

2 Cor 5:20

20 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.

21 For He made Him who knew no sin to be sin for us, that we might become the righteousness of God in Him.

This is the only way to be reconciled to God, vs 21.

What about the person who claims to be a new creation

- but continues walking in their old ways.
 - continually tramples God's grace
- he needs to purpose in his heart
- that he will begin to change.

Only we and God know what changes we need to make,

- what we need to work on.

There are times that we don't see our sin,

Ps 139:23-24

23 Search me, O God, and know my heart;
Try me, and know my anxieties;

24 And see if there is any wicked way in me,
And lead me in the way everlasting.

It's not always the Lord who reveals our sin, the Lord uses others to reveal our sin.

But, God will help you to make change if you're willing!

During our study thru 1st Corinthians we learned of:

- some of the difficulties and challenges Paul faced in Corinth.

Ministry was difficult for Paul.

He had some struggles in ministry.

- ministry can be difficult
- spiritually, mentally and often times physically as well.

Now in chapter 6

- Paul will mention some of the struggles he faced in ministry.

Since Paul had struggles in ministry, then we know that we too will have struggles.

There wasn't and still isn't any such thing as a perfect church.

- None of us are perfect.

Matt 5:10-11

10 Blessed are those who are persecuted for righteousness' sake,
For theirs is the kingdom of heaven.

11 "Blessed are you when they revile and persecute you, and say all kinds of evil
against you falsely for My sake.

2 Cor 6:1-10

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

3 We give no offense in anything, that our ministry may not be blamed. 4 But in all
things we commend ourselves as ministers of God: in much patience, in tribulations,
in needs, in distresses, 5 in stripes, in imprisonments, in tumults, in labors, in
sleeplessness, in fastings; 6 by purity, by knowledge, by longsuffering, by kindness, by
the Holy Spirit, by sincere love, 7 by the word of truth, by the power of God, by the
armor of righteousness on the right hand and on the left, 8 by honor 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 yet not killed; 10 as
sorrowful, yet always rejoicing; as poor, yet making many rich; as having nothing, and
yet possessing all things.

2 Cor 6:1-2

1 We then, as workers together with Him also plead with you not to receive the grace
of God in vain (Kenós - without purpose).

A person's ability "to believe" is a gift from God!

This verse reminds us that we are not alone.

Not only are ambassadors for Christ,

- but we are workers
- together with Him, that is with the Lord.

If you have a business partner

- you don't work for your partner,

- you work with your partner.

We are ministry partners with God.

- you are never alone.
- He is always with you.

1 Cor 3:9

9 For we are God's fellow workers; you are God's field, you are God's building.

We will never be alone!

Mark 16:19-20

19 So then, after the Lord had spoken to them, He was received up into heaven, and sat down at the right hand of God. 20 And they went out and preached everywhere, the Lord working with them and confirming the word through the accompanying signs. Amen.

One of the most comforting thoughts in ministry is knowing that the Lord is with you.

Isn't it pretty cool knowing that we are workers together with

- God our Emmanuel meaning "God is with us"

We don't need to turn to any self-help manuals,

We need to turn to the Emmanuel as our final authority.

Verse 2:

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.

Listen to Paul's tone, "NOW" is the accepted time, "NOW" is the day of salvation.

- Paul spoke with urgency.

Some people hear the gospel message and they respond

- while others put it off.

Paul didn't want them to wait,

- he wanted them to respond immediately.

Hebrews 3:15...

"Today, if you will hear His voice,
Do not harden your hearts as in the rebellion."

Paul's ministry was marked by integrity.

2 Cor 6:3

3 We give no offense in anything, that our ministry may not be blamed.

To give no offense is

- to put an obstacle in someone's path
- that will cause them to trip,

Here in Corinthians

- it means "not to put something in someone's path
- that will give them reason for rejecting the gospel." -

Paul was sensitive to others:

For example: he said to the Jew he became as a Jew, to the Gentile as a Gentile.

1 Cor 9:26-27...,

26 Therefore I run thus: not with uncertainty. Thus I fight: not as one who beats the air. 27 But I discipline my body and bring it into subjection, lest, when I have preached to others, I myself should become disqualified.

Paul was so concerned about bringing offense or being disqualified (to be cast away)

- that he disciplined his own body
- so as to not stumble anyone.

Who needs enemies when

- we have our-self to contend with.

He says here that he disciplines his body. The verb for discipline in the Greek is the word "*hupōpiázō*".

This comes from two other Greek words,

- one is "*hupó*" meaning "under"
- the other is "*ōps*" meaning "eye, face, or countenance".

The meaning of "*hupōpiázō*" then according to the Word Study NT Dictionary is to

- strike under the eyes,
- or to give a black eye.

So Paul is speaking about subjecting the body to visible hardship.

He also exhorted his co-laborers to do the same thing.

We are to live in such a way that our adversary would have no ammunition to base any charges against us.

In his letter to the Colossians, Paul was stating that it was God who made it possible for us who were once enemies of the cross to come to him thru His Son!

Col 1:22

22 in the body of His flesh through death, to present you holy, and blameless, and above reproach in His sight—

Live your life so as to not be accused.

In his letter to Titus, Paul spoke of the qualities of a sound church.

Titus 2:1-7

1 But as for you, speak the things which are proper for sound doctrine: 2 that the older men be sober, reverent, temperate, sound in faith, in love, in patience; 3 the older women likewise, that they be reverent in behavior, not slanderers, not given to much wine, teachers of good things — 4 that they admonish the young women to love their husbands, to love their children, 5 to be discreet, chaste, homemakers, good, obedient to their own husbands, that the word of God may not be blasphemed.

