

## **What To Do When You Are Not Appreciated?**

### **2 Corinthians 6**

**Have you ever felt not appreciated?**

**Have you ever tried to help someone and then had your motives questioned?**

**Does it hurt when people don't see your value?**

### **What Does The Bible Say?**

3 We live in such a way that no one will stumble because of us, and no one will find fault with our ministry. 4 In everything we do, we show that we are true ministers of God. (2 Corinthians 6:3–4 NLT)

**People will not separate you from your ministry.**

We patiently endure troubles and hardships and calamities of every kind. 5 We have been beaten, been put in prison, faced

angry mobs, worked to exhaustion, endured sleepless nights, and gone without food. (2 Corinthians 6:4–5 NLT)

**People are watching your endurance through pain.**

6 We prove ourselves by our purity, our understanding, our patience, our kindness, by the Holy Spirit within us, and by our sincere love. 7 We faithfully preach the truth. God's power is working in us. We use the weapons of righteousness in the right hand for attack and the left hand for defense. (2 Corinthians 6:6–7 NLT)

**Let your character speak for you.**

8 We serve God whether people honor us or despise us, whether they slander us or praise us. We are honest, but they call us impostors. 9 We are ignored, even though we are well known. We live close to death, but we are still alive. We have been beaten, but we have not been killed. 10 Our hearts ache, but we always have joy. We are poor, but we give spiritual riches to

others. We own nothing, and yet we have everything. (2 Corinthians 6:8–10 NLT)

**You, as a Christian, live in a paradoxical world. Know that one day, that will no longer be true.**

14 Don't team up with those who are unbelievers. How can righteousness be a partner with wickedness? How can light live with darkness? 15 What harmony can there be between Christ and the devil? How can a believer be a partner with an unbeliever? 16 And what union can there be between God's temple and idols? For we are the temple of the living God. As God said: "I will live in them and walk among them. I will be their God, and they will be my people. 17 Therefore, come out from among unbelievers, and separate yourselves from them, says the Lord. Don't touch their filthy things, and I will welcome you. (2 Corinthians 6:14–17 NLT)

**Unbelievers rarely appreciate your Christian beliefs and actions.**

2 Live a life filled with love, following the example of Christ. He loved us and offered himself as a sacrifice for us, a pleasing aroma to God. (Ephesians 5:2 NLT)

**Remember that Christ loves and appreciates you.**

**How Can You Obey?**

**What does it mean to be separated?**

15 Later, Levi invited Jesus and his disciples to his home as dinner guests, along with many tax collectors and other disreputable sinners. (There were many people of this kind among Jesus' followers.) 16 But when the teachers of religious law who were Pharisees saw him eating with tax collectors and other sinners, they asked his disciples, "Why does he eat with such scum?" 17 When Jesus heard this, he told them, "Healthy people don't need a doctor—sick people do. I have come to call

not those who think they are righteous, but those who know they are sinners.” (Mark 2:15–17 NLT)

**Jesus was accused of not living a separated life.**

**It does not mean divorcing your unsaved spouse (1 Corinthians 7:12–15).**

12 Now, I will speak to the rest of you, though I do not have a direct command from the Lord. If a fellow believer has a wife who is not a believer and she is willing to continue living with him, he must not leave her. 13 And if a believing woman has a husband who is not a believer and he is willing to continue living with her, she must not leave him. 14 For the believing wife brings holiness to her marriage, and the believing husband brings holiness to his marriage. Otherwise, your children would not be holy, but now they are holy. 15 (But if the husband or wife who isn’t a believer insists on leaving, let them go. In such cases the believing husband or wife is no longer bound to the

other, for God has called you to live in peace.) (Mark 2:15–17  
NLT)

**It does not mean you cannot eat with unbelievers (1 Corinthians 10:27).**

27 If someone who isn't a believer asks you home for dinner, accept the invitation if you want to. Eat whatever is offered to you without raising questions of conscience. (Mark 2:15–17  
NLT)

**It does not mean unbelievers are not welcome to attend Christian worship meetings (1 Corinthians 14:22–25).**

22 So you see that speaking in tongues is a sign, not for believers, but for unbelievers. Prophecy, however, is for the benefit of believers, not unbelievers. 23 Even so, if unbelievers or people who don't understand these things come into your church meeting and hear everyone speaking in an unknown language, they will think you are crazy. 24 But if all of you are

prophesying, and unbelievers or people who don't understand these things come into your meeting, they will be convicted of sin and judged by what you say. 25 As they listen, their secret thoughts will be exposed, and they will fall to their knees and worship God, declaring, "God is truly here among you." (1 Corinthians 14:22–25 NLT)

### **So what does it mean to be separated?**

**Paul's separation dealt with two issues:**

**Sex and idols are where Paul draws the line between mixing and compromise.**

**Christians are not to have sex outside marriage (1**

**Corinthians 6:15–20).**

15 Don't you realize that your bodies are actually parts of Christ? Should a man take his body, which is part of Christ, and join it to a prostitute? Never! 16 And don't you realize that if a man joins himself to a prostitute, he becomes one body with

her? For the Scriptures say, “The two are united into one.”

