



1

**(Theme slide for this message)**

**Jesus came not to be served but to serve.**

**-- He calls us to servanthood . . . and in theory we embrace that truth.**

**-- But servanthood, Jesus-style, is brutally hard.**

**-- Many of us have witnessed someone going ballistic in a store or restaurant because they didn't get the level of service they felt entitled to. It feels so awkward, doesn't it?**

**TR: We wouldn't be surprised if this berated servant finally just "let them have it," like this waitress . . .**



2

**. . . “I’ve just had enough of your ingratitude, your presumption, your caustic, nasty words.**

**-- “In our world, many people would say, “You go, girl! They had it coming!”**

**-- But is that the response our Lord Jesus wants of us?**

**-- Perhaps we are not waiters or waitresses, but the hardest place to be a Christ-like servant is with people we see all the time – our families, co-workers, fellow church-members.**

**-- God’s desire is not for us to just give up, let them have it, and then go find another restaurant to serve at.**

**TR: He desires us to learn the heart of a servant from the Suffering Servant, Jesus.**



**Jesus left us an example of the towel and basin – washing His disciples' feet.**

**-- And the Apostle Paul teaches us in 2 Corinthians 6 some principles that can help us serve . . .**

**-- . . . even when servanthood has become a grind, when the response of others stirs up the grounds of bitterness within our hearts . . .**

**-- . . . when their lack of appreciation makes us feel used and even abused.**

**-- I certainly need help in growing as a servant . . . a truly Jesus-style servant . . . who serves with a wide-open heart.**

**TR: Let's read from our text to get an overview of it.**

*2 Corinthians 6:1-2 page 1069 in handout Bibles*

**Working together with him**, then, we appeal to you not to receive the grace of God in vain. <sup>2</sup>For he says,

"In a favorable time I listened to you, and in a day of salvation I have helped you."

Behold, now is the favorable time; behold, now is the day of salvation.

*ESV*

4

**2 Corinthians 6, page 1069 in the Handout Bibles**

**-- READ SLIDE (Verse 1 only)**

**-- [working together with him] = great statement of tension between God's work and our work**

**-- cf. Phil 2 – work out your salvation with fear and trembling because it is God who is at work in you.**

**TR: In the previous chapter the Apostle sought to persuade and even begged the Corinthians to be reconciled to God. Here he APPEALS to them . . .**

**2 Corinthians 6:1-2** *page 1069 in handout Bibles*

Working together with him, then, we appeal to you **not to receive the grace of God in vain.** <sup>2</sup>For he says,

"In a favorable time I listened to you, and in a day of salvation I have helped you."

Behold, now is the favorable time; behold, now is the day of salvation.

*ESV*

5

. . . [to not receive the grace of God in vain.]

-- This could be focused on receiving Christ as Savior, or losing salvation, or living life inconsistently with the grace offered to us through Jesus, who knew no sin and yet became sin on the cross so we could become the righteousness of God.

TR: This "not receiving in vain" is then connected to an OT quote .

. .

**2 Corinthians 6:1-2** *page 1069 in handout Bibles*

Working together with him, then, we appeal to you not to receive the grace of God in vain. <sup>2</sup>For he says,

**"In a favorable time I listened to you, and in a day of salvation I have helped you."**

Behold, now is the favorable time; behold, now is the day of salvation.

*ESV*

6

-- from Isaiah 49:8

-- READ SLIDE (highlighted only)

TR: Paul then helps us know what his point is in drawing attention to this passage when he says . . .

**2 Corinthians 6:1-2** *page 1069 in handout Bibles*

Working together with him, then, we appeal to you not to receive the grace of God in vain. <sup>2</sup>For he says,

"In a favorable time I listened to you, and in a day of salvation I have helped you."

**Behold, now is the favorable time; behold, now is the day of salvation.**

*ESV*

7

**READ SLIDE (highlighted only)**

-- Receiving the grace of God, whether the offer of salvation **AND/OR** the offer of providing us what we need each day as we live life after coming to faith . . .

