

Lesson 11: 2 Corinthians 6:1-10

- **I. Verse 1: We then, as workers together with him, beseech you also that ye receive not the grace of God in vain.**
 - A. Paul returns in this chapter to his earlier description of the work that God has assigned to him and his associates. The phrase "as workers together" translates one Greek word meaning "working together."
 - 1. The verb has no object, but most translations assume that it refers to working together with God, thus translating the phrase "As God's fellow workers," for example.
 - a. As an aside, a good translation is not necessarily a translation that removes all ambiguity. If the ambiguity is in the original text, then (in my opinion) the ambiguity should remain in the translation.
 - 2. Paul could be referring to his human coworkers, but since this phrase follows 5:20, where Paul says that God gave him a ministry of reconciliation and that God makes his appeal through him, it seems almost certain that here he has in mind his working with God.
 - 3. The statement then reminds his readers of his divine commission and authority, while also asserting that what he does is God's work rather than his own.
 - 4. And what is his work? He is working with God to accomplish the agenda of reconciliation. God sent Jesus to make the reconciliation possible, and God now sends Paul as an ambassador to proclaim that message of reconciliation.
 - 5. Everyone is either working for God or working against God. We should pray each day that we will never be found working against God in his mission of reconciliation.
 - B. The "grace of God" in verse 1 also points to God's reconciling work in Christ.
 - 1. Paul better than anyone understood the grace of God. And he worked harder than anyone to make certain that he had not received that grace in vain.
 - a. 1 Corinthians 15:10 But by the grace of God I am what I am: and his grace which was bestowed upon me was not in vain; but I laboured more abundantly than they all: yet not I, but the grace of God which was with me.
 - 2. What would cause the grace of God to be received in vain?
 - a. Anselm: "He receives grace into a vacuum ... who does not work with it, who does not give it to his heart, and who, through sloth, makes that grace ineffectual, by not doing all that he can to express it in good works."
 - b. An inactive response to God's word is worthless and unprofitable.
 - 1) Mark 4:18-19 And these are they which are sown among thorns; such as hear the word, 19 And the cares of this world, and the deceitfulness of riches, and the lusts of other things entering in, choke the word, and it becometh unfruitful.
 - 3. While generally true for all Christians, Paul's warning (as we will soon see) had a more specific and immediate application. Beginning in verse 14 we will see Paul's fear that the Corinthians' continuing association with idols would cause their faith to founder on the rocks.
- **II. Verse 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.)**
 - A. Paul next explains the gravity of the situation with a quote from Isaiah 49:8 followed by a one sentence summary in which he twice says "Behold" or "Look."
 - 1. "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."

