

2Cor. 6:1 ¶ We then, as workers together with him, beseech you also that ye receive not the grace of God in vain.

I really liked the CJB translation of this verse: *“As God’s fellow-workers we also urge you not to receive his grace and then do nothing with it.”*

The first thought that came to mind as I read this verse was of Paul’s words in his first letter to the Corinthians.

1 Corinthians 3:13-15 “Every man’s work shall be made manifest: for the day shall declare it, because it shall be revealed by fire; and the fire shall try every man’s work of what sort it is. If any man’s work abide which he hath built thereupon, he shall receive a reward. If any man’s work shall be burned, he shall suffer loss: but he himself shall be saved; yet so as by fire.”

It is possible to accept God’s gift of salvation and then have no evidence of the grace of God working in your life to the benefit of eternal reward. This is a hard verse to reconcile with the words of James, “faith without works is dead,” (2:26). I hadn’t really thought about it before, but maybe one can possess some of the fruits of the Spirit...

Galatians 5:22-23 “But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, longsuffering, gentleness, goodness, faith, Meekness, temperance: against such there is no law.”

... and choose not to use one’s gifting from the Spirit in ministry that qualifies for reward. It just seems to me that the indwelling Holy Spirit will be revealed in the life of the believer in some way.

As I continued to think about it, my study in Hebrews came to mind. This could also be a reference to having received the truth and giving lip service to professing that truth without really possessing that truth.

The KJV added the word “with him,” and most of the other translations support this wording. Again, in his first letter to the Corinthians Paul supports this understanding of working with God.

1 Corinthians 3:9 “For we are labourers together with God: ye are God’s husbandry, ye are God’s building.”

The Greek for the “grace of God” makes reference to His divine influence upon one’s heart through the ministry of the Holy Spirit. In that regard Paul and his team were working with God as they begged those in the Corinthian church to evidence their faith by how they lived.

2Cor. 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.)

“He saith....” Where?

Isaiah 49:8 “Thus saith the LORD, In an acceptable time have I heard thee, and in a day of salvation have I helped thee....”

This is from a section when Isaiah is declaring the future blessing that will be Israel’s through the Messiah. Paul is using this quote to emphasize that salvation through faith in the Messiah is available NOW. Implied—you may have no tomorrow. I like this quote from Ray Stedman, “The devil’s time is always

tomorrow. That is why we never get around to it. God's time is always today, now."

Proverbs 27:1 "Boast not thyself of to morrow; for thou knowest not what a day may bring forth."

James 4:14 "Whereas ye know not what shall be on the morrow. For what is your life? It is even a vapour, that appeareth for a little time, and then vanisheth away."

This verse also declares that God desires to relieve us of the curse of sin, to relieve us from difficulty, want and distress. First, however, we must accept His gift of salvation.

2Cor. 6:3 Giving no offence in any thing, that the ministry be not blamed:

At this point Paul begins to address the ways that he and his fellow workers have given evidence of their faith and the power of the Spirit in their lives. He states that they are striving to live and minister in a way that causes no one to stumble and provides no grounds for criticism.

Scripture reveals that men did make false accusation against Paul as God's servant, but Paul knew that he was innocent before the Lord in light of these accusations. He expressed this thought well in his letter to the Thessalonians.

1 Thessalonians 2:4-11 "But as we were allowed of God to be put in trust with the gospel, even so we speak; not as pleasing men, but God, which trieth our hearts. For neither at any time used we flattering words, as ye know, nor a cloke of covetousness; God is witness: Nor of men sought we glory, neither of you, nor yet of others, when we might have been burdensome, as the apostles of Christ. But we were gentle among you, even as a nurse cherisheth her children: So being affectionately desirous of you, we were willing to have imparted unto you, not the gospel of God only, but also our own souls, because ye were dear unto us. For ye remember, brethren, our labour and travail: for labouring night and day, because we would not be chargeable unto any of you, we preached unto you the gospel of God. Ye *are* witnesses, and God *also*, how holily and justly and unblameably we behaved ourselves among you that believe: As ye know how we exhorted and comforted and charged every one of you, as a father *doth* his children...."