17 But the person who is joined to the Lord is one spirit with him.

18 Run from sexual sin! No other sin so clearly affects the body as this one does. For sexual immorality is a sin against your own body. 19 Don’t you realize that your body is the temple of the Holy Spirit, who lives in you and was given to you by God? You do not belong to yourself, 20 for God bought you with a high price. So you must honor God with your body. (1 Corinthians 6:15–20 NLT)

**Christians are warned not to be part of temple meals which are dedicated to idols.**

9 But you must be careful so that your freedom does not cause others with a weaker conscience to stumble. 10 For if others see you—with your “superior knowledge”—eating in the temple of an idol, won’t they be encouraged to violate their conscience by

eating food that has been offered to an idol? 11 So because of your superior knowledge, a weak believer for whom Christ died will be destroyed. 12 And when you sin against other believers by encouraging them to do something they believe is wrong, you are sinning against Christ. 13 So if what I eat causes another believer to sin, I will never eat meat again as long as I live—for I don't want to cause another believer to stumble. (1 Corinthians 8:9–13 NLT)

### **Are you living a biblically separated life?**

### **Additional Notes:**

If you would like to use your home to disciple others, check out our training at [www.crosswaveschurch.com/host](http://www.crosswaveschurch.com/host). Cross Waves has produced short videos to train you how to use your home to reach others for Christ. So please check it out.

### **Additional Notes:**

This week's Deep Dive Into The Bible is from Michael S. Heiser, *I Dare You Not to Bore Me with the Bible*, ed. John D. Barry and Rebecca Van Noord (Bellingham, WA: Lexham Press; Bible Study Magazine, 2014), 91–94.

### **Verses used in Deep Dive Into The Bible:**

15 Moses continued, “The Lord your God will raise up for you a prophet like me from among your fellow Israelites. You must listen to him. 16 For this is what you yourselves requested of the Lord your God when you were assembled at Mount Sinai. You said, ‘Don’t let us hear the voice of the Lord our God anymore or see this blazing fire, for we will die.’ 17 “Then the Lord said

to me, ‘What they have said is right. 18 I will raise up a prophet like you from among their fellow Israelites. I will put my words in his mouth, and he will tell the people everything I command him. 19 I will personally deal with anyone who will not listen to the messages the prophet proclaims on my behalf. 20 But any prophet who falsely claims to speak in my name or who speaks in the name of another god must die.’

21 “But you may wonder, ‘How will we know whether or not a prophecy is from the Lord?’ 22 If the prophet speaks in the Lord’s name but his prediction does not happen or come true, you will know that the Lord did not give that message. That prophet has spoken without my authority and need not be feared.

(Deuteronomy 18:15–22 NLT)

21 “But you may wonder, ‘How will we know whether or not a prophecy is from the Lord?’ 22 If the prophet speaks in the Lord’s name but his prediction does not happen or come true,

you will know that the Lord did not give that message. That prophet has spoken without my authority and need not be feared. (Deuteronomy 18:15–22 NLT)

18 “Have any of these prophets been in the Lord’s presence to hear what he is really saying? Has even one of them cared enough to listen?

22 If they had stood before me and listened to me, they would have spoken my words, and they would have turned my people from their evil ways and deeds. (Jeremiah 23:18, 22 NLT)

It was in the year King Uzziah died that I saw the Lord. He was sitting on a lofty throne, and the train of his robe filled the Temple. 2 Attending him were mighty seraphim, each having six wings. With two wings they covered their faces, with two they covered their feet, and with two they flew. 3 They were calling out to each other, “Holy, holy, holy is the Lord of Heaven’s Armies! The whole earth is filled with his glory!” 4 Their voices

shook the Temple to its foundations, and the entire building was filled with smoke. 5 Then I said, “It’s all over! I am doomed, for I am a sinful man. I have filthy lips, and I live among a people with filthy lips. Yet I have seen the King, the Lord of Heaven’s Armies.” 6 Then one of the seraphim flew to me with a burning coal he had taken from the altar with a pair of tongs. 7 He touched my lips with it and said, “See, this coal has touched your lips. Now your guilt is removed, and your sins are forgiven.” 8 Then I heard the Lord asking, “Whom should I send as a messenger to this people? Who will go for us?” I said, “Here I am. Send me.” 9 And he said, “Yes, go, and say to this people, ‘Listen carefully, but do not understand. Watch closely, but learn nothing.’” (Isaiah 6:1–9 NLT)

On July 31 of my thirtieth year, while I was with the Judean exiles beside the Kebar River in Babylon, the heavens were opened and I saw visions of God. 2 This happened during the fifth year of King Jehoiachin’s captivity. 3 (The Lord gave this

message to Ezekiel son of Buzi, a priest, beside the Kebar River in the land of the Babylonians, and he felt the hand of the Lord take hold of him.) 4 As I looked, I saw a great storm coming from the north, driving before it a huge cloud that flashed with lightning and shone with brilliant light. There was fire inside the cloud, and in the middle of the fire glowed something like gleaming amber. 5 From the center of the cloud came four living beings that looked human, 6 except that each had four faces and four wings. 7 Their legs were straight, and their feet had hooves like those of a calf and shone like burnished bronze. 8 Under each of their four wings I could see human hands. So each of the four beings had four faces and four wings. 9 The wings of each living being touched the wings of the beings beside it. Each one moved straight forward in any direction without turning around. 10 Each had a human face in the front, the face of a lion on the right side, the face of an ox on the left side, and the face of an eagle at the back. 11 Each had two pairs of outstretched wings—

one pair stretched out to touch the wings of the living beings on either side of it, and the other pair covered its body. 12 They went in whatever direction the spirit chose, and they moved straight forward in any direction without turning around. 13 The living beings looked like bright coals of fire or brilliant torches, and lightning seemed to flash back and forth among them.

