

TITLE: EXPECTATIONS OF THE CHRISTIAN MINISTER

TEXT: 2 CORINTHIANS 6

INTRO: In chapter 5 Paul presented several motivations to work as Christians: hope of Heaven (v. 1-10), the *fear* of the Lord (judgment—v. 11-13), the *love* of Christ (v. 14-16), & the message of reconciliation (v. 17-21). With these motivations, he continues in ch. 6 with the *expectations* of Christians as ministers (deliverers) of the more glorious new covenant.

I. MINISTERS MUST BE ACTIVE (MUST BE WORKERS) (v. 1-2):

(v. 1) *We then, as workers together, beseech you also that ye receive not the grace of God in vain.* We (apostles), fellow workers *with him* – “with him” is added (referring to God), & could be “with you” (all Christians have the same goal in this ministry – **5:18-20**).

We beseech you not to receive God’s grace in vain (empty, useless). [Calvinism says this is impossible, but clearly it isn’t!] Paul explains this further in v. 2.

(v. 2) *(For he saith, “I have heard thee in a time accepted, and in the day of salvation have I helped thee”: behold, now is the accepted time; behold, now is the day of salvation.)* This is the reasoning Paul gives for them *not* to receive God’s grace in vain.

1. It’s a quote from **Isa 49:8**, which is a prophecy of the Messiah, and the passage refers to His gift of salvation to the Jews & Gentiles (v. 6—*“I will also give thee for a light to the Gentiles, that thou mayest be my salvation unto the end of the earth”*).
2. Paul then says, “**Now** is the accepted time...” (i.e., **now** is the time Isaiah spoke of – **now** is the time to get to work)!
3. In context Paul is speaking of the ministry (**5:18,19,20; 6:3**). Failure to do our part in this ministry is to receive grace in vain!
4. Don’t receive God’s grace in vain. Don’t make Christ’s sacrifice useless to people around you by **not** trying to teach them! To a certain degree, how you *receive* God’s grace can be determined by how you *give* God’s grace. A Christian must be a worker! He/she **must** continue to urge those around him to “*be ye reconciled to God*” (**5:20**)!

II. MINISTERS MUST BE APPROVED (STEADFAST, CONSISTENT, DEDICATED) (v. 3-10):

A. (v. 3) *Giving no offense [occasion of stumbling] in anything, that the ministry (evangelizing the lost) be not blamed (mocked).*

1. This *doesn’t* mean that Christians should never offend/upset others. Jesus did (**Mt 15:12**)! He also said, “*Blessed is he, whosoever shall not be offended in me*” (**Mt 11:6**). Like Jesus, we are to teach the truth in love (**Eph 4:15**). If the truth offends a man, he isn’t “blessed” (he doesn’t want the truth, & he won’t obey it). But this isn’t the context here.
2. How do Christians offend (cause others to stumble)? By **1**) being poor examples, **2**) not practicing what we preach, **3**) being worldly (no difference between us & the world), **4**) not speaking the truth in love, or **5**) not speaking the truth at all.
3. This ministry ought to be a huge concern of ours! We should always be on our guard *not* to damage our influence – our ability to minister. Because when we fail, it’s usually the ministry (Christianity) that gets blamed! Christianity’s only weakness is Christians! Yet when Christians make mistakes, it’s Christ, Christianity, & His church that take the blame (“the church is full of hypocrites”; I saw/heard one of their members...”)

B. (v. 4-10) *“But in all things approving (commending) ourselves as the ministers of God...”* He’s already said we *don’t* commend ourselves again (apostles-**3:1; 5:12**), & we *do* commend ourselves to every man’s conscience (**4:2**). So *how* do we do this & *how don’t* we do this? We *don’t* do things arrogantly to get recognition. We *do* “*renounce the hidden things of dishonesty, not walking in craftiness, nor handling the word of God deceitfully; but by manifestation of the truth*” (**4:2**). How else? In v. **4-10** Paul provides several ways, each of which is a reflection of his own ministry (& what all Christians must be willing to endure):

