

Parson to Person
2 Corinthians 6
(The Power of Grace)

“We then, as workers together with Him also plead with you not to receive the grace of God in vain. For He says: ‘In an acceptable time I have heard you, and in the day of salvation I have helped you.’ Behold, now is the accepted time; behold, now is the day of salvation. We give no offense in anything, that our ministry may not be blamed. But in all things we commend ourselves as ministers of God: in much patience, in tribulations, in needs, in distresses, in stripes, in imprisonments, in tumults, in labors, in sleeplessness, in fastings; by purity, by knowledge, by longsuffering, by kindness, by the Holy Spirit, by sincere love, by the word of truth, by the power of God, by the armor of righteousness on the right hand and on the left, by honor and dishonor, by evil report and good report; as deceivers, and yet true; as unknown, and yet well known; as dying, and behold we live; as chastened, and yet not killed; as sorrowful, yet always rejoicing; as poor, yet making many rich; as having nothing, and yet possessing all things.

O Corinthians! We have spoken openly to you, our heart is wide open. You are not restricted by us, but you are restricted by your own affections. Now in return for the same (I speak as to children), you also be open.

Do not be unequally yoked together with unbelievers. For what fellowship has righteousness with lawlessness? And what communion has light with darkness? And what accord has Christ with Belial? Or what part has a believer with an unbeliever? And what agreement has the temple of God with idols? For you are the temple of the living God. As God has said: ‘I will dwell in them and walk among them. I will be their God, and they shall be My people.’ Therefore ‘Come out from among them and be separate, says the Lord. Do not touch what is unclean, and I will receive you.’ ‘I will be a

Father to you, and you shall be My sons and daughters, says the LORD Almighty” (2 Corinthians 6:1–18).

Power in and by the Grace of God

As Paul continued his defense, he gently chastened the Corinthians for their lack of single-mindedness—for the Corinthians had allowed themselves to be derailed by the false apostles who had so cleverly afflicted them. Moreover, he simply reminded them that the grace of God that led them to salvation (Titus 2:10), brought about the propitiatory requirements needed to provide them salvation (1 John 2:2), saved them through the washing of regeneration (Titus 3:5), sealed them for the day of redemption (Ephesians 1:13b–14; 4:30), empowered them to know the truth (John 16:13, Ephesians 1:13a), and taught them to live within that truth (Titus 2:11–12), had been set aside by their failure in diligence—saying, *“[we] plead with you not to receive the grace of God in vain”* (vs. 1).

As is true for so many believers today, God’s grace has been abused and treated as “vain” (empty and powerless) when the lifestyle of the believer does not unite with the nature of God’s holiness. Believers are to be discerning and strong in their lifestyle choices and companion relations.

Paul had suffered greatly for the Gospel—the true Gospel—but the Corinthians had let down their guard and fallen into disrepair. Their peace-keeping with the enemies of the cross compromised their call to *“contend earnestly for the faith”* (Jude 3). Herein we learn that discernment must be employed.

When believers face the choice to unite or separate themselves from evils, they must be aware that—*“certain men have crept in [and will creep in] unnoticed, who long ago were marked out for this condemnation, ungodly men, who turn the grace of our God into*

lewdness and deny the only Lord God and our Lord Jesus Christ” (Jude 4).

Paul Insane? A Hard No!

Paul’s sufferings for the Gospel were great, and the Corinthians needed to be reminded of it. He wrote, *“we commend ourselves as ministers of God: in much patience, in tribulations, in needs, in distresses, in stripes, in imprisonments, in tumults, in labors, in sleeplessness, in fastings; by purity, by knowledge, by longsuffering, by kindness, by the Holy Spirit, by sincere love, by the word of truth, by the power of God, by the armor of righteousness on the right hand and on the left, by honor and dishonor, by evil report and good report; as deceivers, and yet true; as unknown, and yet well known; as dying, and behold we live; as chastened, and yet not killed; as sorrowful, yet always rejoicing; as poor, yet making many rich; as having nothing, and yet possessing all things”* (vss. 4–10).

Please note the fact that amidst the accusations Paul endured “as insane” (2 Corinthians 5:13; Acts 26:24) His tribulations were paired with comfort from the Lord and from those who were true to the Gospel. He wrote that he was strengthened *“by purity, by knowledge, by longsuffering, by kindness, by the Holy Spirit, by sincere love, by the word of truth, by the power of God, by the armor of righteousness on the right hand and on the left, by honor...always rejoicing; as poor, yet making many rich; as having nothing, and yet possessing all things.”* His hope was in the Lord and set on the successes of the believers and upon the heavenly things (Colossians 3:2).

Plainness of Speech—Telling it Like It Is! In a Way You Can Understand

Paul spoke openly and directly with the Corinthians, *“O Corinthians! We have spoken openly to you, our heart is wide open”*

(vs. 11). Yet, they were guarded and skeptical and growing cynical—thus preventing Paul and his co-laborers from being freely accepted. Paul wanted the Corinthians to hear him, to receive from him! He loved them and wanted them to know it. Therefore, he wrote, *“You are not restricted by us, but you are restricted by your own affections. Now in return for the same (I speak as to children), you also be open”* (vss. 12–13).

Godly Standards and Separation from Evil

Paul knew that the Corinthians needed to make the decision to distance themselves and unyoke from the people and voices who were harmful to their growth—and rest in the truth. His injunction was a stern command: *“Do not be unequally yoked together with unbelievers. For what fellowship has righteousness with lawlessness? And what communion has light with darkness? And what accord has Christ with Belial? Or what part has a believer with an unbeliever? And what agreement has the temple of God with idols? For you are the temple of the living God”* (vss. 14–16a).

The most startling aspect of the command was the fact that Paul considered the false teachers *“unbelievers.”* His warning was clear—these men were accursed. To the Galatians he wrote, *“I marvel that you are turning away so soon from Him who called you in the grace of Christ, to a different gospel, which is not another; but there are some who trouble you and want to pervert the gospel of Christ. But even if we, or an angel from heaven, preach any other gospel to you than what we have preached to you, let him be accursed. As we have said before, so now I say again, if anyone preaches any other gospel to you than what you have received, let him be accursed”* (Galatians 1:6–9). It could not have been said more clearly!

The Promise

Loosely Paul paraphrased Isaiah when writing, *“As God has said: ‘I will dwell in them and walk among them. I will be their God, and they shall be My people.’ Therefore ‘Come out from among them and be separate, says the Lord. Do not touch what is unclean, and I will receive you.’ ‘I will be a Father to you, and you shall be My sons and daughters, says the LORD Almighty’”* (vss. 16b–17).

No believer can take lightly Paul’s command—nor the encouragement contained in the citation.

We must:

- 1) “Mark” and separate from those who teach a false gospel (Romans 16:17).
- 2) Discern good and evil (Hebrews 5:12–14).
- 3) Live as ambassadors of Christ—in Godliness and a lifestyle befitting the believer (2 Corinthians 5:17–21; Ephesians 4:22–24).
- 4) Endure the hardship that follows Godliness (2 Timothy 3:12).
- 5) Know that God is our Father, that He has provided for us, set us apart, adopted us into His family, and will grant us the eternal inheritance promised—in Christ Jesus our Lord (vs. 17, Ephesians 1:5, Hebrews 9:15, and more).

I love you all,
Pastor Paul