

CHAPTER SIX

Analysis

- A. Paul told how he had endeavored to keep his ministry of reconciliation blameless (1-10).
1. He gave some additional information about the ministry of reconciliation (1-2).
 - a) He was working together with God (1a).
 - b) He strongly urged the Corinthians not to receive the gracious favor of God in vain (b).
 - c) He gave his reasons for this exhortation (2).
 - (1) It was based on the Scripture that told how the Lord had listened to the cry of His people and had helped them when they needed salvation.
 - (2) He explained that the acceptable time, the day of salvation, is now.
 2. He explained how he had kept his ministry blameless (3-4a).
 - a) He gave no occasion for anyone to stumble because of him.
 - b) He followed this course that his ministry might be blameless.
 3. He listed the areas in which his ministry was blameless (4b-7a).
 - a) He had patiently endured in (1) afflictions, (2) necessities (3) distresses, (4) stripes, (5) imprisonments, (6) tumults, (7) labors, (8) watchings, and (9) fastings.
 - b) He listed eight more areas in which his ministry was blameless. They were in (1) pureness, (2) knowledge, (3) longsuffering, (4) kindness, (5) holy spirit, (6) love unfeigned, (7) word of truth, and (8) power of God.
 4. He told of the means by which he had carried on his blameless ministry (7b-8a). They were (1) weapons of righteousness, (2) glory and dishonor, and (3) evil report and good report.
 5. He explained the manner in which he had served (8b-10). He had done so (1) as unknown, yet well known; (2) as dying, and behold we live; (3) as chastened, and not

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killed; (4) as sorrowful, yet always rejoicing; and (5) as having nothing, yet possessing all things.

B. Based on his blameless ministry, Paul made a strong appeal to be accepted by the Corinthians (11-18).

1. He plead for reciprocal affections (11-13).
 - a) In doing so, he spoke openly to them.
 - b) He reminded them of his enlarged affection, for there was room in his heart for all of them.
 - c) The only limit was on their part, not his.
 - d) He urged them to enlarge their hearts for him, for they were his children in the Lord.
2. He plead for complete separation from unbelievers and their contaminating practices (14-18).
 - a) What this meant to their lives (14-16a).
 - (1) They were not to be unequally yoked with unbelievers.
 - (2) Righteousness and iniquity cannot be partners.
 - (3) Light and darkness cannot mix.
 - (4) Christ and Belial cannot be in agreement.
 - (5) Faith has no part with unbelief.
 - (6) The temple of God cannot be based on the same foundation as an idol's temple.
 - b) Why he plead for this separation (16b-17a).
 - (1) God said, "I will dwell in them and walk in their midst."
 - (2) He also said, "I will be their God and they my people."
 - (3) The Lord also said, "Come out from among them and be ye separate; touch no unclean thing."
 - c) The promise of the Lord God Almighty to those who respond (17b-18).
 - (1) I will receive you.
 - (2) I will be your Father.
 - (3) You will be My sons and daughters.

The Blameless Ministry

Scripture

6:1-10. And working together with him we entreat also that ye receive not the grace of God in vain 2 (for he saith,

At an acceptable time I hearkened unto thee,

And in a day of salvation did I succor thee:

behold, now is the acceptable time; behold, now is the day of salvation): 3 giving no occasion of stumbling in anything, that our ministration be not blamed; 4 but in everything commending ourselves, as ministers of God, in much patience, in afflictions, in necessities, in distresses, 5 in stripes, in imprisonments, in tumults, in labors, in watchings, in fastings; 6 in pureness, in knowledge, in long suffering, in kindness, in the Holy Spirit, in love unfeigned, 7 in the word of truth, in the power of God; by the armor of righteousness on the right hand and on the left, 8 by glory and dishonor, by evil report and good report; as deceivers, and yet true; 9 as unknown, and yet well known; as dying, and behold, we live; as chastened, and not killed; 10 as sorrowful, yet always rejoicing; as poor, yet making many rich; as having nothing, and yet possessing all things.

Comments

And working together with him.—While the words "with him" do not appear in the Greek, the context makes it clear that Paul as an ambassador on behalf of Christ was working together with God. He had spoken of himself and Apollos as God's fellow-workers in his first epistle. See I Cor. 3:9. Each of them had his own work to do, but God gave the increase. Paul and Apollos were fellow-workers who belonged to God.