14 And the living beings darted to and fro like flashes of lightning.

26 Above this surface was something that looked like a throne made of blue lapis lazuli. And on this throne high above was a figure whose appearance resembled a man. 27 From what appeared to be his waist up, he looked like gleaming amber, flickering like a fire. And from his waist down, he looked like a burning flame, shining with splendor. 28 All around him was a glowing halo, like a rainbow shining in the clouds on a rainy day. This is what the glory of the Lord looked like to me. When

I saw it, I fell face down on the ground, and I heard someone's voice speaking to me.

(Ezekiel 1:1–14, 26–28)

4 The Lord gave me this message: 5 “I knew you before I formed you in your mother’s womb. Before you were born I set you apart and appointed you as my prophet to the nations.”

(Jeremiah 1:4–5)

15 The Lord God placed the man in the Garden of Eden to tend and watch over it. 16 But the Lord God warned him, “You may freely eat the fruit of every tree in the garden—17 except the tree of the knowledge of good and evil. If you eat its fruit, you are sure to die.” (Genesis 2:15–17 NLT)

8 When the cool evening breezes were blowing, the man and his wife heard the Lord God walking about in the garden. So they hid from the Lord God among the trees. 9 Then the Lord God called to the man, “Where are you?” 10 He replied, “I heard you

walking in the garden, so I hid. I was afraid because I was naked.” 11 “Who told you that you were naked?” the Lord God asked. “Have you eaten from the tree whose fruit I commanded you not to eat?” 12 The man replied, “It was the woman you gave me who gave me the fruit, and I ate it.” (Genesis 3:8–12 NLT)

7 “Were you the first person ever born? Were you born before the hills were made? 8 Were you listening at God’s secret council? Do you have a monopoly on wisdom? (Job 15:7–8 NLT)

22 After the birth of Methuselah, Enoch lived in close fellowship with God for another 300 years, and he had other sons and daughters. 23 Enoch lived 365 years, 24 walking in close fellowship with God. Then one day he disappeared, because God took him.

9 This is the account of Noah and his family. Noah was a righteous man, the only blameless person living on earth at the time, and he walked in close fellowship with God. (Genesis 5:22 - 24; 6:9 NLT)

The Lord had said to Abram, “Leave your native country, your relatives, and your father’s family, and go to the land that I will show you. 2 I will make you into a great nation. I will bless you and make you famous, and you will be a blessing to others. 3 I will bless those who bless you and curse those who treat you with contempt. All the families on earth will be blessed through you.”

Some time later, the Lord spoke to Abram in a vision and said to him, “Do not be afraid, Abram, for I will protect you, and your reward will be great.” 2 But Abram replied, “O Sovereign Lord, what good are all your blessings when I don’t even have a son? Since you’ve given me no children, Eliezer of Damascus, a

servant in my household, will inherit all my wealth. 3 You have given me no descendants of my own, so one of my servants will be my heir.” 4 Then the Lord said to him, “No, your servant will not be your heir, for you will have a son of your own who will be your heir.” 5 Then the Lord took Abram outside and said to him, “Look up into the sky and count the stars if you can. That’s how many descendants you will have!” 6 And Abram believed the Lord, and the Lord counted him as righteous because of his faith.

2 This was Stephen’s reply: “Brothers and fathers, listen to me. Our glorious God appeared to our ancestor Abraham in Mesopotamia before he settled in Haran. 3 God told him, ‘Leave your native land and your relatives, and come into the land that I will show you.’ 4 So Abraham left the land of the Chaldeans and lived in Haran until his father died. Then God brought him here to the land where you now live. (Gen 12:1–3; 15:1–6; compare Acts 7:2–4)

A severe famine now struck the land, as had happened before in Abraham's time. So Isaac moved to Gerar, where Abimelech, king of the Philistines, lived.

2 The Lord appeared to Isaac and said, "Do not go down to Egypt, but do as I tell you. 3 Live here as a foreigner in this land, and I will be with you and bless you. I hereby confirm that I will give all these lands to you and your descendants, just as I solemnly promised Abraham, your father. 4 I will cause your descendants to become as numerous as the stars of the sky, and I will give them all these lands. And through your descendants all the nations of the earth will be blessed. 5 I will do this because Abraham listened to me and obeyed all my requirements, commands, decrees, and instructions." (Genesis 26:1–5 NLT)

10 Meanwhile, Jacob left Beersheba and traveled toward Haran.  
11 At sundown he arrived at a good place to set up camp and stopped there for the night. Jacob found a stone to rest his head

against and lay down to sleep. 12 As he slept, he dreamed of a stairway that reached from the earth up to heaven. And he saw the angels of God going up and down the stairway.