- 2. Note that Paul quotes verbatim the Septuagint (the Greek translation of the Old Testament) rather than the original Hebrew text. That should put to rest permanently any issue about whether a translation can accurately convey the word of God. There was at least one translation that was given the Holy Spirit Seal of Approval!
- 3. Paul uses this quote to show that it refers now to something much more important than the return of God's people from exile and captivity in Babylon. Today it refers to the deliverance of God's people from exile and captivity in sin.
- B. The "time accepted" or "acceptable time" refers to that day of salvation at which time a Christian is delivered from the bondage of sin and death.
 - 1. The acceptable time is the time acceptable to God, not to man. God's timetable completely ignores what might or might not be acceptable or timely to humans.
 - 2. We may think we have all the time in the world to obey God, and we may want to wait for a more acceptable time to walk down that aisle. But God tells us that "now is the accepted time, behold, now is the day of salvation."
 - 3. Before one can obey the message of reconciliation, one must hear the message of reconciliation. But hearing the message is no guarantee that it will be received.
- C. The people in Paul's day were familiar with the ancient maxim, "Seize the day!"
 - 1. Hebrews 3:13 "But exhort one another daily, while it is called To day; lest any of you be hardened through the deceitfulness of sin."
 - 2. Ephesians 5:14-16 "Wherefore he saith, Awake thou that sleepest, and arise from the dead, and Christ shall give thee light. 15 See then that ye walk circumspectly, not as fools, but as wise, 16 Redeeming the time, because the days are evil."
 - 3. Time is one of God's most precious gifts.
 - a. Shakespeare: "I wasted time, and now time doth waste me."
 - b. "This is the day the Lord has made. It comes equipped with a set of fresh opportunities. In its joys and pleasures, I can show my gratitude to God. In its trials and temptations, I can prove my faithfulness to God. In its pains and hardships, I can demonstrate my trust in God. Here it is, this day God has made for me. For all I know, it could be my last. What to do then? I will rejoice and be glad in it!"
- D. Paul may have turned to this passage from Isaiah because Isaiah's situation resembled his own.
 - 1. Isaiah 49:1-6 "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."
 - 2. God formed Isaiah in the womb to be his servant, to reconcile Israel to him, and to proclaim his salvation to the ends of the earth. But when Isaiah delivered that message it was not met with an enthusiastic response. Instead, Isaiah wondered in verse 4 whether he had labored in vain. But he also expressed his confidence in verse 5 that his cause was with the Lord.
 - 3. "Although men despise him, God will honor him by confirming his message; and the God who has had compassion on Israel in spite of their sins will have compassion on all the nations. ... Word for word this is true of the Apostle Paul." (Plummer)

- **III. Verse 3: Giving no offence in any thing, that the ministry be not blamed:**
- A. Paul now moves on to present what is commendable about his ministry.
 - 1. In Paul's letters, the word "ministry" or "service" occurs 23 times, 12 of which are in this epistle. The emphasis on this one word shows the importance Paul attached to his ministry. His ministry was what mattered; not himself.
 - 2. He commends himself by his purity of motives and by the evident power of God that has sustained him through all his trials and afflictions.
 - 3. Paul was many things but one thing he never was is a hypocrite. His deeds matched his words. That quality was very different from the Cynics who gathered crowds on street corners at this time. They were widely regarded as "foul-smelling frauds."
 - 4. In listing his qualities, Paul is trying to indirectly encourage the Corinthians to emulate his own cross-centered life. His life and work are a model and example of his message.
 - 5. We can proclaim the gospel 24 hours a day, but our proclamation will be ineffective if we are not living that gospel 24 hours a day.
- B. Paul says here that he gives no offense in any thing.
 - 1. A better translation is that he puts no stumbling block in anyone's path.
 - 2. That is, Paul does not do anything that would discredit his proclamation of the gospel and turn others away from the gospel.
 - 3. Paul implies that if the Corinthians have accepted the grace of God in vain, it is not because of anything he has done.
- C. In the second half of the verse, Paul tells us the purpose of his upright behavior -- so that the ministry will not be blamed or discredited.
 - 1. Paul is not concerned about his own personal reputation, but rather the reputation of the ministry and its effectiveness.
 - a. Philippians 1:15-18 "Some indeed preach Christ even of envy and strife; and some also of good will: 16 The one preach Christ of contention, not sincerely, supposing to add affliction to my bonds: 17 But the other of love, knowing that I am set for the defence of the gospel. 18 What then? notwithstanding, every way, whether in pretence, or in truth, Christ is preached; and I therein do rejoice, yea, and will rejoice."
 - 2. The censure Paul dreads comes not from man, but from God.
 - a. 1 Corinthians 4:2-5 Moreover it is required in stewards, that a man be found faithful. 3 But with me it is a very small thing that I should be judged of you, or of man's judgment: yea, I judge not mine own self. 4 For I know nothing by myself; yet am I not hereby justified: but he that judgeth me is the Lord. 5 Therefore judge nothing before the time, until the Lord come, who both will bring to light the hidden things of darkness, and will make manifest the counsels of the hearts: and then shall every man have praise of God.
 - 3. To be discredited before men is one thing; to be discredited before God is quite another.
 - a. John 12:42-43 "Nevertheless among the chief rulers also many believed on him; but because of the Pharisees they did not confess him, lest they should be put out of the synagogue: 43 For they loved the praise of men more than the praise of God."
 - 4. One thing verse 3 is not teaching is that an effective minister is a minister who never offends anyone.
 - a. After all, this verse was written by the same Paul who called Peter a hypocrite and who suggested that those of the circumcision party should go all the way and castrate themselves. Paul was not beaten and left for dead because he was telling people what they wanted to hear. People are inevitably offended when they are told they are lost in their

