

2 Corinthians 6:1 - 7:4

Day 1

Servants of God. Read 2 Corinthians 6:1-7

1. What response should believers have to the amazing position they have been given? 6:1

- What importance did Paul attach to this appeal? 6:2

FYI: "to receive the grace of God in vain...means to receive the goodness and favor of God, yet to hinder the work of grace in one's life... God doesn't want us to receive His grace and become passive." - David Guzik

"Paul is speaking to those who have already been reconciled to God: 'Don't let your reconciled relationship with God come to nothing. Don't let it be in vain. Build on this relationship, live accordingly, live a life that is worthy of one who has been reconciled to God.'

Paul is not suggesting that a saved and reconciled believer can lose his salvation. Other Scripture passages make it clear that this is not possible. Paul is saying that once we received Christ as Lord, He lives in us to show us right from wrong, and He gives us the power to do right and reject wrong." - Ray Stedman (332)

Acceptable/favor *dektos* Strong's NT:1184, "a person or thing who has been regarded favorably"
- Vine's Expository Dictionary of Biblical Words

"In Philippians 2:12 Paul encourages those who have been saved to work out or develop their salvation. The Corinthians were failing at this very point. They were saved and stuck, so to speak...Paul quoted Is. 49:8 to remind the Corinthians that God was ready to listen to them and to help them." - The Nelson Study Bible (1952)

"In its original context the quotation belongs to a section of Isaiah 49...Paul uses the quotation to establish that the gospel era ("now") is "the day of salvation" when God's favor is shown to men. How unthinkable that such grace should be received in vain (v. 1)!"
- The Expositors Bible Commentary

2. In the following, underline important points about the work God has given us to do.

- Ephesians 2:10 For we are his workmanship, created in Christ Jesus unto good works, which God hath before ordained that we should walk in them. KJV
- Philippians 1:6 For I am confident of this very thing, that He who began a good work in you will perfect it until the day of Christ Jesus. NAS
- Philippians 2:13 for it is God who is at work in you, both to will and to work for His good pleasure. NAS
- Hebrews 13:21 May the God of peace...equip you in every good thing to do His will, working in us that which is pleasing in His sight, through Jesus Christ, to whom be the glory forever and ever. Amen. NAS

3. What do believers need to be careful to do and why? 6:3 (See Titus 2:8)

FYI: "Paul was aware that he was a role model, a representative of his Lord, and he was careful not to do anything to bring discredit upon the gospel...Paul lived with a continual awareness that he was being closely watched by both believers and unbelievers."
- Ray Stedman (334)

4. People were often offended at the words and work of Jesus, Paul and other disciples (Matt. 13:57; Acts 21:30). What type of “offense/stumbling blocks” do you think Paul is talking about? (Contrast 1 Corinthians 1:23)

Offense/stumbling block NT:4349 *proskope*; a stumbling, i.e. (figuratively and concretely) occasion of sin: “something which leads others into error or sin.” - Vine's Expository Dictionary of Biblical Words
 “Paul was not afraid to offend anyone over the **gospel** of Jesus Christ...but he would not allow his **style of ministry** to offend anyone. **ministry may not be blamed**...Paul could not do anything about false accusations except live in such a way that any fair-minded person would see such accusations as false.” - David Guzik

Enduring Through Trials

5. What did Paul's service entail and how did that reflect on him? 6:4

6. What suffering did Paul receive at the hands of men? 6:5a

- What kind of stressful circumstances did he endure? 6:5b

endurance/patience *hupomone* Strongs NT:5281 cheerful or hopeful endurance “To persevere, remain under. A bearing up under, patience, refers to that quality of character which does not allow one to surrender to circumstances or succumb under trial.” - The Complete Word Study Dictionary (5282)

7. What do the first four characteristics that Paul gives in 6:6 say about his conduct under these trials? (Compare 1 Thessalonians 2:10)

8. List the resources that empowered and motivated Paul:

- 6:6b “in/by the
- 6:6b “in genuine/sincere
- 6:7 “in/by the
- 6:7 “in the power (See Colossians 1:11,29)
- 6:7 “by/with (See Romans 13:12)

FYI: “In truthful speech literally, this phrase is ‘the word of truth,’ a reference to the Scriptures. God's Word of truth contains the knowledge of how God sees life - which is the knowledge of how life truly is. You can't be forewarned of the pitfalls of this life unless you face the truth contained in the Bible.” - Ray Stedman (337)

“The idea of **on the right hand and on the left** is of holding both offensive and defensive weapons. It probably has in mind both advancing and being attacked.” - David Guzik

Applying the Word: What is your ideal image of a minister or missionary? How does that compare to Paul's example?

