

***“Paul's Second Letter to the Corinthians —
For the Corinthians, and Us All, It Is An Acceptable Time Indeed!”***

Our Outline:

- ***The Burden of God's Grace Was On Paul for the Sake of the Corinthians***
- ***The Burden of God's Grace Was On the Corinthians for Paul's Sake***
- ***The Apostle's Primary Exhortation is Clear, for the Corinthians and for Us***

I. The Burden of God's Grace Was On Paul for the Sake of the Corinthians:

2 Cor. 6:1-2

1 We then, as workers together with him, beseech you also that ye receive not the grace of God in vain.

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.)

- “We then, as workers together with him, beseech you also that ye receive not the grace of God in vain ... behold, now is the accepted time; behold, now is the day of salvation.)”: ***The reference is from Is. 49:8 and let's look at that amazing Millennial prophecy from the prophet Isaiah. Our study today is primarily a study in what was in the apostle's heart as he wrote these words. For this is foundational to his exhortations in the rest of this chapter and in the letter as a whole. Isaiah 49 was surely on his heart as he wrote the words before us today:***

[READ] Is. 49:1-5, 8, 13-16

1 Listen, O isles, unto me; and hearken, ye people, from far; The LORD hath called me from the womb; from the bowels of my mother hath he made mention of my name.

2 And he hath made my mouth like a sharp sword; in the shadow of his hand hath he hid me, and made me a polished shaft; in his quiver hath he hid me;

3 And said unto me, Thou art my servant, O Israel, in whom I will be glorified.

4 Then I said, I have laboured in vain, I have spent my strength for nought, and in vain: yet surely my judgment is with the LORD, and my work with my God.

5 And now, saith the LORD that formed me from the womb to be his servant, to bring Jacob again to him, Though Israel be not gathered, yet

shall I be glorious in the eyes of the LORD, and my God shall be my strength.

6 And he said, It is a light thing that thou shouldest be my servant to raise up the tribes of Jacob, and to restore the preserved of Israel: I will also give thee for a light to the Gentiles, that thou mayest be my salvation unto the end of the earth.

7 Thus saith the LORD, the Redeemer of Israel, *and* his Holy One, to him whom man despiseth, to him whom the nation abhorreth, to a servant of rulers, Kings shall see and arise, princes also shall worship, because of the LORD that is faithful, *and* the Holy One of Israel, and he shall choose thee.

8 Thus saith the LORD, In an acceptable time have I heard thee, and in a day of salvation have I helped thee: and I will preserve thee, and give thee for a covenant of the people, to establish the earth, to cause to inherit the desolate heritages;

9 That thou mayest say to the prisoners, Go forth; to them that *are* in darkness, Shew yourselves. They shall feed in the ways, and their pastures *shall be* in all high places.

10 They shall not hunger nor thirst; neither shall the heat nor sun smite them: for he that hath mercy on them shall lead them, even by the springs of water shall he guide them.

11 And I will make all my mountains a way, and my highways shall be exalted.

12 Behold, these shall come from far: and, lo, these from the north and from the west; and these from the land of Sinim.

13 Sing, O heavens; and be joyful, O earth; and break forth into singing, O mountains: for the LORD hath comforted his people, and will have mercy upon his afflicted.

14 But Zion said, The LORD hath forsaken me, and my Lord hath forgotten me.

15 Can a woman forget her sucking child, that she should not have compassion on the son of her womb? yea, they may forget, yet will I not forget thee.

16 Behold, I have graven thee upon the palms of *my* hands; thy walls *are* continually before me.

- *There is little question that this passage of scripture was a major motivator for the apostle. Although that prophecy of Isaiah is Millennial and Messianic, meaning that its proper interpretation is for Israel and the Jews, and primarily for the future Millennial Kingdom where believing Jews will finally receive their promised inheritance, nevertheless it meant much to Paul personally. I suspect that the prophet Isaiah was for him a special example even of his own life, since Isaiah was sent to Israel knowing that the nation would NOT receive his testimony and exhortations and would in rebellion suffer the consequences.*

- *Isaiah's calling as a prophet had begun like this:*

Is. 6:8-10

8 Also I heard the voice of the Lord, saying, Whom shall I send, and who will go for us? Then said I, Here *am* I; send me.

9 And he said, Go, and tell this people, Hear ye indeed, but understand not; and see ye indeed, but perceive not.

10 Make the heart of this people fat, and make their ears heavy, and shut their eyes; lest they see with their eyes, and hear with their ears, and understand with their heart, and convert, and be healed.

