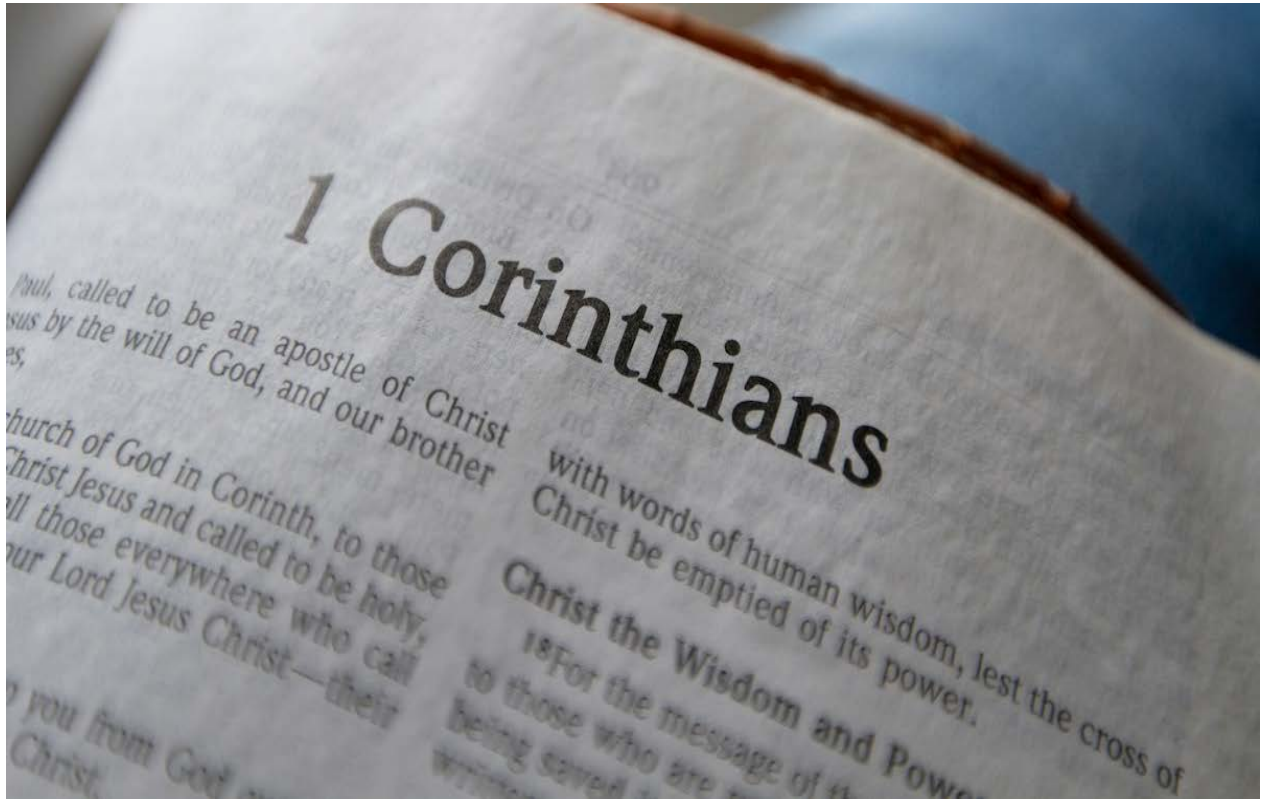


Children of God

2 Corinthians 6

1 and 2 Corinthians Part 23



T. M. AND SUSIE MOORE

A Scriptorium Study from The Fellowship of Ailbe

Children of God: 2 Corinthians 6
1 and 2 Corinthians Part 23
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Introduction to *2 Corinthians 6*

We have an eternal and almighty Father, and He has given us Himself as our inheritance.

He feeds us by His unfailing Word, fills us with His Holy Spirit, puts us in the charge of His appointed King and Lord, and continues to bring us into greater measures of His fullness day by day.

His power flows to us and dwells in us (Acts 1.8). He receives our prayers and promises to answer them in great and wondrous ways (Jer. 33.3). He sends us into His mission of restoring the reconciled world with the instructions to do good works and be witnesses for Him.

He provides for all our needs; bears with us in all our shortcomings; renews us by His Word and Spirit; calls us to His Kingdom and glory; and makes us a royal priesthood and a holy generation.

What a privilege: We are children of God.

If you find these studies, or any of our other resources, helpful, we hope you will consider making a contribution to help support our work. You can do so by using the donate button at the website or by sending your gift to The Fellowship of Ailbe, 103 Reynolds Lane, West Grove, PA 19390.

We hope you find this study instructive and helpful to equip you for your walk with and work for the Lord. Thank you for joining us.

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1 The Day of Salvation

Pray Psalm 96.1-4.

Oh, sing to the LORD a new song!
Sing to the LORD, all the earth.
Sing to the LORD, bless His name;
Proclaim the good news of His salvation from day to day.
Declare His glory among the nations,
His wonders among all peoples.
For the LORD *is* great and greatly to be praised;
He *is* to be feared above all gods.

Sing Psalm 96.1-4.

(Mit Freuden Zart: *All Praise to God Who Reigns Above*)
Sing to the LORD! O, bless His Name! All nations tell His glory!
Salvation's tidings loud proclaim; let earth rehearse His story!
For God is greatly to be praised; His throne above all gods is raised!
Fear Him and sing His glory!