1. **Negatives (v. 4-5):**
 - a. General persecution terms (v. 4): *in much patience* (endurance – **2 Thess 1:4; Jam 1:3**—“*the trying of your faith...*”); *in afflictions* (persecution, burden, trouble—**2 Tim 3:12**), *in necessities* (hardship; needs) – we don’t do well when in need; we expect to always have everything. But there were times when Paul was in need/hardship, and there may be times we are as well. *In distresses* (anguish). But we also keep in mind **Psa 37:25**—“*I have not seen the righteous forsaken, nor his seed begging bread.*” Though we endure many persecutions, God will **always** take care of us.
 - b. Specific afflictions faced (v. 5): *In stripes* (beatings—**1 Pet 2:24; 11:23-25**), *in imprisonments* (**11:23**), *in tumults* (disorder, confusion) - sounds like what the Jews caused everywhere Paul preached. *In labors* (pain, weariness – **11:23**), *in watchings* (sleeplessness - **11:27**), *in fastings* (**11:27**). Obviously these last two are meant in an *involuntary* sense (not a planned/purposed fast or staying awake, but something forced on him because of persecution).
 - c. Paul endured these things for the church - for the cause of the ministry (**11:23-28**). He had approved himself in these ways. Do you think the false teachers at Corinth had (or were willing to)? What about us?
2. **Positives (v. 6-7):** *By pureness* (clean, blameless—**1 Tim 5:22**—“*keep thyself pure*”; v. **14-18**); *by knowledge*—this is how we can distinguish between clean & unclean (**Hos 4:6**), *longsuffering* (forbearance—**Col 3:13**), *kindness, the HS* (probably in a miraculous sense then, but now means to have the fruit/qualities of the HS), *love unfeigned* (sincere), *the word of truth* (Scripture), *power of God, armor of righteousness* (**Eph 6**). The source of **all** this today is in knowing & living His Word!
3. **Contrasts/Extremes (v. 8-10):** *honor & dishonor, evil report & good* – It’s glorious to be a Christian & to be included in this ministry, but we aren’t always honored as such! We don’t let the reaction we receive change who we are! *Deceivers & yet true*—reference to false accusations; *unknown (ignored)...well known* (by brethren/God), *dying, & behold we live, chastened* (punished/instructed—**Lk 23:16**) & *not killed*—Paul endured many attacks, yet he was still alive! *As sorrowful* (over lost souls) *yet always rejoicing* (Christian perspective); *poor, yet making many rich* (by reconciliation); *having nothing, yet...all things* (eternal life—what else do we need)?

CONCLUSION: In whatever situation we find ourselves, we are to demonstrate the qualities of Christ & His Spirit, as found in the Word. These attitudes show us to be approved, and will keep us from causing others to stumble *and* the ministry from being blamed (v. 3). But, it’s hard to even relate to these things we must endure if we’re not active in this ministry. Paul makes it clear in v. **1-2** that we are to be working (“*Now is the time; Now is the day of salvation*)! Don’t receive the grace of God in vain! Your soul (& many others) depends on it!

III. MINISTERS MUST BE PURE (v. 11-18):

A. Necessary Fellowship (v. 11-13)

(v. 11) *O ye Corinthians, our mouth is open unto you, our heart is enlarged.* We speak freely & openly to you. Our heart is completely open to you! Paul loved them, and therefore held nothing back that they needed (cf. **Acts 20:20,27**- “*I kept back nothing that was profitable unto you*”). But he knows the feeling isn’t 100% mutual.

(v. 12) *Ye are not straitened* (restricted, compressed, restrained) *in (by) us, but ye are straitened in (by) your own bowels.* You all aren’t restricted by us (Our affection for you hasn’t diminished), but by your own affections/feelings/emotions (you don’t love us like you should). Why not? Probably because of the effect of the false teachers and their attacks on Paul.

(v. 13) *Now for a recompense in the same, (I speak as unto my children,) be ye also enlarged.*

1. “You’re like my children!” Paul ‘begat’ them through the gospel (**1 Cor 4:15**).
2. Recompense us (return the favor)! Open up to us, as we have to you! It must’ve been very painful for Paul, after having put so much effort into teaching in Corinth, now to have to deal not only with false teachers & their false accusations, but with good brethren holding back as a result. No wonder Paul told Titus to “*reject a divisive man...*” (**Titus 3:10**).

B. Forbidden Fellowship (v. 14-18)

1. (v. 14a) “*Be ye not unequally yoked together with unbelievers...*”

Unequally yoked– “to be bound differently, unequally” (only occurrence in NT). Two different views:

