



## 2 Corinthians 6:1-7:1

Taught at our Sunday evening service, 6th March 2022 @ Deal Christian Fellowship

**Reading:** 1 John 3:1-3

**Good evening. Let's pray.**

### Introduction

We've come as far as chapter 6 in Paul's second letter to the church in Corinth - a greek city that was as renowned for it's immorality, as it was for its trade. And Paul, who planted this church there, loves it, and wants to see it to grow - not simply in breadth, but in depth. That is, not only growth in numbers, but in personal obedience to and love for Christ.

### Overview of 2 Corinthians

Now, by way of reminder, this second letter, the 47th book of the Bible, can be summarised by breaking it down into 3 parts...

- Chapters 1 to 7 - Christian living

- Chapters 8 to 9 - Christian giving
- Chapters 10 to 13 - Christian guarding

And so we're right in the middle of looking at Christian living. Therefore we should be encouraged and equipped by this so we know how to live, but just like the Corinthians, we should also be corrected if there is anything in us and our lives that is contrary to the teaching of the Bible, remembering that the point of being corrected isn't to be told off, but to help us correct our course, to change the direction we're headed in.

## Overview of chapter six

Tonight we'll look at all of chapter six, in which there are two clear halves

- No offence in ministry (v1-10)
- No compromise in life (v11-18, + 7:1)

As we begin our study this evening, let's remind ourselves of what we read at the end of chapter 5:

### 2 Corinthians 5:20-21

Now then, we are ambassadors for Christ, as though God were pleading through us: we implore you on Christ's behalf, be reconciled to God. For He made Him who knew no sin to be sin for us, that we might become the righteousness of God in Him.

The very word ambassador means an accredited diplomat sent by a state as its permanent representative in a foreign country. And so for us, it's to represent Christ faithfully in this world that also is not our home. The problem is, we are *in* the world, even if we're not *of* the world - and it can have an effect on us.

## Chapter six

And so Paul writes...

### 2 Corinthians 6:1

We then, as workers together with Him also plead with you not to receive the grace of God in vain.

How could we receive the grace of God in vain? By there being no difference in our lives - that is, no distinction between us, and the world around us. To call ourselves Christian's, but fail to be Christ-like, and Christ-led. Quoting from Isaiah 49:8, Paul continues...

### 2 Corinthians 6:2

For He says: "In an acceptable time I have heard you, And in the day of salvation I have helped you." Behold, now is the accepted time; behold, now is the day of salvation.

Many in the past have wanted to know what we know - they wanted to see the completed work of Christ. And we now both see it, and are beneficiaries of it... what a wonderful time to be alive!

Peter writes:

**1 Peter 1:10-12**

Of this salvation the prophets have inquired and searched carefully, who prophesied of the grace that would come to you, searching what, or what manner of time, the Spirit of Christ who was in them was indicating when He testified beforehand the sufferings of Christ and the glories that would follow. To them it was revealed that, not to themselves, but to us they were ministering the things which now have been reported to you through those who have preached the gospel to you by the Holy Spirit sent from heaven—things which angels desire to look into.

Jesus has paid for our sin. He has set us free. That shouldn't only make a difference to our future, but to our today. If it doesn't, if it really makes no difference to you now, then you should examine yourself to see if you're actually a Christian - indeed, Paul will later write in this same letter...

**2 Corinthians 13:5-6**

Examine yourselves as to whether you are in the faith. Test yourselves. Do you not know yourselves, that Jesus Christ is in you?—unless indeed you are disqualified. But I trust that you will know that we are not disqualified.

Today is the day of salvation. If you don't know Jesus, there is nothing prevent you repenting of your sin and accepting Him as your saviour today. If you do know Him, then there should be nothing that prevents you from living for Him today, or from telling others about this amazing grace that we've received!

However, Paul warns, that our lives should be consistent with what we preach. That is, our walk must be consistent with our talk. We read:

**2 Corinthians 6:3**

*We give no offence in anything, that our ministry may not be blamed.*

Of course, this doesn't mean that we can please everyone, or agree with everything, or anything they say. Indeed, the very message of the cross is offensive because it makes clear that we have sin problem that needs dealing with, *and* that we cannot deal with it by our own efforts. It says we need help! And we should not try to reduce the offensiveness of the cross.

But we ourselves, should not cause offence in the way that we speak or act. There should be no scandal, no questionable motives or actions. Not only to please God, but that others might be saved. And this was not a new concept to the Corinthians, for Paul wrote in his first letter:

**1 Corinthians 10:31-33**

Therefore, whether you eat or drink, or whatever you do, do all to the glory of God. Give no offence, either to the Jews or to the Greeks or to the church of God, just as I also please all men in all things, not seeking my own profit, but the profit of many, that they may be saved.

