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**BIBLE STUDY**

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**"RECEIVE NOT THE**

**GRACE OF GOD IN VAIN"**

**2 Corinthians 6:1-18**

***II Corinthians 6:1 "We then, [as] workers together [with him], beseech [you] also that ye receive not the grace of God in vain."***

False apostles were leading some astray in Corinth by preaching “another Jesus”. They were telling Gentile Christians that they had to keep the Mosaic law in addition to believing in Jesus. Verse 1 is a plea from Paul for Corinth to realize that he is a messenger {ambassador} for Christ. He says, do not let the gospel message you received stop with you {be in vain}. Paul is calling them to testify of the truth of the gospel to everyone they have opportunity to.

***1 Corinthians 3:10 “According to the grace of God which is given unto me, as a wise masterbuilder, I have laid the foundation, and another buildeth thereon. But let every man take heed how he buildeth thereupon.”***

***I Peter 4:10 "As every man hath received the gift, [even so] minister the same one to another, as good stewards of the manifold grace of God."***

***II Corinthians 6:2 "(For he saith, I have heard thee in a time accepted, and in the day of salvation have I succoured thee: behold, now [is] the accepted time; behold, now [is] the day of salvation.)"***

Paul quotes from Isaiah 49:8 to emphasize that the day of salvation has arrived. Today, we must operate in light of God’s grace if we are to maximize the salvation we have received. "Succored", in this Scripture, means aid or relieve. No one should ever put off salvation to a more convenient time. We are not promised tomorrow. We do not even know whether we will be alive, or not tomorrow. The Spirit might even stop drawing you at another time. Today is the day of salvation. Even better, right this minute is the time for salvation.

***II Corinthians 6:3 "Giving no offence in any thing, that the ministry be not blamed:"***

Paul puts himself forward as an example for the Corinthians to follow. He didn’t worry about protecting himself but sought to protect his ministry from accusations. This is the same as saying, do not even give the appearance of evil. The only glimpse of what Christianity is all about, is sometimes us Christians. The non-believer does not go to church, or read his Bible, or listen to sermons. He has no way of knowing anything about Christianity, except the life we live before him. Is your life a testimony for Jesus? If a Christian does something bad, and it makes the news, the unbelieving world thinks all Christians are like that. It drives them away from receiving Christ in their lives. Christianity gets a black eye for what a few fallen Christians do. We must behave {all the time} in a Christ-like manner.

***II Corinthians 6:4 "But in all [things] approving ourselves as the ministers of God, in much patience, in afflictions, in necessities, in distresses,"***

***II Corinthians 6:5 "In stripes, in imprisonments, in tumults, in labours, in watchings, in fastings;"***

As God’s ministers, Paul and his coworkers were representatives of the Lord. So, he wants to commend his ministry and avoid anything that would compromise it and bring spiritual ruin to the lives of others, as many false teachers were doing. Paul lists a series of hardships that he had endured on behalf of his ministry, demonstrating that he was willing to suffer many intense afflictions to honor Christ and see lives transformed for his kingdom. Are you a Christian just when everything is going alright, or are you like Job: a Christian in hard times, too? The world is looking on to see how you handle the difficult times in your life. The world has no answer to this type of problem. God will help you if you stand fast and don't doubt.

***II Corinthians 6:6 "By pureness, by knowledge, by longsuffering, by kindness, by the Holy Ghost, by love unfeigned,"***

***II Corinthians 6:7 " By the word of truth, by the power of God, by the armour of righteousness on the right hand and on the left,"***

After listing the adversities he faced Paul lists the qualities necessary for this kind of faithful ministry. We see the standard that we should endure these problems with. We should be hypocritical but absolutely honest with God, with ourselves, and with others. Knowledge is accumulated learning. The Bible teaches us how to withstand these onslaughts from Satan. In time of troubles, we should allow the Spirit of God within us to take over. It is not how many problems you have that are important, but how you handle those problems. Perhaps, the right and left side means that whether this is coming from the world {left side}, or other Christians {right side}, it can be overcome with righteousness.

***Romans 5:3-5***

***3 And not only so, but we glory in tribulations also: knowing that tribulation worketh patience;***

***4 And patience, experience; and experience, hope:***

***5 And hope maketh not ashamed; because the love of God is shed abroad in our hearts by the Holy Ghost which is given unto us.***

The word of truth refers to the “preaching of the truth of Jesus.” The written word of God is the truth we preach. We know that every temptation Satan brought to Jesus, He answered with the truth "It is written". This is a guide to us. We must face each problem, or temptation, with "It is written". The answers to all of life's problems are found in the Bible. We must use the Bible as our guide in every situation. With the power of God working in us and the amour of righteousness protecting us we can overcome all obstacles.