sins. Even when we proclaim the truth in love (as we must) some people will inevitably be offended.

- b. Romans 9:31-33 "But Israel, which followed after the law of righteousness, hath not attained to the law of righteousness. 32 Wherefore? Because they sought it not by faith, but as it were by the works of the law. For they stumbled at that stumblingstone; 33 As it is written, Behold, I lay in Sion a stumblingstone and rock of offence: and whosoever believeth on him shall not be ashamed."
- c. Matthew 15:12 Then came his disciples, and said unto him, Knowest thou that the Pharisees were offended, after they heard this saying?
- d. "People inevitably find fault with human ministers, and trying to avoid this by ministering defensively, skirting around anything that might evoke possible criticism, will still meet with criticism. Worse, a ministry directed by what others might think is so neutralized that it is ultimately worthless to God."
- e. If the only alternative to offending someone with the gospel is to have them continue on their way to Hell unoffended, then it is much better to offend them. Perhaps they will come to their senses and recognize their condition outside of Christ.

• **IV. Verses 4-5: But in all things approving ourselves as the ministers of God, in much patience, in afflictions, in necessities, in distresses, In stripes, in imprisonments, in tumults, in labours, in watchings, in fastings;**

- A. In verse 4, Paul begins to discuss how he approves or commends himself as a minister of God.
 - 1. Some have suggested this contradicts what Paul said elsewhere on this subject.
 - a. 2 Corinthians 5:12 For we commend not ourselves again unto you, but give you occasion to glory on our behalf, that ye may have somewhat to answer them which glory in appearance, and not in heart.
 - 2. But in 5:12, Paul was talking about commending himself to the Corinthians. Here he is talking about commending himself in general, which is how he used the term in Chapter 4.
 - a. 2 Corinthians 4:2 But have renounced the hidden things of dishonesty, not walking in craftiness, nor handling the word of God deceitfully; but by manifestation of the truth commending ourselves to every man's conscience in the sight of God.
 - 3. Paul is saying to the Corinthians, this is the way I commend myself to others in the world, and this is the way you should commend me to others (12:11).
 - 4. He is also suggesting that they should copy his lifestyle. God did not call them to be bystanders applauding the dedicated sacrificial service of God's servants. They are called to serve as well.
- B. Paul's lifestyle had brought him many hardships; he had not landed a soft assignment as Christ's ambassador.
 - 1. "A ministry of reconciliation requires that one must go to those who are unreconciled and impenitent, to claim those claimed by Satan, to march boldly into the dens of vice, ignorance, and devilry. It is dangerous work, as Christ's crucifixion reveals. The demonic powers do not lie down weakly in submission when the gospel is preached. But they rise up and lash out viciously in a desperate attempt to prevent it from taking hold."
 - 2. Barclay: "In all the chances and changes of life Paul had only one concern—to show himself a sincere and profitable minister of Jesus Christ. Even as he made that claim, his mind's eye went back across ... "the blizzard of troubles" through which he had come and through which he was still struggling. Every word in this tremendous catalogue, which someone has called "the hymn of the herald of salvation," has its background in Paul's adventurous life."