-- . . . seems to be tied to responding **NOW . . . TODAY**

**TR: Paul then changes gears and talks about the quality of his work . . . that he has offered to the Corinthians "working together with God."**

**2 Corinthians 6:3-5**

**We put no obstacle in anyone's way, so that no fault may be found with our ministry, <sup>4</sup>but as servants of God we commend ourselves in every way: by great endurance, in afflictions, hardships, calamities, <sup>5</sup>beatings, imprisonments, riots, labors, sleepless nights, hunger;**

*ESV*

8

**READ SLIDE (highlighted)**

**-- No obstacle, no hindrance, no stumbling block . . . other than the cross of Christ, as 1 Corinthians told us.**

**TR: The reason he puts no obstacle is for the purpose or desired outcome . . .**

**2 Corinthians 6:3-5**

We put no obstacle in anyone's way, **so that no fault may be found with our ministry,** <sup>4</sup>but as servants of God we commend ourselves in every way: by great endurance, in afflictions, hardships, calamities, <sup>5</sup>beatings, imprisonments, riots, labors, sleepless nights, hunger;

*ESV*

9

**READ SLIDE (highlighted)**

**-- [ministry] – “service” related to the word “deacon”,**

**TR: This ministry is related to . . .**

**2 Corinthians 6:3-5**

We put no obstacle in anyone's way, so that no fault may be found with our ministry, **4but as servants of God we commend ourselves in every way:** by great endurance, in afflictions, hardships, calamities, **5beatings, imprisonments, riots, labors, sleepless nights, hunger;**

ESV

10

**“God’s servants” in v. 4**

**READ SLIDE (highlighted)**

- We don’t put any “cause for offense” in someone’s way . . .**
- . . . and on the positive side we commend ourselves,**
- not like the false teachers with letters of reference,**
- . . . but with our lives.**

**TR: Paul and his companions commend themselves by . . .**

**2 Corinthians 6:3-5**

We put no obstacle in anyone's way, so that no fault may be found with our ministry, <sup>4</sup>but as servants of God we commend ourselves in every way: **by great endurance, in afflictions, hardships, calamities, <sup>5</sup>beatings, imprisonments, riots, labors, sleepless nights, hunger;**

*ESV*

11

**READ SLIDE (highlighted)**

**TR: The list goes on to include even more ways . . .**

2 Corinthians 6:6-7

. . . by purity, knowledge, patience,  
kindness, the Holy Spirit, genuine love;  
7by truthful speech, and the power of  
God; with the weapons of righteous-  
ness for the right hand and for the left;

ESV

12

**READ SLIDE**

-- The Roman soldier had a sword in one hand and a shield in the other . . . perhaps Paul was envisioning both offensive and defensive weapons that manifest the righteous character of God.

TR: He still is not done with his list . . .

**2 Corinthians 6:8-10**

**. . . through honor and dishonor,  
through slander and praise. We are  
treated as impostors, and yet are true;  
<sup>9</sup>as unknown, and yet well known; as  
dying, and behold, we live; as  
punished, and yet not killed; <sup>10</sup>as  
sorrowful, yet always rejoicing; as poor,  
yet making many rich; as having  
nothing, yet possessing everything.**

*ESV*

13

**READ SLIDE**

**TR: Having presented how his character of life has sought to work together with God to help them not receive the grace of God in vain,**

**2 Corinthians 6:11-13**

**We have spoken freely to you,  
Corinthians; our heart is wide open.**

**<sup>12</sup>You are not restricted by us, but you  
are restricted in your own affections.**

**<sup>13</sup>In return (I speak as to children)  
widen your hearts also.**

*ESV*

14

**. . . he then appeals to the Corinthians again.**

**-- READ SLIDE (highlighted)**

**-- Paul makes clear that they have spoken freely and opened their heart freely.**

**-- In no way have the Corinthians been restricted by Paul.**

**TR: Rather . . .**

**2 Corinthians 6:11-13**

We have spoken freely to you,  
Corinthians; our heart is wide open.

<sup>12</sup>You are not restricted by us, **but you  
are restricted in your own affections.**

<sup>13</sup>**In return (I speak as to children)  
widen your hearts also.**

*ESV*

15

**READ SLIDE (highlighted)**

**-- They had closed their hearts to Paul.**

**-- They were behaving like spoiled children that needed to be  
challenged to open their hearts again.**

**TR: What we just went through can be visualized like this . . .**

**Appeal:** Don't receive grace in vain (1)  
-For NOW is the day of salvation (2-3)



**(Appeal:)** Widen your hearts (11-13)

**Paul makes two appeals . . . REVIEW SLIDE**

**TR: In the middle of these appeals . . .**

**Appeal:** Don't receive grace in vain (1)  
-For NOW is the day of salvation (2-3)

[ No fault in our ministry (3-10)  
No obstacles  
Commend ourselves . . . ]

**(Appeal:)** Widen your hearts (11-13)

... he presents how his ministry has been “faultless,” that is, not blemished in any way.

-- They have not put up obstacles.

-- Rather, they have commended themselves with a quality of servanthood that I would label, “Jesus-style.”

TR: With that brief overview in mind . . .

