

"Paul's Partnership with the Gospel"

Part 5

2 Corinthians 6:1-7:1

Introduction: As we continue to work our way through 2 Corinthians we have come to a section tonight that shows us the reality of serving God. When we trusted in Jesus Christ we became soldiers in the army of God. We are to gather together here in this building and as we study the Word of God we are then equipped and prepared for the battle. The battle is not with people around us but the battle is a spiritual battle.

Ephesians 6:12-13

¹² For we wrestle not against flesh and blood, but against principalities, against powers, against the rulers of the darkness of this world, against spiritual wickedness in high places.

¹³ Wherefore take unto you the whole armour of God, that ye may be able to withstand in the evil day, and having done all, to stand.

Now as we serve God in the midst of this spiritual battle we can expect Satan will use people to oppose us. He will work through anyone who allows themselves to be used by him. For this reason there are going to be people who despise what we do.

I. The Contrasts of Ministry

Notice 2 Corinthians 6:8

As we now look at verses 8-10 Paul will give a list of contrasts which we can expect to experience in the ministry.

1. By honour and dishonour

As we stand for the Truth of God's Word we need to understand that there will be people who welcome the Truth and there will be people who despise the Truth. Let us notice the words of Jesus.

Matthew 10:34-36

³⁴ Think not that I am come to send peace on earth: I came not to send peace, but a sword.

³⁵ For I am come to set a man at variance against his father, and the daughter against her mother, and the daughter in law against her mother in law.

³⁶ *And a man's foes shall be they of his own household.*

The preaching of the Gospel divides people into 2 different groups; those who are for us and those who are against us.

Illustration:

I read a story recently about a woman who had been raised as an Italian Catholic. She did not frequent the church on a regular basis but she did show some interest in "religious things". A man stopped by one day and shared the Gospel with her. She saw her need of the Savior and accepted Jesus Christ. She then was invited by her neighbor to attend his family's Protestant church and she welcomed the invitation. She took her daughter with her and they both loved the service. The people of the church welcomed her with open arms. They embraced her because she had accepted to message of the Gospel. Several days later she visited with her neighbor and he could see the sadness on her face. When he inquired about the sadness she explained what had happened. He favorite nephew discovered that she had attended the Protestant and he exploded in rage. He said, "Aunt Emma, if you ever go back to that Protestant church I will never speak to you again!"

We live in a world that is under the influence of the Prince of the power of the air.

Ephesians 2:1-2

And you hath he quickened, who were dead in trespasses and sins;

² *Wherein in time past ye walked according to the course of this world, according to the prince of the power of the air, the spirit that now worketh in the children of disobedience:*

2 Corinthians 4:4

³ *But if our gospel be hid, it is hid to them that are lost:*

⁴ *In whom the god of this world hath blinded the minds of them which believe not, lest the light of the glorious gospel of Christ, who is the image of God, should shine unto them.*

Satan works in the lives of the unsaved and he blinds their mind to the Truth so we should not be surprised by how the world responds. Let me show you what Peter wrote about the persecution which Nero brought upon the believers in Rome.

1 Peter 4:12

¹² *Beloved, think it not strange concerning the fiery trial which is to try you, as though some strange thing happened unto you:*

2. By evil report and good report

The words "evil report" means "to defame someone" or "to damage someone's reputation". There were many lies which were spread about Paul. He did not attempt to chase down every source nor did he attempt to defend himself in every situation. He understood that to chase after the sources which attempted to defame him was nothing more than a distraction.

There are going to be times as we serve the Lord when people are going to say things about us that are not true. There have been many things said about me and I know that I cannot chase after the sources. It would be a huge distraction. I must keep in my mind the Words which Jesus spoke in the Sermon on the Mount.

Matthew 5:11-12

¹¹ Blessed are ye, when men shall revile you, and persecute you, and shall say all manner of evil against you falsely, for my sake.

¹² Rejoice, and be exceeding glad: for great is your reward in heaven: for so persecuted they the prophets which were before you.

Even when we are walking directly in the will of God and in a life of integrity people will still attempt to defame us with lies. Let us not forget the life of Joseph and what happened to him in the house of Potiphar. He refused to sin against God and Potiphar's wife used her words in an attempt to destroy him. He was then taken and he was cast into prison. In all of this there was never any bitterness in Joseph's life for he understood that God was able to take even the evil experiences and use them for his (Joseph's) good and for God's glory and that is exactly what happened.

We need to understand that there will be good reports about us and there will be evil reports about us. Both are a part of being involved in serving God because we are a threat to Satan.

3. As deceivers and yet true.

The word "deceivers" means "to mislead" or "to lead into error". Paul was often accused of being a man who proclaimed a message of deception. The way the word is used in this verse it has the idea of Paul being an imposter. The Judaizers hated Paul for the message of grace which he preached. They were all about the Law and when Paul came into "their territory" proclaiming salvation by grace they despised him and his message. They considered Paul to be an "imposter" who was leading people astray.