Read and meditate on 2 Corinthians 6.1, 2.

Preparation

1. How must we *not* receive the grace of God?
2. In what acceptable time and day do we live?

Meditation

It is possible to receive the grace of God in vain, that is, without bringing forth any evidence of *saving* grace (Heb. 11.1). Paul determined that he would not receive God's grace this way, so he abounded in good works of witness and love (1 Cor. 15.58). Here he pled with the Corinthians to follow his example.

This is the day of salvation concerning which Isaiah prophesied. In the context of this quote (v. 2), the people of God are identified as His covenant people, called to restore the reconciled world to God, set free those who are imprisoned to sin and death, and shine light into the darkness (Is. 49.8, 9). Where the grace of God is received, the work of grace abounds. God's *common* grace benefits every human being; His *saving* grace reaches only to those who repent and believe the Gospel. Most of those who enjoy God's common grace show no gratitude, take little or no thought for Him, and do not walk the path Jesus walked (1 Jn. 2.1-6). All in whom God's saving grace has taken hold carry on the work of Kingdom ambassadors, are increasingly transformed into the likeness of Jesus, and bear witness to the Gospel as they are going in their Personal Mission Field.

God has declared the times we live in "the day of salvation". These are the times when God's servants live and proclaim the Good News. And these are the "acceptable" times when many who hear will repent and believe in Jesus. Now is the accepted time; now is the day of salvation (v. 2).

Our labors as grace spreaders will never be in vain in the Lord. Let us abound in them daily.

Treasures Old and New: Matthew 13.52; Psalm 119.162

What exciting work! And God has chosen us to be "workers together with Him" to accomplish it! (2 Cor. 6.1; 1 Cor. 3.9)

In the Handbook for this work, we are given some guidelines for success.

First, don't do the work in vain (2 Cor. 6.1), which happens when we receive the gift of God's gracious salvation and then don't live the life that matches up to our words.

God has been warning of this since Moses' day. "You shall not take the name of the LORD your God in vain, for the LORD will not hold him guiltless who takes His name in vain" (Ex. 20.7). This commandment goes far beyond merely using His Name as an expletive. It encompasses our entire life. We take His Name in vain when we claim to be a Christian, accepting God's grace, and then spurn His demands for how we live that Name out. Hypocrite sums it up nicely.

And second, we are to live it out in the present—not the past or the future—now!

"Now is the accepted time."

"Now is the day of salvation." (2 Cor. 6.2)

Although it sounds well-meaning to say that a while ago, we really loved Jesus, or maybe sometime soon we're going to start spending more time in the Word and prayer; those things are not current events. They are merely memories and/or futuristic hopes; and He knows the difference.

He knows when He is not pre-eminent: "Nevertheless I have this against you, that you have left your first love." This He said to the church at Ephesus: "I know your works, your labor, your patience, and that you cannot bear those who are evil. And you have tested those who say they are apostles and are not, and have found them liars; and you have persevered and have patience, and have labored for My name's sake and have not become weary. Nevertheless..." (Rev. 2.2-4).

Granted, they sounded successful; but by receiving the grace of God in vain, had sadly lost their first love. They were going through the motions of love; without experiencing the love.

"For the time has come for judgment to begin at the house of God..." (1 Pet. 4.17).

We do not want to be found akin to those church folk that Jude referred to as "spots in your love feasts, while they feast with you without fear, serving only themselves. They are clouds without water, carried about by the winds..." (Jude 12).

These words of Paul's, Peter's, and Jude's were not sent to heathen folk in some dark, far-off country. They were sent to the church. Then and now. As in *now*. To us, His people promoting His Church, His grace, and the glorious day and reality of His salvation.

Paul said, "I plead with you not to receive the grace of God in vain."

We hear, and respond as those who are called, sanctified by God the Father, preserved in Jesus Christ (Jude 1) and as workers together with God:

"Now to Him who is able
to keep [us] from stumbling,
and to present [us] faultless before
the presence of His glory with exceeding joy,
to God our Savior, who alone is wise,
be glory and majesty,
dominion and power,
both now and forever.
Amen" (Jude 24, 25).

"Let us abound!"

For reflection

1. How do you understand what it means not to receive the grace of God in vain?

2. How might prayer and a little planning make it more likely that you would be a grace spreader each day?
3. What's one thing you can do throughout the day to remind yourself that God has called you to do His work in your Personal Mission Field?

The gospel is a word of grace sounding in our ears. The gospel day is a day of salvation, the means of grace the means of salvation, the offers of the gospel the offers of salvation, and the present time the proper time to accept these offers. The morrow is none of ours: we know not what will be on the morrow, nor where we shall be. We now enjoy a day of grace; then let all be careful not to neglect it. Matthew Henry (1662-1714), *Commentary on 2 Corinthians 6.1-10*

Pray Psalm 96.5-13.

Rejoice in the salvation of the Lord. Give Him thanks and praise. Call on Him so to work His grace in and through you today that you will be a fruitful spreader of His Good News to others.

Sing Psalm 96.5-13.

(Mit Freuden Zart: *All Praise to God Who Reigns Above*)

All other gods are idols vain; the LORD created heaven.

Splendor and strength with Him obtain; to Him be glory given!