2Cor. 6:4-5 But in all *things* approving ourselves as the ministers of God, in much patience, in afflictions, in necessities, in distresses, In stripes, in imprisonments, in tumults, in labours, in watchings, in fastings;

Paul is saying that they are striving in every way to present themselves in a way that is commendable by God and man as they work to spread the gospel message. They've demonstrated patience (cheerful endurance) in:

- Afflictions – Greek references anguish, persecution and trouble.
- Necessities – Greek includes constraint and distress.
- Distresses – Greek: narrowness of room, calamity, anguish and distress
- Stripes – Wounded by beating
- Imprisonments

- Tumults – Greek: instability, commotion, confusion
- Labours – Greek: toil, pains, trouble, weariness
- Watchings – Greek: sleeplessness
- Fastings – Going without food.

Obviously, some of these seem to overlap as we read them, but I am sure that Paul had in mind specific times of testing associated with each word he used. Frankly, as one reads through the book of Acts, you can't help but be amazed at Paul's faithfulness in light of all that he had to endure. I think the only way one can "cheerfully endure" through the trials and testings with which we are confronted in this life is through the knowledge that God is working good through allowing such trials and/or testing.

JFB categorized this listing as a group of triplets that described affliction in general, affliction as a result of the violence of men, and things he brought upon himself. I can identify with being so intent on accomplishing a certain objective that you push yourself to the limit and forego sleep and sustenance. If one can experience that regarding the things of this world, how much more should we be willing to experience such in serving God.

2Cor. 6:6 By pureness, by knowledge, by longsuffering, by kindness, by the Holy Ghost, by love unfeigned,

Not only did Paul and his team endure testing with patience, but they also exhibited evidence of the following traits as they ministered through the power of the Spirit.

- Pureness – Greek: clean and blameless
- Knowledge – From a Greek root that associates this with the ability to understand spiritual truth and explain it to others.
- Longsuffering – A disposition to bear injuries a long time; not easily provoked.
- Kindness – Greek: usefulness, moral in character, gentle
- The Holy Ghost – Evidencing the power of the Holy Spirit in their ministry.
- Love unfeigned – Showing sincere love; without hypocrisy in their expression of love.

I am far from being able to say the same thing concerning my life, but I am making progress. Father, grow me to the point that I am yielded to Your Holy Spirit in every area of my life at all times—whatever it takes.

2Cor. 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,

In this section of verses Paul continues to describe how they minister the gospel. Using the word of truth I think is a reference to the word of God as recorded in the Old Testament and from personal revelation.

Psalms 119:41-43 "VAU. Let thy mercies come also unto me, O LORD, even thy salvation, according to thy word. So shall I have wherewith to answer him that reproacheth me: for I trust in thy word. And take not the word of truth utterly out of my mouth; for I have hoped in thy judgments."

Galatians 1:11-12 "But I certify you, brethren, that the gospel which was preached of me is not after man. For I neither received it of man, neither was I taught it, but by the revelation of Jesus Christ."

Paul also emphasized that he ministered by the "power of God," not in his own power. The Lord specifically declared that without Him we can accomplish nothing (of spiritual impact implied), and that the Holy Spirit would indwell the believer and empower him/her for effective ministry.

John 15:5 "I am the vine, ye are the branches: He that abideth in me, and I in him, the same bringeth forth much fruit: for without me ye can do nothing."

Acts 1:8 "But ye shall receive power, after that the Holy Ghost is come upon you: and ye shall be witnesses unto me both in Jerusalem, and in all Judaea, and in Samaria, and unto the uttermost part of the earth."

The Greek for the word *armour* makes reference to an offensive weapon. God makes these weapons of righteousness available to each of His children. I couldn't help but think of the section in Ephesians regarding the spiritual armour for the Christian.

Ephesians 6:13-17 "Wherefore take unto you the whole armour of God, that ye may be able to withstand in the evil day, and having done all, to stand. Stand therefore, having your loins girt about with truth, and having on the breastplate of righteousness; And your feet shod with the preparation of the gospel of peace; Above all, taking the shield of faith, wherewith ye shall be able to quench all the fiery darts of the wicked. And take the helmet of salvation, and the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God:"

In light of these verses I would think that the weapons on the right and left hands would be a reference to the shield of faith and the sword of the Spirit. Though we generally think of a shield as defensive, it is a necessary part of offensive equipment as well when pressing forward to do the Lord's work in the enemy's territory. And this world is currently the enemy's domain.

2 Corinthians 4:3-4 "But if our gospel be hid, it is hid to them that are lost: In whom the god of this world hath blinded the minds of them which believe not, lest the light of the glorious gospel of Christ, who is the image of God, should shine unto them."