- C. The phrase "in much patience" or "in much endurance" goes with the opening clause rather than with the list that follows. Endurance is not one of the afflictions but is rather a positive quality by which he commends himself.
- 1. Barclay has the following to say about the Greek word translated "endurance": "It is untranslatable. It does not describe the frame of mind which can sit down with folded hands and bowed head and let a torrent of troubles sweep over it in passive resignation. It describes the ability to bear things in such a triumphant way that it transfigures them."
- D. A list of nine hardships follows that may be grouped into three sets of three -- general suffering, suffering endured at the hands of others, and suffering endured by way of self-discipline.
- 1. General Suffering: Afflictions, Necessities, Distresses
 - a. Afflictions
 - 1) The word Paul uses originally expressed sheer, physical pressure on a man. It describes things that weigh down a person's spirit and the disappointments that threaten to crush the life out of him.
 - b. Necessities
 - 1) The Greek word used here literally means the necessities of life. Certain burdens a man may escape, but others are inescapable. There are certain things that a man must bear. The greatest of these are sorrow and death. Only the life that has never known love will never know sorrow, and death is an appointment we all must keep.
 - c. Distresses
 - 1) The word Paul uses here literally means a too narrow place. It might be used of an army caught in a narrow, rocky crevice with space neither to maneuver nor escape. It might be used of a ship caught in a storm with no room either to ride it out or to run before it. There are moments when a man seems to be in a situation in which the walls of life are closing round him.
- 2. Suffering from Others: Stripes, Imprisonments, Tumults
 - a. Stripes
 - 1) For Paul the Christian life meant not only spiritual suffering, but also physical suffering. It is the simple fact that if there had not been those who were ready and able to bear the torture of the fire and the wild beasts we would not be Christians today. There are still some for whom it is physical agony to be a Christian; and it is always true that "the blood of the martyrs is the seed of the Church."
 - b. Imprisonments
 - 1) Clement of Rome tells us that Paul was in prison no fewer than seven times. From Acts we know that before he wrote to the Corinthians he was in prison in Philippi, and afterwards in Jerusalem, in Caesarea and in Rome. The line of Christians who were imprisoned stretches from the first to the twentieth century. There have always been those who would abandon their liberty sooner than abandon their faith.
 - c. Tumults
 - 1) Over and over again we have the picture of the Christian facing, not the sternness of the law, but the violence of the mob. The mob has often been the enemy of Christianity; but nowadays it is not the violence but the mockery or the amused contempt of the crowd against which the Christian must stand fast.
- 3. Suffering by Self Discipline: Labours, Watchings, Fastings
 - a. Labours

- 1) The word Paul uses is in the New Testament almost a technical term for the Christian life. It describes toil to the point of sheer exhaustion, the kind of toil which takes everything of body, mind, and spirit that someone has to give.
- b. Watchings
 - 1) The Greek word used here means sleepless nights. Some would be spent in prayer, some in a situation of peril or discomfort where sleep was impossible. At all times Paul was ready to be the unsleeping sentinel of Christ.
 - 2) In 1 Thessalonians 2:9 Paul writes about working day and night to support himself, which may explain the sleepless nights he refers to in 11:27 of this letter.
 - 3) He may have worked through the night and preached during the day, or sometimes he may have worked through the day and preached through the night because many of his hearers would have been work-bound from dawn to dusk. You will recall from Acts 20 that Paul sometimes preached until midnight.
- c. Fasting
 - 1) This word may refer to times that Paul neglected to eat so that he could devote more time to his evangelistic work, it may refer to fasting that accompanies prayer, or it may refer to times when Paul went hungry rather than accept support from others.
 - 2) In 11:27 Paul will say that he often observed periods of fasting.
- E. There is a very important message for us today in this list.
 - 1. We read about all of the terrible hardships endured by the early Christians, we read that all Christians will suffer persecution (2 Timothy 3:12), and we look at all that Paul suffered -- and then we look at our own comfortable lives and worry that we aren't suffering enough or maybe not at all.
 - 2. This list of sufferings in verses 4-5 tells us that not all suffering is alike. Some may suffer for Christ one way, others may suffer for Christ another way.
 - 3. The Old Testament exiles provide a perfect example. The suffering experienced by the exiles varied greatly under the Egyptians, the Assyrians, and the Babylonians, and also varied greatly by time period. Daniel and Joseph, for example, experienced periods of suffering and periods of comfort during their exiles -- but no one doubts that they were faithful servants of God.
 - 4. If we never experience suffering of any sort because of our faithfulness to Christ, then that might very well be a commentary on our faithfulness. But a period of time in which we enjoy a lack of suffering in no way means that we are not faithful servants of God. Instead, such periods of time should be enjoyed with gratitude as we enjoy all of God's gifts. If we are living faithful Christian lives, then periods of comfort should fill us with gratitude rather than guilt.
 - 5. And as far as a lack of suffering, we should note that one of the categories in these verses involves suffering due to self-discipline. Fasting and exhausting work, for example, are examples of the sufferings that Paul endured, and those are things almost all of us can do.
- **V. Verses 6-7b: By pureness, by knowledge, by longsuffering, by kindness, by the Holy Ghost, by love unfeigned, By the word of truth, by the power of God,**
 - A. The list now changes from hardships to ethical qualities that characterize his ministry.
 - B. Purity refers to his guiltless conduct. See, for example, 1 Thessalonians 2:3.
 - C. The word "knowledge" is possibly best translated as "understanding" in this context.
 - 1. Paul is referring here not simply to human knowledge but to the kind of knowledge that counts with God.