**A FAULTLESS & FAITHFUL SERVANT OF GOD**  
2 Corinthians 6:1-13

Appeal: Don't receive grace in vain (1)  
- For NOW is the day of salvation (2-3)

No fault in our ministry (3-10)  
- No obstacles  
- Commend ourselves by . . .

(Appeal) Widen your hearts (11-13)

**The Sufferings of a "Faultless Servant"**

An intentional focus on \_\_\_\_ things<sup>(1)</sup>  
- Creating no unnecessary obstacles

An exceptional willingness to \_\_\_\_<sup>(4-5)</sup>  
- accepting a servant's afflictions

Ambidextrous skills of \_\_\_\_ & \_\_\_\_<sup>(6-7)</sup>  
- commended by Holy Spirit-empowered truth & love

Oblivious to worldly \_\_\_\_ of success<sup>(8-10)</sup>  
- through honor & dishonor

A willingness to " \_\_\_\_ " <sup>(11)</sup>  
- A wide open heart

CONTINUED ON BACK INSIDE COVER

**The Appeal of a Faithful Servant**  
"Don't receive the grace of God in vain!"  
† Don't \_\_\_\_ in responding!  
† Don't \_\_\_\_ your \_\_\_\_!

"Following God is not for tomorrow  
it is for TODAY!"

NO  
PRAYER  
US  
APPLICATION UNDERSTANDING  
ORIGINAL READERS

GOD'S MESSAGE  
OBSERVATION  
PRAYER  
APPLICATION UNDERSTANDING  
ORIGINAL READERS

"Only Jesus-style servanthood  
embraces the uncomfortable  
often unappreciated  
vulnerability  
of the foot of the cross  
in the spiritual warfare  
of truth-in-love."  
Gerhards.deBack@TrinityInfo.org

... let's turn the corner of the Pathways Bible Study Method and consider the applications to us today.

TR: I would like us to first think about . . .

**Appeal:** Don't receive grace in vain  
 -For NOW is the day of salvation (3)

[ No fault in our ministry (3-10)  
 No obstacles  
 Commend ourselves . . . ]

**(Appeal:)** Widen your hearts (11-

. . . verses 3-10 . . . about being a faultless servant.  
 -- In a few moments, we'll come back to the two appeals.

TR: In our notes I label the two sections as . . .

The Sufferings of  
a “Faultless” Servant

1

The Appeal of  
a Faithful Servant

2

20

**READ SLIDE**

**TR: Servanthood has a suffering about it . . . a dying to self. If we are to be “faultless” (even though not perfect) we need to have . .**

•

## The Sufferings of a “Faultless” Servant

= An intentional focus on 1<sup>st</sup> things<sup>(3)</sup>  
- *creating no unnecessary obstacles*

21

### **READ SLIDE**

-- Unnecessary obstacles are the kind of issues that trip up weaker brothers who have an overly sensitive conscience about some issue.

TR: The distinction between clean and unclean foods based on the Mosaic Law is an example.

**1 Corinthians 8:8-9**

Food will not commend us to God. We are no worse off if we do not eat, and no better off if we do. **9But take care that this right of yours does not somehow become a stumbling block to the weak.**

ESV

22

In his first letter to the Corinthians (or at least the first one we have a copy of), Paul writes . . . **READ SLIDE**

- A Jesus-style servant doesn't just consider their rights but is willing to suffer having their rights impinged upon for the sake of others.
- This doesn't mean that we tolerate sin or that we don't address sinful behavior.
- It does mean that we focus on 1<sup>st</sup> things . . . making only absolute what the Bible makes absolute, and then making them absolutely absolute!
- EX:

**TR: Another way that a Jesus-style servant suffers is by having . . .**

## The Sufferings of a “Faultless” Servant

- = An intentional focus on 1<sup>st</sup> things<sup>(3)</sup>
  - *creating no unnecessary obstacles*
- = An exceptional willingness to pay the price<sup>(4-5)</sup>
  - *accepting a servant’s afflictions*

23

**READ SLIDE**

**TR: Paul’s list includes dealing with external hardships forced upon him by external circumstances or people . . .**

**by great endurance,  
in afflictions,  
hardships,  
calamities,  
<sup>5</sup>beatings,  
imprisonments,  
riots,  
labors,  
sleepless nights,  
hunger;**

24

**READ SLIDE (highlighted)**

**-- [calamities] = forced into a tight corner**

**-- A Jesus-style servant will not limit their service to the safe opportunities.**

**TR: The list also includes . . .**

by great endurance,  
in afflictions,  
hardships,  
calamities,  
<sup>5</sup>beatings,  
imprisonments,  
riots,  
labors,  
sleepless nights,  
hunger;

25

. . . afflictions that were by Paul's direct personal choices.