- *If we then compare this with Acts 28:26-27, we can easily see the similarities in Paul's calling and ministry. And this is from the Lord's point of view. He had ordained Paul as apostle of the Gentiles and with a special ministry to the Jews as well. So it is no wonder that Paul himself also saw himself in this way, as a minister of God sent forth in the same spirit as Isaiah had been.*

[READ] Acts 28:23-28

23 And when they had appointed him a day, there came many to him into *his* lodging; to whom he expounded and testified the kingdom of God, persuading them concerning Jesus, both out of the law of Moses, and *out of* the prophets, from morning till evening.

24 And some believed the things which were spoken, and some believed not.

25 And when they agreed not among themselves, they departed, after that Paul had spoken one word, Well spake the Holy Ghost by Esaias the prophet unto our fathers,

26 Saying, Go unto this people, and say, Hearing ye shall hear, and shall not understand; and seeing ye shall see, and not perceive:

27 For the heart of this people is waxed gross, and their ears are dull of hearing, and their eyes have they closed; lest they should see with *their* eyes, and hear with *their* ears, and understand with *their* heart, and should be converted, and I should heal them.

28 Be it known therefore unto you, that the salvation of God is sent unto the Gentiles, and *that* they will hear it.

- *So with this context, we can understand so much better what the apostle has written in our next section here, verses 3 and following, part of the long sentence begun in verse 1 with verse 2 being parenthetical. For Paul was sent forth as Isaiah was, knowing that the nation of Israel and its leaders would reject his witness, whether in Jerusalem or in Rome, whether near to far!*

Let's continue, for now this is all about Paul and the Corinthians, and the apostle is preparing now to give his strongest exhortation of all. But would the Corinthians receive it or would they be like the Jews as they so often had rejected the message of the prophets that they had sent, or our Paul, apostle of the Gentiles but who was sent to the Jew first and then also to the Greeks!

I suspect that Paul had often taught the Corinthians about Israel's rejection of his preaching but the Gentiles welcoming of it during the 18 months he was in Corinth. And the Corinthians themselves were in the center of that teaching, for they were the "first fruits" there.

2 Cor. 6:3-10

3 Giving no offence in any thing, that the ministry be not blamed:

4 But in all *things* approving ourselves as the ministers of God, in much patience, in afflictions, in necessities, in distresses,

5 In stripes, in imprisonments, in tumults, in labours, in watchings, in fastings;

6 By pureness, by knowledge, by longsuffering, by kindness, by the Holy Ghost, by love unfeigned,

7 By the word of truth, by the power of God, by the armour of righteousness on the right hand and on the left,

8 By honour and dishonour, by evil report and good report: as deceivers, and yet true;

9 As unknown, and yet well known; as dying, and, behold, we live; as chastened, and not killed;

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

- ***The are powerful and one would think convicting words chosen by the Holy Spirit but reflecting so intimately Paul's ministry among the Corinthians. How can they possible NOT respond as the apostle has so hoped and prayed? Let us see how he now applies this all to them personally:***

II. The Burden of God's Grace Was On the Corinthians for Paul's Sake:

- ***Paul deserves a positive response, he writes first, a "recompense" or reward:***

[READ] 2 Cor. 6:11-15

11 O ye Corinthians, our mouth is open unto you, our heart is enlarged.

12 Ye are not straitened in us, but ye are straitened in your own bowels.

13 Now for a recompence in the same, (I speak as unto *my* children,) be ye also enlarged.

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

15 And what concord hath Christ with Belial? or what part hath he that believeth with an infidel?

- **Verse 13** - “Now for a recompence in the same, (I speak as unto my children,) be ye also enlarged”: ***Parents have a natural right to expect their children for whom they have sacrificed as much as life itself to respond to their nurturing, teachings, requests. In this section, verses 11 through 15, Paul, with his intimate knowledge of the Old Testament Mosaic Law, makes several allusion to Moses’s ministry of the Law to the nation of Israel.***
- **Verses 14-15** - “Be ye not unequally yoked together with unbelievers: for what fellowship hath righteousness with unrighteousness? and what communion hath light with darkness?”: ***See Lev. 19:19 & Deut. 7:2-3, & 22:9-11, etc. for the allusions here to Moses.*** “And what concord hath Christ with Belial? or what part hath he that believeth with an infidel?”:

1 Kings 18:21 And Elijah came unto all the people, and said, How long halt ye between two opinions? if the LORD [be] God, follow him: but if Baal, [then] follow him. And the people answered him not a word.

- ***See similar language in the first letter to the Corinthians found in chapter 10 which references Deuteronomy 32:***

1 Cor. 10:20-22 ***[Paul now with many allusions to the Pentateuch especially to Deuteronomy, lays a firm foundation for the exhortation soon to follow.]***

20 But I say, that the things which the Gentiles sacrifice, they sacrifice to devils, and not to God: and I would not that ye should have fellowship with devils.

21 Ye cannot drink the cup of the Lord, and the cup of devils: ye cannot be partakers of the Lord's table, and of the table of devils.