- 2. In 11:6, Paul will say that while he may be untrained in speech, he is not untrained in knowledge.
- 3. At the opposite extreme are those who are trained in speech but untrained in knowledge, and there is no shortage today of such people. Their speech is impressive but at best content-free, and at worst false and misleading.
- 4. Any congregation who is blessed with someone who is both trained in speech and in knowledge first should thank God for that blessing and second should use that blessing as God intended. It is a sin to waste any blessing from God, and God gives us many different kinds of blessings.

- D. Patience and Kindness refer to how Paul responds to all the abuse he receives.
 - 1. Patience is reactive, while kindness is proactive.
 - 2. In 1 Corinthians 4:12-13, Paul said that when he was reviled, he blessed, and when he was slandered, he answered kindly.

- E. Patience and kindness also describe how Paul dealt with the Corinthians.
 - 1. One of common complaints against the Cynics of Paul's day was that they were brutally harsh rather than seeking to benefit their hearers. As any radio talk show host will tell you, one way to attract a large number of listeners is to be brutally harsh to a small group, perhaps those who call in or perhaps some target group who likely never even listens to the show. But while that tactic may attract an audience, it offers little benefit beyond its entertainment value.
 - 2. Paul was not like that. He could be harsh when needed, but he was also patient and kind. He generally softened his rebukes so that the sting would be only momentary.

- F. The presence of the phrase "in the Holy Spirit" is perhaps surprising in a list of ethical qualities, and commentators are divided about what it means here.
 - 1. Some argue that the spirit here is the human spirit and that "holy" is a description of its ethical quality. Thus, Paul would be saying "with a holy spirit."
 - 2. The better view in my opinion is that the phrase "holy spirit" in this verse refers to the Holy Spirit of the Godhead. Many of these same ethical qualities are connected with the work of the Holy Spirit elsewhere in Paul's letters (Romans 14:17, 15:13; 1 Corinthians 12:8; Galatians 5:22).
 - 3. Also, in the New Testament, the noun "spirit" refers to the Holy Spirit whenever it is qualified by the adjective "holy," which occurs 92 times.
 - 4. In 3:8 Paul told us he was engaged in a ministry of the Spirit. Walking in the spirit is the foremost requirement for effective ministry and is a mandatory credential for a minister of God.

