

# ADDRESSING TENSIONS Sunday, August 24, 2014

## Unifying Topic: AN APPEAL FOR RECONCILIATION

### Lesson Text

I. Today Is The Day Of Salvation (2 Corinthians 6:1-4)

II. Servants Can Endure Hardships (2 Corinthians 6:5-10)

III. Servants Must Open Their Hearts (2 Corinthians 6:11-13; 7:2-4)

**The Main Thought:** Receive us; we have wronged no man, we have corrupted no man, we have defrauded no man (2 Corinthians 7:2, KJV).

**Unifying Principle:** Sometimes the community may ignore the good done by a great leader and may become estranged from the leader. What must be done to end separation of a community from its leaders? Paul reminds the Corinthians of all he has done for the sake of Jesus Christ; and based on that testimony, he asks that they be reconciled to him.

**Lesson Aim:** To encourage the students to carry the message of salvation to the world with integrity in spite of oncoming hardships.

**Life Aim:** To endure hardship for the cause of Christ and to minister as loving servants of the Lord.

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6:1 We then, as workers together with him, beseech you also that ye receive not the grace of God in vain.

6:2 (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.)

6:3 Giving no offence in any thing, that the ministry be not blamed:

6:4 But in all things approving ourselves as the ministers of God, in much patience, in afflictions, in necessities, in distresses,

6:5 In stripes, in imprisonments, in tumults, in labours, in watchings, in fastings;

6:6 By pureness, by knowledge, by long suffering, by kindness, by the Holy Ghost, by love unfeigned,

6:7 By the word of truth, by the power of God, by the armour of righteousness on the right hand and on the left,

6:8 By honour and dishonour, by evil report and good report: as deceivers, and yet true;

6:9 As unknown, and yet well known; as dying, and, behold, we live; as chastened, and not killed;

6:10 As sorrowful, yet always rejoicing; as poor, yet making many rich; as having nothing, and yet possessing all things.

6:11 O ye Corinthians, our mouth is open unto you, our heart is enlarged.

6:12 Ye are not straitened in us, but ye are straitened in your own bowels.

6:13 Now for a recompence in the same, (I speak as unto my children,) be ye also enlarged.

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7:2 Receive us; we have wronged no man, we have corrupted no man, we have defrauded no man.

7:3 I speak not this to condemn you: for I have said before, that ye are in our hearts to die and live with you.

7:4 Great is my boldness of speech toward you, great is my glorying of you: I am filled with comfort, I am exceeding joyful in all our tribulation.

### HISTORY:

**Chapter 5:11-21:** The scriptures (vv.11-17) show the **devoted nature of Paul's ministry**. He is motivated by the fear of the Lord (vv.11-13) and he is motivated by the love of Christ. By fear— Paul knows the terror of the Lord, he therefore, persuades men (*not of salvation, but of his own personal integrity*). By love— whether Paul appeared to be out of control or under control, Christ's love for Paul held him in such a grip, that it constituted the compelling force in everything he did. In other words, Paul is constrained (*controlled*) by the love of Christ who died for all, which makes him now live for Christ and not for self (vv.14-15). He ceases to make superficial judgments based upon appearance (*outward fashion*), even as he had once done with Christ (*thought of Christ as merely a man*) (v.16). For, whosoever is "in Christ", he is a new creation, and all things have become new. *How?* – It is "*in Christ!*" When a person truly believes in Christ, God places and positions him "*in Christ.*" He is then identified with Christ, that is, he is counted and considered to be "*in Christ*"; reckoned and credited as "*in Christ.*" The believer's faith actually causes God to identify the believer with Christ. He then walks and lives "*in Christ*" day by day, bearing the fruit of the Spirit. For all is clearly seen in a new creature; becoming a new man. His old life has passed away and a new life has begun (v.17).

The scriptures (vv.18-21) show the **reconciling nature of Paul's ministry**. He himself has been reconciled to God through Jesus Christ (v.18a). Therefore, God has given him the "*ministry of reconciliation*" (vv.18b-19). There are three persons involved in reconciliation:

1. God Himself is the *first person*. Note the words: "*All things are of God.*"
2. Jesus Christ is the *second person*. Note the words: "*...through Jesus Christ.*"
3. We (*ministers and the body of Christ*) are the *third persons*. Note the words: "*...has given us.*"

The reconciliation of the world is actually God's work in Christ (v.19a). God worked it out in Christ. **How? First**, God came to earth in Christ, that is, in the person of Christ.