Those who teach and preach the gospel must work together to present the message of reconciliation effectively. But they should also remember that they are privileged to work with God in this ministry, for God through this means is reconciling the world unto Himself.

receive not the grace of God in vain.—This was no idle warning. The Corinthians were in constant danger of forsaking the truth which Paul had delivered to them because of the presence of false teachers in their midst.

This was also true of almost every church that had been taught the gospel by Paul. False teachers came to Antioch and caused even Peter and Barnabas to be influenced by their claims. They went so far as to refuse to eat with Gentile Christians. Paul had to set the matter straight and resist Peter to the face. Paul showed him that he had been crucified with Christ and that Christ was living in him. Therefore he was not making the grace of God a meaningless thing. See Gal. 2:11-21.

There is a serious question about much of the program of the church today: Does it make the grace of God meaningless? Is the Word of the Cross foolishness to those who should count it, as Paul did, the very power to save the believer? Too often the church resembles a club composed of nice people, but with little to remind one of the body of Christ. Is the first business of the church being neglected? Is the church actually seeking to save the lost?

The church, in altogether too many cases, has become a tree without fruit. It should be called upon to repent and do its first work, just as Jesus called on Ephesus to do. It needs to be like the disciples in Jerusalem who "went everywhere preaching the Word" (Acts 8:4).

The grace of God is made meaningless when we fail to live in such a manner that it becomes evident that Christ lives in us. It is made meaningless when we fail to share the gospel of His grace with others. The driving force in the life of Paul was this: "Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners" (I Tim. 1:15).

for he saith.—The pronoun is inferred from the context and suggests that God is speaking through the Scriptures. The quotation is from Isa. 49:8 where it is introduced with the phrase, "Thus saith the Lord."

In the absence of the pronoun in our text, it would be equally correct to say, "The Scripture says," for God is the Author of the sacred writings. See Heb. 3:7-11 where the quotation from Psalm 95:8-11 is introduced with the statement, "The Holy Spirit saith." These statements all say one thing: The Bible is the Word of God. It is His message of reconciliation, for He heard the cry of His people and came to their rescue in "the day of salvation."

behold, now is the acceptable time.—The whole gospel age is the time of salvation. It began on Pentecost and will end when Christ comes again. It is the time during which God welcomes home sinners who repent.

Men should welcome the opportunity to be saved while it is here. They should be like prisoners who welcome release; like the blind who welcome sight; like the lost who welcome the Savior. See Luke 4:16-22.

No one knows when the longsuffering of God will end and the day of salvation will be over. See II Pet. 3:8-13; Matt. 25: 10-13. We do know that death closes the door for every man. See Luke 16:31; John 8:21. But now is the day of salvation!

giving no occasion of stumbling.—Since God was entreating men

through Paul, the apostle carried out his ministry in a blameless manner. This involved two things: (1) preaching the Word, and (2) living the Christlike life. He was not ashamed of the gospel of Christ. To him, the Word of the Cross was not an empty thing. He determined not to know anything except Jesus Christ and Him crucified. He knew that God saves the believer through the foolishness of the thing preached by His inspired apostles. He lived so that he could say, "Christ lives in me." (Gal. 2:20).

Paul was not like the Jewish religionists who had caused the name of God to be blasphemed among the Gentiles. See Rom. 2:24. They failed to practice what they taught. They abhorred idols, but robbed pagan temples for the gold and precious stones of which their idols were made. They gloried in the law, but dishonored it by their transgressions. See Rom. 2:17-24.

The way of salvation is strewn with stumbling blocks left by those who fail to preach the truth and live by its standard. The preacher should be able to say with Paul, "Be imitators of me as I am of Christ."

False teachers were real stumbling blocks in the pathway of the Corinthians. Paul had good reason to warn against them. See 6:14-7:1. Such protruding rocks in the pathway of salvation can cause many to be lost.

There were, of course, those who without cause found fault with Paul's ministry. They criticized his message because they preferred the wisdom of men to the wisdom that came down from above. They impugned his motives, implying that he preached for the sake of money. See II Cor. 11:6-15.

Every faithful gospel minister is subject to the same attacks. When they come, he should remember the word of Paul to Timothy, "Suffer hardship with me as a good soldier of Jesus Christ" (II Tim. 2:3).

in much patience.—Paul developed the thought of his blameless ministry, he told of the areas in which he served God. He listed nine of them.