So, as JVM puts it, "Giving no offence" means that you are so to live that no one can point to you and say, "Because of that man's life I have no confidence in the salvation he professes."

In what ways should we not cause offence? Well, that's what Paul addresses next:

### **2 Corinthians 6:4-5**

But in all things we commend ourselves as ministers of God: in much patience, in tribulations, in needs, in distresses, in stripes, in imprisonments, in tumults, in labours, in sleeplessness, in fastings;

So Paul is talking about himself, but also all those who serve the Lord in ministry, which should be us all to some extent. And so note, ministry is hard. Doesn't mean it's not a joy too. But whether it's from the pulpit, or serving as youth or children's club leader, or teaching the children at Sunday school. Whether it is serving practically, or by counselling others. Or perhaps by writing songs or posting videos on YouTube, ministry is hard.

But remember, how you conduct yourself in the difficulties of ministry *is* part of the ministry! That's what Paul is saying here - that the very evidence of our suitability for ministry, even the fruit of it, comes from the trials, tribulations and needs that we have. Paul was saying that what they saw in his response to being in prison or other difficulties, was actually further qualification of him for the work of ministry.

But also, for him, and for us, may our conduct never disqualify us from the work of ministry. We continue...

### **2 Corinthians 6:6**

by purity, by knowledge, by long-suffering, by kindness, by the Holy Spirit, by sincere love,

So we should honour God with pure hearts and minds - not only in singleness but in marriage too - that our ministry be effective. Likewise, knowledge should not puff us up in pride, neither should we have a short fuse in our sufferings. We should be kind, and we should do all things by the power the Holy Spirit, speaking the truth in love.

Further...

### **2 Corinthians 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,

We should be teaching the Bible faithfully, doing things in God's strength - not our own - and in righteousness.

### **2 Corinthians 6:8**

by honour and dishonour, by evil report and good report; as deceivers, and yet true;

That is, there should be so much good reported of us, that clearly any evil reports are false.

### **2 Corinthians 6:9**

as unknown, and yet well known; as dying, and behold we live; as chastened, and yet not killed;

Not making a name for ourselves, but known by God. Having died to self, but alive in Christ. Corrected by God, but not subject to His wrath.

## **2 Corinthians 6:10**

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

Sorrow for the state of others before God, but rejoicing because of what God has done in us. Not focussed on the things of this world, but abundantly rich in Christ with an eternity to look forward to with Him.

This is the way Paul has endeavoured to conduct himself. And I want to remind you why all those in ministry, especially those in pastoral and teaching ministries, should do so. And that is example. Not so that pastors and ministers are put on a pedestal... no, no, no. But that they might set an example to be followed by all. That's why Paul writes to Timothy and Titus about the requirements of ministry - not that ministry requirements should establish an elite, but that those in ministry may faithfully teach and lead.

Now Paul says...

## **2 Corinthians 6:11-13**

O Corinthians! We have spoken openly to you, our heart is wide open. You are not restricted by us, but you are restricted by your own affections. Now in return for the same (I speak as to children), you also be open.

Paul loves this church. And he's saying - "look, I'm speaking freely and openly to you, with nothing of our lives done in secret - so have open hearts to what I am saying."

And he says:

## **2 Corinthians 6:14-16**

Do not be unequally yoked together with unbelievers. For what fellowship has righteousness with lawlessness? And what communion has light with darkness? And what accord has Christ with Belial? Or what part has a believer with an unbeliever? And what agreement has the temple of God with idols? For you are the temple of the living God. As God has said: "I will dwell in them And walk among them. I will be their God, And they shall be My people."

This is instruction. Paul's not saying "I'd prefer if you didn't". But rather "Do not". But what is this instruction about? It's about partnerships and relationships.

And he uses the analogy of a yoke. Now a yoke, is a wooden crosspiece that is fastened over the necks of two animals and attached to the plough or cart that they are to pull. And this, of course would happen in farming - and care would be put into ensuring the yoke fit well. But more than the yoke itself, it was important to have to equal animals - and not try and have an ox and a donkey pulling the load. Because the result of that would be the pair going round in circles, and being ineffective at what they were yoked together for.

And so likewise, Paul is saying when you make a serious commitment with an unbeliever - such as a business partnership or marriage, you're being unequally yoked. So much so, it's like contrasting Jesus and Satan. That is the difference of direction you'll be faced with.