13 At the top of the stairway stood the Lord, and he said, “I am the Lord, the God of your grandfather Abraham, and the God of your father, Isaac. The ground you are lying on belongs to you. I am giving it to you and your descendants. 14 Your descendants will be as numerous as the dust of the earth! They will spread out in all directions—to the west and the east, to the north and the south. And all the families of the earth will be blessed through you and your descendants. 15 What’s more, I am with you, and I will protect you wherever you go. One day I will bring you back to this land. I will not leave you until I have finished giving you everything I have promised you.”

16 Then Jacob awoke from his sleep and said, “Surely the Lord is in this place, and I wasn’t even aware of it!” 17 But he was

also afraid and said, “What an awesome place this is! It is none other than the house of God, the very gateway to heaven!”

18 The next morning Jacob got up very early. He took the stone he had rested his head against, and he set it upright as a memorial pillar. Then he poured olive oil over it. 19 He named that place Bethel (which means “house of God”), although it was previously called Luz.

20 Then Jacob made this vow: “If God will indeed be with me and protect me on this journey, and if he will provide me with food and clothing, 21 and if I return safely to my father’s home, then the Lord will certainly be my God. 22 And this memorial pillar I have set up will become a place for worshiping God, and I will present to God a tenth of everything he gives me.”

11 Then in my dream, the angel of God said to me, ‘Jacob!’  
And I replied, ‘Yes, here I am.’

12 “The angel said, ‘Look up, and you will see that only the streaked, speckled, and spotted males are mating with the females of your flock. For I have seen how Laban has treated you. 13 I am the God who appeared to you at Bethel, the place where you anointed the pillar of stone and made your vow to me. Now get ready and leave this country and return to the land of your birth.’ ”

22 During the night Jacob got up and took his two wives, his two servant wives, and his eleven sons and crossed the Jabbok River with them. 23 After taking them to the other side, he sent over all his possessions. 24 This left Jacob all alone in the camp, and a man came and wrestled with him until the dawn began to break. 25 When the man saw that he would not win the match, he touched Jacob’s hip and wrenched it out of its socket. 26 Then the man said, “Let me go, for the dawn is breaking!”

But Jacob said, “I will not let you go unless you bless me.”

27 “What is your name?” the man asked. He replied, “Jacob.”

28 “Your name will no longer be Jacob,” the man told him.

“From now on you will be called Israel, because you have fought with God and with men and have won.” 29 “Please tell me your name,” Jacob said. “Why do you want to know my name?” the man replied. Then he blessed Jacob there. 30 Jacob named the place Peniel (which means “face of God”), for he said, “I have seen God face to face, yet my life has been spared.” 31 The sun was rising as Jacob left Peniel, and he was limping because of the injury to his hip. 32 (Even today the people of Israel don’t eat the tendon near the hip socket because of what happened that night when the man strained the tendon of Jacob’s hip.)

3 Even in the womb, Jacob struggled with his brother; when he became a man, he even fought with God. 4 Yes, he wrestled with

the angel and won. He wept and pleaded for a blessing from him. There at Bethel he met God face to face, and God spoke to him— (Genesis 28:10–22; 31:11–13; 32:22–32; compare Hosea 12:3–4).

One day Moses was tending the flock of his father-in-law, Jethro, the priest of Midian. He led the flock far into the wilderness and came to Sinai, the mountain of God. 2 There the angel of the Lord appeared to him in a blazing fire from the middle of a bush. Moses stared in amazement. Though the bush was engulfed in flames, it didn't burn up. 3 “This is amazing,” Moses said to himself. “Why isn't that bush burning up? I must go see it.”

4 When the Lord saw Moses coming to take a closer look, God called to him from the middle of the bush, “Moses! Moses!” “Here I am!” Moses replied. 5 “Do not come any closer,” the Lord warned. “Take off your sandals, for you are standing on holy ground. 6 I am the God of your father—the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob.” When Moses

heard this, he covered his face because he was afraid to look at God. 7 Then the Lord told him, “I have certainly seen the oppression of my people in Egypt. I have heard their cries of distress because of their harsh slave drivers. Yes, I am aware of their suffering. 8 So I have come down to rescue them from the power of the Egyptians and lead them out of Egypt into their own fertile and spacious land. It is a land flowing with milk and honey—the land where the Canaanites, Hittites, Amorites, Perizzites, Hivites, and Jebusites now live. 9 Look! The cry of the people of Israel has reached me, and I have seen how harshly the Egyptians abuse them. 10 Now go, for I am sending you to Pharaoh. You must lead my people Israel out of Egypt.” 11 But Moses protested to God, “Who am I to appear before Pharaoh? Who am I to lead the people of Israel out of Egypt?” 12 God answered, “I will be with you. And this is your sign that I am the one who has sent you: When you have brought the people out of Egypt, you will worship God at this very mountain.” 13 But

Moses protested, “If I go to the people of Israel and tell them, ‘The God of your ancestors has sent me to you,’ they will ask me, ‘What is his name?’ Then what should I tell them?”