Patience is the first of these areas. It is the ability to endure trials. It is represented by the soldier who withstands the attack of the enemy and remains in his position after the wave of battle has rolled on. It is genuine faith in the Lord Jesus Christ that produces this ability to stand up under the trials of this life. Such patient endurance leads to God's approval which is represented by the crown of life. See James 1:2-4, 12.

Paul wrote to the Romans saying, "We also rejoice in our tribulations: knowing that tribulation worketh steadfastness, and steadfastness approvedness; and approvedness, hope: and hope putteth not to shame; because the love of God has been shed abroad in our hearts through the Holy Spirit which was given to us" (Rom. 5:3-5).

in afflictions.—Trials, distresses, and afflictions beset the way of those who journey toward the heavenly home. The writer of Hebrews listed some of the trials through which men of faith have passed. See Heb. 11:32-12:2. Those who run the race set before them find encouragement in the example of those who have endured the trials.

Jesus reminded His disciples that in this world they were to expect tribulation. But He said, "Be of good cheer, I have overcome the world" (John 16:33). Paul told the churches of Lystra, Iconium and Antioch that through many tribulations they must enter into the kingdom of God. See Acts 14:21-22. Peter wrote to the early Christians saying, "Beloved, think it not strange concerning the fiery trials among you which cometh upon you to prove you: but insomuch as ye are partakers of Christ's sufferings, rejoice: that at the revelation of his glory ye may rejoice with exceeding joy" (I Pet. 4:12-13). John wrote to the seven churches of Asia reminding them that he was a partaker in the tribulation and kingdom and patience which are in Christ Jesus. See Rev. 1:9.

in necessities.—Paul wrote to the Corinthians in his first epistle using this word to describe the distress, whatever it was, that they were facing at that time. Depressions, wars, and the like are all accompanied with distress. Paul said, "I take pleasure in weakness, in injuries, in necessities in persecutions, in distresses, for Christ's sake: when I am weak, then I am strong" (II Cor. 12:10).

In this context, necessities seem to be those circumstances in which the Christian may be compelled to undergo various hardships. Patience would certainly be needed in necessities. Paul needed it in his blameless ministry.

in distresses.—The term suggests narrow confinement produced by pressures. Paul had experienced it while waiting to learn about the situation at Corinth. That pressure had prevented his carrying on an evangelistic effort at Troas. But his patience in the distress brought ultimate triumph.

in stripes.—This is a reference to the many beating which Paul endured for the sake of Christ. He had been beaten at Philippi and barely escaped one at Corinth. See Acts 16:23, 37. The Jews had

dragged him before Gallio, the proconsul, and charged him with the guilt of persuading men to worship God contrary to the law. Gallio dismissed the matter for he was not minded to be a judge of such things. Thwarted in their attempt to have Paul punished, the Jews seized Sosthenes, the ruler of the synagogue, and gave him the beating. See Acts 18:12-17. Paul ran into mob violence at Jerusalem at the close of his third missionary journey. Roman soldiers came to his rescue and prevented the mob from killing him. See Acts 21:30-32. Looking back upon such experiences, Paul wrote of his being in "stripes above measure" (II Cor. 12:23). As the servant of God he endured them and fulfilled his ministry blamelessly.

in imprisonments.—On his second journey, even before he reached Corinth, Paul had been unjustly imprisoned. See Acts 16:37. At the close of his third journey as he was about to be torn in pieces by a confused mob, Paul was arrested and put in jail. See Acts 23:10. But "the night following, the Lord stood by him, and said, Be of good cheer; for as thou hast testified concerning me at Jerusalem, so must thou bear witness also at Rome" (Acts 23:11). Paul was taken to Caesarea where he remained in prison for about two years while awaiting settlement of his case before Felix. Festus succeeded Felix and, desiring to keep favor with the Jews, asked Paul if he would be willing to go back to Jerusalem and be tried there. But Paul appealed his case to Caesar, taking advantage of his Roman citizenship and was sent to Rome. Although he entered Rome in chains, he was given certain freedoms which allowed him to continue his ministry of reconciliation. Luke closes the account in these words: "And he abode two whole years in his own hired dwelling, and received all men that went in unto him, preaching the kingdom of God, and teaching things concerning the Lord Jesus Christ with all boldness, none forbidding him" (Acts 28:30-31). During that imprisonment the whole praetorian guard came to know Christ whom Paul preached. See Phil. 1:13. What an example of patient endurance that was!