We must understand that as we share the message of the Gospel of Jesus Christ there are going to be many "religious" people who hate it and they are going to accuse us of being deceivers. Let me explain why they become so offended.

1 Corinthians 2:4

¹⁴ *But the natural man receiveth not the things of the Spirit of God: for they are foolishness unto him: neither can he know them, because they are spiritually discerned.*

The unsaved cannot grasp the Truth of the Gospel because he has not the Spirit of God and he is also blinded by Satan.

2 Corinthians 4:4

³ *But if our gospel be hid, it is hid to them that are lost:*

⁴ *In whom the god of this world hath blinded the minds of them which believe not, lest the light of the glorious gospel of Christ, who is the image of God, should shine unto them.*

The unsaved then have created their own god in their minds and with the false god they have formulated their own plan of salvation. Therefore when the Truth of the Gospel is heard it destroys all they have come to believe. They may believe a false gospel that has been believed by their family for generations. So when the Gospel is proclaimed it is an attack upon the entire family.

Therefore they will push back against God's plan of salvation because it destroys their's.

Let me show you how the religious people of Jesus day viewed Him.

Matthew 27:62-63

⁶² *Now the next day, that followed the day of the preparation, the chief priests and Pharisees came together unto Pilate,*

⁶³ *Saying, Sir, we remember that that deceiver said, while he was yet alive, After three days I will rise again.*

John 7:12

¹² *And there was much murmuring among the people concerning him: for some said, He is a good man: others said, Nay; but he deceiveth the people.*

If it was said about Jesus we can expect it will also be said about us.

Notice 2 Corinthians 6:9

Here are 3 more contrasts which Paul lists.

4. **As unknown yet well known.**

The word "unknown" here has the idea of "being a nobody". In the eyes of God, Paul and the other Apostles had the most important positions on the earth. In the eyes of God they were the most important people on the earth. The reasons were they were pillars within the church, and they were gifted by God to teach the church the Truth of God's Word. But to the unsaved religious leaders as well as many others they were nobodies.

I can assure you that in our society today there are people who view us who are believers as weak dependent people who use our religion as a crutch to get through life. They see us as very insignificant in the big scheme of this advancing world.

But in the eyes of God we are extremely important in this world.

Matthew 5:13-16

¹³ ***Ye are the salt of the earth:*** but if the salt have lost his savour, wherewith shall it be salted? it is thenceforth good for nothing, but to be cast out, and to be trodden under foot of men.

¹⁴ ***Ye are the light of the world.*** A city that is set on an hill cannot be hid.

¹⁵ Neither do men light a candle, and put it under a bushel, but on a candlestick; and it giveth light unto all that are in the house.

¹⁶ Let your light so shine before men, that they may see your good works, and glorify your Father which is in heaven.

We who are believers are the most important people on the earth for we have within us a message that can save the world from the fires of hell. You may be viewed by many as someone this world would be better off without. But that is not the case. We are very important for we have been given the greatest message ever told.

5. **As dying and behold we live.**

The word "BEHOLD" here is very interesting. Paul's life was threatened over and over again but miraculously he was still alive. This is why he uses the word "BEHOLD". Notice what Paul recorded in chapter 1.

2 Corinthians 1:8-10

⁸ For we would not, brethren, have you ignorant of our trouble which came to us in Asia, that we were pressed out of measure, above strength, insomuch that we despaired even of life:

⁹ *But we had the sentence of death in ourselves, that we should not trust in ourselves, but in God which raiseth the dead:*

¹⁰ *Who delivered us from so great a death, and doth deliver: in whom we trust that he will yet deliver us;*

For you and me we do not need to look over our shoulder every day for someone who desires to end our lives. But it is important to know that our enemy does desire to kill us. Notice what Jesus said about Satan when speaking to the religious leaders.

John 8:44

⁴⁴ *Ye are of your father the devil, and the lusts of your father ye will do. He was a murderer from the beginning, and abode not in the truth, because there is no truth in him. When he speaketh a lie, he speaketh of his own: for he is a liar, and the father of it.*

But you and I do not need to fear Satan or his desire to kill us. He cannot end our lives unless God would permit him to do so.

Job 14:1-2, 5

Man that is born of a woman is of few days and full of trouble.

² *He cometh forth like a flower, and is cut down: he fleeth also as a shadow, and continueth not.*

⁵ *Seeing his days are determined, the number of his months are with thee, thou hast appointed his bounds that he cannot pass;*

Conclusion:

We are in a spiritual battle and the enemy is very real and hostile. For this reason life can become very difficult at times. We will be honored by some and dishonored by others. We will be slandered by those who dislike our message. We will be called deceivers because the message which we have destroys the world's ideas and religious beliefs. We will be considered nobodies but the truth is we are salt and light. Satan may launch deadly attacks against us but while God allows us to be here and until our ministry here is finished we are bullet proof.

Next week we shall look at the last 4 contrasts and in those we shall find some very interesting spiritual Truth for our lives.