Ephesians 2:2-3 "Wherein in time past ye walked according to the course of this world, according to the prince of the power of the air, the spirit that now worketh in the children of disobedience: Among whom also we all had our conversation in times past in the lusts of our flesh, fulfilling the desires of the flesh and of the mind; and were by nature the children of wrath, even as others."

2Cor. 6:8 By honour and dishonour, by evil report and good report: as deceivers, and yet true;

This verse seems to be a declaration that Paul and his team are not worried about what people might think about them; they are intent on serving God in

obedience. Sometimes they are appreciated and honored by the people to whom they minister; other times they are disgraced and persecuted because of their message. Sometimes they are described with slander and vitriol; other times they are praised. Sometimes they are accused of deceiving the people with the gospel message; other times they are recognized for their sincere message of truth. I think it is reasonable to conclude that those who praised them, spoke well of them and believed them would come from the ranks of those who became believers. Those who slandered them, spoke evil of them and called them deceivers were from the ranks of those who rejected the gospel message.

2Cor. 6:9 As unknown, and yet well known; as dying, and, behold, we live; as chastened, and not killed;

It seems that sometimes their reputation preceded them, while at other times they had to establish connections. Paul records being beaten to the point of death, yet experiencing supernatural strength to carry on according to God's will.

This reference to chastening was intriguing to me. Is he just emphasizing the previous statement, or was he acknowledging that God allowed some things in his life as a chastening or instructional experience regarding his personal sanctification? I tend to think that to be so. Scripture is clear that the Lord chastens those He loves, and He certainly loved Paul.

Hebrews 12:6 "For whom the Lord loveth he chasteneth, and scourgeth every son whom he receiveth."

2Cor. 6:10 As sorrowful, yet alway rejoicing; as poor, yet making many rich; as having nothing, and yet possessing all things.

Paul was very transparent about how his service to God affected his life. He was often sorrowful, but not without hope; he could always rejoice in his eternal future. He was often poor and worked hard to provide what was needed; yet he knew he was spiritually rich and rejoiced in bringing many others to salvation so that they too could be spiritually rich. It would seem that he did not have much to call his own, and how could he with the amount of traveling he did; yet he knew he was a joint-heir with Christ, "possessing all things."

Romans 8:16-17 "The Spirit itself beareth witness with our spirit, that we are the children of God: And if children, then heirs; heirs of God, and joint-heirs with Christ; if so be that we suffer with him, that we may be also glorified together."

Hebrews 1:1-2 "God, who at sundry times and in divers manners spake in time past unto the fathers by the prophets, Hath in these last days spoken unto us by his Son, whom he hath appointed heir of all things...."

I couldn't help but think of the Lord's words to the church at Smyrna.

Revelation 2:8-9 "And unto the angel of the church in Smyrna write; These things saith the first and the last, which was dead, and is alive; I know thy works, and tribulation, and poverty, (but thou art rich)...."

Paul embraced the truth wholeheartedly that every child of God needs to understand. God's perspective on wealth and the world's perspective on wealth

are two entirely different things. The Lord was very clear that the treasures of this world would pass away and that we should concentrate on accumulating eternal treasure in heaven.

Matthew 6:19-21 "Lay not up for yourselves treasures upon earth, where moth and rust doth corrupt, and where thieves break through and steal: But lay up for yourselves treasures in heaven, where neither moth nor rust doth corrupt, and where thieves do not break through nor steal: For where your treasure is, there will your heart be also."

2Cor. 6:11 ¶ O ye Corinthians, our mouth is open unto you, our heart is enlarged.

2Cor. 6:12 Ye are not straitened in us, but ye are straitened in your own bowels.

Paul is declaring that they have been completely open and honest in their ministry to the Corinthian church and they desire to enjoy close fellowship with them. He is declaring his/their love for the Corinthians believers even as he feels that they are withholding their love from him and those who serve with him.

I am reminded that love is a choice and is not dependent upon being loved in return. The Lord commanded us to love one another; to love each other as He has loved us. That means unconditionally.

John 15:12 "This is my commandment, That ye love one another, as I have loved you."

In spite of their many weaknesses, Paul loved this body of believers. They were his spiritual children.

2Cor. 6:13 Now for a recompence in the same, (I speak as unto *my* children,) be ye also enlarged.

Paul is asking the believers in Corinth to respond in like manner by opening up their hearts to them in return. He wants them to hear the tone of his request as that of a father speaking to his children. He knows that the more they open their hearts the more blessing they will be able to receive and the more blessing they will be to others.

