

2 Corinthians 6

10-10-12

Good Relationships, Bad Partnerships!

I. Slide#1 Intro:

- A. Last week we ended with Paul's plea to **Sinners** to be reconciled to God!
 1. Now, he starts the next chapter pleading to the **Saints**.

II. Slide#2 GRACE IN VAIN! (1,2)

- A. (1) What is Paul's fear here of them *receiving Grace in vain*?
1. The fear is **not** that they would **lose their salvation**, but that they would **not effectively carry out the ministry of reconciliation**.
 2. Is your life & ministry "grace-orientated" or "law-orientated"?
 - a) Some Christians have a hard time living in **Grace**. They are so afraid of *liberty in Christ* that they become, or remain, a legalist!
 - b) If they become or remain in this mode...**then God's Grace is in vain!**
- B. (2b) **Now-When do you deal with insurance policies? - After you've had an accident? NO way!**
1. **You don't wait until** the copper water pipe breaks in your house, to get **homeowners insurance**.
 2. **You don't wait until** you get into an auto accident, before you invest in **auto insurance**.
 3. **You don't wait until** you're diagnosed with a fatal disease, before you think about **medical insurance**.
 4. **And so, You shouldn't wait until** it's too late...before you **share the ministry of Reconciliation!**
 - a) **Behold, now is the accepted time; behold, now is the day of salvation.**
 - b) **Slide#3 Illustration:** A Saxon king who put down a rebellion in the distant province of his kingdom, then placed a **burning candle** in the archway of the castle and announced that all who had rebelled would be spared **if they put down their arms and took an oath of loyalty to the king**. Clemency and mercy were offered, **but the offer was limited to the life of the candle**. [God's candle is burning!]
 - c) **Behold, now is the accepted time; behold, now is the day of salvation.**
 - (1) Their salvation, **not yours**.

III. Slide#4 MINISTRY 101! (3-10)

- A. **Slide#5a** (3) How do you view *Ministry*?
1. Some would picture Ministry as **Sacred** – Stain glass, somber, grave & serious, w/ robes, & organ music.

2. **Slide#5b** Others would observe Ministry as **Cush/cushy** – as a place of manipulation; a place to make money off of people; or see the minister as one who craves power & wants to be in charge.
3. **Slide#5c** Still others would see Ministry as **Selective** – For only the spiritual elite. Those who float 6” off the ground. Who never have made a mistake. Who never have had a fight w/their wife [Like Kel & I, we’ve never had a fight...just **intense fellowship!**]
4. **Unfortunately**, none of these “*hit the mark*” for biblical ministry.
5. **Unfortunately**, many Ministers have discredited their very name [Minister = Servant]

B. Here are **2 ways** that our ministry **won’t** be discredited!

1. **Give no offense in anything!** – like breaking promises, using people, living hypocritically, being unfaithful, compromising truth, becoming greedy, or expect special treatment.
2. **By being Servants**(ministers) – One who expresses **submission**, or **debt** to another.
 - a) Here is an old Prayer we would do well to pray for our ministry:
 From the **cowardice** that shrinks from **new truth**,
 From the **laziness** that is content with **half-truths**,
 From the **arrogance** that thinks it knows **all the truth**,
 O **God of truth**, deliver us, deliver me!

C. (4,5) These verses dismantle any who think of ministry as “cush/cushy”!

D. **Patience** = Endurance

E. **Slide#6a Inner Struggles** -

1. **In tribulations** [afflictions/pressures/things that press in on us];
2. **In needs** [hardships/painful discomforts of life];
3. **In distresses** [lit. *narrow places*/tight spots that make us feel trapped]

F. **Slide#6b External Treatment** -

1. **In stripes** [physical torture]; **In imprisonments**; **In tumults** [noisy commotions/riots/mob violence/public outcry & assaults]

G. **Slide#6c Private Disciplines** –

1. **In labors**, **In sleeplessness**, **In fastings**.