14 God replied to Moses, “I Am Who I Am. Say this to the people of Israel: I Am has sent me to you.” 15 God also said to Moses, “Say this to the people of Israel: Yahweh, the God of your ancestors—the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob—has sent me to you. This is my eternal name, my name to remember for all generations. (Exodus 3:1–15 NLT)

24 So Moses went out and reported the Lord’s words to the people. He gathered the seventy elders and stationed them around the Tabernacle. 25 And the Lord came down in the cloud and spoke to Moses. Then he gave the seventy elders the same Spirit that was upon Moses. And when the Spirit rested upon

them, they prophesied. But this never happened again. (Numbers 11:24–25 NLT)

14 Then the Lord said to Moses, “The time has come for you to die. Call Joshua and present yourselves at the Tabernacle, so that I may commission him there.” So Moses and Joshua went and presented themselves at the Tabernacle. 15 And the Lord appeared to them in a pillar of cloud that stood at the entrance to the sacred tent. 16 The Lord said to Moses, “You are about to die and join your ancestors. After you are gone, these people will begin to worship foreign gods, the gods of the land where they are going. They will abandon me and break my covenant that I have made with them. 17 Then my anger will blaze forth against them. I will abandon them, hiding my face from them, and they will be devoured. Terrible trouble will come down on them, and on that day they will say, ‘These disasters have come down on us because God is no longer among us!’ 18 At that time I will hide my face from them on account of all the evil they

commit by worshiping other gods. 19 “So write down the words of this song, and teach it to the people of Israel. Help them learn it, so it may serve as a witness for me against them. 20 For I will bring them into the land I swore to give their ancestors—a land flowing with milk and honey. There they will become prosperous, eat all the food they want, and become fat. But they will begin to worship other gods; they will despise me and break my covenant. 21 And when great disasters come down on them, this song will stand as evidence against them, for it will never be forgotten by their descendants. I know the intentions of these people, even now before they have entered the land I swore to give them.” 22 So that very day Moses wrote down the words of the song and taught it to the Israelites. 23 Then the Lord commissioned Joshua son of Nun with these words: “Be strong and courageous, for you must bring the people of Israel into the land I swore to give them. I will be with you.”

13 When Joshua was near the town of Jericho, he looked up and saw a man standing in front of him with sword in hand. Joshua went up to him and demanded, “Are you friend or foe?”

14 “Neither one,” he replied. “I am the commander of the Lord’s army.” At this, Joshua fell with his face to the ground in reverence. “I am at your command,” Joshua said. “What do you want your servant to do?” 15 The commander of the Lord’s army replied, “Take off your sandals, for the place where you are standing is holy.” And Joshua did as he was told. (Deuteronomy 31:14–23; Joshua 5:13–15 NLT)

11 Then the angel of the Lord came and sat beneath the great tree at Ophrah, which belonged to Joash of the clan of Abiezer. Gideon son of Joash was threshing wheat at the bottom of a winepress to hide the grain from the Midianites. 12 The angel of the Lord appeared to him and said, “Mighty hero, the Lord is with you!” (Judges 6:11–12 NLT)

10 And the Lord came and called as before, “Samuel! Samuel!”

And Samuel replied, “Speak, your servant is listening.” (1  
Samuel 3:10 NLT)

16 After his baptism, as Jesus came up out of the water, the  
heavens were opened and he saw the Spirit of God descending  
like a dove and settling on him. 17 And a voice from heaven  
said, “This is my dearly loved Son, who brings me great joy.”

(Matthew 3:16–17 NLT)

3 As he was approaching Damascus on this mission, a light from  
heaven suddenly shone down around him. 4 He fell to the  
ground and heard a voice saying to him, “Saul! Saul! Why are  
you persecuting me?” 5 “Who are you, lord?” Saul asked. And  
the voice replied, “I am Jesus, the one you are persecuting!  
6 Now get up and go into the city, and you will be told what you  
must do.” (Acts 9:3–6 NLT)

Am I not as free as anyone else? Am I not an apostle? Haven't I seen Jesus our Lord with my own eyes? Isn't it because of my work that you belong to the Lord?

8 Last of all, as though I had been born at the wrong time, I also saw him. (1 Corinthians 9:1; 1 Corinthians 15:8 NLT)

On the day of Pentecost all the believers were meeting together in one place. 2 Suddenly, there was a sound from heaven like the roaring of a mighty windstorm, and it filled the house where they were sitting. 3 Then, what looked like flames or tongues of fire appeared and settled on each of them. 4 And everyone present was filled with the Holy Spirit and began speaking in other languages, as the Holy Spirit gave them this ability. (Acts 2:1–4 NLT)

17 To the Israelites at the foot of the mountain, the glory of the Lord appeared at the summit like a consuming fire.

6 Then one of the seraphim flew to me with a burning coal he had taken from the altar with a pair of tongs. 7 He touched my lips with it and said, “See, this coal has touched your lips. Now your guilt is removed, and your sins are forgiven.”

15 See, the Lord is coming with fire, and his swift chariots roar like a whirlwind. He will bring punishment with the fury of his anger and the flaming fire of his hot rebuke.

4 As I looked, I saw a great storm coming from the north, driving before it a huge cloud that flashed with lightning and shone with brilliant light. There was fire inside the cloud, and in the middle of the fire glowed something like gleaming amber.