All fam'lies, praise this mighty LORD! Give strength and glory to His Word;
exalt the LORD of heaven!

Bring off'ings sweet to Him, our LORD, in holy garments praise Him!

Tremble before Him, all the earth; among the nations raise Him!

The earth is fixed, it will not move; the peoples will His justice prove.

Exalt the LORD and praise Him!

Let heaven sing with lusty voice; let earth and sea sing sweetly!

Let fields and trees in Him rejoice, for He is coming swiftly

to judge the world in righteousness, the peoples in His faithfulness.

He comes; exalt Him greatly!

2 Commendations of Ministry (1)

Pray Psalm 143.1, 2.

Hear my prayer, O LORD,
Give ear to my supplications!
In Your faithfulness answer me,
And in Your righteousness.
Do not enter into judgment with Your servant,
For in Your sight no one living is righteous.

Sing Psalm 143.1, 2.

(Divinum Mysterium: *Of the Father's Love Begotten*)

Hear my earnest prayer, O LORD! Give ear to my pleas for grace!
In Your faithfulness and righteousness, look upon me with Your face!
Enter not to judgment with Your servant, LORD, with Your loving servant, LORD:
None can stand before Your Word.

Read 2 Corinthians 6.1-7; meditate on verses 3-7.

Preparation

1. How did Paul identify himself?
2. What comes with that calling?

Meditation

We must remind ourselves, before unpacking these next eight verses, that all believers are called to the work of ministry. God gives *ministers* to the churches, so that they can equip all the members of the church for *ministry* (Eph. 4.11, 12). Every believer is called as a “minister of God” (v. 4) within their own Personal Mission Field. So what Paul says about himself, we must embrace as part of our own calling.

First, do not be an offensive person (v. 3)! God’s ministers are called to be loving servants to the people around them. The word “servant” is, in the Greek, *διακονία* and refers to someone who waits on tables. While the *Gospel* may be offensive, we must not be, but must humbly serve the people to whom God sends us (cf. 1 Cor. 10. 31-33). The more we practice loving our neighbors as ourselves, the less likely it will be that we will give offense.

But we must be clear to one and all concerning who we are: ministers of God (v. 4). We are called to the Kingdom and glory of God and the work He has given us to do. We need to read the fine print of our job description and make sure we are ready for everything that comes with that calling.

Such as patience—working with people can be a challenge. A readiness to be afflicted and in want; to work hard and in various capacities; endure sacrifice; grow in grace and knowledge; walk in the Spirit and Word of the Lord; love others selflessly; grow in Christlikeness; and become adept with the weapons of spiritual warfare (vv. 4-7). More to follow in verses 8-10 in our next installment.

If you are a Christian, you are appointed to serve. You are a minister of God. What a privilege! What an exciting calling!

And what an effective way to spread the grace of God throughout your world.

Treasures Old and New: Matthew 13.52; Psalm 119.162.

“We give no offense in anything, that our ministry may not be blamed” (2 Cor. 6.3).

If only this was the heartfelt motto of every Christian, we would not besmirch the Name of Christ or serve Him in vain; nor would we ever be found guilty of hypocrisy. It is a win/win.

“We will try to live in such a way that no one will ever be offended or kept back from finding the Lord by the way we act, so that no one can find fault with us and blame it on the Lord. In fact, in everything we do we try to show that we are true ministers of God” (2 Cor. 6.3, 4 TLB).

“Who may ascend into the hill of the LORD?
Or who may stand in His holy place?
He who has clean hands and a pure heart,
who has not lifted up his soul to an idol,
nor sworn deceitfully” (Ps. 24.3, 4).

“Wash yourselves, make yourselves clean;
put away the evil of your doings from before My eyes.
Cease to do evil,
learn to do good;
seek justice,
rebuke the oppressor;
defend the fatherless,
plead for the widow” (Is. 1.16, 17).

We must be mindful, moment by moment, to live as purely as possible, for we do not want to hear Jesus say to us, as He had to say to Peter, “You are an offense to Me, for you are not mindful of the things of God, but the things of men” (Matt. 16.23).

And as Jesus said to His disciples, “Offenses must come, but woe to that man by whom the offense comes!” (Matt. 18.7).

Really, this is not an offense we want to be found guilty of.

Paul wrote an antidote for this to the church at Philippi, that he would be pleased to know we have adopted for our own ministry: “This I pray, that your love may abound still more and more in knowledge and all discernment, that you may approve the things that are excellent, that you may be sincere and without offense till the day of Christ, being filled with the fruits of righteousness which are by Jesus Christ, to the glory and praise of God” (Phil. 1.9-11).

Do that, and guaranteed, your ministry will be offense-free.

For reflection

1. Do you understand your calling to be that of a minister of God? Explain.
2. Of what does your ministry consist? You may not be a preacher, but how does God want you to minister His grace to others?
3. Whom will you encourage today in working at the ministry God has given them?

For this is the grace of the Holy Spirit, possessing the entire soul and filling the dwelling place with gladness and power, making

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sweet for the soul the sufferings of the Lord and taking away the perception of the present pain because of the hope of the things to come. Gregory of Nyssa (335-394), *On the Christian Mode of Life*

Pray Psalm 143.3-12.