H. **These show ministry is hard work!** – Paul later gives us an incredible list of hardship in ministry in ch.11. Here’s a quick peek, ...**in weariness and toil, in sleeplessness often, in hunger and thirst, in fastings often, in cold and nakedness; besides the other things, what comes upon me daily:**

1. This aspect of ministry rarely gets depicted on our **Christian TV Network!** No wonder our world has a strange view of Christianity.
 2. **Wow!** How do we deal with ministry if it's like that?
 - a) The answer is in the next 2 verses where Paul gives the **Attitudes** that must accompany these life-situations.
- I. **Slide#7a** (6,7) Here he gives us 9 qualities (4 seen & 5 unseen).
1. **4 Seen** - by purity (a clean lifestyle); by knowledge (a practical awareness of truth); by longsuffering (calm in the midst of the storm); by kindness (opp. of meanness).
 2. **Slide#7b 5 Unseen** - by the Holy Spirit (who controls us); by sincere love (seeking the highest good of others); by the word of truth (honest speech); by the power of God (supernatural enablement); by the armor of righteousness (given in Eph.6/our sp. weapons of warfare); on the right hand and on the left (Which ever direction the enemy comes).
 - a) **Kindness & sincere love.** When William McKinley was President of the United States, he had to make a decision about the appointment of an ambassador to a foreign country. Two candidates were equally qualified, so McKinley was still a Congressman, he had observed an inconsiderate action by one of the men. He recalled boarding a streetcar at the rush hour and getting the last vacant seat. Soon an elderly woman got on, carrying a heavy clothesbasket. No one got up to offer her a seat, so she walked the length of the car and stood in the aisle, hardly able to keep her balance as the vehicle swayed from side to side. One of the men McKinley was later to consider for ambassador was sitting next to where the woman was standing. Instead of getting up and helping her, he deliberately shifted his newspaper so it would look like he hadn't seen her. When McKinley noticed this, he walked down the aisle, graciously took her basket, and offered her his seat. The man was unaware that anyone was watching, but that one little act of selfishness would later deprive him of perhaps the crowning honor of his lifetime.¹
- J. Ok, if I hold passionately to **all 9** then ministry is a *cake-walk*? **Negative!**
1. Ministry consists of **glory** sometimes & **dishonor** at other times! (8a)
- K. (8b-10) **Hear how we will be regarded...**(read 8b-10)
1. **Many years ago I brought back a painting from Haiti.** It was still a little bit wet. But I brought it home anyway, & the top portion was *smear*d. I had a friend from church that had to touch it up for me.
 - a) Now, take a look at the canvas of **your** own life.
 - (1) **What would you paint over if you had the opportunity?**

¹ Our Daily Bread, Monday, November 8

L. **Octavius** (the pagan) charges: Look: some of you, the greater half (the better half, you say), go in need, suffer from cold, from hunger and toil. And yet your god allows it, he connives at it; he will not or he cannot assist his own followers. This proves how weak he is - or wicked.

Minucius Felix (the Christian) answers: "I now come to the accusation that most of us are said to be poor; that is not to our **shame**, it is to our **great credit**. Men's characters are *strengthened* by stringent circumstances, just as they are *dissipated* by luxurious living.

Besides, can a man be poor if he is free from want, if he does not covet the belongings of others, if he is rich in the possession of God?

Rather, he is poor who possesses much but still craves for more.

And so it is that when a man walks along a road, the **lighter** he travels, the **happier** he is; equally, on this journey of life, a man is more blessed if he does not pant beneath a burden of riches but lightens his load by poverty.

Nevertheless, we would ask God for material goods if we considered them to be of use; without a doubt, He to whom the whole belongs would be able to concede us a portion. But we prefer to hold possessions in contempt than to hoard them: it is rather **innocence** that is our aspiration, it is rather **patience** that is our entreaty; our preference is **goodness**, not extravagance."

IV. Slide#8 GOOD RELATIONSHIPS! (11-13)

- A. (11,12) Paul completely opened up & made himself vulnerable to the Corinthian church.
How did they respond back? *They have withdrawn.*
- B. (13) I speak as to children – meaning, *I'm not sharing anything real deep & mysterious folks.*
 - 1. He placed the cookies on the bottom shelf!
- C. **You also be open** - A successful relationship can never remain a 1-way street.
 - 1. Have you ever **hugged** someone who didn't hug you back?
 - 2. Have you ever **kissed** someone who didn't kiss you back?
 - 3. Have you ever tried to **talk** to someone, but they only gave 1 word answers back?
 - a) If you want to maintain an "open" relationship, it must be **reciprocal**.
- D. **Some relationships** should be **open & free**, **while others** need to be guarded.