9 I watched as thrones were put in place and the Ancient One sat down to judge. His clothing was as white as snow, his hair like purest wool. He sat on a fiery throne with wheels of blazing fire, 10 and a river of fire was pouring out, flowing from his

presence. Millions of angels ministered to him; many millions stood to attend him. Then the court began its session, and the books were opened. 11 I continued to watch because I could hear the little horn's boastful speech. I kept watching until the fourth beast was killed and its body was destroyed by fire.

(Exodus 24:17; Isaiah 6:6–7; Isaiah 66:15; Ezekiel 1:4; Daniel 7:9–11 NLT)

20 So we are Christ's ambassadors; God is making his appeal through us. We speak for Christ when we plead, "Come back to God!" (2 Corinthians 5:20 NLT)

18 Jesus came and told his disciples, "I have been given all authority in heaven and on earth. 19 Therefore, go and make disciples of all the nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit. 20 Teach these new disciples to obey all the commands I have given you. And be

sure of this: I am with you always, even to the end of the age.”

(Matthew 28:18–20 NLT)

### **Explore:**

Paul the example (vv. 3–10). One of the greatest obstacles to the progress of the Gospel is the bad example of people who profess to be Christians. Unsaved people like to use the inconsistencies of the saints—especially preachers—as an excuse for rejecting Jesus Christ. Paul was careful not to do anything that would put a stumbling block in the way of either sinners or saints (see Rom. 14). He did not want the ministry to be discredited (“blamed”) in any way because of his life.

Paul reminded his readers of the trials he had endured for them (2 Cor. 6:4–5). He had been a man of endurance (“patience”) and had not quit when things were tough. Afflictions are trials under pressure, when you are pressed down by circumstances. Necessities are the everyday hardships of life, and distresses

refer to experiences that push us into a corner where there seems to be no escape. The Greek word means “a narrow place.”

But even unsaved people go through those experiences, so Paul then listed a few of the trials he endured because of the opposition of people: stripes, imprisonments, and tumults (riots).

These he experienced because he was faithfully serving the Lord. He then named some of the sacrifices he made voluntarily for the sake of the ministry: labors (work resulting in weariness), watchings (sleepless nights), fastings (willingly going without food). Of course, Paul had not announced these things publicly.

The only reason he mentioned them in this letter was to assure the Corinthians of his love for them.

He further reminded them of the tools he had used in his ministry (2 Cor. 6:6–7). Purity means “chastity” (see 2 Cor. 11:2). Paul kept himself morally clean. Long-suffering refers to patience with difficult people, while patience (2 Cor. 6:4) refers

to endurance in difficult circumstances. Paul depended on the power of the Spirit so that he might manifest the fruit of the Spirit, such as kindness and sincere love. He used the Word of God to convey spiritual knowledge, and he wore the armor of God (see Eph. 6:10ff) to protect him from satanic attacks.

Finally, he reminded them of the testimony that he bore (2 Cor. 6:8–10). Paul listed a series of paradoxes, because he knew that not everybody really understood him and his ministry. Paul's enemies gave an evil report of him as a man who was a dishonorable deceiver. But God gave a good report of Paul as a man who was honorable and true. Paul was well known and yet, at the same time, unknown.

What a price Paul paid to be faithful in his ministry! And yet how little the Corinthians really appreciated all he did for them. They brought sorrow to his heart, yet he was “always rejoicing” in Jesus Christ. He became poor that they might become rich

(see 1 Cor. 1:5; 2 Cor. 8:9). The word translated poor means “the complete destitution of a beggar.”

Was Paul wrong in appealing for their appreciation? I don’t think so. Too many churches are prone to take for granted the sacrificial ministry of pastors, missionaries, and faithful church officers. Paul was not begging for praise, but he was reminding his friends in Corinth that his ministry to them had cost him dearly.

Of course, in all of this personal testimony, Paul was refuting the malicious accusations of the Judaizers. How much had they suffered for the people at Corinth? What price did they pay for their ministry? Like most “cultists” today, these false teachers stole another man’s converts; they did not seek to win the lost themselves.

It has well been said, “If you want to find gratitude, look in the dictionary.” Are we showing gratitude to those who have ministered to us?

Warren W. Wiersbe, The Bible Exposition Commentary (Wheaton, IL: Victor Books, 1996), 650–651.

### **Explore:**

#### **Believers’ Lifestyles Should Draw People to Christ, Not Push Them Away (2 Corinthians 6:1-10)**

Paul appealed to the church at Corinth to accept and take seriously the message of salvation by grace through faith in Christ alone. They were not to depend on their own works, as the false teachers had urged them. If they depended on works, the grace they had received would have been useless (verses 1-2). By grace, he is referring to the unmerited favor of God, demonstrated by the sacrificial death of Jesus. The quotation

in verse 2 is from Isaiah 49:8, a passage that illustrated God's readiness to receive Israel when they turned to Him. Just as God restored and reconciled His people Israel, He offers the same reconciliation to all of humanity through Christ. Twice in verse 2 the apostle used the word now, a term that emphasizes the importance and urgency of people turning to God. The "day of salvation" is the time when God offers salvation and reconciliation through faith in Christ.