in tumults.—Riotous mobs set upon Paul on his very first missionary journey. They convinced the people that Paul should be put to death. At Lystra, they stoned him and dragged him out of the city, supposing that he was dead. See Acts 14:19. It is significant that out of Lystra, there came one of Paul's most trusted and best loved fellow-workers, Timothy. On his second missionary journey, this young man joined Paul to suffer hardship with him as a good soldier of Jesus Christ. See Acts 16:1-5.

in labors.—Not just ordinary work, but toil that meant pain and suffering. Those who suppose that the ministry is an easy life should read the story of Paul's activities in his blameless ministry.

Paul listed the hardships he suffered without so much as a hint of complaint. He patiently endured them as a servant of God. See Col. 1:24-29.

in watchings.—This may have been one of those occasions when Paul had stood guard over one who was wrestling with his problems that involved his being reconciled to God.

in fastings.—Paul and Barnabas had been set aside to this ministry after the church at Antioch, acting upon the instructions from the Holy Spirit, had fasted and prayed and laid their hands on them. See Acts 13:1-3. Fasting was not merely depriving one's self of food; it was abstaining from food in order to give one's entire thought to his relationship to God. This exercise, also, required patience on the part of the servant of God.

in pureness.—Pureness like patience was an area in which Paul was blameless. Purity in mind and heart characterized his ministry.

in knowledge.—Paul's knowledge was based solidly on the divinely revealed wisdom of God rather than on the speculative theories of men. Jesus said, "If ye had recognized me, ye would have known the Father also" (John 14:7). Paul's knowledge centered in Christ. He said, "I know him whom I have believed, and am persuaded that he is able to guard that which I have committed unto him against that day" (II Tim. 1:12). Such knowledge is necessary if the servant of God is to have a blameless ministry.

in longsuffering.—This term emphasizes the long periods of time during which one is able to hold up under trials. Paul said, "Love suffers long and is kind" (I Cor. 13:4). Longsuffering is a mark of those who belong to Jesus Christ. See Gal. 5:22-24.

in kindness.—Love expresses itself in kindness. Paul said, "Be ye kind one to another, tenderhearted, forgiving each other, even as God also in Christ forgave you" (Eph. 4:32). Unkind words or deeds have no place in a blameless ministry.

in the Holy Spirit.—As an apostle, Paul was under the control of the Holy Spirit when he spoke and wrote. The Spirit directed him in specific instances as he went about his work for the Lord. He had all the powers of an apostle. He performed miracles, even raising the dead. He spoke in foreign languages under the power of the Holy Spirit. He and the other apostles were, of course, responsible for

their response to the revealed truth of God just as any Christian is. See Gal. 2:11-21.

Since this is one of the areas in which Paul carried on a blameless ministry, it is quite possible that he was referring to his own spirit which was holy, for he had separated himself from all defilement of flesh and spirit when he became a Christian.

in love unfeigned.—Writing to the Romans, Paul said, "Let love be without hypocrisy" (Rom. 12:9). John writes, "My little children, let us not love in word, neither with the tongue; but in deed and in truth" (I John 3:18).

in word of truth.—This is the message of reconciliation that told the truth about God's love and grace that made it possible for sinners to be saved.

in the power of God.—Paul, of course, was fully aware of the fact that the message which had been revealed to him was the gospel. He was convinced that the gospel was the power of God to save the believer. Paul prayed for the Ephesians that they might be strengthened with power through the Spirit in the inward man. This was the same power that the Lord used in the wilderness temptation as He defeated the devil with the Word of God. In each temptation, He answered the challenge of Satan with a "Thus it is written." The Christian can also defeat Satan by following the example of Christ. See Eph. 3:16-17; 6:10-18.

This is the armor which is on the right hand and on the left, suggesting both the offensive and defensive aspects of the whole armor of God. For example, the sword of the Spirit would be in the right hand, but the shield of faith on the left.

by glory and dishonor.—There were those who sought to discredit every work of Paul and bring dishonor upon him. But there were many who approved his efforts to proclaim the gospel to save them. The converts to Christ at Corinth were like a monument to his faithfulness in teaching them the truth that had reconciled them to God.