I want to make it more real to you, and ask you this - in a business partnership, would an unbelieving business partner be prepared to:

1. Make prayerful decisions?
2. Not invest in questionable endeavours?
3. Pay employees fairly?
4. Treat employees kindly?
5. Not require staff to work on Sunday's?
6. Not sell/promote anything contrary to the Bible? This becomes more real when you consider the example of the Ashers bakery, or a Christian printing press refusing to print pornography, or web host refusing to host it on servers, or design agency making web sites for an abortion clinic, or video games or films with gratuitous violence. Or TV shows with blasphemy. Or accept advertising from gambling organisations. Or serve drunk people more alcohol.
7. Are they prepared to abide by Christian ethics? For example run a medial practice in line with Christian ethics? Euthanasia, abortion, gender reassignment surgery, or mutilating a body to look like an animal or such like.

This is all hard enough to deal with as an employee when you have certain rights that can keep you from compromise, and the option to find another job.

Likewise, in marriage, is an unbeliever prepared to/for:

1. The husband to be the head of the home (and wife the heart)?
2. To raise children to know the Lord (that's more than coming to church, that's actively teaching them)... see Deut
3. To tithe (and honour God in finances - no gambling etc.)
4. To serve in the church
5. To abstain from sex before marriage, and to teach your children the same
6. To regularly attend church - ahead of family, friends, sports, movies, work (where possible)
7. To refrain from watching some films
8. To never tell coarse jokes, swear, blaspheme - or permit it in the home
9. To stand up for children in their schools when ungodly things are taught
10. To love God, more than career
11. To let the Bible form their politics, not politics informing their interpretation of the Bible
12. Would they be prepared to spend time in prayer as a couple, as a family?

Don't look for someone who will accept your faith. But rather one who lives it. Just consider for a moment the picture we have of a Christian home that we read in Deuteronomy...

**Deuteronomy 6:4-7**

Hear, O Israel: The LORD our God, the LORD is one! You shall love the LORD your God with all your heart, with all your soul, and with all your strength. "And these words which I command you today shall be in your heart. You shall teach them diligently to your children, and shall talk of them when you sit in your house, when you walk by the way, when you lie down, and when you rise up.

That's not a worldly home.

I know that looking for a Christian spouse can be like searching for water in the desert. It can feel really hard - an almost impossible task. But I want to give you hope. And I'm going to share a few personal things, maybe in some sense like Paul was trying to open his heart to the Corinthian church that they might open their hearts to hear these things. So I hope this is helpful.

As you know, I'm happily married to Siân who is a wonderful, godly woman. But going back 5 or 6 years ago I'd been single for a long time. In fact, I'd spent 15 years as a single adult, really, really, wanting to be married.

And along came a girl who said she was a Christian. I don't think that's the case. But it seemed great news at the time when she said she was. And a relationship formed over a period of months. But as time went on, it became evident to me that she was in a mess. And after a very long and lonely weekend thinking and praying it through I had to sit down and say to her that "your relationship with God is more important than your relationship with me, and you need to sort out first." She agreed. And that was the end of things

Sadly, she didn't sort out her relationship with God. I pray that she will.

But in those months that followed, something wonderful happened. And you might expect me to say, well, I met Siân. And yes, I did, but that was a further few months after that. And yes, that was wonderful, but something better than Siân happened - and that was my relationship with God.

I can still picture standing right here, playing guitar and singing one particular song which was *Worth it all* by Ben Cantelon. The words in that song say "everything I've lost I have found in you."

And I promise you, if you are unmarried and you want to be married, you will find more satisfaction in Jesus than you will in getting married. That's not to say marriage is a bad thing. But I promise you, there is nothing like the closeness that you can have with Jesus.

I know it is really difficult. But as the song says, it is worth it all. Now you may ask, and many people have over the years... can I date a non-Christian? Can I date them? Well, perhaps I would ask you back, *why would you want to?* Not to slight them, but why would you want to if your lives are so different? CS Lewis said:

Prudence means practical common sense, taking the trouble to think out what you are doing and what is likely to come of it.

**CS Lewis**

You see, a Christian will have very different standards to a non-Christian. At least they should and that makes it very very hard to be in any kind of relationship with an unbeliever.

But also, the longer it goes on, the harder it is to break up. Are you're going to have to, if they don't become a Christian, because you can't marry a non-Christian AND obey God. I'll say that again, you can't marry a non-Christian and obey God.

To obey is better than sacrifice. Doesn't matter if you tithe. Doesn't matter if you give your time. Doesn't matter if you turn up to church meetings. That doesn't excuse you from obedience. God wants those other things too, of course.