In verse 3, Paul challenged the Corinthian believers to follow the example set by him and his team. They lived in such a way that their lives did not hinder people from coming to Christ. As a result, they could commend or approve themselves, something that could not happen if they were living scandalous or hypocritical lives. Supporting this assertion, he shared the personal testimony of his own ministry team who had endured great hardships, yet lived with godly character in order to commend themselves to all as servants of Christ (verses 3-10).

In these verses, Paul listed nine trials or experiences, nine inner qualities of followers of Christ, and then nine paradoxes to support the example he and his team had demonstrated. The nine trials are listed in verses 4 and 5. These trials and persecutions were impositions that Paul and the others endured as a result of being a part of the ministry of Christ. (See Acts 16:19-23 for examples of these experiences Paul suffered in Philippi.)

From these nine trials, Paul turned to the nine internal qualities that equipped them to endure these hardships, all of which are listed in verses 6 and 7. Included in this list are patience—the ability to bear up under pressures and trials, and purity—the practical righteousness that was demonstrated in Paul’s life. All of these, however, would have remained useless were it not for the power of God, another component mentioned by the apostle.

In verses 8-10, Paul continued his list with nine paradoxes or contradictions. These paradoxes include “unknown, yet well-known” and “dying, yet alive.” These paradoxes further

illustrated the challenges faced by the apostle and his team, their responses to these challenges, and the results of them. Even through all these challenges, Paul could remain joyful (verse 10).

## **Explore:**

### **Major Theme**

Paul wrote 2 Corinthians in response to strong attacks which some Christians at Corinth had made on his person, motive and character.

### **Background and Purpose**

False apostles had moved in among the Christians at Corinth (11:12–15). These “super-apostles” (11:5), taught a different gospel (11:12–15), and defied Paul’s authority. The Christians at Corinth had, or were on the verge of, changing their minds about

Paul. Paul wrote 2 Corinthians to tell them just how much this change of mind meant to him.

His letter warns them not to be too harsh with his opponents (2:5–11); not to be closely linked with unbelievers (6:14); to give generously to the collection of money being made for the poor Christians in Jerusalem (8–9); how to deal with false teachers (11:1–6); and concludes with Paul’s happiness that the Corinthians have stopped following false teachers (11:12–15).

## **Author**

The apostle Paul.

## **Date**

We know the precise date that Paul was originally in Corinth. It was when Gallio was proconsul in Achaia: “Paul left Athens and went to Corinth.... While Gallio was proconsul of Achaia, the Jews made a united attack on Paul and brought him into court” (Acts 18:1, 12). This was in ad 51 or 52. So his first letter to

Corinth must have been written in about ad 54–55 and his second letter about one year later in ad 55–56.

Mark Water, *The Books of the Bible Made Easy*, *The Made Easy Series* (Alresford, Hampshire: John Hunt Publishing, 2001), 47.

### **Explore:**

#### **Believers Should Avoid Close, Binding Relationships With Unbelievers (2 Corinthians 6:11-16)**

Paul's heart was open to these believers and he desired to have a close relationship with them. However, they were apparently harboring some suspicion about him and his ministry, likely spurred on by the false teachers Paul warned them about. He assured them of his willingness to renew and deepen the relationship (verses 11-13). Paul's desire was for the Corinthians to return the affection that he and the other missionaries had demonstrated toward them. While scholars believe that most felt

the same affection toward Paul, there were those in the fellowship who did not. To further his point, he reminded them in verse 12 that any distance or coldness they may have sensed was not on his part, thus he could admonish them again in verse 13 to open their hearts toward him.

Some of the Corinthians apparently had close relationships with unbelievers, possibly the false teachers, who were aiding in this divisive spirit. Paul instructed the Corinthians to avoid placing themselves in close and binding relationships with unbelievers whose influence and conduct could affect their own lives (verse 14). This would certainly include false teachers, but also marriages and other binding relationships in which the other person's attitudes, actions, and choices could strongly affect our lives. He supported this command by showing how complete opposites cannot be fully united in belief and purpose (verses 14-16).

The expression, unequally yoked, or bound together, used in verse 14, pictured yoking together two different types of animals. The logic is basic—why would someone yoke together two animals of differing strengths, differing styles of work, and differing purposes, and expect it to turn out well? They would not have such expectations. Nor should a believer, especially in regard to pagan worship, be linked together with unbelievers.

This did not mean, however, that believers are to have no interactions or friendships with unbelievers. Other writings of the apostle, such as 1 Corinthians 5:9-10, make that clear.

Believers should avoid binding relationships with individuals who live contrary to the faith God honors and desires to bless.

Paul's point is further clarified by five rhetorical questions that he asked from verses 14 to 16. Each of these questions was intended to reflect the vast differences between the kingdom of God and the kingdom of Satan. The term Belial in verse 15 meant a person of lawlessness and came to be used of the evil

one himself. The last question in verse 16 compared the temple of God with the temple of idols, between which there is no agreement whatsoever. Paul then concluded his questions with a reminder that we, as believers, are the temple of God (1 Corinthians 3:16 and 6:19). God wants to live in us and walk in close relationship with us.

