

# PRODIGAL

## CHURCH II

A SERIES IN 2 CORINTHIANS



## PRODIGAL CHURCH (SEASON 2) - HOLY WAR

### Community Group Study Guide 2 Corinthians 6:1-13 - Week of October 17, 2021

#### Introduction

- If you want to live a life of safety, don't become a Christian.
- The biggest idol of our day is not money, sex, vanity, or leisure. The biggest idol of our day is safety. The most power-hungry know this, so they promise us safety. In return they take our power.
- God isn't safe. He's petrifying. He's anything but tame. That's why he's the safest place to be. He offers us salvation and then sends us to war.
- The enemy wants to take away our freedom to fight for God. He arranges it so that some ideas are forbidden. Those who ask questions, think and ponder ideas are cancelled, banned, de-platformed, and/or banished. The ability to fight with truth is taken away.
- In the past 18 months, society has moved from "there is no truth" to "don't question the truth" really fast.
- Suffering and war are parts of life for all Christians who stand up for the truth. Christians should be prepared for such Holy War.
- This passage is intended to challenge every serious reader to examine and re-examine their commitment to God. It's intention is to bring them to a single-minded pursuit of God's will, purposes and pleasure.

#### You are at war

- If you didn't know this, it's probably the reason your life is so boring. If you aren't fighting, you live a domesticated, passive, and quiet life of desperation that lacks true purpose. The enemy doesn't even waste time with you because you're already losing by not engaging the war. God is not using you because you haven't offered Him, the King, your sword, because you're too busy building your own little kingdom to worry about his.
- v1 (also see 5:20): Paul is saying, "We appeal to you, but we're working together with God. So it's actually God making His appeal to you through us. Don't presume upon God's grace by living as you want. Be reconciled to him. Take up his cause."
- Grace was always the motivating factor behind Paul's ministry work. He understood God's daily grace toward him, and it served as the power, fuel and energy to get him working. See 1 Corinthians 15:9-10.
- Do you know how special it is to have received God's grace?
- What has he chosen you for? War. War against sin, temptations of the flesh, the world and satan, complacency, and lesser loves.
- v2: "Now" is the time of God's favor toward the Corinthians. Now is the time for them to show that they fully understand how blessed it is to have been called by God (despite their sin) and see that they have been commissioned to do his work.

#### To win, suffer loss

- v3-4a: By saying "we commend ourselves," Paul both denies the charges that false teachers made and asserts the faithfulness of his ministry.
- v4-5: Paul asserts the faithfulness of his ministry by outlining how much he has suffered on behalf of the ministry. His personal life was not inconsistent with his message. He was scrupulously careful to avoid giving any offense by his manner of life. See 1 Corinthians 9:26-27 and 1 Peter 2:9-12.
- To live a life that exhibits such power of the the Gospel is work and war. You can't make sense of daily life, especially today, if you don't understand that you're at war.
- Men, particularly, need to stop wasting time watching about war or playing war instead of engaging the real battle for their soul and faithfulness to God.

#### DISCUSSION GOALS

##### Head

To understand that the Christian life is a life of war.

##### Heart

To hold fast to our Lord and smile in victory and in defeat.

##### Hands

To live up to the great commission that you have been given by Christ (upon reception of his grace) on a daily basis or languish in defeat.

#### ANNOUNCEMENTS

The next **Membership 101** meeting will be held on October 31 at 1PM. Interested parties should RSVP here: <https://brookline.mosaicboston.com/membership>

Sign up to join a service team here: <https://brookline.mosaicboston.com/serve>.