Call on the Lord to protect you against the wiles of the devil, to keep His works before your mind throughout the day, to make His Presence known with you, and to teach and empower you to do all His will.

Sing Psalm 143.3-12.

(Divinum Mysterium: *Of the Father's Love Begotten*)

See, the enemy pursued my soul; he has crushed and cast me down.
He has made me sit in darkness, LORD, like those dead and in the ground.
Thus my troubled spirit faints within me, LORD, faints within my weary soul,
and my heart is no more whole.

I recall the days of old; on Your works I meditate—
all the wonders of Your mighty hand, works both small, O LORD, and great.
LORD, my thirsty soul cries out for help to You! To You, LORD, I reach my hand
in a dry and weary land.

Answer quickly, O my LORD! Do not hide from me Your face!
For my spirit fails and I am like those who do not know Your grace.
In the morning let me hear Your steadfast love; LORD I trust You, show my way!
I lift up my soul and pray!

Rescue me from all my enemies! LORD, I refuge seek in You.
Let me know Your will, O LORD my God; make me know what I must do.
Let Your Spirit lead me on to level ground; save my life! Preserve my soul!
Rescue, LORD, and make me whole!

3 Commendations of Ministry (2)

Pray Psalm 84.8-12.

O LORD God of hosts, hear my prayer;

Give ear, O God of Jacob!

Selab

O God, behold our shield,

And look upon the face of Your anointed.

For a day in Your courts is better than a thousand.

I would rather be a doorkeeper in the house of my God

Than dwell in the tents of wickedness.

For the LORD God *is* a sun and shield;

The LORD will give grace and glory;

No good *thing* will He withhold

From those who walk uprightly.

O LORD of hosts,

Blessed *is* the man who trusts in You!

Sing Psalm 84.8-12.

(Holy Manna: *Brethren, We Have Met to Worship*)

LORD of hosts, my prayer receiving, hear me, help me by Your grace!

In Your courts I stand believing; turn to me Your glorious face!

LORD, our sun, our shield, our glory, no good thing will You deny

to those who proclaim Your story, and who on Your grace rely.

Read 2 Corinthians 6.1-10; meditate on verses 8-10.

Preparation

1. How does this set of commendations differ from those in verses 4-7?

2. Which of these is true for you?

Meditation

Paul continues with those aspects of his life that commend him as a minister of God. This set of commendations shows us just how different life in the Kingdom of God is. What looks to the world as one thing is in fact just the opposite. Those who faithfully embrace their calling to serve the Lord know exactly what Paul means.

God honors us with grace and strength to do His will; the world thinks our efforts dishonorable and deceitful. Thus, they speak evil of us, while God says to His angels, "Have you considered my faithful servants? Go down to help them." To the world we seem to be leading people astray into nonsense; but we know that our message and lifestyle are true (v. 8).

We're nobodies in the world's eyes, but we are well known by our Good Shepherd. We are the stench of death to wrong-believers, a sure sign that we are the very aroma of life in Christ. People speak ill of us and worse, but we continue on our course and journey in eternal life (v. 9).

We sorrow at times, but never to the point of obliterating our joy. We do not cling to this world's goods because our riches are in Jesus and His Word; and we spread His grace to others, enriching their lives. In Jesus we have everything we need, all the precious and very great promises of God (v. 10).

Yes, life in the Kingdom, pursuing our calling as ministers of God, is very different indeed. Gloriously and joyfully so.

Treasures Old and New: Matthew 13.52; Psalm 119.162

The world may perceive us as they choose, but we know where we stand, and what we stand for. We know that our Redeemer lives; we know that we belong to Him; and we know that we have important work to do in and for the Kingdom of God.

We may appear to “have nothing” and yet we possess “all things” (2 Cor. 6.10).

We are of all people most blessed. Just think of all the benefits that come with our work:

1. God forgives all our iniquities.
2. He heals all our diseases (either now or most assuredly later).
3. He redeems our life from destruction.
4. He crowns us with His lovingkindness and tender mercies.
5. He satisfies our hunger with good things.
6. He renews our strength.
7. He brings righteousness and justice when we are oppressed.
8. God is merciful and gracious.
9. God is not angry with us forever.
10. God does not punish according to what we deserve.
11. He removes our sins as far from us as the east is from the west.
12. God pities those of us who fear Him.
13. He remembers that we are dust.
14. His mercy is from everlasting to everlasting.

(Psalm 103.3-18)

And if those benefits are not enough, these can be added to this list:

“If God is for us, who can be against us?

He who did not spare His own Son, but delivered Him up for us all,
how shall He not with Him also freely give us all things?

Who shall bring a charge against God’s elect?

It is God who justifies...”

Therefore what or “who shall separate us from the love of Christ?” (Rom. 8.31-33, 35).

No thing and no one will ever find it possible to do so.

Because I am His and He is mine (Song of Solomon 2.16, 6.3).

Through the power of the Holy Spirit we not only possess all things; “we can do all things through Christ who strengthens us” (Phil. 4.13).

“Yes, life in the Kingdom, pursuing our calling as ministers of God, is very different indeed. Gloriously and joyfully so.”

“Behold, we live” (2 Cor. 6.9).

For reflection

1. How have you experienced life in the Kingdom as different from life in the world?
2. What opportunities for ministry will be available to you today? Are you prepared for them?
3. How would you explain the Kingdom of God to a new believer?