### **Explore:**

#### **Believers Separate Themselves From Sin and Keep Growing in Holiness (2 Corinthians 6:17—7:1)**

Paul ended this chapter by instructing his readers to make decisions that would move them toward a life of holiness. Verse 17 begins with the word therefore or wherefore, linking it to the principles established in the previous verses. Since believers are the temple of God by His Spirit (verse 16), we are to separate ourselves from everything that would defile His

dwelling place—our bodies, hearts, and minds (verse 17). Here, Paul quoted Isaiah 52:11 to encourage the Corinthians (and us) to separate themselves from those who would serve as harmful influences to their spiritual lives.

While God's power and Spirit are at work in our lives and we are the recipients of God's grace and power, we are not to remain passive. These verses are filled with action the believer is to take: come out, be separate, touch not, and cleanse. While God's power will most assuredly enable us to do these things, it is placed upon us to be active in the process of sanctification.

Coupled with these actions believers are to embrace some special promises. In verse 17, God said He would welcome or receive us. Commentators see a link between this verse and Ezekiel 20:34, 41 where God promised to gather and to care for Israel. This must have been especially encouraging to those

believers who were struggling with being ostracized because of their faith and wondering how, or if, they would be accepted.

Then, in verse 18, the Lord said He would be a Father to us. Here, it appears that Paul is quoting from 2 Samuel 7:14, where God promised to be a Father to David's sons. A redeemed people, such as the Corinthian believers, have a special and unique relationship with God the Father. From these sons and daughters, however, God wants, and deserves, allegiance and obedience. In other words, God's promise to be present with us in such a close relationship should motivate us to cleanse ourselves of anything that would hinder our growing holiness and relationship with the Lord (7:1). The cleansing alluded to here would have been understood by the Corinthians as a ceremonial cleansing, a purification that implied separation from every evil defilement.

As used here, body or flesh, and spirit, reference the whole person, including the external (body) and the internal (heart, soul, and mind) components. In an attitude of reverence for God, we can cleanse ourselves by setting aside all sin and consistently choosing what is right, resulting in a growing holiness of our entire person. This is a maturing, growing holiness that reveals itself in a believer becoming more and more like Christ.

Paul's uses of the Old Testament accomplish several things. First, it reveals and supports Paul's knowledge of Judaism and the teachings of the Old Covenant. Second, it illustrates the fact that he was not a rogue teacher, teaching principles that were contrary to the principles of God. Third, it challenged the Corinthians in how they were to live their lives and the difference it would make when they chose holiness.

## **Explore:**

The expression unequally yoked or bound together (verse 14) was a metaphor involving harnessing together two unequal animals for the purpose of cultivating the land. The warning is against the joining together of a believer and an unbeliever in a way that would be considered a “yoke.” So what exactly did Paul have in mind? How far did he intend for this principle to be applied? While most commentators agree that this would forbid marriage between a believer and an unbeliever, the principle goes much further. The ultimate issue was one of beliefs and values behind the decisions and course of action people would take. Because the basic beliefs and values of believers and unbelievers are radically different, any union that would involve these beliefs and values would be doomed to tension and disharmony. Every believer should evaluate his or her relationships, business ventures, and partnerships by this standard. While Paul did not give any specifics, it is clear that he

never intended the believer to cease all contact and relationships with unbelievers. If he were to do this, he would never have the chance to impact them with the gospel message (See 1 Corinthians 5:9- 10). Also, this was not a call for believers who were already married to divorce their unbelieving spouses (1 Corinthians 7:12-13).

### **Explore:**

Christianity is about more than going to church and living a good moral life. Being a Christian is about having a vibrant personal relationship with Jesus Christ. Every Sunday School teacher or Bible study leader should want to see each of his or her learners enter into this relationship—their eternal destiny depends on it. As you work toward this goal, keep the following in mind:

Following Christ is about more than a mere decision; it is about a lifelong relationship. Jesus called us to make disciples, not mere decision-makers. Aim for long-term faith, not momentary emotion.

Salvation is a matter of grace, not works. Our works do not save us (Ephesians 2:8-9), nor do they keep us (Galatians 3:2-6). Good works are a product of salvation, not a prerequisite to it.

Don't confuse sanctification with salvation. Holiness follows salvation; it doesn't precede it. Don't try to impose "Christian" expectations on men and women who don't know Christ.

- Keep it simple. Being born again is not complicated. Here's a simple way to explain it:

- Acknowledge your sinfulness and your need for a Savior (Romans 3:10, 23).
- Trust in Christ's sacrifice for your sins and in His resurrection (Romans 10:9-10).

Surrender your life to God's transforming power (Romans 12:1-2).

Most of all, remember that your job is to tell the truth in a way others can understand, answer their questions, and give them an opportunity to respond. If you do that faithfully, some will respond and join the band of Christ-followers. When they do, Heaven will rejoice!

## **Question 1 of 5**

How did someone become a prophet?

## **Question 2 of 5**

What attitudes and actions of Christians might become obstacles to others coming to faith in Christ?

## **Question 3 of 5**

What attitudes and actions of Christians might draw people to Christ?

## **Question 4 of 5**

Give examples of close, binding relationships in which a lost person's attitudes, actions, and choices could strongly influence or affect believers' lives.

## **Question 5 of 5**

What attitudes, actions, or characteristics do I want to build into my life that will draw people to Christ?