- a. This forbids **any** bond between a Christian & non-Christian. NAS– “*do not be bound together*” (no “unequally”).
 - b. A Christian *can* be yoked to a non-Christian, just not unequally. These two words are **one** word in Greek (i.e., Paul’s not making a distinction between “being yoked” & “being unequally yoked”). And, based on what follows, it seems that the binding of a Christian & non-Christian *is the definition* of a Christian being unequally yoked.
2. (v. 14b-16a) *For what fellowship hath righteousness with unrighteousness? and what communion hath light with darkness? And what concord hath Christ with Belial? or what part hath he that believeth with an infidel? And what agreement hath the temple of God with idols?* Paul asks five questions to further make his point. The obvious answer to each of these questions is “None!” These words help us define this “unequal yoke/bond”:
 - a. *Righteousness has no fellowship* (participation, sharing) *with unrighteousness* (lawlessness)! A person who is truly righteous (right in *God’s* sight) will not participate in actions (or with people) that are *not* right in *God’s* sight. So the unequal yoke is one that results in a Christian **participating in (or being involved with) unrighteousness**.
 - b. *Light has no communion* (joint participation, fellowship, association) *w/darkness!* Light & darkness are the quintessential representations of good & evil. The two can have **no** association. They’re opposites (at eternal odds)! So the unequal yoke is one that results in a Christian **having fellowship (participation) with darkness**.
 - c. *Christ has no concord* (“same mind”; in harmony, one accord, agreement) *with Belial* (transliteration of Hebrew word for “worthlessness” or “wickedness”; applied to Satan). Christ has **NO** harmony with Satan (there is no “meeting of the minds” between them). Christ is in you (**Gal 2:20**); how can you have agreement with His (& our) greatest enemy? So the unequal yoke is one that results in a Christian **being of the same mind with Satan!**
 - d. *A believer has no part* (portion/share of the whole; participation) *with an infidel* (unbeliever)! Same idea – the unequal yoke is one that results in a Christian **being a “part” (sharing of the whole) with an unbeliever**.
 - e. *The temple of God has no agreement with* (agreement, approval) *idols!* Maybe Paul mentioned this last because it’s already a major point he made in **1 Cor 10:14-22** (“*Ye cannot drink the cup of the Lord & the cup of devils*”-v. 21).

*So Paul is forbidding a Christian from being “unequally yoked” with a non-Christian, and has defined this as having “fellowship, communion, concord, part, or agreement” with “unrighteousness, darkness, Belial, infidels, or idols.” Why?

3. (v. 16b) *For ye are the temple of the living God...I will dwell in them... And I will be their God, & they shall be my people.*
 - a. You (plural, church) are the temple of God. The church (the people, not the building) is *God’s* dwelling place.
 - b. We better take this seriously! We were supposed to learn from the Old Testament (**Rom 15:4**), & from how God dwelled in His temple. Think about the purity requirements regarding the temple (*only* the high priest entered the holy of holies; service was limited to priests/Levites, etc.). *God’s* dwelling place is holy & is to be kept free from pollutions.
4. **Application:** Initially, he may be referring to the false teachers, & telling the faithful Corinthians not to have fellowship with them (open up *to him* – v. 11-13, not the false teachers). **How do we apply it?** Any bond that puts a Christian into the situations mentioned in v. 14-16 is inappropriate! Do **all** Christian/non-Christian relationships constitute this type of sin?
 - a. Work relationships: **1)** Reporting to a non-Christian: Does this affect your Christianity? Not necessarily. **2)** Having a job that requires you to miss worship? Big problem! **3)** Business partnership w/non-Christian? Not necessarily. What if he’s majority owner, and is unethical? Pretty clear this is a forbidden fellowship!
 - Obviously Christians are **not** to leave the world completely (monasticism). We have family responsibilities (**1 Tim 5:8**) which require us to be in the world. We also have responsibility to be ministers of reconciliation (**5:18**).
 - b. *Marriage to a non-Christian?* It certainly puts you in a difficult life situation, but a marriage is *not* a master/servant relationship, and doesn’t fall into the category of the yokes in v. 14-16. Plus, it’s obviously *not* a sin, or Paul wouldn’t have told Christians to stay with non-Christian spouses (**1 Cor 7:12-13**). But it is **very** unwise! **Mt 6:13**– “*lead us not into temptation.*” But marrying a non-Christian is walking right into temptation – for the rest of your life!
5. (v. 17-18) *Wherefore come out from among them, and be ye separate, saith the Lord, and touch not the unclean thing...* Quote of **Isa 52:11**– Come out from among them! Be ye separate (boundary/division). Put boundaries (spiritually speaking) between you & them! “*Touch no unclean thing*” – an important lesson from OT! Don’t enter relationships that will adversely affect your ability to function as a Christian (and remove yourself from those you’re already in)!

CONCLUSION: 7:1 really goes w/ch. 6. Given these promises (**6:18**), we’re told to cleanse ourselves from **all** filthiness (make clean/pure; cf. *not* touching what’s unclean). If you have relationships (work, friends, etc.) that could be considered “unequally yoked,” you need to come out, be separate, & purify yourself from all of it. Otherwise, how can you be *God’s* temple, and how can you properly influence others?