

"Paul's Partnership with the Gospel"

Part 7

2 Corinthians 6:1-7:1

Introduction: In our study of 2 Corinthians 6 we have worked our way through verses 1-10. As we studied these verses we did not really talk much about the context of the letter so to begin with tonight I want to examine the context and then we will move on to verses 10-13.

This letter was written by Paul to defend his integrity and his apostleship. He had been plagued by the critics over and over again. They were constantly doing all they could to destroy his reputation. That really was to be expected for he was in a spiritual battle and God was using him to write Scripture. So the attacks upon him were an attack against the Word of God and the enemy choose to attack his integrity so as to cast doubt upon "his" teaching which was really Christ's teaching.

2 Corinthians 5:20

²⁰ *Now then we are ambassadors for Christ, as though God did beseech you by us: we pray you in Christ's stead, be ye reconciled to God.*

Now, what was NOT to be expected was how the Corinthian believers bought into the lies of the critics. This would have caused great pain in the heart of Paul. It is one thing for your enemies to spread lies about you but it is really difficult when people who know you, who claim to be your friends, believe those lies. This was the situation which Paul faced. Let me remind you that when Paul went to Corinth he had stayed there for 18 months and while he was there he worked as a tent maker.

Acts 18:1-3, 11

After these things Paul departed from Athens, and came to Corinth;

² *And found a certain Jew named Aquila, born in Pontus, lately come from Italy, with his wife Priscilla; (because that Claudius had commanded all Jews to depart from Rome:) and came unto them.*

³ *And because he was of the same craft, he abode with them, and wrought: for by their occupation they were tentmakers.*

¹¹ *And he continued there a year and six months, teaching the word of God among them.*

Paul was not the average evangelist. Many times an evangelist will come into town and he will hold a series of meetings and in those meetings there may be people who profess to be saved but the chances are he will never see them again for he moves on to the next town. In that town the same thing happens and it continues on. The responsibility of following up on those who have professed to be saved falls upon the churches and their leaders.

This was not the way Paul operated. He went into Corinth and he lived and worked among the people. He used his profession as a tent maker to build relationships with those within the city. He spent time with those who were saved so as to disciple them along in their walk. When the pressure within a city became too great Paul would then move on BUT he did not abandon those who were saved.

1 Corinthians 4:14-17

¹⁴ *I write not these things to shame you, but as my beloved sons I warn you.*

¹⁵ *For though ye have ten thousand instructors in Christ, yet have ye not many fathers: for in Christ Jesus I have begotten you through the gospel.*

¹⁶ *Wherefore I beseech you, be ye followers of me.*

¹⁷ *For this cause **have I sent unto you Timotheus**, who is my beloved son, and faithful in the Lord, who shall bring you into remembrance of my ways which be in Christ, as I teach every where in every church.*

If Paul could not get back to the church personally he would then send one of his trusted companions here we see it was Timothy and at other times it was Titus. This was all because of how much love Paul had for the people of the Lord.

Now the section we just came through in 2 Corinthians 6 Paul had explained to them the suffering which he had to face in his ministry to the Corinthians as well as to all others. He will now plead with them starting in verse 11.

I. The Plea

Notice 2 Corinthians 6:11

Verses 10-13 here are kind of an outburst of emotion from Paul. He is reviewing some of what he has endured so that the Corinthians could hear the Gospel and then in the midst of his openness with them his emotions overflow.

He tells them **"our mouth is open unto you"** and what he is saying here is that I have not held one thing back from you. I have poured out my heart just to show you how much I love you. He also tells them **"his heart is enlarged"**. The point which Paul is making here is

there was nothing within his heart that he was harboring that would lessen his love for them. His love was so great for the Corinthians he had poured out all that was in his heart.

Matthew 12:34b

for out of the abundance of the heart the mouth speaketh.

Luke 6:45

⁴⁵ *A good man out of the good treasure of his heart bringeth forth that which is good; and an evil man out of the evil treasure of his heart bringeth forth that which is evil: for of the abundance of the heart his mouth speaketh.*

The Corinthians had wronged Paul but he would not hold onto that for he knew that if there was unforgiveness in his heart it would hinder the ministry of the Gospel.

2 Corinthians 6:3

³ *Giving no offence in any thing, that the ministry be not blamed:*

Humanly speaking Paul had every right to pull back from these people at Corinth because of the pain they had caused within his heart. But Paul knew that when he or anyone else is walking in the will of the father that we all become very vulnerable.

