

2 CORINTHIANS - (Chapter 6)

Marks of the Ministry (vs. 1-10)

It was Paul who had gone to Corinth with the Good News of the Gospel; and through his ministry the church had been founded. Paul had fulfilled the work of an “ambassador” described in **2 Corinthians 5:18-21**. It was not the Judaizers who had won them to Christ; it was the Holy Spirit working through Paul’s ministry. But even now, Paul was not certain that “*everybody in the church*” who professed to be saved was truly a child of God (**2 Corinthians 13:5**). Since Jesus said everyone who says Lord, lord will not enter heaven and more would go through the wide gate and the broad way versus travel through the narrow gate and the difficult way; **Paul’s concern is as valid for us today as it was for Paul then.**

Vs. 1-2 - The phrase “*workers together*” derives from a Greek word meaning “*as God’s fellow workers.*” Paul is saying in these verses *since we are fellow workers in the great task of the ministry of reconciliation, I plead with you not to receive the grace (God’s unmerited favor) of God in vain.* Paul in no way is suggesting one could receive God’s gift of grace through faith – Salvation and then lose their salvation (**John 10:28-29**) proves you cannot. For the Corinthians to receive the gospel in vain would mean that their lives and

practices might not measure up to their profession of faith and their actions deny the gospel. Paul feared that after he preached a pure gospel to them, the Corinthians would be so influenced by false apostles that they would build with straw or stubble rather than with stone. Paul was encouraging them to take the greatest care in practicing what you teach/preach. God's best for our life is never a state of ease and comfort and indulgent inactivity. In vs. 2 Paul is quoting Isaiah 49:8 as his appeal to them to receive God's grace. Because of the reconciling work of Christ on the cross (2 Corinthians 5:18-19), today is indeed the "day of salvation." There is no guarantee that any sinner will have the opportunity to be saved *tomorrow*. Isaiah 55:6 says, *Seek the Lord while He may be found.*

Vs. 3 - Paul again defended his ministry and his conduct. He stated that in no way had he done anything to cause others to stumble, to discredit his ministry or to compromise his preaching of the gospel. The Greek word translated for "offense" in vs. 3 means to provide an occasion to stumble. *In everything Paul did, he always considered what his actions communicated about Jesus Christ to others.* We must strive not to allow our careless or undisciplined actions not to be a stumbling block or excuse for another to reject Christ.

Vs. 4-5 – Verses 4-10 is really one long sentence in the Greek...the translators created separate verses for clarity sake. Regarding the phrase in vs. 4 - "in all

things we commend ourselves” - Paul will now recount his resume’ to the Corinthian Christians. Here are the things he will list to commend himself before them. “*In much patience*” - Paul’s first qualification was patience. The *Greek* word carries the idea of endurance instead of simply “inactively waiting.” We often think of patience as a passive thing – the ability to sit around and wait for something to happen. That is not the idea of the word Paul used here. It is an active endurance instead of a *passive waiting*. The ancient *Greek* word hupomone “*does not describe the frame of mind which can sit down with folded hands and bowed head and let a torrent of troubles sweep over it in passive resignation. It describes the ability to bear things in such a triumphant way that it transfigures them.*” Next Paul mentions “*Tribulations, needs and distresses.*” In Paul’s resume’ as an apostle, ambassador, and co-worker with Jesus, he follows patience with describing why he needed this endurance. First, it was because of the general struggles and trials of life. Paul was often stressed and under pressure (this is the idea behind the word for tribulations), often needy, and often in distress. “Distresses implies an external and usually temporary cause of great physical or mental strain and stress. Next Paul mentions “*stripes, imprisonments, and tumults.*” Stripes were the wounds on his back from a whippings (*2 Corinthians 11:24*), imprisonments referred to the frequent time Paul spent in jail (remember the

prison epistles - Ephesians, Philippians, Colossians, and Philemon were written by Paul in prison), and *tumults* speak of violence from an angry mob (*2 Corinthians 11:25*). Nowadays it is not the physical violence but the mockery or the amused contempt of the crowd that many Christian must stand up to. Next Paul mentions “*Labors, sleeplessness, and fastings.*” Paul continues his resume’ with describing his self-inflicted hardships because of his commitment to Christ. No one made him work so hard, keep so many sleepless nights, or go without food so often. These were true trials but ones Paul chose willingly as a co-worker with Jesus Christ. Paul isn’t complaining about these, because they were self-inflicted, but they were relevant to his need for patience. Paul knew he needed endurance, and he knew many things in his life drew him to seek that endurance. Some of them were the general trials of life, some were sufferings directly brought by others, and some were self-inflicted. Not every trial was the same, but they all made him need endurance. Regarding *fasting* Jesus said in *Mark 9:29* there are some things that require *both* prayer and *fasting*.