Our Lord faced a similar situation in His ministry. Many glorified Him as they listened to the gracious words that fell from His lips. Many even of the rulers believed on Him, but they did not acknowledge Him openly because they loved the glory—approval—of men more than the glory of God. See John 12:43. But there were some who sought constantly for an excuse to discredit Him in the eyes of the people and finally succeeded on having Him crucified.

by evil report and good report.—Paul carried on this ministry in a blameless manner despite the fact that his enemies sought to destroy it by evil reports. See II Cor. 10:10-12. Paul's defense against all such reports was this: "He that glorieth, let him glory in the Lord. For not he that commendeth himself is approved, but whom the Lord commendeth" (II Cor. 10:17).

There are those who attempt to vilify preachers of the gospel by vicious gossip. Paul pointed out the only protection in such cases: His message and his life were blameless in the sight of the Lord.

as deceivers, and yet true.—This is the beginning of a series of clauses by which Paul shows the manner in which he conducted himself as a servant of God. Some said that he was leading men astray. Some believed he opposed the Law of Moses. But this was not true, for he "had done nothing but what the prophets and Moses did say should come" (Acts 26:22). The Jews had made similar charges against Jesus. The chief priests and Pharisees, appearing before Pilate after the crucifixion, referred to Him as "that deceiver." His resurrection showed how wrong they were.

as unknown, and yet well known.—At one time Paul had been well known as a persecutor of the church. He had actually tried to destroy the church of God. See Gal. 1:13-14; Acts 9:1-2. At Athens, however, Greek philosophers thought of him as an unknown babbler. He was preaching Jesus and the resurrection, but they thought he was speaking about some foreign god. Nothing he said resembled any system of philosophy worthy of their attention. See Acts 17:18. He had no standing among the professional of that day. See II Cor. 11:6. He was like Peter and John who were called ignorant and unlearned. See Acts 4:13. But Paul's credentials which the Lord furnished him established him as an ambassador of Christ working with God in his blameless ministry of reconciliation.

as dying, and behold, we live.—As the servant of God he was "always bearing about in the body the dying of Jesus, that the life also of Jesus might be manifest in his own body" (II Cor. 4:10). They thought he was dead at Lystra, but as sorrowing disciples stood about him he rose up and went into the city and on the next day proceeded on his journey. See Acts 14:20.

as chastened, and not killed.—Some assume that this is chastening from the Lord and cite such passages as Psa. 118:17-18 and Prov. 3:11-12 (quoted in Heb. 12:3-5) to support their view.

It is hard to see how "chastened, and not killed" could refer to

God's treatment of His apostle. But because he was a servant of God, he was punished by men on many occasions. Although men sought to kill him, the providence of God watched over him and prevented them from doing so.

as sorrowful, yet always rejoicing.—The Corinthians knew very well the sorrow they had caused him. See 2:1-11. Despite that sorrow he was able to rejoice over those who were faithful. See also Phil. 4:1; I Pet. 1:8; James 1:2-3.

as poor, yet making many rich.—When Paul wrote to the Philippians to thank them for the many times they had helped him, he said "I have learned, in whatsoever state I am in, therein to be content. I know how to be abased, and I know how to abound: in everything and in all things have I learned the secret both to be filled and to be hungry, both to abound and to be in want" (Phil. 4:11-12). Then he told his secret: "I can do all things in him that strengtheneth me" (Phil. 4:13). Paul had come to Corinth in want and for a time had supported himself by working as a tentmaker. See II Cor. 11:9; Acts 18:1-4. But the Corinthians knew how rich they had been made in spiritual things through the gospel ministry of Paul. See I Cor. 9:11; II Cor. 8:9.

as having nothing, yet possessing all things.—In connection with the incident of the rich young ruler who came to Jesus, Peter said, "Lo, we have left our own, and followed thee. And he said to them, Verily I say unto you, There is no man that hath left house, or wife, or brethren, or parents, or children, for the kingdom of God's sake who shall not receive manifold more in this time, and in the world to come eternal life" (Luke 18: 28-30). And to the Philippians Paul wrote, "I have all things, and abound: I am filled, having received from Epaphroditus the things that came from you, an odor of a sweet smell, a sacrifice acceptable, well-pleasing to God, and my God will supply every need of yours according to his riches in glory in Christ Jesus" (Phil. 4:18-19). Jesus told about the man who filled his barns to bursting. When he had done so, God said to him, "Thou foolish one, this night is thy soul required of thee; and the things which thou hast prepared, whose shall they be? So is he that layeth up treasure for himself, and is not rich toward God" Luke 12:20-21).