Application:

I need to stop here briefly and make a very important application for our own personal lives. There are going to be times when people hurt us. It may be with words or it may be with their choices. But we must be quick to forgive those who offend us. There are 4 basic reasons why we must not harbor unforgiveness:

1. **Forgiveness is commanded.**

Matthew 18:21-22

²¹ *Then came Peter to him, and said, Lord, how oft shall my brother sin against me, and I forgive him? till seven times?*

²² *Jesus saith unto him, I say not unto thee, Until seven times: but, Until seventy times seven.*

2. **We have received the greatest forgiveness.**

Ephesians 4:31-32

³¹ *Let all bitterness, and wrath, and anger, and clamour, and evil speaking, be put away from you, with all malice:*

³² *And be ye kind one to another, tenderhearted, forgiving one another, even as God for Christ's sake hath forgiven you.*

Hebrews 10:17

¹⁷ *And their sins and iniquities will I remember no more.*

3. **Harboring unforgiveness breaks our fellowship with our Father.**

Psalm 66:18

¹⁸ *If I regard iniquity in my heart, the Lord will not hear me:*

Matthew 6:14-15

¹⁴ *For if ye forgive men their trespasses, your heavenly Father will also forgive you:*

¹⁵ *But if ye forgive not men their trespasses, neither will your Father forgive your trespasses.*

4. **Carrying around unforgiveness hinders the ministry of the Gospel.**

2 Corinthians 6:3

³ *Giving no offence in any thing, that the ministry be not blamed:*

Now let us get back to our text. Paul had been wronged by the Corinthians but he would not hold that against them for he knew that the Gospel was far more important than his feelings or his rights.

Notice 2 Corinthians 6:12

This verse is difficult to grasp here in the King James Version so let me help you with what Paul is saying here. This is really a contrast and the contrast is between Paul's heart and the heart of the Corinthians.

He is saying, "There is no lack of room for you in my heart, but the need of love is in your heart!"

Some of the Corinthians had listened to the critics long enough that there was now a withholding of love for Paul. Let me explain what was happening here by using our own lives to help us to see the problem.

Illustration:

Let's say that someone comes to you and they discuss with you another believer. They tell you this believer has fallen into sin and for that reason they are not coming to church as much and so you take that and you think about it for a while. It is true that you have not seen them in a while and when you start to put the pieces together it all seems to fit. You have no real proof that they are involved in sin but it seems to make sense with how they are acting from where you are standing. So in your heart you begin to judge this individual and more time passes and you have had time to really "figure out" the entire situation. One day you are at Wal-Mart and you look down the aisle and you see this individual coming toward you. So you act like you have forgotten something and you turn and you go the other way because in your mind you have judged them unworthy of your attention and time. In the parking lot as you are loading the car they come up to you and they begin to pour out their heart to you. They tell you that they have been having some real problems at home and for several reasons they have not been able to attend church as much as they would desire. But there is something in your heart that tells you this is not the entire story because you remember what the other person told you. So for that reason you withhold love and compassion toward them.

That is exactly what the Corinthian's were doing to Paul. The words of the critics were nothing but lies but they sure appeared to be true. Remember how the critics had told the Corinthians Paul did not want to visit them? He had expressed his desire to visit but the truth was God had closed the door and he was not able to visit.

Application:

I need to just stop here for a moment and point out something that really needs to be understood by every believer. THIS SITUATION RIGHT HERE SHOWS THE DANGER OF GOSIP!

We live in a world today where many people are just looking for something to post on Facebook. All they need is a tiny piece of the story and they can fill in the gaps with how they desire the story to be heard. That is bad enough but then you have believers who read the gossip and they then accept it as the absolute truth and they begin to spread it to all their friends.

Even if it is true no believer has the right to spread it on to someone else. Let me show you a few verses that fit this thought.

Proverbs 10:11-14

¹¹ The mouth of a righteous man is a well of life: but violence covereth the mouth of the wicked.

¹² Hatred stirreth up strifes: but love covereth all sins.

¹³ In the lips of him that hath understanding wisdom is found: but a rod is for the back of him that is void of understanding.

¹⁴ Wise men lay up knowledge: but the mouth of the foolish is near destruction.

Let me show you verse 12 in action.

Genesis 9:20-23

²⁰ And Noah began to be an husbandman, and he planted a vineyard:

²¹ And he drank of the wine, and was drunken; and he was uncovered within his tent.

²² And Ham, the father of Canaan, saw the nakedness of his father, and told his two brethren without.

²³ And Shem and Japheth took a garment, and laid it upon both their shoulders, and went backward, and covered the nakedness of their father; and their faces were backward, and they saw not their father's nakedness.

Conclusion:

Let me get you back to our text because we are out in the weeds with this but it is important.

The Corinthians listened to the lies of the critics and so it affected their love and their openness with Paul.

Notice 2 Corinthians 6:13

He pleads with them here to be as open with him as he was with them. This will take us right into the command which Paul gives to the Corinthians in the next verse.

Let us be very careful what we listen to and read and let us be very careful not to pass on that which others do not need to hear.