- When Jesus Christ came to earth, God Himself came to earth.
- When Jesus Christ bore sin for man, God Himself was dying for man.
- When Jesus Christ died for man, God Himself was dying for man.

God Himself was in the person of Jesus Christ reaching out to man. God loved man so much that He came to earth to seek and to save that which was lost. **Second**, God does not impute sin to men (v.19b). The word "*impute*" means to reckon, count, and credit. If God does not impute or charge sin against men, then it means that He forgives their sins. There on the cross God "*in Christ*" died for the sins of men, making it possible for men to be freed from the guilt and condemnation of their sins. The "*word of reconciliation*" has been committed to Paul (v.19c). **Third**, God has committed the word of reconciliation to us. God takes the initiative by equipping us to proclaim and preach the message of reconciliation—a world can be brought back to God.

**"Reconciliation"** means to change thoroughly, to change from enmity to friendship, to bring together, to restore.

*Two persons who had allowed something to come between them are restored and reunited.*

The thing that broke the relationship between God and man was sin! Paul pleads with them to be reconciled to God (vv.20-21). Paul lets the Corinthian believers know that they are ambassadors for Christ, pleading for God and on Christ's behalf (v.20) "*For Christ became sin for us, who knew no sin.* **How?** God did it by laying all the sins of man upon Christ—all the guilt and condemnation of sin. He was the ideal, Perfect Man and He could die the Ideal death—the death that would satisfy the justice of God's eternal court and holy nature. **Why?** - *That we might be made the righteousness of God in Christ.*" God counts, credits, considers man's faith as already righteous in Christ; already having died in Christ; already having been resurrected in Christ. All because of His love for man (v.21).

## LESSON:

### 2 Corinthians 6:1-4 Today Is The Day Of Salvation

**6:1** We then, as workers together with him, beseech you also that ye receive not the grace of God in vain. We are co-workers with God. **What do we do?** We urge, beg, and plead as the Scripture says, with men to receive the wonderful grace of God. **What is that grace?** It is the glorious truth that God has provided salvation through Christ and proclaimed that salvation through Christ. This message of redemption (God's grace) is not to be received in vain. A person must not hear the message with empty deaf ears. God has made it possible for him to receive.

**6:2** (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.)— This verse is from Isaiah 49:8. The Messiah is represented as proclaiming for the grace of God to be given to sinners. God give His favorable answer in a time of grace when salvation's day comes to the world. His appointed time in the future, the Lord will, by His Servant, accomplish the final deliverance of Israel. Paul applied Isaiah's words to his ministry of proclaiming the gospel of God's grace to all people. The decision to be saved is to be made now. There may not be a tomorrow, in fact, there may not even be one hour left for any of us, and sometimes we put off a decision for Christ. If **now** is the day, then, there will be a day when it will no longer be present. Yes, the time is now!

**6:3** Giving no offence in any thing, that the ministry be not blamed:— Paul always considered what his actions communicated about Jesus Christ. He wanted his life and ministry to be so consistent, and that he would never give any reason for anyone to reject the Lord Jesus Christ. The word "*offense*" means to stumble, to strike against. He never wanted to put an obstacle; or a stumbling in anyone's way. He did not want to be a poor reflection upon the ministry; lest the ministry should be discredited.

**6:4** But in all things approving ourselves as the ministers of God, in much patience, in afflictions, in necessities, in distresses,— Paul was consistent and enduring in physical and mental suffering and stress where he and others proved to be servants and ministers of God. Six particular things are mentioned:

**"Endurance"** means patience; **"Patience"** means steadfast perseverance. When trials, fatigue, temptation, or opposition confront the minister of God, he must do all he can to endure.

1. Paul endured "**afflictions**" (*pressure, strain, tension*), that comes within and without. Sometimes the pressure is so heavy and tight that a man feels like he is going to explode or be crushed.
2. Paul endured "**necessities**" (*inescapable hardship, difficulties, privation, and pain of life*). Only one thing that will carry the minister through the necessities and experiences of life: endurance (patience).