All the issues which Paul mentioned in this list can be illustrated from his own ministry, and many of them from the ministry of Christ. In a very real sense Christ lived in him.

*Scripture**The Plea For Acceptance*

6:11-18 Our mouth is open unto you, O Corinthians, our heart is enlarged. 12 Ye are not straitened in us, but ye are straitened in your own affections. 13 Now for a recompense in like kind (I speak as unto my children), be ye also enlarged.

14 Be not unequally yoked with unbelievers: for what fellowship have righteousness and iniquity? or what communion hath light with darkness? 15 And what concord hath Christ with Belial? or what portion hath a believer with an unbeliever? 16 And what agreement hath a temple of God with idols? for we are a temple of the living God; even as God said, I will dwell in them, and walk in them; and I will be their God, and they shall be my people. 17 Wherefore

Come ye out from among
them, and be ye separate,

saith the Lord,

And touch no unclean thing;
And I will receive you,
18 And will be to you a Father,
And ye shall be to me sons and daughters,

Comments

Our mouth is open unto you.—Paul had urged the Corinthians not to receive the grace of God in vain. He continued the appeal by urging them to accept him as the servant of God through whom the message of grace and reconciliation had been preached to them. With a clear message, a pure heart, and sincere motives he urged them to understand his great love for them.

Ye are not straitened in us.—The place the Corinthians occupied in the affections of Paul was not limited. His deep concern for them had led him to do more for them than for any other congregation among the many he had established. If there was any limitation, it was in their love for him. Some of them had come under the influence of false teachers and were failing to show proper respect for him as the one who had taught them to love the Lord. See I Cor. 4:14-21.

Now for a recompense in like kind.—Since Paul had boldly declared

his love for them, he appealed to them as his children in Christ to demonstrate the same love for him.

Be not unequally yoked with unbelievers.—Some have assumed that it would have been impossible for Paul to have written these words immediately after the fervent declaration of his deep love for them. They seem to think that the contrast is too great and that he could not have changed from the expression of love to one of criticism which they assume characterizes this passage. See 6:14-7:1.

On these assumptions they build still another: That this section must have been taken from some other letter which he had written at another time. The absence of manuscript evidence to support the theory argues strongly against it. It also fails on two other counts: (1) This section, rather than being a rebuke is a continuation of Paul's earnest appeal for the Corinthians to rid themselves of whatever thing that had caused them to limit their love for the one who had led them to Christ and whose love for them was like that of a father. (2) Paul's writings abound in such sharp contrasts. For example, see his condemnation of the works of the flesh in contrast to his praise of the fruit of the spirit in Gal. 5:16-24. He did not hesitate to speak freely about his deep sorrow over someone who had fallen away from Christ and in the next moment tell of his joy as he contemplated the victory through Christ for all those who remain faithful to Him.

with unbelievers.—This passage is invariably interpreted as having to do with marriage. But there is no evidence in the context to show that Paul had this subject in mind at all. He had discussed that subject at length in the first epistle. See I Cor. 7:1-40. There, he indicated that marriage should be within the regulation of the Lord. He also gave instruction for the believer who was married to an unbeliever. The life of the believer was to be such that the unbelieving partner might be led to salvation in Christ. See also I Pet. 3:1-2. There is no question, of course, that it would be better for both husband and wife to be believers in the Lord Jesus Christ.

In this context, Paul seems to be referring to those unbelievers who were disturbing the church and keeping them from the proper attitude of Christian love toward him. The series of questions that follow shows the utter incompatibility of belief and unbelief.

what fellowship have righteousness and iniquity?—Can righteousness and lawlessness be partners? Some at Corinth seemed to think that these opposites could be yoked together. See I Cor. 5:1-13 for an attempt to do so.