-- Whether "hard, exhausting work"

-- OR burning the midnight oil

-- OR self-imposed hunger (giving up food for the sake of the ministry . . . perhaps fasting for prayer or financial resources.

-- EX: Asking a young married about their marriage . . . then sharing the levels of servanthood.

-- If marriage, parenthood, service in the body of Christ are not "hurting" you, then you aren't doing them right. Servanthood, Jesus-style, means having an exceptional willingness to pay the price.

TR: Another splash of water from the basin of servanthood that God refreshed my heart with was that a disciple who shows allegiance in Jesus Christ does so by having the . . .

## The Sufferings of a “Faultless” Servant

= Ambidextrous skills of truth & love<sup>(6-7)</sup>  
- *commended by Holy Spirit*  
*empowered truth and love*

26

**READ SLIDE**

**TR: Back to Paul’s list, we read . . .**

by great endurance,  
in afflictions,  
hardships,  
calamities,  
<sup>5</sup>beatings,  
imprisonments,  
riots,  
labors,  
sleepless nights,  
hunger;

<sup>6</sup>by purity,  
knowledge,  
patience,  
kindness,  
the Holy Spirit,  
genuine love;  
<sup>7</sup>by truthful speech  
and the power of God;  
with the weapons  
of righteousness . . .

27

**READ SLIDE (highlighted)**

-- [purity] = speaking of holiness

-- patience and kindness are found on the list of the fruit of the Spirit

-- these are internal qualities, strongly tied to our motives.

**TR: The list goes on with four items that each have an adjective modifying them . . .**

by great endurance,  
in afflictions,  
hardships,  
calamities,  
<sup>5</sup>beatings,  
imprisonments,  
riots,  
labors,  
sleepless nights,  
hunger;

<sup>6</sup>by purity,  
knowledge,  
patience,  
kindness,  
**the Holy Spirit,  
genuine love;**  
<sup>7</sup>**by truthful speech  
and the power of God;**  
with the weapons  
of righteousness . . .

28

**READ SLIDE (highlighted)**

-- Elsewhere we are told to speak the truth in love.

-- We are told Jesus came full of grace and truth . . . in the power of God and filled with the Holy Spirit.

TR: These are our . . .

by great endurance,  
in afflictions,  
hardships,  
calamities,  
<sup>5</sup>beatings,  
imprisonments,  
riots,  
labors,  
sleepless nights,  
hunger;

<sup>6</sup>by purity,  
knowledge,  
patience,  
kindness,  
the Holy Spirit,  
genuine love;  
<sup>7</sup>by truthful speech  
and the power of God;  
**with the weapons  
of righteousness . . .**

29

**. . . weapons of righteousness . . . in both hands . . . offense and defense.**

**-- The skills of truth and love . . . empowered by the Holy Spirit of God . . .**

**-- . . . how can we really serve others Jesus-style without these.**

**-- We may consider ourselves servants when we blast others with our understanding of truth, but are we really?**

**-- We may consider ourselves servants when we enable others to continue in sin out of a desire to be loving, but is that genuine, godly love?**

**TR: Being a Jesus-style servant means being . . .**

## The Sufferings of a "Faultless" Servant

- = Ambidextrous skills of truth & love<sup>(6-7)</sup>
  - *commended by Holy Spirit*
  - *empowered truth and love*
- = Oblivious to worldly symbols of success<sup>(8-10)</sup>
  - *through honor & dishonor*

30

### READ SLIDE

- If we need to look like we are always a success . . .
- . . . OR we need others to always like us and think highly of us .
- . . . we aren't faultless servants.

TR: Think through with me the contrasts in this portion of the list  
. . .

dishonor	honor
slander	praise
treated as impostors	yet are true
as unknown	yet well known;
as dying	behold, we live;
as punished	yet not killed;
as sorrowful	yet always rejoicing
as poor	yet making many rich
as having nothing	yet possessing everything

31

## **READ SLIDE**

- This sounds so much like the quote I read last week about Christians not fitting into the world.**
- True Jesus-style servants aren't usually honored by the world.**
- But they continue to serve because they know they are known by God.**
- Contrast so many who serve as long as they are shown gratitude. As soon as they don't feel appreciated, they are gone.**

**TR: As I have prayerfully considered this passage, I felt there was one more qualification, a suffering of a faultless servant. It comes from the closing appeal section.**

## The Sufferings of a “Faultless” Servant

= A willingness to “go first” (11)  
- *A wide open heart*

32

**A Jesus-style servant has a . . . READ SLIDE**

**TR: Remember the text . . .**

We have spoken freely to you,  
Corinthians; **our heart is wide open.**

ESV

**READ SLIDE**

- Paul says that he and his companions have been completely truthful, holding nothing back, that is, they have spoken freely.
- **BUT** it is not just truthful speech but our of a heart of genuine love.
  