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People outside the church may think we are sorrowful, but in fact we are always rejoicing. We may look poor, but in fact we have enormous riches, both spiritual and physical. As usual, the Christian life is the exact opposite of what it appears to be on the surface. John Chrysostom (344-407), Homilies on the Epistles of Paul to the Corinthians 12.4

Pray Psalm 84.1-7.

Embrace the contradictions and commendations of ministry that mark your journey in the Lord. In prayer, refocus on Him, and call on Him to journey with you this day, knowing that in Him you possess all things.

Sing Psalm 84.1-7.

(Holy Manna: *Brethren, We Have Met to Worship*)

LORD of hosts, how sweet Your dwelling; how my soul longs for Your courts!

Let my soul with joy keep telling of Your grace forevermore.

Like a bird upon the altar, let my life to You belong.

Blessed are they who never falter as they praise Your grace with song!

Blessed are they whose strength is founded in Your strength, O LORD above.

All whose hearts in You are grounded journey in Your strength and love.

Though they weep with tears of sadness, grace shall all their way sustain.

In Your Presence, filled with gladness, they shall conquer all their pain.

4 Open Your Heart

Pray Psalm 139.23, 24.

Search me, O God, and know my heart;
Try me, and know my anxieties;
And see if *there is any* wicked way in me,
And lead me in the way everlasting.

Sing Psalm 139.23, 24.

(Ripley: *Hallelujah! Praise Jeborah, O My Soul*)

Search my heart, O LORD, and know me, as You only, LORD, can do.
Test my thoughts and contemplations, whether they be vain or true.
Let there be no sin in me, LORD, nothing that Your Spirit grieves.
Lead me in the righteous way, LORD, unto everlasting peace!

Read 2 Corinthians 6.1-13; meditate on verses 11-13.

Preparation

1. In what sense were the Corinthians “restricted”?
2. What was restricting them?

Meditation

Solomon understood, and so did Jesus: The heart is the heart of the matter in our relationship with the Lord. We must watch over our heart with all diligence, for out of the heart flow all our words and deeds.

The human soul is comprised of three spiritual components: the mind, which governs thinking; the conscience, which stores our default values and priorities; and the heart, which is the seat of our affections. The heart is most important, because when our affections go awry, so that we desire, prefer, and incline to things other than the glory of God, our life will follow what we love. The Corinthians had loved the wrong things: pride of place, blinking at sin, taking advantage of one another, and more. Their affections were corrupted, and this restricted their ability to fulfill their callings as followers of Christ (v. 12).

Paul longed for them to open their hearts to him as he had frankly opened his heart to them (vv. 11, 13). Only the Holy Spirit can open our hearts to the Word of God so that we desire Him and His will above all. Daily, and throughout each day, we must call on the Spirit to search our hearts, know our thoughts, firm up our Kingdom calling and priorities, and lead us in the path of everlasting life.

Don't let misguided love and desire keep you from God's best. Keep a close watch on your heart, devoting it moment by moment to loving God and your neighbors with the grace that only He can provide. Open your heart to God, speaking in His Word, and He will overflow your heart with grace like living water.

Treasures Old and New: Matthew 13.52; Psalm 119.162

After God created the heavens, earth, and man, He said to Adam, “Of every tree of the garden you may freely eat; but of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil you shall not eat, for in the day that you eat of it you shall surely die” (Gen. 2.16, 17).

Then later, when Adam and Eve's children were older, God came to their son Cain, and said to him, “Why are you angry? And why has your countenance fallen? If you do well, will you not be accepted? And if you do not do well, sin lies at the door. And its desire is for you, but you should rule over it” (Gen. 4.6, 7).

In both these cases, God knew that they could be overcomers. If they kept their hearts devoted to Him and His Word. He gave them the benefit of the doubt and expected the best from them. He treated them as adults. Yes, the devil is always lurking to trip God's people up, but we don't have to fall for it. God said so.

Paul was expecting the same devotion to God from the Corinthians; and yet was dismayed that he was still having to relate to them as toddlers. As he wrote, "I speak to you as children" (2 Cor. 6.13).

And now we—as were the Corinthians—have been given the empowering gift of the Holy Spirit, enabling us to keep our hearts in check and to "rule over" our thoughts and behavior (Jn. 16.7-14). And when we don't? We are indeed, "restricted by" our own affections (2 Cor. 6.12).

"Whoever has no rule over his own spirit is like a city broken down, without walls" (Prov. 25.28).

We are meant to live in the Light, walk in the Light, and to be the light (Jn. 8.12; Is. 2.5; Eph. 5.8).

No one is restricting or keeping us from closely following the law and love of the Lord God.

As Smokey the Bear used to say, "Only you can prevent forest fires".

We need only open our heart to the rule of the Holy Spirit.

For reflection

1. Why can we not obey God apart from trusting in Him?
2. How does the Spirit work on affections so that we know more of the life God intends for us?
3. Today, what is "restricting" you from a fuller and more fruitful walk with the Lord?

He means to say, that it is owing to their corrupt judgment, that the things that he utters are not relished by them. John Calvin (1509-1564), *Commentary on 2 Corinthians 6.12*

Pray Psalm 139.1-10.

Thank and praise the Lord for being with you always and for directing your heart and life according to His good and perfect will.