Day 2

Steadfastness in Spite of Circumstances. Read 2 Corinthians 6:8-13

9. List the contrasts Paul makes in 6:8-10 and expand on what you think they mean: *different reactions to his ministry, the world's view versus God's view, the seen versus the unseen (4:18), etc...*

Contrasts	
6:8 e.g. Glory/honor and dishonor	<i>Paul preached the gospel whether he was honored or dishonored by people</i>
6:8b	
6:8c	
6:9	
6:9b	
6:9c	
6:10	
6:10b	
6:10c	

FYI: 3 nine-fold descriptions "2 Corinthians 6:4-5 lists nine "negative" experiences which the servant must be willing to endure graciously. Then there are nine "positive" attributes which he should exhibit (II Corinthians 6:6-7). Finally, there are nine paradoxes that characterize such a minister (II Corinthians 6:8-10)." - Henry Morris

10. Which of the descriptions in 6:4-10 stands out to you as an attribute you would like to cultivate more in sharing of the gospel or in your relationship with others?

Open Hearts

11. List the three ways that Paul had shared with the Corinthians. 6:11,12a

- How had the Corinthians responded? 6:12b (See 12:15)
- How should they have responded ? 6:13

Withholding/Restrained NT:4729 *stenochoreo*; to hem in closely, i.e. (figuratively) cramp: Figuratively to be constrained, reserved, be unable to express oneself." - The Complete Word Dictionary (1311)

Spoken freely... "Paul communicated with them. He told them, candidly and transparently, what was taking place in his own life. He shared his feelings, his struggles, his failures, his pressure, and his problems...He showed no favoritism. He took in everyone, the whole congregation, not just the nice people, but the difficult ones, the hard-to-get-along-with ones."
- Ray Stedman (340-341)

12. Underline how we are to show love.

- 1 Peter 1:22 Now that you have purified yourselves by obeying the truth so that you have sincere love for your brothers, love one another deeply, from the heart. NIV
- 1 Thessalonians 3:12 May the Lord make your love increase and overflow for each other and for everyone else, just as ours does for you. NIV
- Matthew 7:12 "In everything, therefore, treat people the same way you want them to treat you, for this is the Law and the Prophets. NAS
- Romans 13:8 Owe nothing to anyone except to love one another; for he who loves his neighbor has fulfilled the law. NAS
- Galatians 5:13-14 ...through love serve one another. 14 For the whole Law is fulfilled in one word, in the statement, "YOU SHALL LOVE YOUR NEIGHBOR AS YOURSELF." NAS

13. What measure and significance did Jesus give to love? John 13:34,35

14. What does this heart felt exchange show about some of the problems Paul was having with these believers? What may have caused the Corinthians to show restraint to Paul?

FYI: "The Corinthian Christians played the 'victim' before Paul. Out of godly necessity he was firm with them on previous occasions ...Now, they probably claimed to be restricted by the 'hurt' Paul caused them." - David Guzik

"This section is the high point of emotion for the whole epistle... The accusations against Paul and their own sinful entanglements resulted in the Corinthians withdrawing from him, at least emotionally. He had been totally open to them but they had not responded to him in the same spirit. "*O Corinthians*" (6:11) Paul addressed his readers by name on only two other occasions (Gal. 3:1; Phil 4:15). When he did this he was expressing strong emotion."
- The Nelson Study Bible (1953)

Applying the Word: What is one of the best experiences you have had when someone reached out and opened up to you in love and acceptance? What fears or concerns do you have that restrain you from reaching out to others?

Day 3

Do Not Compromise. Read 2 Corinthians 6:14-16

15. What command did Paul give the Corinthians? 6:14a (Picture two different kinds of animals (Deut. 22:10) being yoked together.)

- Consider: We are called to be *ambassadors* (which requires contact with the world Matthew 5:14-16). How does that differ from the command to “not be yoked”?

FYI: *unequally yoked together/bound together* Strong's NT:2086 *heterozugeo*; to yoke up differently, i.e. (figuratively) to associate discordantly

“Paul means much more here than only marrying an unbeliever. It really applies to any environment where we let the world influence our thinking.”
- David Guzik

“In expanded form the principle might be expressed thus: “Do not form any relationship, whether temporary or permanent, with unbelievers that would lead to a compromise of Christian standards or jeopardize consistency of Christian witness.”
- The Expositor's Bible Commentary

“A yoke is any relationship that binds you and is hard to break and constrains you and limits your freedom to follow your conscience and follow your Lord.”
- Ray Stedman (346)

“Evidently the false apostles (11:13) who were trying to discredit Paul with the church were also encouraging them to compromise with the pagan teachings from which they had turned when they accepted Christ.” - Henry Morris

16. What clarifications did Paul give about this in:

- 1 Corinthians 5:9-11
- 1 Corinthians 7:12-13

17. Underline the dangers or consequences of the wrong kind of associations.

- 1 Cor 5:6 Do you not know that a little leaven leavens the whole lump of dough? NAS
- 1 Corinthians 15:33 Do not be misled: “Bad company corrupts good character.” NIV
- 2 Timothy 2:16-17 But avoid worldly and empty chatter, for it will lead to further ungodliness, and their talk will spread like gangrene. NAS
- Proverbs 13:20 He who walks with wise men will be wise, But the companion of fools will suffer harm. NAS

18. How are we to be engaged with the world? 1 Peter 3:15,16

19. From 6:14-16, list the close (*bound, yoked*) associations that Paul questions and the differences between believers and unbelievers that make it a conflict.

