

2 Corinthians 6:1- *We then, as workers together with Him also plead with you not to receive the grace of God in vain.*

The phrase *workers together* can upset people that solely focus on grace, but work is always accompanied by the gospel (Colossians 1:29). We do not work to get God to move or to earn His favor. Rather, we work by allowing God to work through us. Good works are the product of receiving God's grace.

Under the Old Covenant, people worked for six days and then rested. The born-again believer starts from a place of rest and then works. Paul himself said, "For this purpose I also labor" (Colossians 1:29).

Grace is always received, never earned, but it is received by faith (Romans 5:2; 5:17).

The word *vain* in Greek is *kenos*, meaning empty or without effect. Do you realize it is possible to treat what Jesus has done as though it has no effect in your life if you do not appropriate it by faith (Galatians 2:21; 5:2)?

Grace is God's part, and faith is our response. It takes both to bring forth the promise.

Grace without faith becomes sovereignty and faith without grace becomes works.

2 Corinthians 6:2- *For He says: "In an acceptable time I have heard you, And in the day of salvation I have helped you." Behold, now is the accepted time; behold, now is the day of salvation.*

Jesus came as soon as possible. God was not sitting back unwilling to save mankind. Throughout the Old Testament, God revealed His plan of redemption through prophecies that pointed to Jesus. Every book of the Bible ultimately points to Christ.

Before a person can be saved, they must first recognize their need for a Savior. You cannot cry out to be rescued if you do not first know that you are lost. This is one reason God gave the Law. Galatians 3:19 teaches that the Law was added because of transgressions, and Galatians 3:22 shows that it pointed people to Christ. The Law revealed mankind's inability to make themselves right with God and highlighted the need for a Savior. Humanity had a fallen nature, and Jesus came to give us a new heart and a restored relationship with God (2 Corinthians 5:18).

When Jesus came, He announced "the acceptable year of the Lord" (Luke 4:19). Titus 2:11 declares that the grace of God has appeared, bringing salvation, and Luke 2:14 proclaims peace on earth and goodwill toward men.

Paul says, "Now is the day of salvation." Salvation is more than the forgiveness of sins. The Greek word *sōzō* includes salvation, deliverance, healing, preservation, and wholeness.

Now is the day of salvation. Just because God has provided something does not always mean a person immediately experiences it in every area of life. For example, a believer may be

completely forgiven before God, yet still need time to renew their mind and walk free from guilt and condemnation. In the same way, God's truth must often be received and understood before it is fully experienced in daily life.

You know a truth has become established in your heart when you are resting in it rather than constantly questioning it. Positionally, we have been delivered, but our experience often involves a process of renewing the mind and walking in what Christ has already provided.

The children of Israel leaving Egypt was an event; getting Egypt out of them was a process.

2 Corinthians 6:3- We give no offense in anything, that our ministry may not be blamed.

Offense is one of the deadliest things that can destroy a believer. Many people forfeit their future because they fall into offense. Earlier, Paul wrote in 2 Corinthians 2:11 that one of the enemy's greatest tactics is taking advantage of ignorance. In that context, deception was the enemy's strategy.

I have found that when studying successful people in ministry, there is often a season of great rejection before a major breakthrough or expansion. The enemy uses this as an attempt to get people off course and distracted from their assignment.

If you do not eliminate distractions, they will eliminate you.

If you are called into ministry—and every born-again believer is called to ministry—you may identify with Jesus as the One who heals the sick and sets people free. But do you also identify with Him in accusations, persecution, and being misunderstood?

Paul understood that ministry would involve opposition, yet he refused to allow offense to take root. A person who lives offended will struggle to fulfill the call of God on their life because offense clouds vision, steals peace, and shifts focus away from the mission.

The key is to keep our eyes on Jesus and not allow the actions or opinions of others to derail what God has called us to do.

2 Corinthians 6:4- *But in all things we commend ourselves as ministers of God: in much patience, in tribulations, in needs, in distresses,*

Many times we want the promise but care very little about enduring the process. Paul says here that in all things he commended himself as a minister of God. He was not seeking recognition from people or a platform. Rather, he was willing to endure the persecution and hardships that often accompany the call of God.

The anointing will always attract opposition, and Paul was not shy about saying that he commended himself to God through both the good and the bad.