Sing Psalm 139.1-10.

(Ripley: *Hallelujah! Praise Jebonah, O My Soul*)

You have searched me, LORD, and known me, when I sit and when I rise;
from afar, my thoughts discerning, all my path before You lies.
Every word, before it's spoken, You behold and know it well.
Both behind me and before me, Your sweet Presence I can tell!

Such a blessing is more wondrous than my searching soul can know.
From Your ever-present Spirit there is nowhere I can go.
Whether high above the heaven or below the earth in hell,
even there Your hand shall lead me and Your Right Hand hold me well!

5 Guard Purity

Pray Psalm 125.1, 2.

Those who trust in the LORD
Are like Mount Zion,
Which cannot be moved, but abides forever.
As the mountains surround Jerusalem,
So the LORD surrounds His people
From this time forth and forever.

Sing Psalm 125.1, 2.

(St. Gertrude: *Onward, Christian Soldiers*)
All who trust in Jesus, strong as Zion stand!
Naught shall ever move them from their promised land!
Like the hills surrounding safe Jerusalem,
Christ surrounds His Church and holds her in His mighty Hand!

Refrain, v. 1

All who trust in Jesus, strong as Zion stand!
Naught shall ever move them from their promised land!

Read 2 Corinthians 6.1-16a; meditate on verses 13-16a.

Preparation

1. What five words does Paul use to express relationships?
2. How does he caution us with respect to unbelievers?

Meditation

Sharing, fellowship, accord, part, agreement. This is what Christians must work hard to realize with one another (Eph. 4.3). The Christians in Jerusalem experienced this in powerful ways (Acts 2-6), so powerful that the unity and purity they displayed saw many of their enemies joining them in the Lord.

Individually and as churches we must guard the purity we have as believers in the Lord. We must not allow anything into our lives that disrupts or corrupts our purity. This can happen when we become “unequally yoked” with unbelievers and their worldview. Paul is not calling us to have no relationships with unbelievers. That’s unavoidable, and it is desirable for the progress of the Gospel.

But he cautions us to guard the purity we have as the temple of the living God. We recall how, in the Old Testament, the purity of the temple and of the people of God was compromised again and again by forms of “yoking” with idols, wicked rulers, false teachers, and sinful people. Paul doesn’t want us to repeat that mistake. We may work with, shop from, live next door to, and do many things with unbelievers. But we must not share, fellowship, agree, or have any part with them that compromises our purity as the Lord’s dwelling. Paul previously warned the believers against “evil company” (1 Cor. 15.33). Here he simply repeats that admonition in a somewhat different form.

We must be careful to be who we are and to be careful that our contacts with the wrong-believing world do not lead us to compromise that holy distinctive.

Treasures Old and New: Matthew 13.52; Psalm 119.162.

Let’s imagine for a minute that you are going to realize the dream of a lifetime—to participate in the Iditarod. You are then given the choice of all the dogs in the world to put into your winning sled team. And you

choose for your lead dogs a Great Dane to be yoked with a Chihuahua. Hmmm. For all the years you have prepared for this, and for all your longings to win this event, your unequally yoked dogs are not the ticket to your longed-for victory.

God, through Paul, is warning us of this same disastrous choice.

“There is a way that seems right to a man, but its end is the way of death” (Prov. 14.12).

To be yoked is a serious commitment. To casually know is different altogether.

“The righteous should choose his friends carefully, for the way of the wicked leads them astray” (Prov. 12.26).

Jesus has a better idea and a better way: “Take My yoke upon you and learn from Me, for I am gentle and lowly in heart, and you will find rest for your souls. For My yoke is easy and My burden is light” (Matt. 11.29, 30).

What fellowship is there to be found between righteousness and lawlessness?

What communion is there to be found between light and darkness?

What agreement is there between Christ and the wicked and worthless?

What sharing exists between a believer and an unbeliever?

What accord is there between the Church and idols?

Rhetorical, yes? And the definitive answer to all is: none.

“Do not be unequally yoked together with unbelievers” (2 Cor. 6.14).

“Individually and as churches we must guard the purity we have as believers in the Lord” and then win the Iditarod of life yoked with Jesus.

For reflection

1. What would tell you that you were beginning to be unequally yoked in a way that could harm your faith?
2. Can we be unequally yoked with things? Like the Internet? TV? Anything else? Explain.
3. Are you yoked with any believers who can help you keep a close watch over your soul? How can you help them do that?

The renewed man acts upon new principles, by new rules, with new ends, and in new company. The believer is created anew; his heart is not merely set right, but a new heart is given him. He is the workmanship of God, created in Christ Jesus unto good works. Matthew Henry (1662-1714), Commentary on 2 Corinthians 5.16-21

Pray Psalm 125.3-5.

Pray for your church, that God will keep wicked influences from entering, that He will continue to do good and enrich your fellowship, and that any who harbor wickedness in their soul may come to repentance.

Sing Psalm 125.3-5.

(St. Gertrude: *Onward, Christian Soldiers*)

Wickedness shall rest not on this holy land.

Sinfulness shall never come forth from their hand.

Trusting in the Savior, firm in His caress,

ever shall His favor on this holy city rest.

Refrain, v. 1

All who trust in Jesus, strong as Zion stand!

Children of God: 2 Corinthians 6

Naught shall ever move them from their promised land!