22 Do we provoke the Lord to jealousy? are we stronger than he?

[READ] Deut. 32:16-21 [This is the “song” of Moses, just before his death.]

16 They provoked him to jealousy with strange *gods*, with abominations provoked they him to anger.

17 They sacrificed unto devils, not to God; to gods whom they knew not, to new *gods that* came newly up, whom your fathers feared not.

18 Of the Rock *that* begat thee thou art unmindful, and hast forgotten God that formed thee.

19 And when the LORD saw *it*, he abhorred *them*, because of the provoking of his sons, and of his daughters.

20 And he said, I will hide my face from them, I will see what their end *shall be*: for they *are* a very froward generation, children in whom *is* no faith.

21 They have moved me to jealousy with *that which* is not God; they have provoked me to anger with their vanities: and I will move them to jealousy with *those which* are not a people; I will provoke them to anger with a foolish nation.

- ***So, to conclude this section, Paul, as spiritual father of the Corinthians expects a proper reward for his service there, he expects and hopes for their positive response to his exhortations to separate from evil in every dimension. But to do that, they must receive him back as their spiritual father, for, it seems, they had abandoned him for other teachers and even mentors. As he saw it, there was no other way. And so he writes:*** “O ye Corinthians, our mouth is open unto you, our heart is enlarged. Ye are not straitened in us, but ye are straitened in your own bowels. Now for a recompence in the same, (I speak as unto my children,) be ye also enlarged. Be ye not unequally yoked together with unbelievers: for what fellowship hath righteousness with unrighteousness? and what communion hath light with darkness? And what concord hath Christ with Belial? or what part hath he that believeth with an infidel?”

The reason there was no other way is that this was not a matter of legalisms regarding the full keeping of the law as it had been for the Jews under Moses who was presented as their spiritual father. So following Moses as their guide in every way and honoring him was the order of that day. But in this day, as the apostle writes, in this day grace must rule and not law and this was the day of salvation therefore, if they would receive the grace of God not in vain but with the proper consequence. For this is about their salvation in the larger sense, therefore, in regard to their proper growth and sanctification. It must be by grace through faith alone even as their initial salvation was necessarily the same.

- ***And so is ours. Rejoice!***

III. The Apostle's Primary Exhortation is Clear, for the Corinthians and for Us:

[READ] 2 Cor. 6:16-18, 7:1-2

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.

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,

18 And will be a Father unto you, and ye shall be my sons and daughters, saith the Lord Almighty.

7:1 Having therefore these promises, dearly beloved, let us cleanse ourselves from all filthiness of the flesh and spirit, perfecting holiness in the fear of God.

7:2 Receive us; we have wronged no man, we have corrupted no man, we have defrauded no man.

- ***This is the exhortation to stand apart and not be a part of their lives and evils. Here the allusions to Moses and the prophets are many as well, especially it seems to me in Leviticus, Isaiah, and Jeremiah:***

Lev. 26:12* And I will walk among you, and will be your God, and ye shall be my people. **Part of the terms and condition of the blessings promised under the Mosaic Law! This is the Old Covenant. The New Covenant promises the same but this time with the Law written in their hearts since without that there was no way they could keep that law:*

Jer. 31:33-34

33 But this *shall* be the covenant that I will make with the house of Israel; After those days, saith the LORD, I will put my law in their inward parts, and write it in their hearts; and will be their God, and they shall be my people.

34 And they shall teach no more every man his neighbour, and every man his brother, saying, Know the LORD: for they shall all know me, from the least of them unto the greatest of them, saith the LORD: for I will forgive their iniquity, and I will remember their sin no more.

- ***This is promising spiritual blessings for Israel, not for Gentiles! But Paul is writing to Gentiles about the blessings God has in mind for them, for the Gentiles.***
- ***This should remind us of Romans chapter 15, shouldn't it?***

Rom. 15:25-27

25 But now I go unto Jerusalem to minister unto the saints.

26 For it hath pleased them of Macedonia and Achaia to make a certain contribution for the poor saints which are at Jerusalem.

27 It hath pleased them verily; and their debtors they are. For if the Gentiles have been made partakers of their spiritual things **[namely, some of the spiritual benefits of that New Covenant]**, their duty is also to minister unto them in carnal things.

Application / Conclusions:

Israel's spiritual blessing were promised in an Earthly and Kingdom context. But we have the spiritual blessings and more, although in an often purely spiritual and heavenly context. Praise God for his unlimited grace to us today! And, indeed, may we also receive that grace to a blessed life abundant. In other words, may we cleave to Paul and not Moses, may we imitate Paul, not receiving in vain that grace that has been and is freely offered, but taking Paul's mantle upon us and always accepting the ministry of that transforming grace in his stead, for he is our spiritual father. Amen and amen.