But again, I know this is a hard and emotive thing for us to talk about.

And I could certainly understand someone saying "Why can't you be happy for me?" But the first question has to be - when we look at Scripture - the first question has to be "why won't you obey Jesus". But secondly, it's not all about you. How you live affects others. It affects both you and others in this church.

How? At least 4 ways...

1. God's blessing on your life - God cannot bless what he does not permit
2. Blessings in the life of the church (consider Aachen and idols)
3. Your willingness for, or effectiveness in ministry (will it be a source of resentment? will your work keep you from serving?)
4. Your example to others (other eyes are watching you, including your kids)

God's desire is for a people separated to himself, and as such we should be living quite differently to this world... but why?

### **2 Corinthians 6:17**

Therefore "Come out from among them And be separate, says the Lord. Do not touch what is unclean, And I will receive you."

You have a choice. You can have closeness to the world, or to Christ - not both. James writes:

### **James 4:4**

Adulterers and adulteresses! Do you not know that friendship with the world is enmity with God? Whoever therefore wants to be a friend of the world makes himself an enemy of God.

Just a few verses later we read:

### **James: 4:7-8**

Therefore submit to God. Resist the devil and he will flee from you. Draw near to God and He will draw near to you. Cleanse your hands, you sinners; and purify your hearts, you double-minded.

This is such a big deal. Paul continues here in 2 Corinthians...

### **2 Corinthians 6:18**

"I will be a Father to you, And you shall be My sons and daughters, Says the LORD Almighty."

What level of closeness is this? John writes in his first letter...

### **1 John 3:1-3**

Behold what manner of love the Father has bestowed on us, that we should be called children of God! Therefore the world does not know us, because it did not know Him. Beloved, now we are children of God; and it has not yet been revealed what we shall be, but we know that when He is revealed, we shall be like Him, for we shall see Him as He is. And everyone who has this hope in Him purifies himself, just as He is pure.



God wants to treat you as his own son. That's how much He loves you. But here's the deal - starting a business venture with an unbeliever, and investing all your money, or starting a marriage with an unbeliever, and in investing your life, will not change the fact that you are God's child. Nothing ever will change that. But it will change how he can bless you.

**Jon Courson shares this analogy:**

If I wanted to take my family out to dinner, but my kids were all muddy from playing outside, I'd say, "I want to take you out to dinner. Go wash up."

Now, if they responded by saying, "We don't want to wash. We like this mud," they'd still be my children, but I couldn't take them out for dinner.

So, too, God says to us, "I will be a Father to you, taking you great places, doing wonderful things for you if you're separate and clean. If you're not separate, you're still My child, but I can't do for you what I would have done in and with and through you had you separated yourself from the world."

I'm going to speak to those who are unmarried for a moment. It's really, really, hard waiting for a Christian spouse. And I'm not going to stand here and make promises I can't that God will bring someone along in his own timing. I had no guarantee of that myself as a single man.

But what I can promise you, is that obeying the Lord is worth it all. There is nothing you will lose that you won't gain in Him.

Now to us all, Paul writes...

**2 Corinthians 7:1**

Therefore, having these promises, beloved, let us cleanse ourselves from all filthiness of the flesh and spirit, perfecting holiness in the fear of God.

Therefore, in this separation from the world through transformation, let us please God as dear children, obedient to Him. Let us cleanse ourselves of lust, gluttony, drunkenness, fornication, and violence. Let us cleanse ourselves of gossip, slander, covetousness, and pride. In doing so, we'll not only please Him, but it will also allow Him to be a Father that pours out His blessing on us.

If you are thinking "I don't feel close to God. I don't hear Him speak to me." Then realise that you won't, when you're stealing from your employer, lying to your friends, having sex outside of marriage, watching pornography, or spending time gossiping. As has been well said, if you once felt close to God, and now you don't, guess who moved.

**Summary**

In summary, if you want closeness of relationship with God, it comes at the cost of distance from the world. And if you want closeness to the world, it comes at the cost of closeness of relationship with God. However you serve Him in ministry, don't do anything that would cause scandal, confusion, or anyone to doubt that you believe what you say. And whatever you do with your life, do so in a way that is obedient to Him, that He may be able to bless the choices that you make.

- No offence in ministry (v1-10)

- No compromise in life (v11-18, + 7:1)

## Application questions

What should we be asking ourselves in response to this?

- Does our walk match our talk?
- Is there anything you do causes others to doubt what you believe?
- Are you obeying God in your partnerships and relationships?
- Is there anything in your life that could limit God's blessings to you?

**Let's pray.**