the time which God has appointed for us to walk this earth and the time which God has given for sinners to be repent. It is in our ACCEPTABLE TIME that God gives to us His grace which is needed to serve Him and it is in this time that God gives grace to sinners to come to Jesus Christ. Paul then says that NOW is the time of salvation. In other words now is the time to serve God as ministers of reconciliation. Now is the time to be an ambassador for Jesus Christ. The time is NOW. Not tomorrow, NOT next week and NOT after we chase our dreams. NOW is the time to be surrendered over to serving Jesus Christ. Everything we need is provided. We have gifts, grace to exercise our gifts and God gives grace to the sinners around us to repent.

John 9:4

⁴ *I must work the works of him that sent me, while it is day: the night cometh, when no man can work.*

Ecclesiastes 9:10-12

¹⁰ *Whatsoever thy hand findeth to do, do it with thy might; for there is no work, nor device, nor knowledge, nor wisdom, in the grave, whither thou goest.*

¹¹ *I returned, and saw under the sun, that the race is not to the swift, nor the battle to the strong, neither yet bread to the wise, nor yet riches to men of understanding, nor yet favour to men of skill; but time and chance happeneth to them all.*

¹² *For man also knoweth not his time: as the fishes that are taken in an evil net, and as the birds that are caught in the snare; so are the sons of men snared in an evil time, when it falleth suddenly upon them.*

I am reminded here about Psalm 90 which was written by Moses concerning the 40 years of wandering in the wilderness.

Psalm 90:10-12

¹⁰ *The days of our years are threescore years and ten; and if by reason of strength they be fourscore years, yet is their strength labour and sorrow; for it is soon cut off, and we fly away.*

¹¹ *Who knoweth the power of thine anger? even according to thy fear, so is thy wrath.*

¹² **So teach us to number our days, that we may apply our hearts unto wisdom.**

Getting back to the point again, Paul calls everyone who reads this letter to a life of service and he reminds us all that we are equipped with everything which is needed, even grace for those we reach out to.

So Paul has pointed to the ministry and the message. Now he moves on.

II. The Method

a. What we should avoid.

Notice 2 Corinthians 6:3

Now as we serve the Lord and we exercise our gifts and God's grace we must at all times be very careful not to be offensive in any way so that the ministry could be blamed. We must understand that we are under the microscope at all times and so we MUST be sure we walk as Jesus walked while He was on earth. Let me show you something which Jesus said to Peter.

Matthew 17:24-27

²⁴ *And when they were come to Capernaum, they that received tribute money came to Peter, and said, Doth not your master pay tribute?*

²⁵ *He saith, Yes. And when he was come into the house, Jesus prevented him, saying, What thinkest thou, Simon? of whom do the kings of the earth take custom or tribute? of their own children, or of strangers?*

²⁶ *Peter saith unto him, Of strangers. Jesus saith unto him, Then are the children free.*

²⁷ *Notwithstanding, **lest we should offend them**, go thou to the sea, and cast an hook, and take up the fish that first cometh up; and when thou hast opened his mouth, thou shalt find a piece of money: that take, and **give unto them for me and thee**.*

Jesus was very careful not to offend those who collected the Temple tax and so He made sure it was paid.

Notice 2 Corinthians 6:3 again.

The word "offence" means "to cause to stumble". This definition takes my mind back to our study of 1 Corinthians and what Paul wrote concerning our liberty in Christ.

1 Corinthians 8:9-13

⁹ *But take heed lest by any means this liberty of yours become a stumblingblock to them that are weak.*

¹⁰ *For if any man see thee which hast knowledge sit at meat in the idol's temple, shall not the conscience of him which is weak be emboldened to eat those things which are offered to idols;*

¹¹ *And through thy knowledge shall the weak brother perish, for whom Christ died?*

¹² *But when ye sin so against the brethren, and wound their weak conscience, ye sin against Christ.*

¹³ *Wherefore, if meat make my brother to offend, I will eat no flesh while the world standeth, lest I make my brother to offend.*

Paul was so careful about not causing someone to stumble and he told the Corinthians that if meat caused a brother to stumble he would never again eat meat. Now when we studied this section we had discussed that there were gray areas in which the Bible did not touch on. In these areas of life we have 2 things to guide us:

1. **Our conscience** - We must never violate our conscience.
2. **The people who watch us** - We must be sensitive to those who watch us and never use our liberty so as to lead them to violate their conscience.

In the same way we must be very careful as ambassadors of Jesus Christ and never use our liberty to give someone an opportunity to blame the ministry. It always breaks my heart when I hear of someone in the ministry who breaks the law or who falls into immorality for it gives critics and others opportunity to blame the ministry.

Romans 14:13

¹³ *Let us not therefore judge one another any more: but judge this rather, that no man put a stumblingblock or an occasion to fall in his brother's way.*

We are to be careful not to cause a BROTHER to stumble so how much more serious would it be to cause an unbeliever to turn from Jesus Christ?

Matthew 18:6, 7

⁶ *But whoso shall offend one of these little ones which believe in me, it were better for him that a millstone were hanged about his neck, and that he were drowned in the depth of the sea.*

⁷ *Woe unto the world because of offences! for it must needs be that offences come; but woe to that man by whom the offence cometh!*

Back to the thought, we are never to cause an offence so that the ministry could be blamed. We are to avoid offenses.

b. **What we should pursue.**

Notice 2 Corinthians 6:4a

Paul did everything he could to be sure that when others seen him they were able to see Jesus Christ. He commended himself in all that he did.

2 Corinthians 4:2

² *But have renounced the hidden things of dishonesty, not walking in craftiness, nor handling the word of God deceitfully; but by manifestation of the truth commending ourselves to every man's conscience in the sight of God.*

2 Corinthians 4:10-12

¹⁰ *Always bearing about in the body the dying of the Lord Jesus, that the life also of Jesus might be made manifest in our body.*

¹¹ *For we which live are always delivered unto death for Jesus' sake, that the life also of Jesus might be made manifest in our mortal flesh.*

¹² *So then death worketh in us, but life in you.*

We have talked about this many times before but it is something that always needs to be at the front of our minds. As we serve the Lord we **MUST** be willing to die to our rights, our dreams, our desires and ultimately to our flesh. It is then and only then that Jesus' life will be seen in our lives. Let me show you what Jesus said concerning His own death.

John 12:24

²⁴ *Verily, verily, I say unto you, Except a corn of wheat fall into the ground and die, it abideth alone: but if it die, it bringeth forth much fruit.*

He used the illustration of a grain of wheat. While it is high on the stalk it will never produce new life. But when it dies and falls into the ground then the new life comes from the death. The idea here is that Jesus is pointing to His own death and the lesson is that life comes from death. This same Truth can be applied to our lives. When we die to our hopes, dreams, desires, and to our flesh then the life of Christ is seen within us.

July 16, 2017

PM Service

Conclusion:

In 2 weeks we will move on and we shall what the Apostle Paul endured in his own life in order to be used of God to win others to Jesus Christ.