Vs. 6-7 – In these verses Paul begins to describe the resources he took advantage of in triumphing over adversity. If he honestly listed his trials, he will also honestly list the fruit of the Spirit and the power of God in his life. Now Paul had the trials of *2 Corinthians 6:4-5* in greater measure than most

men. Yet, he also had the blessings of 2 Corinthians 6:6-7 in greater measure than most men also. Paul is holding both offensive and defensive weapons - it probably has in mind “both advancing and being attacked.” Particularly, the shield of faith and the sword of the Spirit were invaluable spiritual weapons Paul made use of. We have the doctrine of truth, and the power of God, as an armor to protect us on all sides, everywhere, and on all occasions. In vs. 6 the word purity or pureness reflects moral chastity. In vs. 6 longsuffering refers to having patience with difficult people. A good example of longsuffering is grandmothers...even when teenagers and young adults are acting a fool – being rebellious...grandmothers because they know how to get a prayer into the throne room of grace and mercy....they don’t give up – they don’t just see in the natural, but they look to the future because they know prayer changes things. And sincere love is Agape love – a love that looks out for the betterment of another – it’s a non-hypocritical love. Jesus said the world will know we are His disciples by how we love one another.

Vs. 8-10 – Now the world (including the worldly Corinthian Christians) described Paul with words like: dishonor - evil report - deceivers - unknown – dying – chastened – sorrowful – poor – and having nothing. But God described Paul with words like: honor - good report - true - well known - behold we live - not killed - always rejoicing - making many rich - and

possessing all things. Now which description was true – the world’s or God’s? **2 Corinthians 4:18** gives the answer. According to the things which are seen, the world’s estimation was correct. According to the things which are not seen, God’s estimation was correct. Which estimation is more important to you? I mean, what a difference it makes to know Jesus. He cares for us in spite of what the world thinks. Christians don’t have to give in to public opinion and pressure. *Paul stood faithful to God whether people praised him or slandered him.* He remained joyous and content in the most difficult hardships. Don’t let circumstances or people’s expectations or criticism control you. Be firm as you stand true to God, and refuse to compromise His standards for living.

Be Holy (vs. 11-13)

Vs. 11-13 - When Paul mentioned the specific people groups in his writing he did it for emphasis. Only in Philippians 4:15 (reference to the Philippians – good) and Galatians 3:1 (reference to the Galatians - bad) did Paul highlight a people group. The phrase in **vs. 11** “*We have spoken openly to you, our heart is wide open*” - Paul is practicing what he preached in **Ephesians 4:15**: speaking the truth in love. He genuinely loved the Corinthians with an open heart, yet he would also speak openly to them. This phrase also refers to the depth and breadth of Paul’s love towards the Corinthians. Nothing reveals how much an

under-shepherd loves his sheep more than the *depth and breadth in which he teaches them the word of God* (Jesus told Peter 3 times feed my sheep, tend my lambs, feed my sheep). **Vs. 11-13** reflect the Corinthian's were being cold towards Paul because the enemies of Paul planted suspicions in their hearts and they allowed them to restrict their affections for Paul. As spiritual leaders we must expect that people desire to be told what they want to hear not necessarily what the word of God says. It is easy to react coldly and negatively to leaders who speak the unadulterated word of God. Regarding the phrase in **vs. 12** – “*You are not restricted by us, but you are restricted by your own affections*” - the Corinthian Christians played the “*victim*” before Paul. Therefore, out of godly necessity, he was firm with them on previous occasions (***1 Corinthians 4:18-21, 2 Corinthians 1:23***). Now, they probably claimed to be restricted by the “*hurt*” Paul caused them. They probably said, “We would love to reconcile with you Paul, but the pain you caused us restricts us. We just can't get over it.” But the real problem was that the Corinthian Christians were restricted by their own affections. It wasn't that Paul did not love them enough (which was their claim as “*victims*”). It was that *they loved the world too much* and *they also loved themselves too much* and refused to deal with their selfish and worldly attitudes towards Paul.

Staying Separate in a Connected World (vs. 14-18)

We are living in a time when connectedness is the rule of the day. Everyone wants the “Hook Up” – and most of the connectedness is conditionally based - *I’ll do this for you; if you do this for me.* We love bundled packaging – we want to get our cell phone, internet, and cable or satellite TV bundled to reduce cost and that type of connectedness is good – being connected to those you love and to those you need via the cell phone and Facebook is another good thing. But there is a kind of connectedness that is not good and Paul writes about it in vs. 14-18. Of all the churches mentioned in the New Testament that were connected to Paul, the church in Corinth was undoubtedly the most worldly.