***Philippians 4:13 "I can do all things through Christ which strengtheneth me."***

***John 1:14 “And the Word was made flesh, and dwelt among us, (and we beheld his glory, the glory as of the only begotten of the Father,) full of grace and truth.”***

***John 17:17 “Sanctify them through thy truth: thy word is truth.”***

***1 John 2:21 “I have not written unto you because ye know not the truth, but because ye know it, and that no lie is of the truth.”***

Perhaps, the right and left side means that whether this is coming from the world {left side}, or other Christians {right side}, it can be overcome with the truth, the word, and righteousness.

***Proverbs 4:27 “Turn not to the right hand nor to the left: remove thy foot from evil.”***

***Ephesians 6:10-17***

***10 Finally, my brethren, be strong in the Lord, and in the power of his might.***

***11 Put on the whole armour of God, that ye may be able to stand against the wiles of the devil.***

***12 For we wrestle not against flesh and blood, but against principalities, against powers, against the rulers of the darkness of this world, against spiritual wickedness in high places.***

***13 Wherefore take unto you the whole armour of God, that ye may be able to withstand in the evil day, and having done all, to stand.***

***14 Stand therefore, having your loins girt about with truth, and having on the breastplate of righteousness;***

***15 And your feet shod with the preparation of the gospel of peace;***

***16 Above all, taking the shield of faith, wherewith ye shall be able to quench all the fiery darts of the wicked.***

***17 And take the helmet of salvation, and the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God:***

***II Corinthians 6:8 "By honour and dishonour, by evil report and good report: as deceivers, and [yet] true;"***

***II Corinthians 6:9 "As unknown, and [yet] well known; as dying, and, behold, we live; as chastened, and not killed;"***

***II Corinthians 6:10 "As sorrowful, yet alway rejoicing; as poor, yet making many rich; as having nothing, and [yet] possessing all things."***

Next Paul lists nine pairs of paradoxes that he experienced. Paul is just saying, that it does not matter where the accusations are coming from. It really does not matter whether they are even true, or not. They are still overcome by the Word of God and righteousness. Just stand in your righteousness, and all the deceivers will finally be embarrassed when they are found out for what they are. Problems come from those you know, as well as from strangers. The intentions of those who are bringing the problems may be to cause your death, but they will not succeed. Circumstances around you may be sorrowful, yet unexplainable joy, in the face of these bad circumstances, can be had in Jesus. Paul said that he had learned to be satisfied in times when he had plenty and in times of want. Whatever state he found himself in, he was content. Through his personal character, the divine affirmation of his work, and his spiritual successes in spite of adversity, Paul’s apostleship was validated.

***II Corinthians 6:11 "O [ye] Corinthians, our mouth is open unto you, our heart is enlarged."***

***II Corinthians 6:12 "Ye are not straitened in us, but ye are straitened in your own bowels."***

***II Corinthians 6:13 "Now for a recompence in the same, (I speak as unto [my] children,) be ye also enlarged."***

Paul had not operated in secret among the Corinthians. He had kept nothing from them but had always spoken openly with a heart like an open book. He has opened his mouth and brought them the message of salvation. He loves them as a parent loves a child. So, like a father to his children (they were, in fact, his spiritual children, having been converted under his preaching), he pleads with them to display the same commitment to him that he had to them. His heart is with them. To enlarge the heart is to increase its capacity for sympathy and understanding. His ministry was nothing if not authentic and characterized by affection. In contrast, the Corinthians were the ones withholding affection from Paul. Paul is an authentic and powerful example not only for all church leaders but for all church members as well. Those who serve in positions of leadership ought to have a deep love for those under their spiritual care. Likewise, the congregation should have warm affection and respect for their leaders who will one day “give an account” to God for the souls of those whom they serve.

***Hebrews 13:17 “Obey them that have the rule over you, and submit yourselves: for they watch for your souls, as they that must give account, that they may do it with joy, and not with grief: for that is unprofitable for you.”***

Without this two-way openness, it’s difficult for those within a church to care for and protect one another spiritually. Paul is saying, learn from your mistakes. "Recompence", in this instance means correspondence. This is just another way of saying that Paul is not going to straighten them out, they will have to straighten themselves out. He can tell them what is wrong, but they will have to straighten themselves out. Paul has spoken good advice to them. We might learn from our mistakes, too.

***II Corinthians 6:14 "Be ye not unequally yoked together with unbelievers: for what fellowship hath righteousness with unrighteousness? and what communion hath light with darkness?"***

***II Corinthians 6:15 "And what concord hath Christ with Belial? Or what part hath he that believeth with an infidel?"***

***II Corinthians 6:16 "And what agreement hath the temple of God with idols? for ye are the temple of the living God; as God hath said, I will dwell in them, and walk in [them]; and I will be their God, and they shall be my people."***