3. Paul endured **"distresses"** (*straits, calamities, tight places, inescapable situations*). When the minister is cornered by temptation or trial; when there seems to be no escape, his only resource is endurance. He must steadfastly endure lest he offend the gospel and become a stumbling block to others.

**The point is:** prove yourself as the minister of God, by enduring suffering, hardship, and trouble. **Why?** - Because others are observing you; you are not working on your own, but with God; you have received God's grace; and today is the day of salvation—the day someone makes the decision to be saved. **How do you do it?** By believing God controls all situations; and that it's already done through Christ Jesus to bring you out and grow you up.

## 2 Corinthians 6:5-10 Servants Can Endure Hardships

**6:5 In stripes, in imprisonments, in tumults, in labours, in watchings, in fastings;**— We serve an Awesome God! And the greatest need of the ministry is consistency and endurance. Paul endured in physical sufferings and mental stress.

4. Paul endured **"stripes"** (*scourgings, beatings, lashings, whippings*). This was a savage, excruciating punishment. The whip was made of leather straps with two small balls attached to the end of each strap. The balls were made of rough lead or sharp bones or spikes, so that they would cut deeply into the flesh. Paul's hands were tied to a post above his head and he was scourged (*near death by the presiding centurion*). Jewish trials allowed only forty lashes. Paul was scourged at least eight times (*5 times by the Jews and 3 times by the Gentiles*).
5. Paul endured **"imprisonments."** Paul was arrested and imprisoned several times (*some say seven times*).
6. Paul endured **"tumults."** He often faced angry mobs and could not be heard. He had to stay consistent in his testimony no matter the temptation to go along with the crowd.

There were moments of being overworked, sleeplessness, and hunger. Paul covers three areas:

1. Paul endured **"labours"** (*toils, laborious work to the point of exhaustion*). He was not lazy, lethargic, slothful, or complacent. He got up in the mornings and put his hand to the plow: praying, studying, ministering, and witnessing, just as God had called him to.
2. Paul endured **"watchings"** (sleepless nights). He never stopped preaching, teaching, or ministering until he had to have rest. He spent nights in prayer with the weight of the churches on his mind, at times hard to sleep.
3. Paul endured **"fastings"** (deliberate fasting). Being so involved in his work that he forgot to eat or else chose to keep working instead of eating.

**The point is:** how many ministers endure overwork—laborious work to the point of exhaustion? sleepless nights for the sake of prayer and figuring out how to better help and reach people for Christ?; missed meals in order to get more done for Christ? Paul was faithful and endured many hardships for the sake of Christ and the church.

**6:6 By pureness, by knowledge, by long suffering, by kindness, by the Holy Ghost, by love unfeigned,**— Nine areas of Paul being consistent and enduring in spiritual growth and behavior are displayed:

1. Paul endured in **"purity"** (*innocence, cleanliness; free from the dirt, filth and pollution of the world; free from immoral and unjust behavior and motive*). This involves both heart and acts; both motive and behavior. It means to be spotless and stainless, holy and righteous, godly and just. The minister of God is to live a pure; chaste life.
2. Paul endured in **"knowledge"** (*the study and understanding of God's revelation and Word*). Paul did not neglect the meditation and study of God's Word and revealed Will. He learned all he could about how God wanted men to live, and he applied himself to living and teaching that way.
3. Paul endured in **"longsuffering"** (*patience, bearing, and suffering a long time with people, especially when they were wrong, unjust, abusive, slanderous, and injurious*). The minister of God must always suffer and bear a long time with people, even when they are ever so wrong.
4. Paul endured in **"kindness"** (*goodness and benevolence of heart and behavior*). It is being kind and good, gentle and sweet even when others are abusive and evil, severe and hurting, unappreciative and unthankful.
5. Paul endured in the **"Holy Spirit"** (*in the presence, power, and gifts of the Spirit*). The great proof that Paul was a true minister of God was the fact that the Spirit of God worked in and through him. Paul was able to live for Christ and to build the ministry because he walked in the presence and power of the Spirit of God.
6. Paul endured in **"unfeigned love"** (*love that is not counterfeit or fake; love that is sincere, genuine, and pure; love that is unlimited, selfless, and sacrificial*). No matter what a person does, unfeigned love forgets self and sacrifices whatever is necessary to reach out and help that person. The minister of God must always be consistent, and endure in sincere and genuine love.

