

THIS WEEK'S MESSAGE

MAY 25TH–26TH, 2024 // 2 CORINTHIANS

AMMUNITION (2 CORINTHIANS 6:3–4A)

CHARACTER

If we're to be ambassadors for Jesus, **we must strive to have a great reputation.** Paul said he doesn't give "anyone an occasion for offense, so that the ministry will not be blamed," and we're to "commend ourselves in everything."

- This means **at work, school, shopping, etc., we must act in a Christ-like manner.**

WE ARE A TARGET ALREADY

There has and will always be a unique hatred and criticism towards Christianity. Because Christians are already a target, **we cannot give those who seek to distort or destroy the truth ammunition because of our hypocrisy.**

- This doesn't require us to be perfect, but **to be honest, humble, and repentant.**

MINISTRY (2 CORINTHIANS 6:4B–13)

"BY GREAT ENDURANCE"

Paul had an extremely difficult life after his salvation. He summarizes his calling in 10 phrases that show both the amazing hardships and victories of following Jesus.

- **To follow Christ and minister to others takes endurance only possible by the Spirit. We must be dependent and faithful.**

BUILDING THE KINGDOM TAKES SACRIFICE

To honor God, Paul endured hardships, difficulties, beatings, imprisonments, riots, labors, sleepless nights, and hunger.

- Christians, we will have to endure some level of adversity. The truth is that **anything of value must be fought and labored for, and our faith is of the highest value.**

RESPONDING WITH POSITIVITY

It is not a question of if we will have to face "difficulties," but how we will respond. Paul responded to adversity with **purity, knowledge, patience, kindness, the Holy Spirit, sincere love, the word of truth, by the power of God through weapons of righteousness.**

- **Prayer, the Bible, and obedience is the key.**

GOOD MORAL STANDING WITH GOD

We must live in righteousness to weather "glory and dishonor...slander and good report; [being] regarded as deceivers yet true...unknown yet recognized."

- **Through a relationship with Jesus we produce the fruit (Gal. 5) and gifts (1 Cor. 12–14) of the Spirit that enable us to live stable and God-honoring daily lives.**

SEEING OUR LIVES THROUGH THE LENS OF GOD

Though life is hard, and the body is "dying," through faith, "we live; as being disciplined, yet not killed; as grieving, yet always rejoicing; as poor, yet enriching many; as **having nothing, yet possessing everything.**"

- This is a direct reference to Paul's ministry, but this mindset applies to us as well.

UNDERSTANDING WHAT LIFE IS REALLY ABOUT

When we give our lives to Jesus, we start to learn what life is really about and to value eternal things more than temporary things. In this, **we aim to live by the principles and teachings of the Word because we know the results.**

- **In Christ, there is both power in this life and the promise of a perfect eternity.**

PAUL'S GENUINE LOVE FOR OTHERS

Paul appealed to the hearts of the Corinthians by reminding them of how much he did for their sake. He honestly opened up his heart and wanted them to do the same to him.

- **We rarely get back what we put into others. Glorifying God through truth and love is the goal, not personal reciprocation.**

SEPARATION (2 CORINTHIANS 6:14–7:1)

UNEQUALLY YOKED

V. 14 is often used in relation to marriage, but it goes much deeper. Though we are to build bridges with all kinds of people, we are not to "yoke" (partner with) ourselves to any beliefs or principles that are not biblical.

- **Biblical compromise must become an absolute non-negotiable for the Christian.**

A DELICATE BALANCE

Vs. 14b–15 are about the separation of principles and practices, not seclusion from non-Christians.

We are to hold strong to our beliefs while loving and engaging with non-Christians.

- To do this we must **know truth, love others, set boundaries, and be willing to go through what might be a difficult process.**

"FOR WE ARE THE TEMPLE OF THE LIVING GOD"

In the OT, there were stringent rules so the temple of God wouldn't be defiled. In the NT, we learn we've become the temples of God.

- As living temples, **we must proactively distance ourselves from the destructive**

beliefs of the world because we're called to be "clean" places for God to reside.

A CONDITIONAL PROMISE

Paul uses Exodus 25 and 29 to remind the Corinthians we have a **promise from God to "welcome [us]" and be "a Father to [us]" if we choose to live in a relationship with Him.**

- The condition is that we "cleanse ourselves from every impurity of the **flesh and spirit.**"

ADDRESSING THE FLESH AND THE SPIRIT

There are sins specifically related to both our physical actions and our thoughts, but negligence of either will contaminate the soul.

- **Mentally, we must ensure we're thinking biblically, denying distortions, and avoiding sinful thought. Physically, we must take steps to ensure our actions honor God.**

HOLINESS AND "THE FEAR OF GOD"

God wants us to live in *holiness—separation from the world's principles* (1 Peter 1). But, **when one loses the fear of the Lord they no longer strive to live in contrast to the "world" because they don't think their actions have eternal consequences.**

- Do we live in **holiness and reverence of God?**

HOW WE LIVE MATTERS

- **Character matters to Jesus.** This is why He taught so much on how we are to conduct ourselves in private and in public.
- If we're to **endure and respond well to the pressures of life compounded by the pressures of following Jesus,** we must live in a good standing relationship with Him.

IN THOUGHT AND ACTION

- We must also **intentionally focus our thoughts on the things of God** while setting boundaries from distortions, distractions, and temptations of the "world."
- **If our mind is guarded by God and the truth, it will change how we act, treat others, and even how we treat ourselves.**

IN ORDER TO REACH OTHERS

- **We are not called to seclusion from people, but from principles.** If we are to effectively reach non-Christians, **we must live with a good reputation and in holiness (separation from the world's principles) while still building relationships with others.** This requires strong insulation from the Spirit.

TO HONOR GOD

- If we call ourselves Christians, our chief goal should be to live in a way that invites His Spirit to dwell in our "temple."
- A strong **reverence for God and an understanding that our actions have eternal ramifications keeps us in a healthy and deeply beneficial relationship with Him.**

TO BE AN HONORABLE TEMPLE

- How is our reputation? Does it honor God and attract others? Do our private and public beliefs, thoughts, and actions reflect truth?
- Are we isolated from people or from principles? Are we insulated by the Holy Spirit?
- Do we revere and live in relationship with Jesus? If not, how do we expect to endure pressure?