The Corinthians were not the only ones who have tried to do this. Some church people today excuse their "bent to sinning" by blaming Adam for their "sinful nature" and insist that John said that "we sin every day." They miss the message of I John 1:8 by failing to read what he wrote in I John 3:1-10. They miss Paul's point in Rom. 7:17 by failing to read Rom. 6:16-18.

light with darkness?—These opposites cannot be yoked together as one team. John says, "God is light and in him is no darkness at all" (I John 1:5). Then he adds, "If we say that we have fellowship with him and walk in the darkness, we lie, and do not the truth: but if we walk in the light as he is in the light, we have fellowship one with another and the blood of Jesus Christ his Son cleanseth us from all sin" (I John 1:6-7).

Still some argue that there are "no such absolutes" in the Christian life. They insist that there must be some mixing of light and darkness, for "we all sin; nobody is perfect." Nobody is perfect in the sense that he cannot commit an act of sin. See I John 2:1-2. But the fact remains that the Bible allows no such mixing of light and darkness. James says that God is the "Father of lights, with whom there can be no variation, neither shadow that is cast by turning" (James 1:17). Then he adds, "wherefore putting away all filthiness and overflowing of wickedness receive with meekness the implanted word, which is able to save your souls. But be ye doers of the word, not hearers only, deluding your own selves" (James 1:21-22).

Christ with Belial?—Belial is Satan. Yoking a believer with an unbeliever is like attempting to yoke Christ with Satan. Could there possibly be any accord between Christ and the devil? What is there that belongs to the believer and at the same time to the unbeliever? Not Christ, nor salvation, nor heaven!

temple of God with idols?—How could there possibly be any agreement between the temple where the Spirit of God dwells and a pagan temple where idols are kept? This is the climax of Paul's argument showing that the believers at Corinth were not to be unequally yoked with unbelievers. Paul had warned them of the punishment for destroying the temple of God. See I Cor. 3:16-17. Were they willing to risk destruction of the temple of God by attempting to mix unbelievers and believers in the church?

God had promised Israel that He would be in them and dwell in their midst and be their God. They were to be His people, but on the condition that they separate themselves from every unclean thing.

Then He would be like a father to them and they would be like sons and daughters to Him. Will God tolerate anything less in the church?

Summary

As an ambassador of Christ, working together with God, Paul urged the Corinthians not to receive the gracious gift of righteousness as if it were an empty, meaningless thing. He reminded them of the prophetic word in which God had said to Israel, "At an acceptable time, I heard you, and in a day of salvation I came to help you." Paul explained it by saying that the acceptable time is now, and the day of salvation is now. The whole Christian age that began on Pentecost and will end when Christ comes again is the day of salvation. But no individual has more than a lifetime in which to accept it. The Corinthians were in danger of failing to respond to the urgent plea to be reconciled to God. Paul had been careful not to give offense to anyone, so that no one could blame him if one should fail to respond to God's plea to be reconciled to Him.

Paul's ministry was blameless in areas ranging from patience to power of God. He carried it on by weapons of righteousness, by glory and dishonor, by evil report and good report. He served as one who was unknown, yet well known; as one who was dying, but to the amazement of the disciples, he lived; as one severely punished, but not killed; as one who knew the meaning of sorrow, yet he always rejoiced; as having nothing, yet he possessed all things, for he was a child of the heavenly Father.

Looking back on this frank explanation of his motives and experiences of his ministry in their behalf, Paul plead with the Corinthians to make room for him in their affections. His mouth was open, for he had been speaking openly and freely of his love for them. In his heart there was ample space for all the Christians at Corinth. Any restriction of affection was on their part, not his. He urged them to make room for him in their hearts.

Evidently the attack of false teachers on Paul had caused some of the Corinthians to have an improper regard for him. It became necessary for him to follow his declaration of love for them with a sharp warning: "Stop becoming unequally yoked with unbelievers." The Old Testament regulation forbade yoking animals of different species together. See Deut. 22:10. Putting an unbeliever in the same yoke with a believer was as bad as yoking an ox and an ass together. Believers in Christ are not in the same class with unbelievers.

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To assume that this was a reference to the marriage of the Christian and an unbeliever is to miss the main import of the lesson. Some Christians at Corinth were married to unbelievers, and Paul had reminded them of their opportunity to win the unbelieving partner to Christ.

Paul ordered them to stop the practice of being yoked with unbelievers without saying who the unbelievers were. We know he had ordered them to deliver the immoral person to Satan. "A little leaven leavens the whole lump." Those who were denying the resurrection were like "evil companionships that corrupt good morals." False apostles were ministers of Satan; they were to quit associating with such unbelievers.