**6:7 By the word of truth, by the power of God, by the armour of righteousness on the right hand and on the left,**— All for the spiritual growth and behavior of the minister.

7. Paul endured in the **"Word of Truth"** (*the preaching and teaching of the truth, that is, of the gospel; the Word of God*). Only the Word of Truth will endure. The minister must preach the truth of God's Word, not the thinking, philosophies, and ideas of men. God has placed a calling on the minister to proclaim His Word in truth!
8. Paul endured in the **"power of God."** Only God has the power to deliver men from sin; create men anew, and give them eternal life. Therefore, Paul had to have the power of God upon his life and ministry if his labor was to be effective and bear genuine fruit.
9. Paul endured in **"the armor of righteousness"** (*being spiritually equipped; weapons of righteousness—weapons of defense and weapons of attack*). No matter what the attacks were or against Paul, he resorted to righteousness. He did not fight Satan's kingdom with human resources, but with the spiritual weapons of righteousness (Ephesians 6:10-18), which are both offensive (such as the Sword of the Spirit—the Word of God—on the right, and the defensive weapon (such as the shield of Faith—on the left). He was equipped!

**6:8 By honour and dishonour, by evil report and good report: as deceivers, and yet true;**— Paul was consistent and enduring in disregarding the world's reaction. Three contrasts are displayed:

1. Paul was "honored by some and dishonored by others." However, Paul stood and endured all dishonor done him.
2. Paul was "talked about: some spread evil reports, and others good reports." Whatever the situation, Paul consistently endured and continued to minister for his Lord and Savior Jesus Christ.
3. Paul was "treated as a deceiver, yet he was as true as a person could be." The word "deceiver" means to be an imposter, a false teacher, a quack. However, Paul stood fast: no matter the charge, he endured and continued right on preaching the truth and doing all he could to help and reach people for Christ.

**6:9 As unknown, and yet well known; as dying, and, behold, we live; as chastened, and not killed;**— Paul was consistent and enduring in the face of social abuse and persecution.

1. Some treated Paul as an unknown, yet others treated him as well known. The word "unknown" means to dismiss, ignore, disregard. Some wanted nothing to do with the minister of God. But others loved Paul because of what he had done for them and was doing for people throughout the church. No matter the treatment, Paul endured for the sake of the gospel and the people.
2. Paul was treated as dying, yet he lived. Some looked upon Paul as reckless and unwise. They saw Paul as a "fool" who was doomed; who was rapidly walking the road to death. But others understood and knew the truth—he was a new creature in Christ, a man who had found eternal life, and he was compelled to share the glorious news with the world no matter the threat to his own safety. Therefore, he endured the cross, dying to the world, in order to share the glorious news of eternal life.
3. Paul was chastened, yet he was never killed. Being "chastened" means suffering. Paul was constantly suffering for the cause of Christ, and he was willing to be chastened in order to help reach people for Christ. No person and no thing could kill him until Christ was ready for him to depart for heaven. Until that time, he would endure any suffering, any chastening as long as he had breath to bear witness for Christ.

**6:10 As sorrowful, yet always rejoicing; as poor, yet making many rich; as having nothing, and yet possessing all things.** Paul was consistent and enduring in being content—always. Three contrasts are again made.

1. Paul was looked upon as sorrowful, yet he was always rejoicing. The worldly and carnal saw him as seldom, if ever, having fun. He never joined the crowd in their worldly pleasures and activities, nor did he seek the comforts and possessions of the world. However, Paul was filled with joy, true joy—the joy that comes from knowing where he had come from; why he was here; and where he was going. He was gripped with the utmost security, confidence, and assurance of life.
2. Paul was considered as poor, yet he made many rich. He was a travelling missionary; a man who in the eyes of the world was homeless and without worldly possessions. Yet, he possessed the true wealth, the only wealth that can really make a man secure—the wealth of God's presence and love and care. And Paul shared his wealth with others—sharing how men could possess the eternal treasures of heaven.
3. Paul was looked upon as having nothing, yet he possessed all things. He had no worldly goods, but he did have the promise of God: he was to possess all things very shortly, as soon as Jesus returned. He was an heir of God, even a joint-heir with Christ.