LORD, do good and care for those upright in heart.

Those who turn to evil shall from You depart.

Sinful men may increase on their way to hell!

Save Your people, let your peace abound in Israel!

Refrain

6 Dwelling Place of God

Pray Psalm 132:8-10.

Arise, O LORD, to Your resting place,
You and the ark of Your strength.
Let Your priests be clothed with righteousness,
And let Your saints shout for joy.
For Your servant David's sake,
Do not turn away the face of Your Anointed.

Sing Psalm 132:8-10.

(Finlandia: *Be Still, My Soul*)

Arise, O LORD, come to Your resting place;
Your holy Presence meet with us in might.
Clothe us with righteousness in Jesus' grace,
and we will shout to Your divine delight!
For David's sake, turn not away Your face,
but look upon us in Your holy light.

Read 2 Corinthians 6.1-18; meditate on verses 16b-18.

Prepare

1. How did Paul describe us?
2. As such, what must we do?

Meditation

Peter explained the implications of what it means to be the dwelling place of God: "But you are a chosen generation, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, His own special people, that you may proclaim the praises of Him who called you out of darkness into His marvelous light..." (1 Pet. 2.9).

We are the dwelling place of God (v. 16b), and it should be visible in all our demeanor that His Presence is in us and flowing out from us. Our great possession and privilege is that God is *our* God and we are His people. Because of this, we must no longer continue in the ways of the world. We have been separated unto the Lord (v. 17). We are saints, His holy ones. We can know His Presence with us as we forsake all that is sinful and unclean and cling to God Almighty as our Father and Lord.

What more could we want? None of the vain idols of our secular age can satisfy the deep longing of our soul. No ongoing indulgence in sinful thoughts and behaviors will do anything other than enslave us to guilt and misery. God promises to receive us into His Presence, but we can only know this great privilege as we come out of the world, out of all sinful ways, out from every wicked influence and into the righteousness of Jesus Christ. Knowing the Fatherly love and care of God depends on our truly wanting it. And we show that we want it by coming to Him on His terms (v. 18).

You are a dwelling place of God. Do you want to know the Presence of God with you today? Then come out, and come in. Your Father waits to receive you.

Treasures Old and New: Matthew 13.52; Psalm 119.162

Most parents would prefer not to step on stray Lego pieces in their bare feet.

We like to walk amongst clean bedrooms.

Most would prefer not needing to update a tetanus booster to kiss their children good night.

If that is true for us, most assuredly, the same is true for God.

His intention is to dwell in us and walk among us; to be our God and we to be His people.

His desire is to do this amongst and in the hearts of those cleansed by Jesus and empowered by the Holy Spirit. He does not wish to step on landmines of sin and transgression whilst doing so. Therefore, He has made a way for us to be clean and hospitable to Him and His Spirit.

God says:

Come out from among the world and be separate from it.

Don't even contemplate touching what is unclean. Just don't.

Make yourself a pleasant place for Me to dwell.

I want to receive you and embrace you.

I will be a Father to you.

You will be My sons and daughters.

It will be great—you just need to do what I have said. (2 Cor. 6.17, 18).

“For you are a holy people to the LORD your God; the LORD your God has chosen you to be a people for Himself, a special treasure above all the peoples on the face of the earth...because the LORD loves you...Therefore know that the LORD your God, He is God, the faithful God who keeps covenant and mercy for a thousand generations with those who love Him and keep His commandments” (Deut. 7.6, 8, 9).

God pleads with us: “Wash yourselves, make yourselves clean; put away the evil of your doings from before My eyes. Cease to do evil, learn to do good...” (Is. 1.16, 17). “How can a young man cleanse his way? By taking heed according to Your word” (Ps. 119.9). Be a pleasant dwelling place for the LORD.

As we used to say to our children:

“It's Saturday morning, just clean this mess up, before you go out and play!”

For reflection

1. What does it mean for you to “come out” from your old way of life?
2. How would you explain to a new believer what it means to “come out” and “come in” to the Presence of the Lord?
3. How can we as believers encourage one another to be a true dwelling place of the Lord?

Come out from the workers of iniquity, and separate from their vain and sinful pleasures and pursuits; from all conformity to the corruptions of this present evil world. If it be an envied privilege to be the son or daughter of an earthly prince, who can express the dignity and happiness of being sons and daughters of the Almighty? Matthew Henry (1662-1714), Commentary on 2 Corinthians 6.11-18

Pray Psalm 132.11-18.

Pray to be transformed into the image of Jesus Christ more and more each day. Repent of any sinful thoughts or practices and be clothed with Jesus as you go into your Personal Mission Field today.

Sing Psalm 132.11-18

(Finlandia: *Be Still, My Soul*)

Remember, LORD, the oath You swore to David;

do not turn back, do not deny Your Word:

“One of your sons, with your throne I will favor,

if he shall keep My cov'nant evermore,

and walk within My testimonies ever,
thus he shall ever rule by Israel's LORD.”

God dwells among us, and He will forever,
to meet our needs and clothe us with His grace.
He has to us sent Jesus Christ, our Savior—
Beloved, eternal light and resting place.
His foes are banished from His Presence ever,
but we shall reign with Him before His face.

7 Children of God

Pray Psalm 128.1, 2.