- There is a great risk to going first, to opening our hearts when perhaps others won't.
- Cf. "lowering our shields," even when they appear to have their weapons system powered up.
- The true courage of servanthood is the willingness to open wide our hearts and to put them on a plate.
- Are we not most like Jesus when we open wide our hearts?
- When we open our hands and extend them to others, even if they do not extend them back to us?

**TR: Five pains/sufferings that we are called to bear as Jesus-style servants . . .**

## The Sufferings of a "Faultless" Servant

- = An intentional focus on 1<sup>st</sup> things<sup>(3)</sup>
- = An exceptional willingness  
to pay the price<sup>(4-5)</sup>
- = Ambidextrous skills of truth & love<sup>(6-7)</sup>
- = Oblivious to worldly symbols  
of success<sup>(8-10)</sup>
- = A willingness to "go first" <sup>(11)</sup>

34

### Review Slide

- Let's ask the Spirit to point out where He is challenging us to be built up by suffering.
- On being uncomfortable about non-essential preferences? The "small stuff?"
- On being willing to ask His power to not give into despair or bitterness or vengefulness because of the price we've had to pay?
- On serving by speaking freely and yet lovingly, no longer enabling or blaming?
- On serving even though no one seems to be honoring your service with medals of gratitude?
- On being willing to reach out your hand to that person who has withdrawn their hand from you?

TR: There is so much right there, but will you allow me to serve up a cherry on top of all that?

**Appeal:** Don't receive grace in vain  
-For NOW is the day of salvation (3)

[ No fault in our ministry (3-10)  
No obstacles  
Commend ourselves . . . ]

**(Appeal:)** Widen your hearts (11-12)

**Remember, I mentioned looking first at the ways Paul sought to have his ministry be “faultless.”**

**TR: But our text began and ended with appeals.**

## The Appeal of a Faithful Servant

36

**But I labeled this point of reflection by the singular . . . READ SLIDE**

**TR: I believe the core appeal to the Corinthians and to us is . . .**

## The Appeal of a Faithful Servant

*“Don’t receive the grace of God  
in vain!”*

37

### **READ SLIDE**

-- Even today, you have been offered a tray full of grace in today’s teaching . . .

-- . . . but it will be in vain if you don’t take it off the plate and partake of it.

**TR:** There are two ways we receive the grace of God in vain. To avoid that we must make sure we . . .

## The Appeal of a Faithful Servant

*“Don’t receive the grace of God  
in vain!”*

*= Don’t delay in responding!*

38

### READ SLIDE

- “To delay is to disobey.”
- “Delayed obedience is denied obedience.”
- We must not play the “waiting for a better offer” game. EX:  
Responding to being asked on a date.
- Or waiting to see if the order from our commanding officer changes to something we find more aligned with our desires.
  
- What clear command of God, through the Scriptures and His Spirit, are we putting off obeying?
- May it not be receiving Christ as Savior!
- May it not be having the same mind as Jesus. And be serving others Jesus-style!
- Following God is not for tomorrow . . . it is for today.

TR: The closing verses give us the second way to avoid receiving the grace of God in vain . . .

## The Appeal of a Faithful Servant

*“Don’t receive the grace of God  
in vain!”*

*= Don’t delay in responding!*

*= Don’t close your heart!*

39

**We mustn’t close our hearts . . .**

**-- cf. closing our heart toward God**

**-- cf. closing our heart toward other believers / church**

**-- cf. closing our heart toward our parents or our children**

**-- This relates to the Outlook of an Effective Ambassador – not writing others off; not saying their “no” for them.**

**-- cf. not wanting to be taken in again . . . so not open our heart to others**

**-- Aren’t these two specifics, under the appeal not to receive the grace of God in vain, the very essence of servanthood?**

**-- Jesus-style servants have wide-open hearts that are ready to obey today! Does that describe us? You?**

## The Appeal of a Faithful Servant

*“Don’t receive the grace of God  
in vain!”*

*= Don’t delay in responding!*

*= Don’t close your heart!*

40

**(Same slide as previous)**

**“Only Jesus-style servanthood embraces the uncomfortable, costly, often unappreciated, vulnerability of the foot-washing of the spiritual warfare of truth-in-love.”**

**It is time to go to the doorpost, even the cross, and declare afresh and perhaps for the first time . . . we are Christ’s slaves and each others’ servants.**

**It is time to push the awl through the ear lobe (see Deut. 15:16-17).**