- G. By Love Unfeigned
 - 1. This phrase suggests that others had a feigned love.
 - 2. In Romans 12:9, Paul said that we must have love without hypocrisy.
 - 3. Paul's frank but gentle criticism of them was one of the surest signs of his genuine love for them. When we see someone straying from the path, an unfeigned love will seek to restore that person even at the risk of hurt feelings or rejection. A feigned love will act like nothing is wrong simply to maintain peace or friendship. But such a love is not real love because the most unloving thing we can do to anyone is to make them think they are right with God when they are not right with God.

- H. By the Word of Truth
 - 1. A possible translation is "in truthful speech," and it may refer back to 1:17-20 and forward to 7:14 where Paul defends his own truthfulness.

- a. The contrast here may be with flattery. Later in 7:14, Paul will use the phrase "truthful speech" to refer to his not mincing words when he needs to correct people for their sins. Paul does not seek to win others by flattery; he wins others by speaking the truth.
- 2. Another possible translation is to take the word of truth to refer to the gospel. The phrase occurs four times in the New Testament with reference to preaching. Perhaps both meanings apply -- Paul spoke the truth, and the truth he spoke was the gospel.
- I. By the Power of God
 - 1. Paul does not operate in his own strength but in the power of God, which brings salvation.
 - 2. He explains this more fully in 1 Corinthians 2:4-5.
 - a. And my speech and my preaching was not with enticing words of man's wisdom, but in demonstration of the Spirit and of power: 5 That your faith should not stand in the wisdom of men, but in the power of God.
 - J. In summary, Paul assumes that the gospel is discredited by those ministers who are lustful, impure, ignorant, overbearing, rude, unkind, and hypocritical in their love, interested only in gaining favor with those who can benefit them in some way. Such ministers have neither the Holy Spirit nor the power of God.
- **VI. Verses 7c-8b: by the armour of righteousness on the right hand and on the left, By honour and dishonour, by evil report and good report:**
 - A. Paul next switches to three combinations of terms introduced by the preposition "with."
 - B. Due to ambiguity in the Greek, the first phrase, weapons of righteousness, could be understood in three ways:
 - 1. It could mean "weapons consisting of righteousness."
 - a. That would convey the idea that our righteousness becomes our weapon.
 - b. Romans 6:13 "Neither yield ye your members as instruments of unrighteousness unto sin: but yield yourselves unto God, as those that are alive from the dead, and your members as instruments of righteousness unto God."
 - 2. It could mean "righteous weapons."
 - a. This is a possibility from the Greek but probably not from the context. It is most likely that the righteousness in view here is either our righteousness (as with meaning #1) or God's righteousness (as we will see next with meaning #3).
 - 3. It could mean "weapons provided by righteousness."
 - a. This last possible meaning understands the righteousness to be God's righteousness, and is most likely the best interpretation.
 - b. Paul has just referred to the power of God, and the righteousness of God is a far more powerful weapon than any weapon based on human moral qualities.
 - c. Romans 13:12 "The night is far spent, the day is at hand: let us therefore cast off the works of darkness, and let us put on the armour of light."
 - d. Later in this letter Paul will remind them that our weapons of warfare are not fleshly, but have divine power. (10:4)
 - e. The military image means that Paul does not go out into the world unprotected, but rather he is armed by God.
 - C. Why does Paul say "on the right hand and on the left"?
 - 1. It may simply mean that he has weapons applicable for every situation.

