

BOOK OF 2 CORINTHIANS
A PORTRAIT OF MINISTRY-PART 1
2 CORINTHIANS 6:1-7

Introduction

We began looking last week at the first three verses of Chapters six looking at some Scriptures elsewhere that speak of some of these things: (1 Corinthians 3:9; Romans 12:1-2; 1 Peter 4:10-11; Romans 6)

Chapters six and seven offer Paul's final explanation of what the ministry is about.

Let's look at the **first 5 verses** in detail and see what they are saying:

Vs 1a *"We then as workers together with him..."*

Paul begins here by reminding them that Church work is team work!
We may have different gifts and ministries but we should all be coworkers together in the Lord's harvest!

The pastor's position and other positions in the Church may place leadership responsibilities on some but they are no more important than anyone else! Paul had written before about this very subject! (1 Corinthians 12) **Not only are we Co-laborers with other members of the Local Church but we are Co-laborers with the LORD HIMSELF!** That is both the privilege and responsibility that we share!

Vs 1b *"...beseech you also that ye receive not the grace of God in vain..."*

Again, I want you to understand that Paul is not speaking here about losing one's salvation!

1. He is speaking of **the loss that goes with not accepting our role in God's ministry** (i.e. As Ambassadors for Christ!)
 - a. Naturally, there is a loss to the lost sinners we might have reached with the Gospel! That's bad enough in itself...
 - b. But there is also a loss to us with regard to loss of rewards we could have had if we had been obedient to the LORD!
 - c. But even beyond that there is a loss of glory on the LORD's part because of our failure to glorify Him by our obedience!

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2. He is speaking of **the loss that goes with "giving offense" (vs 3) or not "approving ourselves as the ministers of God"!** (Vs 4a)

Here is the point of this verse: We're not to forget that it is God's grace that both saves us and calls for us to serve the LORD and others!
(Ephesians 2:8-10)

A Christian who trusts Christ as His Savior and then fails to serve the LORD as He should actually frustrates the Grace of God in his life!

Christ's desire is for us to yield our lives to Him so that His life is lived in our lives and He comes shining through our lives!

And as He lives His life through our lives, His purpose is accomplished, His name is glorified, and we are rewarded by Him!

1. **God saved us to serve Him for His purposes!**
Remember that ministry of reconciliation we talked about in the last Chapter? The one that He has given to us as His ambassadors!

God not only saved us to serve Him in the ministry of reconciliation, but...
2. **God saved us to serve together as His body in the World!**
Christ is the Head and we are His body! We are to work together to accomplish the Mind of Christ as revealed to us in the Word of God by His Holy Spirit!
3. **God saved us to serve one another as co-laborers in His local Church!** In order for us to **serve others** as we should, it makes sense that we must also **serve one another** as we should! If we don't take care of this local Body of Christ by **serving one another** and **caring one for another**, then the body will be in no shape to serve others and hence unable to serve others because it will be lacking!

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Vs 2 *“(For he saith, I have heard thee in a time accepted, and in the day of salvation have I succoured thee: behold, now is the accepted time; behold, now is the day of salvation.)”*

We saw last time how this first part of this is quoting a portion of Isaiah 49:8. It is also mindful of :

Ezekiel 16:8 Now when I passed by thee, and looked upon thee, behold, thy time was the time of love; and I spread my skirt over thee, and covered thy nakedness: yea, I sware unto thee, and entered into a covenant with thee, saith the Lord GOD, and thou becamest mine.

I believe he’s saying in so many words here, *“At an acceptable time I listened to you, And on the day of your salvation I helped you; Hey listen up, now is the acceptable time for others, now is the day for their salvation!”*

Vs 3-4a *“3 Giving no offence in any thing that the ministry be not blamed: 4 But in all things approving ourselves as the ministers of God”*

How can we keep the ministry from being discredited? **By not giving any cause for offense** (v. 3a) and **by being servants** (v. 4a).

The word “*offence*” means “*a stumbling, that is, an occasion of sin*”

There is opportunity for the Gospel ministry to be blamed or become discredited or dishonored when we stumble in our personal lives by allowing an occasion of sin. (Unfortunately, we could name numerous names here!)

Whether we like it or not, our lives as children of God are on display before the world! Right or wrong, the world judges our Savior and the Gospel by our actions!

Our stumbling may take the form of living hypocritically or being unfaithful! But it may also take the form of compromising the truth! And worse still, it may take on the form of gross sin in the life of the believer!

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Actually any action that does not bring glory to Christ Himself in the local body, actually diminishes His glory!

The apostle Paul here is urging us to have integrity in this ministry we share! But practically speaking, how does all this get worked out on a daily basis?

Paul says in beginning **verse 4**, *“But in all things approving ourselves”!*

Paul then gives us a list of things that validate one’s ministry:

The list is divided into three distinct areas:

- 1. In verses 4 and 5 Paul focuses on the trials he faced in the ministry.** There is always a price to pay when serving (Christ)! The phrase “*in much patience*” speaks of HOW we are to approve ourselves as the ministers of God as we face trials.

“patience” = cheerful (or hopeful) endurance; constancy.

- a. First, he mentions the internal struggles in verse 4: He mentions *afflictions, necessities, and distresses!***

- 1) The term for *afflictions* means “*pressures,*” the things that press in on us, weighing us down and crushing us.
- 2) *Necessities* refers to *the painful discomforts of life; the constraints of life.*
- 3) “*Distresses*” means literally “*narrow places,*” those tight spots that corner us and make us feel trapped.

- b. Secondly, after the internal struggles he mentions the external treatment—*stripes, imprisonments, and tumults.* “*Stripes*” means “*physical wounds from being struck.*”**

“Imprisonments” means “locked up and guarded!”

“Tumults” means “instability, disorder.” It has the idea of mob violence, of public outcry and assaults.

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- c. **Thirdly, after the internal struggles and the external treatment, there were the private disciplines of commitment— *labors* (toils), *watchings* (sleeplessness), and *fastings* (hunger).**

These descriptions show that the ministry is hard work, often filled with nights of restlessness and days of prayer and fasting! (We'll see these things mentioned in 11:23-28 too).

How could anyone remain encouraged in the midst of such a torrential downpour of negative circumstances?

We'll see next that Paul gives us a list of things that provide an umbrella of attitudes that are essential as we walk through life's difficult situations!