Paul used a series of contrasts to illustrate what he meant. Righteousness and lawlessness are opposites and cannot be mixed. The same is true of light and darkness. Christ has nothing in common with the devil. God's temple cannot rest on the same foundation as that of the temple of an idol. Believers cannot be linked with unbelievers.

Christians are to be separated from the defilements of sin so that God may dwell in their midst. Then He can be as a father to them, and they as sons and daughters to Him.

Questions

1. What are the two topics discussed in this chapter? How are they related?
2. With whom was Paul working in his ministry of reconciliation?
3. How had he described the relationship between himself and Apollos?
4. What was their relationship to God?
5. What danger did the church at Corinth face that caused Paul to urge them not to receive the grace of God in vain?
6. To what favor from did he refer?
7. How could it be made vain?
8. How does the conduct of Peter and Barnabas at Antioch illustrate Paul's meaning in this context?
9. How had Paul conducted himself so as to avoid making the grace of God vain? See Gal. 2:20.
10. What was the real motivating force in the life and ministry of Paul?
11. What is the first business of the church?
12. Why may the following expressions be considered synonymous:

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"Thus saith the Lord," "The Scripture says," and "The Holy Spirit says"?

13. What is the meaning of the text which Paul quoted from Isaiah?
14. How did he apply it to the situation at Corinth?
15. What is the Day of Salvation?
16. When did it begin and when will it end?
17. What did Peter say about the longsuffering of God?
18. Why was Paul eager to have a blameless ministry?
19. How did he accomplish his goal?
20. How had some Jews caused the name of God to be blasphemed?
21. What were some of the stumbling blocks in the pathway of the Corinthian Christians?
22. How harmonize Paul's view of a blameless ministry with the constant criticism brought against him?
23. In what areas was Paul's blameless ministry carried on?
24. By what means did he carry it on?
25. In what manner was it done?
26. What does "patience" mean?
27. In what things did he exercise patience?
28. What does Hebrews say about the trials of the faithful?
29. What did Jesus say about the trials of His disciples?
30. What did Peter say about the trials that were coming upon the brethren?
31. What did Paul mean by "necessities"?
32. What are some of the distressing situations in which he exercised patience?
33. What are some of the situations in which Paul showed patience in stripes?
34. What is the history of Paul's imprisonments?
35. When and how did Paul meet the violence of riotous mobs?
36. How did Paul patiently endure his labors?
37. What were those occasions which Paul called "watchings"?
38. What place did fasting have in the consecration of Saul and Barnabas to their ministry?
39. Why did Paul abstain from food in his blameless ministry?
40. What was the source of Paul's knowledge? How did it help in a blameless ministry?
41. What does longsuffering mean? How does it differ from patience?
42. What place did kindness have in the ministry of Paul?

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43. What are two ways to understand the expression "in the Holy Spirit" as it is used in this context?
44. Why did Paul speak of love as being "unfeigned"?
45. What is the message of the word of truth as Paul delivered it?
46. How was Paul's ministry carried on in the power of God?
47. What is the armor of righteousness?
48. Why did he say, "on the right hand and on the left"?
49. How did he use glory and dishonor in his blameless ministry?
50. How did he make use of good and evil reports?
51. How did Paul react when some looked upon him as a deceiver?
52. Who had used the same term with reference to Jesus?
53. Who had considered Paul an unknown?
54. What credentials did he have to prove that he was well known to God?
55. To what incident may Paul have referred when he spoke of himself "as dying, and behold, we live"?
56. Why was Paul subjected to chastening? By whom?
57. How did he face sorrow?
58. In view of his own poverty, how was he making many rich?
59. As one who had nothing, how could he possess all things?
60. How did Paul express his frankness in speaking to the Corinthians?
61. What did he mean when he said, "You are not restricted in us"?
62. What did he ask of them in return?
63. What did he mean by: "Be no unequally yoked with unbelievers"?
64. Why did he mention the absolute contrast between righteousness and lawlessness?
65. How does the lesson to light and darkness teach the same thing?
66. What promise had God made to Israel?
67. What bearing did this have on the issue at Corinth?

For Discussion

1. What are some of the ways in which we may work together to serve God?
2. What are some of the things in the church today that may cause some to stumble?