Association questioned	Incompatible:
6:14b e.g. <i>what partnership?</i>	<i>righteousness / lawlessness (wickedness, unrighteousness)</i>
6:14c	
6:15a	
6:15b	
6:16a	

FYI: "We easily forget that the unbelievers around us are in darkness. This is not to say that a believer is superior to an unbeliever. Christians are in the light - but only because of the grace of God, not because of any innate righteousness on their part."
- Ray Stedman (343)

"The term **Belial** for Satan only occurs here in the New Testament. It refers to one who is vile and wicked and causes destruction."
- The Nelson Study Bible (1953)

Harmony/accord "(*sumphonesis*) is the word from which we get 'symphony.'"
- Henry Morris

20. Considering the ungodly culture of Corinth, what do you think these descriptions indicate about ways the Corinthians may have been "yoking" themselves or involving themselves with unbelievers that compromised their witness and walk?

- What rationalizations or excuses may they have been making for continuing these close associations? *i.e. What might they have gained by them or lost in giving them up?*

Applying the Word: What "guardrails" or boundaries do you observe in order not compromise your walk and witness with your unbelieving friends and associates?

Day 4

Fellowship with God. Read 2 Corinthians 6:16 - 7:4

21. What high calling have believers received? 6:16b (See Leviticus 26:11-12; CR 1 Cor 6:19)
- What promises had God given to Israel about His fellowship with them? 6:16c (Paul was quoting and combining portions of the Old Testament in 6:16-18.)
22. In order to be a witness to the world, what did Israel need to do? 6:17 (See the reasons given in Exodus 34:14-16.)
23. List how God would respond if they separated themselves from worldly thinking and behaviors? 6:17b,18

FYI: "Isaiah 52:11 is the source of Paul's citation...In Isaiah, the call was for separation (= departure) from Babylon ("her"...) with its pagan idolatry. In Paul, the call is for separation from unbelievers ("them"), with their pagan way of life."
- The Expositors Bible Commentary

24. Underline what happened to the nation:

- Ps 106:35-38 but they mingled with the nations and adopted their customs. 36 They worshiped their idols, which became a snare to them. 37 They sacrificed their sons and their daughters to demons. 38 They shed innocent blood, the blood of their sons and daughters, whom they sacrificed to the idols of Canaan, and the land was desecrated by their blood. NIV
- 2 Kings 17:16-17 They forsook all the commands of the LORD their God and made for themselves two idols cast in the shape of calves, and an Asherah pole. They bowed down to all the starry hosts, and they worshiped Baal. 17 They sacrificed their sons and daughters in the fire. They practiced divination and sorcery and sold themselves to do evil in the eyes of the LORD, provoking him to anger. NIV

25. How patiently did the Lord work with them? 2 Chronicles 36:15

26. How did Paul apply these commands and promises to the Corinthians? 7:1

Digging Deeper

Observe the things Paul said to separate from in Ephesians 5:3-12. (Note phrases describing the extent such as "*must not be even a hint/must not even be named.*")

FYI: "Perfecting holiness. This means dedicating ourselves to Christ and living righteously."

- The Nelson Study Bible (1953)

"We must purify ourselves. We must throw off everything that contaminates us. We must break the yoke that weighs us down. [See Hebrews 12:1]...We can't make ourselves holy...We are already holy because the sacrifice of Jesus on the cross has made us holy. But our holiness is made visible and tangible when we live lives that manifest the holiness of God. That is the appeal that Paul makes to us here. And that's what this world is waiting to see."

- Ray Stedman (347)

"**Body and spirit** here denotes the Christian in his total personality, outwardly and inwardly, in his relations with other people and with God."

- The Expositors Bible Commentary

27. What personal response did Paul want from them? 7:2a

- What claims did Paul first make about his own behavior? 7:2b What do these reveal about the kind of accusations made against him?

28. What did Paul say about his motives in confronting them? 7:3 How willing was he to give of himself?

29. What picture did Paul paint for the Corinthians? 7:4 What words describe his feelings?

30. How do you think you would have felt in Paul's shoes, about a group of people who had been so critical and condemning of you? Why do you think Paul was able to be so gracious and encouraging?

FYI: "When you respect others, you make room for them in your heart (7:2)...you don't speak words that condemn them (7:3)...and you have confidence in them (7:4a). With all their faults, the Corinthians were people of great potential and immense worth in Paul's eyes. He believed in them...even when they failed."

- Charles Swindoll (MA101)

Applying the Word: *Is there someone in your life that you need to make room for in your heart and give words of encouragement, not condemnation? What are some things you could say to comfort and affirm them or paint a picture for a brighter future?*

Memory Verse:

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