6 Likewise, exhort the young men to be sober-minded,

Titus 2:7-8

7 in all things showing yourself (individual) to be a pattern of good works; in doctrine showing integrity, reverence, incorruptibility, 8 sound speech that cannot be condemned, that one who is an opponent (adversary or an enemy) may be ashamed, having nothing evil to say of you.

Represent Christ well!

Why is this so important?

1 Cor 8:9

9 But beware lest somehow this liberty of yours become a stumbling block to those who are weak.

He was urging the church to be sensitive to the brethren.

Later in chapter 10 Paul said: 1 Cor 10:31-32, do everything to the glory of God.

A stumbling block is to cause someone to sin or worse, be the reason they reject Christ.

2 Cor 6:3

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

We need to walk in such a way

- that people will look at us and say,
- I want what you have!

Walk in such a way that people will want what you have and as Paul says, give no offense.

What is the challenge, it's Jesus!

1 Cor 1:22-23

22 For Jews request a sign (the cross appears to them as a weakness. The Jewish leaders repeatedly asked Jesus to perform a sign from heaven but He refused. They expected a Messiah that would conquer and defeat all their enemies, setup His kingdom and return the glory to Israel. However, they failed to see Psa 22 and Isa 53 which point to a different Messiah), and Greeks seek after wisdom; 23 but we preach Christ crucified, to the Jews a stumbling block and to the Greeks foolishness,

Paul's ministry was marked by endurance vs 4.

4 But in all things we commend ourselves as ministers of God: in much patience

We should carry our-self in a manner that shows

- that we are true ministers of God.

And that often requires patience as Paul says.

Patience is a difficult thing to develop

- we are by nature impatient!

Endurance means to bare up under hard labor, to remain steadfast in the face of adversity. It means to have endurance in difficult circumstances.

2 Tim 2:3-5

3 You therefore must endure hardship as a good soldier of Jesus Christ. 4 No one engaged in warfare entangles himself with the affairs of this life, that he may please him who enlisted him as a soldier. 5 And also if anyone competes in athletics, he is not crowned unless he competes according to the rules.

Soldiers are trained to fight.

And we can't serve the injured

- if we're not out on the battlefield.

Jesus said in Jn 16:33...that we will have tribulation in this world,

There is a need for us to endure under pressure.

And so often people want life on easy street.

We as Christians are called to run with endurance.

- There is no quit in us
- because there is no quit in the Lord.

The prophet Jeremiah wanted to quit at one time in his life.

In Jeremiah 12 he asked the burning question

- that many have asked over the years, that is,

“Why do the wicked seem to prosper while so many of the righteous suffer?”

The Lord was saying that

- there were greater challenges which lie ahead.

And if you allow the small things to take you down

- what are you going to do
- when bigger challenges come along.

Jer 12:5

5 "If you have run with the footmen, and they have wearied you,

Then how can you contend with horses?

And if in the land of peace,

In which you trusted, they wearied you,

Then how will you do in the floodplain of the Jordan?

What is our reaction when things become difficult in our life?

What is our reaction in times of trouble?

David must have been discouraged thinking

- that running from Saul would never end.

Paul said, we commend ourselves as ministers of God in much patience.

That's why the scriptures so often stress self-control.

- We tend to act out of our emotions,
- it's then that we create messy situations.

It's easy to praise the Lord when things are going well.

- But what will we do in the day of trouble!

“First Love.” (by Petra)

If I ever lack endurance

I remember Your assurance

That Your only banner over me is love
If my heart begins to waiver
Woo me back, my loving Savior
Woo me back till I return to my First Love

Paul encourages us to:

(be ministers of God) in (times of) tribulations (thilipsis, pressing pressure,),

(be ministers of God) in (times of) needs (Paul had needs in ministry, but he was content, in Phil 4:11-12 he said that he'd learned to be content in whatever state he was in, he knew what it was to have little and to have much),

(be ministers of God) in (times of) distresses, (physically and mentally you may be in a place that you don't know where to turn)

- Paul had internal distresses
- and external hardships

5 in stripes, in imprisonments, in tumults, in labors, in sleeplessness, in fastings;

Paul doesn't mention these things because he was seeking pity from anyone. He wanted the Corinthians to know they were loved.

This verse seems to describe what he faced when in jail.

- He was beaten,
- faced angry mobs,
- he had to do physical labor,
- didn't get much sleep and was fasting,
- maybe from the lack of food
- provided to him while locked up.

You know, being a minister of God

- has its challenges.

Someone once said that a Pastor will die the death of a thousand expectations: People have different expectations of what a Pastor should be.

Paul further reminds the Corinthians of the tools he used in ministry.

2 Cor 6:6-10

6 by purity (sincerity), by knowledge, by longsuffering (refers to patience with difficult people whereas in verse 4 longsuffering referred to endurance in difficult circumstances), by kindness, by the Holy Spirit, by sincere love, 7 by the word of truth, by the power of God, by the armor of righteousness on the right hand and on the left,

In Ephesians Paul spoke about putting on the armor of God, in Romans the armor of light and now in Corinthians the armor of righteousness.

- So, we are to put on the armor:

8 by honor 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 yet not killed;

Paul is quoting directly from the book of Psalms 118:18. God's people had been blessed by the Lord, the Lord was faithful to them.

Although they'd been disciplined by the Lord when He allowed them to be overthrown and taken into captivity, He didn't allow them to die.

In fact, God preserved His people until His purpose was complete and ultimately delivered them from Babylon and reestablished them in their land.

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