- Women need to see that the real war isn't against men, but against satan, sin and the flesh.
- Those who are married should seek to fight the enemy instead of each other.
- Those who are young aren't too young to fight, and those who are old aren't too old to fight.
- v4-5: Paul clearly didn't idolize safety. Safety is self-protective. Paul took up his cross daily to follow Christ. He knew what it meant to keep going when something is difficult and painful. Do you?
- "labors, sleepless nights, hunger": The other difficulties listed before are more general (first triplet) and specific instances of hardship from the outside (second triplet), but this triplet includes experiences that are more voluntary in nature. Paul labored in his trade as a tentmaker, so that he could preach. He experienced hunger while forgoing income-generating work at times in order to preach the gospel, and by fasting regularly in order to train his body and soul for self-control.
- Paul wants his readers to know that one who is fully committed to life in Christ will experience suffering. Being a part of the process of the expansion of Christ's kingdom takes war. The enemy has taken what belongs to our King, so we go to war for him. Jesus battled at the front lines for us, so we go to the front lines for him.
- The war is in the spiritual realm. It primarily manifests itself, though, in the physical realm with words, ideas, thoughts, ideologies, narratives and other powerful invisible things. It's a battle for hearts and minds.
- When the enemy tries to make us fearful we engage our faith. We believe God and his promises, consider that Christ has all authority to rule heaven and earth, and we, therefore, stand up to the agents of the enemy with truth (...like Jesus. See John 18:33-38, 19:1-16, and 15:18-27).
- Christians should look at the wounds that are inflicted upon them as battle scars in the fight for their Lord's kingdom.

#### **Fight with a smile**

- When we fear God more than the enemy we know the ultimate outcome of all of our efforts. We can fight with a smile knowing that all of our efforts have a purpose and are not in vain. The primary cause of our smile in the midst of the fight is the knowledge that Christ has already delivered us from the greatest hell. See Matthew 5:11-12.
- v6-7: Paul turns from sufferings that he's endured for the Gospel's sake to virtues of Christian life. If false teachers were pointing to Paul's hardships as sign of weakness, he wants them to acknowledge his impeccable character.
- v8-10: A collection of 7 antitheses in which perception is contrasted with reality, or, in other words, worldly judgment is contrasted with true spiritual judgement.
- Church history shows us that the more faithful a Christian is, the more difficulties accumulate in his life, and more burdens he carries. Such Christians do not resent the battles and hardship, but wear them as a badge of honor. They know that in battle they experience more of God's presence. They know that being in positions where they have to depend on him are best. If you want more of God's presence in your life go to war for him. An example regarding Horatio Nelson was used here.
- v11-13: When facing hardship, trials, strife in relationship, etc., for the Lord, the tendency for Christians to seek a safe and isolated position, where one is not vulnerable anymore. But Paul shows us, despite the criticism that he's received by the Corinthians, that that his not the way. Paul keeps his heart open to the Corinthians, and encourages them to keep their hearts open to him. He knows that a Christian needs to keep a wide heart instead of having a guarded one. Why? The more you love, the more willing you are to fight for something. The more you love, the better soldier you become.
- The weapon of Christ is the cross. He went to war because he loves his enemies. We fight with a smile because we love our enemies.
- How can you say that you follow Jesus Christ if you don't have any wounds and scars?

## DISCUSSION QUESTIONS:

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### **Read 2 Corinthians 6:1-13.**

1. Can somebody take a moment to summarize the main sections of the sermon?
2. **Read verse 1.** What does it mean to receive God's grace in vain?
3. What would your response be if someone asked you, "Why is it special to receive God's grace"?
4. Does thinking of the Christian life as "holy war" help you to understand your life as a Christian in any new ways?
5. Where do you need to engage in battle more intentionally?
6. It is part of God's plan that Christians experience wins and losses while at war in this life. Do any major lessons from wins or losses stick out in your mind as you reflect on this sermon?
7. **Read verses 4 and 5** about hardships that Paul faced (and sometimes, inflicted upon himself in order to do more focused ministry work). Pastor Jan mentioned a couple of times in the sermon that Christians to look at the wounds inflicted upon us for standing on God's truth as battle scars. Can you relate to this point? If not, what might this suggest about the way that you've lived out your faith in Christ?
8. In verse 13, Paul acknowledges that his heart is open to the Corinthians despite their maltreatment of him. In verse 13, Paul instructs the Corinthians to "widen your hearts also." What can cause Christians to close their hearts off to the world and even other Christians?
9. Why do Christians have the power to keep their hearts open to those (inside and outside of the church) who inflict hardship upon them?