## **2 Corinthians 6:11-13; 7:2-4 Servants Must Open Their Hearts**

**6:11 O ye Corinthians, our mouth is open unto you, our heart is enlarged.** Paul's heart is open and full of affection for he calls them by name; speaking directly to the church of Corinth as though face to face which shows strong feelings. **"Our mouth is open unto you"** meaning openly and honest; freely without hesitation or evasion able to speak frankly concerning the real situation they had been misled in. **"Our heart is enlarged"** meaning widen and open; able to embrace all believers regardless of their condition. This openness and enlargement meant that his mouth wasn't saying one thing and his heart feeling another way; not a divided heart and mouth, but it is what was needed to reconcile, to bring back the misled or distracted believers of God.

**6:12 Ye are not straitened in us, but ye are straitened in your own bowels.** The word *"straitened"* means to be restricted, to lack room, to be pressed or distressed, to be in anguish or straits. Paul says there was no narrowness or stiffness in his heart for the church; no restrictions against them. He held nothing against them in spite of the problems and heartaches the church had caused him. His heart was wide open to receive them. *"But they held restriction in their own affections."* **Why were they withholding their love?** – Because they were childish (v.13) and had divided hearts. They were like a daughter engaged to be married, but being seduced by an unworthy suitor. They were constrained in the inward parts toward the apostle. All children are very narrow in their affection and easily offended by those who correct them.

**6:13 Now for a recompence in the same, (I speak as unto my children,) be ye also enlarged.** Paul calls them his children, therefore, speaking to them as a father to his children. He begs them to receive him and his instructions with affection. *"Recompence"* meaning *return to*. Paul appeals to them to return with the same enlarged and open heart that he has shown before. To be enlarged requires growth and maturity in life, which the Corinthian believers lacked.

#### NOT APART OF THE LESSON

**7:1 Having therefore these promises, dearly beloved, let us cleanse ourselves from all filthiness of the flesh and spirit, perfecting holiness in the fear of God.** God expects us to cleanse ourselves from all filthiness of the flesh and spirit. Sins of the flesh would be such sins as immorality and drunkenness, and sins of the spirit would be such sins as hatred and jealousy. God expects us to perfect holiness in reverence unto Him. Perfecting is an aggressive word demanding aggressive action. Perfecting holiness means not only to practice but to finish and complete. The believer is to practice and pursue doing the things that will make him holy; set his mind and heart upon becoming holy, thereby, reverencing God.

#### BACK TO THE LESSON

**7:2 Receive us; we have wronged no man, we have corrupted no man, we have defrauded no man.** All the hurt Paul had suffered from the Corinthians, and all the hours of prayers offered up on the Corinthian's behalf, he again exclaims receive us; open your hearts. **Why?** – Because Paul had not wronged any man; had not corrupted any man, and had not defrauded any man. It is an appeal to them to get rid of their narrowness of heart and renounce those false teachers.

**7:3 I speak not this to condemn you: for I have said before, that ye are in our hearts to die and live with you.** Note how softly and tenderly Paul spoke to the church; to those who opposed him by saying that *"they were in their hearts to die and live with."* This could not be true if they were not believers. This also shows how far he would go to forgive them.

**7:4 Great is my boldness of speech toward you, great is my glorying of you: I am filled with comfort, I am exceeding joyful in all our tribulation.** *"Boldness"* can be translated confidence. Paul was confident in his speech and God's ongoing work in their lives. He's filled with comfort and overflowing joy even in spite of all the tribulation they had gone through.

#### SUMMARY:

Paul makes a special plea for the Corinthians not to receive God's grace in vain, reminding them that they were workers with Christ and that now is the time for salvation. He focuses on the "approved" nature of his ministry. He determined not to give offense or reason for blame with their ministry, but be acknowledged as servants of God. This is seen in their physical and mental sufferings endured. And have God's grace to endure was not in vain. (vv.6:1-4).

Even the conflicting reactions and reports by others, along with the various experiences described in a contrasting manner, helped to confirm that Paul's ministry is "approved" (vv.6:5-10).

At this point, he begs for them to open wide their hearts to him, as his heart is wide opened to them, for he speaks with great boldness that he has not done them any wrong. Paul talks to them as if they were his children. He makes an appeal to them not to condemn them, but return, for it would greatly make him joyous in spite of the afflictions they had gone through. (vv.6:11-13—7:1-4).

#### APPLICATION:

The time is now to get it straight with God and with others. God makes His appeal through this lesson, hoping He has touché someone.