- 2. Others have noted that in combat the right hand was used for offense (sword or spear) while the left hand was used for defense (shield). One translation reads, "We have righteousness for our weapon, both to attack and to defend ourselves."
- 3. Others have interpreted the phrase allegorically to represent adversity and prosperity. This latter view fits the remainder of the verse well: honor versus dishonor, evil report vs. good report.
- D. Those last two contrasts indicate that Paul suffered insults and also basked in praise for the benefits he brought to others through the gospel.
 - 1. In Acts 14, for example, the Lycaonians worshiped Barnabas and Paul as gods in one moment and stoned them and left them for dead in the next.
 - 2. Paul was indifferent to fame and abuse because he had a divine, internal gyroscope that helped him maintain his equilibrium. Insults did not devastate him; praise did not puff him up. His desire to please God alone kept him on an even keel.
 - 3. Philippians 4:11-13 "Not that I speak in respect of want: for I have learned, in whatsoever state I am, therewith to be content. 12 I know both how to be abased, and I know how to abound: every where and in all things I am instructed both to be full and to be hungry, both to abound and to suffer need. 13 I can do all things through Christ which strengtheneth me."
- **VII. Verses 8c-10: as deceivers, and yet true; As unknown, and yet well known; as dying, and, behold, we live; as chastened, and not killed; As sorrowful, yet always rejoicing; as poor, yet making many rich; as having nothing, and yet possessing all things.**
 - A. The list next shifts to seven pairs of antitheses all introduced by the word "as." The items on this list can be taken several ways.
 - 1. The first item may refer to the outward appearance, while the second refers to the essential, inward reality of Paul's life.
 - 2. Or the first item may refer to the false estimate of Paul formed by those who judged him from a worldly standard, while the second item reflects the true judgment of those who are in Christ. That is, under this view, the first item reflects the world's view of Paul, while the second item reflects God's view of Paul.
 - a. A possible problem with this view is that the first detail in each antithesis is not always a false description. Paul himself admits that he is dying, beaten, and poor.
 - 3. A third possibility is that the first item refers to Paul's reputation, whether true or false, while the second item refers to the reality, with some pairs being complementary, albeit paradoxical, truths about Paul.
 - a. Paul does not merely appear to be unknown, dying, beaten, sorrowful, poor, and possessing nothing. He is.
 - b. But that is not the whole story. The first element is connected to the brief and shadowy realities that affect a clay vessel. The second element is related to the power of God in his life. The first is temporary; the second is eternal.
 - c. (4:18) While we look not at the things which are seen, but at the things which are not seen: for the things which are seen are temporal; but the things which are not seen are eternal.
 - B. The first pair ("as deceivers and yet not true") is different from the others because the first item in this pair was not true of Paul in any sense.
 - 1. Jesus was also labeled a deceiver. (Matthew 27:63)
 - 2. Paul most likely has in mind here the false apostles who were his rivals in Corinth. They, no doubt, accused Paul of being an impostor.
 - C. As unknown, and yet well known.

- 1. Paul was consistently underestimated by his enemies and by his friends. He had neither a powerful presence nor any great speaking ability. He was constantly being dismissed by those in the church and those outside the church.
- 2. In short, no one really knew the Apostle Paul. If you had asked the Corinthians who among their evangelists and apostles would go down in history as one of the greatest apostles and the inspired author of nearly half of the New Testament, no one would have pointed to Paul. Apollos maybe. Peter perhaps. But not Paul.
- 3. And yet Paul was well known, not by men, but by God. God knew the Apostle Paul, and that was all that Paul needed. Others might dismiss him, but God never would.
- 4. 1 Corinthians 8:3 "But if any man love God, the same is known of him."
- 5. 1 Corinthians 13:12 "For now we see through a glass, darkly; but then face to face: now I know in part; but then shall I know even as also I am known."
- 6. "Of all men in the world Paul was the weakest to look at, the most battered, burdened, and depressed, yet no one else had in him such a fountain as he of the most powerful and gracious life."