How do we commend ourselves as ministers of God? Paul begins by mentioning patience. Patience is required to inherit the promises of God. Scripture tells us it is through faith and patience that we inherit the promises.

Paul then mentions tribulations. Remember, he previously wrote that he was hard-pressed on every side, perplexed, and persecuted, yet he also gave us his perspective on those difficulties (2 Corinthians 4:8–9).

The Greek word for *patience* is *hupomonē*, meaning steadfastness, constancy, and endurance. The Greek word for *tribulation* is *thlipsis*, meaning pressure, affliction, or being pressed from every side. The Greek word for *distresses* is *stenochōria*, meaning a narrow place, difficulty, or anguish.

These words describe the reality of being an ambassador for Christ. We are promised an abundant life, but that does not mean there will be no opposition. Paul wrote that a great and effective door had opened to him, yet there were many adversaries (1 Corinthians 16:9).

Are you currently facing opposition or disruption in your life? Opposition can often be an opportunity to examine where we are placing our trust and whether we will remain steadfast in the midst of pressure. Paul's example reminds us that difficulties do not determine our destiny—our response to them does.

2 Corinthians 6:5- *in stripes, in imprisonments, in tumults, in labors, in sleeplessness, in fastings;*

Paul is describing the realities he endured for the sake of the gospel. Today, we may think we are experiencing persecution when we decide to attend Bible college and our family says we are joining a cult. We may think persecution is a difficult boss at work or an ex-spouse trying to take custody of our children but Paul experienced true persecution.

Paul and his companions were not called to a life of comfort. More often than not, Paul was preaching from chains rather than from comfort. Yet he was able to endure because of his perspective. He did not view himself as a prisoner of Rome but as a prisoner of Christ.

"In stripes" refers to the lashes and beatings Paul received for the sake of the gospel. Once again, he is describing the cost of carrying the message entrusted to him.

In context, Paul is reminding the Corinthians that he was not writing or preaching his own message. There were those who sought to discredit his authority and ministry, but Paul points to the sacrifices he endured as evidence that he was serving as a messenger of God. This was not a light assignment, nor was it one he carried for personal gain.

Paul's life demonstrates that the call of God is not always comfortable, but it is always worth it. The hardships he faced did not weaken his commitment to the gospel; they revealed the depth of his conviction and the reality of the message he preached.

2 Corinthians 6:6- *by purity, by knowledge, by longsuffering, by kindness, by the Holy Spirit, by sincere love,*

Throughout this list of the qualities that marked his ministry, I enjoy that Paul intentionally includes the Holy Spirit. I believe He is often neglected, especially in times of hardship. Yet Jesus called Him our Helper. He is the One who stands beside us, strengthens us, comforts us, and empowers us to endure every trial.

The Christian life was never meant to be lived by human effort alone. The same Holy Spirit who empowers us in moments of victory is also present in seasons of suffering. He provides wisdom when we are confused, peace when we are overwhelmed, and strength when we feel weak.

Are you spending intentional time with the Holy Spirit? Are you making room to listen to His voice and follow His leading? The Helper is not distant—He lives within every believer and desires to guide us through every circumstance we face.

2 Corinthians 6:7- *"by the word of truth, by the power of God, by the armor of righteousness on the right hand and on the left,"*

Paul acknowledges where his strength comes from. He did not endure persecution, hardships, and suffering through human determination alone. His ministry was sustained by the Word of God, the power of God, and the righteousness of God.

The Word of God was the foundation of everything Paul preached. The power of God enabled him to fulfill his calling despite every opposition he faced. Finally, Paul speaks of "the armor of righteousness," reminding us that our greatest defense is not our own goodness but the righteousness we have received through Christ.

Just as a soldier carries weapons in both hands, believers are equipped on every side. We stand secure, not because of our own strength or performance, but because we have been clothed with the righteousness of God. When we know who we are in Christ, we can stand confidently against every accusation, trial, and attack of the enemy.

2 Corinthians 6:8- *"by honor and dishonor, by evil report and good report; as deceivers, and yet true;"*

Paul experienced both praise and criticism throughout his ministry. Some honored him as a faithful apostle, while others dishonored him and spread false accusations about his character and motives. He was labeled a deceiver, yet he remained true to the gospel and to the calling God had given him.

