

Handout: 2 Corinthians Lesson 3

In 6:3-7a, Paul lists his apostolic credentials and defends the integrity of his missionary team. He insists that, as ministers of God, they have caused “no one to stumble in anything,” having caused no offense and no scandal. He lists three groups of three hardships (for a total of nine) they have suffered (verses 4b-5), and two series of four virtues (using the words by, in, and with) that explain how they endured and overcame hardships (verses 6-7a). Then, after three transitional phrases (verses 7b-8a), he lists a series of seven antitheses, illustrating the paradoxes of his team’s apostolic ministry (verses 8b-10):

- Hardships endured: afflictions, hardships, constraints, beatings, imprisonments, riots, labors, vigils, fasts.
- Overcame hardships: by purity, knowledge, patience, kindness, in a holy spirit, in unfeigned love, in truthful speech, in the power of God; with weapons of righteousness at the right and at the left.
- Transitional phrases: with weapons of righteousness at the right and at the left; through glory and dishonor, insult and praise.
- Seven antitheses, beginning with “We are treated”:
 1. as deceivers and yet are truthful
 2. as unrecognized and yet acknowledged
 3. as dying and behold we live
 4. as chastised and yet not put to death
 5. as sorrowful yet always rejoicing
 6. as poor yet enriching many
 7. as having nothing and yet possessing all things

Paul asks five questions in 6:14b-16a:

1. For what partnership do righteousness and lawlessness have?
2. Or what fellowship does light have with darkness?
3. What accord has Christ with Beliar?
4. Or what has a believer in common with an unbeliever?
5. What agreement has the temple of God with idols?

Throughout 2 Corinthians, Paul answers the question “Who is God” by naming God in seven various ways:

1. He is “God our Father” in 1:2.
2. He is the “God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ” in 1:3a.
3. He is “the Father of compassion and God of all encouragement” in 1:3b.
4. He is the “living God” in 3:3 and 6:16.
5. He is the “God who raises the dead” in 1:9 and “the one who raised the Lord Jesus will raise us also” in 4:14.
6. He is the God who said “Let light shine out of darkness” in 4:6.
7. He is the God who brings “a new creation” in Christ and the “God who has reconciled us to himself through Christ” in 5:17-18.

6:16-18 Paul quotes three pairs of Old Testament verses: *as God said: “I will live with them and move among them, and I will be their God and they shall be my people. 17 Therefore, come forth from them and be separate,” says the Lord, and touch nothing unclean; then I will receive you and I will be a father to you, and you shall be sons and daughters to me, says the Lord Almighty.”* → over

The first part of the Old Testament quotation at the end of verse 16 combines Leviticus 26:11-12 (from the list of blessings for covenant obedience) and Ezekiel 37:27 (from God's promise of a future everlasting covenant of peace):

- *I will set my Dwelling among you, and will not disdain you. Ever present in your midst, I will be your God, and you will be my people* (Lev 26:11-12).
- *My dwelling shall be with them; I will be their God, and they shall be my people* (Ez 37:27).

He uses the combined passages to remind the Corinthians of the fulfillment of the Old Testament promises of the new and everlasting Covenant through the death and Resurrection of the Davidic Messiah, Jesus Christ and the indwelling of the Holy Spirit. God now dwells with the Corinthian Christians and His entire Church through the gift of the Holy Spirit that Jesus made possible.

The next combination of Old Testament verses Paul quotes is from Isaiah 52:11 and Ezekiel 20:34 where the Lord says:

- *Depart, depart, come forth from there, touch nothing unclean! Out from there! Purify yourselves, you who carry the vessels of the LORD!* (Is 52:11).
- *With a mighty hand and an outstretched arm, with poured-out wrath, I will bring you out from the nations and gather you from the countries over which you are scattered* (Ez 20:34).

God called the Corinthian Christians as His holy people in the same way He called Israel. Therefore, they must separate themselves from pagan practices and from anyone who would contaminate their true Christian identity. The call to separate themselves from what is unholy probably includes any itinerate Christian missionaries who have caused division in the community.

The third set of verses Paul cites as the words of "the Lord Almighty" are from 2 Samuel 7:14a and Isaiah 43:6b:

- *I will be a father to him, and he shall be a son to me...* (2 Sam 7:14a).
- *Bring back my sons from afar, and my daughters from the ends of the earth* (Is 43:6b).

He reminds the Corinthians that Jesus is the Son of God and the promised Davidic Messiah. As heirs of Jesus Christ, the Corinthian Christians are true sons and daughters of God in the family of an eternal covenant.

In 7:9-10, Paul mentions the "godly sorrow" that produced repentance in the Corinthians that counted toward their salvation as opposed to absence of repentance that leads to death. The Council of Trent defined contrition as "sorrow of the soul and detestation for the sin committed, together with the resolution not to sin again" (see CCC 1451). There can be more than one motive for contrition, ranging from sorrow for offending a loving God and Father to fear of divine punishment in the fires of Hell. Jesus' preaching called us to show our love for God by renouncing all sin. However, He also taught: "*I shall show you whom to fear. Be afraid of the one who after killing has the power to cast into Gehenna*" (Lk 12:5; also see Mt 10:28; 25:31-26). Contrition motivated by the fear of eternal punishment is called "imperfect contrition," whereas "perfect contrition" is motivated by one's love for God, the Father of all encouragement. CCC 1451-54.