Vs. 14 - When the text says in vs. 14 – “*Do not be unequally yoked*” this concept is derived from Deuteronomy 22:10. A yoke is a wooden bar that joins two oxen to each other and to the burden they pull. An “unequally yoked” team has one stronger ox and one weaker. Instead of working together, they are usually at odds with one another. So in our vernacular what Paul is saying to us is: *don’t be unequally yoked with anyone who chooses to party all night on Saturday night hence, no energy or desire to worship God on Sunday. Don’t be unequally yoked with anyone whose standard of right and wrong is the evolution of society and the approval of unholy friends rather, than the never changing truth of God’s Word. Don’t be unequally yoked with anyone who desires for you*

to engage in sexual immorality verses living holy unto the Lord. And when you think you have met Mr. or Mrs. Right don't be unequally yoked with anyone who desires to co-habitat or shack up instead of allowing God to usher you into the state of Marriage - Holy Matrimony – one man and one woman living in covenant with God and each other.

Vs. 15 - The term *Belial* in **vs. 15** is a Satanic term referring to someone who is vile and wicked and one who causes destruction. Note also the subject in these verses is you understood. Paul is saying “You” the Believer do not be unequally yoked because the unbeliever is yoked up to the unsaved world and its evil system. Believers, we must make our choices with eternity in mind; we must establish some non-negotiable principles. Our God said, “Be holy for I am Holy”...one of the greatest “blessing blockers” is when one does not prioritize holiness. I know we live in a highly sensual world – you can't turn on the TV and there not be something on it that is intentionally designed to appeal to us physically and/or sexually. The Bible is the Christians “*Declaration of Independence*” – we must not be unequally yoked to any teaching or ideology contrary to the Bible – we should not “go along” with sin to “get along.” If the Bible is not where you get your morals and principles from, then you will find yourself in an unequally yoked position.

Vs. 16 - According to **vs. 16** our bodies are God's temple and we are designed to be set apart to worship and serve God's purposes for our lives. Paul said in **1 Corin. 6:19-20** - *"do you not know that your body is the temple of the Holy Spirit who is in you, whom you have from God, and you are not your own? For you were bought with a price; therefore glorify God in your body and in your spirit, which are God's."* Now, I love the last phrase of **vs. 16** – *"And they shall be My people"* – **vs. 16b** derives from **Levit. 26:12** and **Ezek. 37:27**. This phrase begs the question - Are you God's people only when you're at the church house? Are you God's people on Friday and Saturday night? Are you God's people when you go on a "hot" date? Are you God's people when nobody is watching you? For us today when God says "My People" He is in essence saying - *"My People" read and obey My Word – My People are not ashamed to Worship Me – My People grace give at least a tithe of their income – My People actively serve in the ministry of their spiritual gifting – My People can't keep quiet about My excellent mercy - My People love God's Pastor - My People serve God with gladness...My People pray for and with one another – and My People go share the gospel to the people in their sphere of influence...* The real question today is, Are You Sure you are God's People?

Vs. 17 - This verse derives from **Isaiah 52:11** and **Ezekiel 20:34**. Come out and separate from the world involves more than the keeping of our physical

distance from the unholy practices - it also means, staying close to God. It involves more than avoiding worldly entertainment but it also extends to how we spend our time, talent, and money. And we are not being admonished to separate from unsaved people as it relates to witnessing to them. If we did that, then how are they going to receive the witness of the Gospel? And please don't think all Christians live like some we see each week at "any church USA" including TMFBC - if you saw the expressions on some people's faces in church – in the choir – during praise and worship – while the pastor is preaching - you'd think some just ate a bowl of sour grapes. When you talk to some people, you want to go off in a state of depression...The Authentic Christian life is not a boring life...authentic Christianity is the best life one can live and it is not boring...what is more exciting than knowing your name is written in Lamb's Book of Life because you have confessed with your mouth the Lord Jesus and you believe in your heart God raised Him from the dead therefore you are saved...what can be more exhilarating than knowing you serve a God who is able to do exceedingly and abundantly above what you could think or ask...what is more gratifying than knowing you serve a God who promises to provide all that you need according to His riches in glory by Christ Jesus...what is more meaningful than knowing God says, Call to me

and I will answer you; and show you great and mighty things which you do not know.

Vs. 18 – Regarding the phrase “*I will be a Father to you,*” this is why Jesus taught the disciples to pray, “*Our Father, which art in heaven, hallowed by thy name.*” God becomes our “Father” when we trust Jesus Christ as our Savior. The Greek word translated for the title “*Almighty*” means the one who has his hand on everything. In the entire New Testament, this word for “*almighty*” is used only here and in the book of Revelation (1:8, 4:8; 16:7). Paul wants us to understand that it is the sovereign God of heaven who offers us adoption as His children as we separate unto Him.