V. Slide#9 BAD PARTNERSHIPS! (14-18)

- A. There are times to hold back *relationally*!
 - 1. **When is it wrong to "bond" with someone?** - **Answer:** vs.14-18.
- B. **Slide#10a WHAT THIS ISN'T SAYING!**
- C. It is **not** forbidding *associations* or *friendships* w/**unbelievers**!
 - 1. Remember what he said in 1 Cor.5:9,10 **I wrote to you in my epistle not to keep company with sexually immoral people. Yet I certainly did not mean with the**

sexually immoral people of this world, or with the covetous, or extortioners, or idolaters, *since then you would need to go out of the world.*

D. It is **not** forbidding a marriage *already established!*

1. For he already dealt w/that in 1 Cor.7:12,13 **If any brother has a wife who does not believe, and she is willing to live with him, let him not divorce her. And a woman who has a husband who does not believe, if he is willing to live with her, let her not divorce him.**

E. **Slide#10b WHAT THIS IS SAYING!**

F. **Slide#11,12 (14) Unequally yoked** - comes from Deuteronomy 22:10, **You shall not plow with an ox and a donkey together.**

1. **Is this speaking of marriage?** - It is speaking to “any” relationship that would fall under its command!
 - a) Marriage; business partnership; dating; friendships; major doctrinal differences. (I even think there is a wise caution of the strong Christian dating a weak Christian) [**Share my heart!**]
2. **Principle: What God has *joined*, we must not separate. What God has *separated*, we must not join.**
3. **Unequal yoking is: *Unfitting*** - Different in size, temperament, strength. **Ox clean, Ass unclean. *Unfair*** - Both would suffer pain, discomfort. **A poor working combination.**
4. **They have *two opposite natures* and wouldn't work well together.**
 - a) There are certain things which are fundamentally incompatible & were never meant to be brought together.
 - b) “It is impossible for the **purity** of the **Christian** & the **pollution** of the **pagan** to run in **double harness.**” William Barclay, 2 Cor., pg.221
 - (1) **Mark Twain** married a **Christian lady**. She at first didn't want to marry, but later did. He at first went through the motions of religion with her, but later said he couldn't keep up the hypocrisy. In time, she came to the place where she no longer believed in a personal God. During a time of deep grief, Twain said to his wife, “If your **Christian faith** will comfort you, go back to it.” She replied, “**I have none.**” :(
 - c) They'll be out of step w/each other.
 - d) Chances are the row they plow together...is going to be *crooked*.
5. **In the same way, it is wrong for believers to be yoked together with unbelievers.**
 - a) There will be differences in **lifestyles**, differences in **philosophies**, differences in **morals & values**.

6. But often times a person yearns for “relationship” & will settle for what the world has to offer.

a) It could be as damaging & as frightening down the road as...A runaway youth looking for the warmth of a relationship **but** wanders down a wrong alley trying to find that warmth!

G. Time magazine reported (1/22/95) that the earthquake in Kobe, Japan, occurred when **2 plates** on a fault line **15 miles offshore** suddenly **shifted against each other**, violently lurching **6-10'** in opposite directions.

The result was the worst Japanese earthquake since 1923. Thousands died. More than 46,000 buildings lay in ruins. One-fifth of the city's population was left instantly homeless. The destruction unleashed by those **2 tectonic plates** depicts what happens when a Christian bonds **unequally** with a non-Christian. Two people committed to each other but going in different directions can only lead to trouble.”

H. (14-16a) Note: fellowship, communion, accord/harmony, part, agreement.

1. Each of these words speaks of having something in common.

2. The word **accord** gives us our English word **symphony**, and it speaks of beautiful music that comes when the players are **reading the same music and following the same leader**.

I. (16b) We are **not only, not a good bond together, but we are different** in that we are *the Temple of the living God*, meaning, *the very residence where God lives*. [a God sleep over!]

1. Webster defines temple as, *a place devoted to a special purpose*.

J. (17) **Come out from among them!** (Similar to, “Get out”!)

1. *The same word came to...*

To Abraham - **Get out of your country**, From your family And from your father's house, To a land that I will show you. Gen.12:1

To Lot - **Get up, get out of this place**; for the LORD will destroy this city!

To Jacob - **Now arise, get out of this land**, and return to the land of your family. Gen.31:13

K. **Be separate!** – There are things in the world w/which the Christian cannot & dare not associate himself with.

2 boys caught two chirping baby **linnets**. They decided to teach these birds to sing by placing them in a small cage and hanging it next to the cage of a pet canary. The canary, of course, sang beautifully, so the boys thought if the linnets were close to it they too would become good songbirds. Several weeks went by with no apparent results. Then one day the youngsters were startled by a strange sound coming from the canary's cage. “Listen,” said one of them, “the canary is cheeping like a linnet.”