Blessed is every one who fears the LORD,
Who walks in His ways.
When you eat the labor of your hands,
You *shall be* happy, and it *shall be* well with you.

Sing Psalm 128.1, 2.

(Fountain: *There Is a Fountain Filled with Blood*)

How blessed are they who fear YOU, LORD, who walk within Your ways!
Rejoicing in Your bounteous Word, they prosper all their days!
They prosper all their days, they prosper all their days!
Rejoicing in Your bounteous Word, they prosper all their days!

Review 2 Corinthians 6.1-18; meditate on verse 18.

Preparation

1. How did Paul describe our relationship with God?
2. How does he instruct us to think about God?

Meditation

All who believe in Jesus Christ are children of God (Jn. 1.12). The implications of this are staggering.

We have an eternal and almighty Father, and He has given us Himself as our inheritance. He feeds us by His unfailing Word, fills us with His Holy Spirit, puts us in the charge of His appointed King and Lord, and continues to bring us into greater measures of His fullness day by day. His power flows to us and dwells in us (Acts 1.8). He receives our prayers and promises to answer them in great and wondrous ways (Jer. 33.3). He sends us into His mission of restoring the reconciled world with the instructions to do good works and be witnesses for Him. He provides for all our needs; bears with us in all our shortcomings; renews us by His Word and Spirit; calls us to His Kingdom and glory; and makes us a royal priesthood and a holy generation.

The more we realize our heritage and live from within it, the less this fleeting world will appeal to us. And the more we will desire holiness in the Lord, our heritage and calling card, as we serve our Father in this world.

Children, heirs, co-workers, ministers, witnesses, and benefactors. We are the children of the LORD Almighty! Know your Father. Embrace your heritage. Seek His Kingdom and righteousness in all you do.

Treasures Old and New: Matthew 13.52; Psalm 119.162

“...the glory of children is their father” (Prov. 17.6).

If this is true of the earthbound, how much truer is this of our Almighty heavenly Father?

Not all people have had loving fathers—those who cared tenderly for us—or who disciplined, guided, and disciplined us well. But God has stepped into our lives and made all things new. He has given us a new heart (Ez. 36.26, 27) and made us new people with a new outlook (2 Cor. 5.17). Everything has changed because He is our Father.

He only expects from us what He knows we can do for “He pities those who fear Him” (Ps. 103.13). He is a

protective Father Who is on the job for the long-haul. “You, O LORD, are our Father; our Redeemer from Everlasting is Your Name” (Is. 63.16)

We are a part of His extended family from eternity past to the everlasting future. “Have we not all one Father? Has not one God created us?” (Mal. 2.10).

So, God wants us to get along with the siblings: “There is one body and one Spirit, just as you were called in one hope of your calling; one Lord, one faith, one baptism; one God and Father of all, who is above all, and through all, and in you all” (Eph. 4.4-6).

Most Christian parents wholeheartedly want their children to follow in their footsteps to love and serve God (1 Cor. 11.1). Frankly, there is nothing that we desire more. Obviously, God wants the same for His children.

There is not a Father’s Day card that would suffice for our dear, perfect, loving, Almighty Father. Happily He doesn’t demand a card. But what He does want is for us to be holy, as He is holy (1 Pet. 1.16; Eph. 1.4).

Jesus Christ is God’s perfect Son. We should imitate Him. And we should be eager to say, as Jesus said, “Did you not know that I must be about My Father’s business?” (Lk. 2.49).

The truth of our Parentage, albeit “staggering”, demands that we, as His imperfect children, must be busy about our Father’s business too, for we *are* His “sons and daughters” (2 Cor. 6.18).

For reflection

1. How do you experience God as your Father?
2. What does it mean to “walk in the Spirit”, Who is God indwelling us?
3. How would you explain to an unbelieving friend what it means to be a son or daughter of the Almighty God?

It is no common honor that we are reckoned among the sons of God: it belongs to us in our turn to take care, that we do not show ourselves to be degenerate children to him. For what injury we do to God, if while we call him father, we defile ourselves with abominations of idols! Hence, the thought of the high distinction to which he has elevated us, ought to whet our desire for holiness and purity. John Calvin (1509-1564), Commentary on 2 Corinthians 6.18

Pray Psalm 128.3-6.

Thank the Lord for making you one of His children, taking you as His dwelling place, and appointing you as His minister in the world. Pray that He will bless your work for this day.

Sing Psalm 128.3-6.

(Fountain: *There Is a Fountain Filled with Blood*)

Their homes with happy children bloom who fear Your holy Name;
their tables and their every room declare Your glorious fame!
Declare Your glorious fame, declare Your glorious fame!
Their tables and their every room declare Your glorious fame!

O LORD, from Zion send Your peace, and prosp’rous make our ways;
thus may Your blessings e’er increase upon us all our days!
Upon us all our days, upon us all our days!
Thus may Your blessings e’er increase upon all us all our days!

Questions for Reflection or Discussion

1. In what sense are all believers “ministers” of God?
2. What kind of life should we expect as ministers of God?
3. What are affections? How do they lead us astray? Why is it so important to keep our affections submitted to the Lord?
4. What is required of us as children of the LORD Almighty?
5. What’s the most important lesson you’ve learned from this part of our study of 1 and 2 Corinthians?

For prayer:

The Fellowship of Ailbe

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