2Cor. 6:14 Be ye not unequally yoked together with unbelievers: for what fellowship hath righteousness with unrighteousness? and what communion hath light with darkness?

2Cor. 6:15 And what concord hath Christ with Belial? or what part hath he that believeth with an infidel?

2Cor. 6:16 And what agreement hath the temple of God with idols? for ye are the temple of the living God; as God hath said, I will dwell in them, and walk in them; and I will be their God, and they shall be my people.

Being "yoked together" is definitely speaking of forming a partnership regarding life ventures. It is not saying that we are to avoid contact with unbelievers. As long as we are in the world, we are to be salt and light.

Matthew 5:13-16 "Ye are the salt of the earth: but if the salt have lost his savour, wherewith shall it be salted? it is thenceforth good for nothing, but to be cast out, and to be trodden under foot of men. Ye are the light of the world. A city that is set on an hill cannot be hid. Neither do men light a candle, and put it under a bushel, but on a candlestick; and it giveth

light unto all that are in the house. Let your light so shine before men, that they may see your good works, and glorify your Father which is in heaven.”

We are to be in the world, but not of it.

I think it is important to recognize that the success of a partnership—be it in the marriage relationship or in business—is largely dependent upon those involved having vision, goals, ethics and character traits that complement each other.

Those who call themselves Christian have chosen to yield their lives in submission to the authority of God and His truth as declared in His word. He is to be a part of every decision and His truth is to serve as the guide by which we function as marriage or business partners. Christians who choose to link themselves with unbelievers are asking for trouble, because the unbeliever is functioning with worldly wisdom and according to the leading of the flesh; the Christian, however, is supposed to be living according to spiritual wisdom and the leading of the Holy Spirit. These are totally at odds with one another. Paul stated this truth very clearly in his letter to the Romans.

Romans 8:5-8 “For they that are after the flesh do mind the things of the flesh; but they that are after the Spirit the things of the Spirit. For to be carnally minded is death; but to be spiritually minded is life and peace. Because the carnal mind is enmity against God: for it is not subject to the law of God, neither indeed can be. So then they that are in the flesh cannot please God.”

Galatians 5:17 “For the flesh lusteth against the Spirit, and the Spirit against the flesh: and these are contrary the one to the other: so that ye cannot do the things that ye would.”

I think the truth of verse 16 is a very needful warning to those in the “church” today. Many more “Christian” leaders are joining aligning themselves with unbelievers in a misguided effort toward establishing peace through joint humanitarian efforts. I believe this section of scripture to give direct counsel against such ventures. God’s word is clear that we can accomplish nothing of spiritual value without Him.

John 15:5 “I am the vine, ye are the branches: He that abideth in me, and I in him, the same bringeth forth much fruit: for without me ye can do nothing.”

As stated in the verses above, those who work “in the flesh,” in their own strength and in the wisdom of the flesh, cannot please God. Leaders who promote such ventures are playing into the hand of the enemy; they are not leading in submission and obedience to the Lord.

Personally, I think this principle applies in all areas of service-oriented clubs or agencies. The believer should be working as part of and/or in support of Christian organizations dedicated to sharing the truth of God’s word as they minister to the needs of the people.

2Cor. 6:17 Wherefore come out from among them, and be ye separate, saith the Lord, and touch not the unclean *thing*; and I will receive you,

2Cor. 6:18 And will be a Father unto you, and ye shall be my sons and daughters, saith the Lord Almighty.

This chapter closes with an admonition to stand out as unique and different when compared to the world. It is still in context of establishing an “unequal yoke.” It was interesting to look at the Greek for “touch” and “unclean”; *touch* states “to attach oneself to” and *unclean* makes reference to that which is “impure, morally (lewd) or (demonic).” It is actually giving emphasis to his statement in verse 14 to avoid being unequally yoked. The Greek for “receive” states “to take into one’s favor.” To be in God’s favor is to be positioned as His child.

All through scripture emphasis is given to the importance of cleanliness and purity of those dedicated to the Lord’s service. Verse 17 is actually a quote from one such verse in Isaiah.

Isaiah 52:11 “Depart ye, depart ye, go ye out from thence, touch no unclean thing; go ye out of the midst of her; be ye clean, that bear the vessels of the LORD.”

David Guzik made a good comment, “...this not only a separation *from* evil, but also a separation *unto* God.”