- D. As dying, and behold, we live! As chastened, and not killed.
 - 1. These two pairs recall Paul's recollection of his hardships in Chapter 4.
 - a. (4:10-12) Always bearing about in the body the dying of the Lord Jesus, that the life also of Jesus might be made manifest in our body. 11 For we which live are always delivered unto death for Jesus' sake, that the life also of Jesus might be made manifest in our mortal flesh. 12 So then death worketh in us, but life in you.
 - 2. They also recall Psalm 118:17-18.
 - a. I shall not die, but live, and declare the works of the LORD. 18 The LORD hath chastened me sore: but he hath not given me over unto death.
 - 3. Later in Chapter 11, Paul will describe how he has suffered for the sake of Christ.
 - a. (11:23-27) Are they ministers of Christ? (I speak as a fool) I am more; in labours more abundant, in stripes above measure, in prisons more frequent, in deaths oft. 24 Of the Jews five times received I forty stripes save one. 25 Thrice was I beaten with rods, once was I stoned, thrice I suffered shipwreck, a night and a day I have been in the deep; 26 In journeyings often, in perils of waters, in perils of robbers, in perils by mine own countrymen, in perils by the heathen, in perils in the city, in perils in the wilderness, in perils in the sea, in perils among false brethren; 27 In weariness and painfulness, in watchings often, in hunger and thirst, in fastings often, in cold and nakedness.
 - 4. And yet Paul endured. But unlike the pagan Cynics of his day, the source of Paul's endurance was not his philosophy, but his God!

- E. As sorrowful, yet always rejoicing.
 - 1. Paul admits to being sorrowful. Recall 2:4 ("For out of much affliction and anguish of heart I wrote unto you with many tears; not that ye should be grieved, but that ye might know the love which I have more abundantly unto you.")
 - 2. Romans 9:1-3 "I say the truth in Christ, I lie not, my conscience also bearing me witness in the Holy Ghost, 2 That I have great heaviness and continual sorrow in my heart. 3 For I could wish that myself were accursed from Christ for my brethren, my kinsmen according to the flesh"
 - 3. Most who read Philippians do not remember the passage in 2:27 where he said that he would have had "sorrow upon sorrow" had Epaphroditus not been spared. Instead, most remember the joy that radiates throughout that epistle even though Paul wrote it from prison with his life hanging in the balance.

- F. As poor, yet making many rich. As having nothing, and yet possessing all things.
 - 1. No one could ever accuse Paul of getting rich off the preaching of the gospel. He chose poverty so that he would not compromise the gospel with even an appearance that he was in it for the money.
 - 2. And yet even though he was poor, he was in the business of making others rich.
 - 3. 2 Corinthians 8:9 "For ye know the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, that, though he was rich, yet for your sakes he became poor, that ye through his poverty might be rich."
 - 4. Revelation 2:9a "I know thy works, and tribulation, and poverty, (but thou art rich)"
 - 5. James 2:5 "Hearken, my beloved brethren, Hath not God chosen the poor of this world rich in faith, and heirs of the kingdom which he hath promised to them that love him?"
 - 6. 1 Peter 1:6-7 "Wherein ye greatly rejoice, though now for a season, if need be, ye are in heaviness through manifold temptations: 7 That the trial of your faith, being much more precious than of gold that perisheth, though it be tried with fire, might be found unto praise and honour and glory at the appearing of Jesus Christ."

- G. There is a remarkable parallel between these verses and the Beatitudes.
 - 1. (6:4-5) In troubles, hardships, and distresses; in beatings, imprisonments and riots
 - a. (Matthew 5:10) Blessed are those persecuted for righteousness sake.
 - 2. (6:6) In purity.
 - a. (Matthew 5:8) Blessed are the pure in heart.
 - 3. (6:8) Through glory and dishonor, bad report and good report, genuine yet regarded as impostors.
 - a. (Matthew 5:11) Blessed are you when people insult you and falsely say all kinds of evil against you because of me.
 - 4. (6:10) Sorrowful, yet always rejoicing.
 - a. (Matthew 5:4) Blessed are those who mourn.
 - 5. (6:10) Poor, yet making many rich; having nothing, yet possessing everything.
 - a. (Matthew 5:3) Blessed are the poor.
 - 6. Is it any wonder that Paul was always rejoicing. He not only understood the Beatitudes, he lived the Beatitudes. He went though life with his eyes fixed on the eternal, unseen glory that awaited him in Jesus Christ.