Quoting from several Old Testament passages for support, Paul exhorts them not to have intimate fellowship with unbelievers. Some of the Corinthians were doing this with the Jewish false teachers who were opposing Paul and sowing discord in the church. The idea comes from Deuteronomy 22:10, in which the Israelites were commanded not to have “an ox and a donkey” plowing together. What’s true among animals is true among humans. Close relationships or partnerships between believers and unbelievers result in an unholy union. Whether it’s a romantic relationship, intimate friendship, or a business partnership, such compromise negatively affects your intimacy with God. When you align yourself with those whose beliefs and lives are far from God, you’ll find God distancing himself from you too.” This does not mean that you should not witness to those that are lost. It is saying, don't get involved in their way of life. There is sin by association. It is strange, but it seems bad rubs off on good more often than good rubs off on bad. This can mean for those who are believers not to intermarry with those of unbelief. It, also, means for the Christians not to get closely related in friendships with those people of the world. The righteous are those who have been washed in the blood of the Lamb and put in right standing with God. The unrighteous are followers of the devil and the world. They are heathen. Light does away with darkness. Darkness symbolizes evil. Light is of God. "Belial" means worthlessness, as an epithet of Satan. That is exactly what Satan is, worthless. All of the comparisons above are opposites. Christ and Satan are opposites. "Infidel" means disbelieving. The answer is, that they have nothing in common.

***1 John 2:13-14***

***13 I write unto you, fathers, because ye have known him that is from the beginning. I write unto you, young men, because ye have overcome the wicked one. I write unto you, little children, because ye have known the Father.***

***14 I have written unto you, fathers, because ye have known him that is from the beginning. I have written unto you, young men, because ye are strong, and the word of God abideth in you, and ye have overcome the wicked one.***

The Spirit of the Risen Christ dwells in the Christian. The Holy Spirit of God is in us to teach the truth of God, and to direct our lives pleasing unto God. This is the very reason it is so important that the Christian not get involved in any sin that involves the body. You would be including the Holy Spirit of God in your sin. God is a Spirit. He can dwell in my heart and be in heaven all at the same time. He is omnipresent {everywhere all at the same time}. We live in God, and He lives in us. You can easily see why it is so important for the Christian to live a life pleasing unto God. We should not go anywhere we could not take God or do anything that He would not be willing to do.

***Romans 8:9 "But ye are not in the flesh, but in the Spirit, if so be that the Spirit of God dwell in you. Now if any man have not the Spirit of Christ, he is none of his."***

Temple of God: In Scripture has three meanings. (1) Heaven, God’s dwelling place (Psalms 11:4; Habakkuk 2:20). (2) The collective Church, God’s temple (1 Corinthians 3:16; Ephesians 2:20, 21). (3) The individual believer as a temple of God (1 Corinthians 6:19). The plural pronouns (namely, them, their, they, v. 16; “you,” v. 17) in the Old Testament quotation suggest that Paul had the second idea in mind in this passage. That is, collectively they constitute the temple of God. Accordingly, the promise of God in Exodus and Leviticus applies to their situation.

***Exodus 29:45 “And I will dwell among the children of Israel, and will be their God.”***

***Leviticus 26:11-12***

***11 And I set my tabernacle among you: and my soul shall not abhor you.***

***12 And I will walk among you, and will be your God, and ye shall be my people.***

***II Corinthians 6:17 "Wherefore come out from among them, and be ye separate, saith the Lord, and touch not the unclean [thing]; and I will receive you,"***

***II Corinthians 6:18 "And will be a Father unto you, and ye shall be my sons and daughters, saith the Lord Almighty."***

Christians have to live in the world, until we go home to heaven, but we must not be entangled with the world or its people. We must separate ourselves unto holiness and righteousness. God said to the believers, "Be ye holy, for I am holy". We are like an island surrounded by water. We are the island, and the world is the water. We have a hedge of the blood of Jesus which protects us from the world coming too close. We are separated unto God. In other words, we have come over to God's side. We have left the evil of the world behind. This is one of the few places that Christian women are spoken of as daughters. We are children of the Father. We have been adopted into the family of God. Jesus is our older brother.

***Romans 8:15 "For ye have not received the spirit of bondage again to fear; but ye have received the Spirit of adoption, whereby we cry, Abba, Father."***

Just as in earthly adoptions, there is a price to pay, there was for the Lord. Jesus paid the price of adoption for us with His precious shed blood.

**QUESTIONS**

1. What is verse one a plea from Paul about?
2. Who's message had Paul brought them?
3. When is the day of salvation?
4. What does "succored" mean?
5. Verse 3 is the same thing as what statement?
6. What are some of the things we might face proving ourselves?
7. Who, in the Old Testament, was a good example for us in handling problems?
8. How can we withstand the onslaught of the devil?
9. Where do we find the instructions on this?
10. How did Jesus answer every temptation Satan placed before Him?
11. Where can we find the answers to all of life's problems?
12. Accusations are overcome by the \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ of \_\_\_\_.
13. Who do problems come from?
14. When circumstances around you are sorrowful, what should be your attitude?
15. How does Paul love the Corinthians?
16. What is verse 12 saying, really?
17. What does "recompence", in verse 13, mean?
18. What is Paul telling them to do in verse 13?
19. What does "unequally yoked" mean?
20. Darkness symbolizes what?
21. What is "Belial" in verse 15?
22. What is the temple of God?
23. What are Christians to do, so they will not get involved in the world's sins?