2 Corinthians 6:9- *"as unknown, and yet well known; as dying, and behold we live; as chastened, and yet not killed;"*

Paul's life is a picture of perseverance. Though he endured countless hardships, he never allowed them to define or stop him. Every trial became another opportunity for God's faithfulness to be displayed.

We often want the trophies but not the training, the stage but not the sacrifice, and the highlights but not the hardships. Yet Paul did not arrive at greatness because his life was absent of problems. He became the man God called him to be because he remained faithful through them.

I once had a mentor tell me, "Neresa, never separate success and failure." Failure, setbacks, and hardships are often part of the journey to success. They are not necessarily signs that you are off course but opportunities to grow in character, perseverance, and dependence on God.

2 Corinthians 6:10- *"as sorrowful, yet always rejoicing; as poor, yet making many rich; as having nothing, and yet possessing all things."*

I love this verse. It reminds us that rejoicing is not a feeling—it is a decision. Joy is not determined by our circumstances but by where we place our focus.

Paul lived this truth. While facing possible execution in Rome, he repeatedly encouraged believers to "rejoice." In the book of Philippians, he mentions joy, rejoice, or rejoicing at least sixteen times. His circumstances did not dictate his attitude because his confidence was rooted in Christ, not in his situation.

What is remarkable is that Paul's focus was consistently on others rather than on himself. Even while imprisoned, he was encouraging, strengthening, and praying for the churches. He understood that a life centered on Christ naturally becomes a life centered on serving others.

One of the greatest pathways to freedom begins when we take our attention off ourselves. The more consumed we are with our own problems, the heavier they become. But when our eyes are fixed on Christ and we begin to love and serve others, we discover the joy that circumstances cannot steal.

Paul may have appeared to possess very little by the world's standards, yet he understood that in Christ he possessed everything that truly mattered.

2 Corinthians 6:11- *"O Corinthians! We have spoken openly to you, our heart is wide open."*

Again, this letter is pastoral in nature and one of reconciliation. Anytime there is reconciliation, there must be transparency and openness. This creates an atmosphere of trust.

Paul's intent was to express to the Corinthians all that he had gone through for the sake of the gospel and for their benefit. He was not hiding his struggles, hardships, or affections for them. Instead, he spoke openly and honestly so they could understand the sincerity of his heart and the depth of his love for them.

Paul's open heart toward the Corinthians demonstrates that healthy relationships are built on honesty, trust, and genuine care for one another.

2 Corinthians 6:12- *"You are not restricted by us, but you are restricted by your own affections."*

Paul is not aiming to bring condemnation but awareness to those in Corinth. The difficulties they were experiencing had, in many ways, been brought about by their own attitudes and responses. In context, some in Corinth were questioning Paul's leadership and attributing their dysfunction and problems to him.

Paul is stating that their restriction was not coming from him. Leadership can be challenging, and if you are in a position of leadership, there will be ample opportunity to be misunderstood and have fingers pointed at you.

The antidote to offense and being consumed by negativity is to remember the purpose for which you are there. If you are a teacher or principal and your boss or peers have an issue with you, remember that you are there for the students. If you are a nurse, remember your heart is for the patients and to help people.

It is impossible to be in a position of leadership and never be accused or misunderstood. Jesus, the perfect leader, had people seeking to kill Him, accuse Him, and blame Him. Even in God's perfect kingdom, one-third of the angels rebelled and left.

If you find yourself in a similar situation, do not think it strange that these things are happening (1 Peter 4:12). In John 6:66, many disciples left Jesus and followed Him no more after hearing a difficult message.

Paul's point is that sometimes the greatest limitations we face are not external but internal. When our hearts become narrowed by offense, pride, or misplaced affections, we restrict ourselves from receiving what God desires to do in our lives.

2 Corinthians 6:13- *"Now in return for the same (I speak as to children), you also be open."*

Paul is saying, "I have been open with you; now I am asking you to be open with me." Throughout this letter, Paul has exposed his heart, motives, struggles, and affections toward the Corinthians. He now desires the same openness in return.

The church at Corinth was one of the most dysfunctional churches Paul ministered to. In many ways, we could say they were his problem child. Yet despite their immaturity, division, and repeated challenges, Paul never stopped loving them or pursuing reconciliation.

In the same way, a loving parent does not abandon a child who has gone astray. Rather, their heart remains open toward them. Paul's appeal here is not one of authority alone but of affection. He is inviting the Corinthians into a restored relationship built on trust, honesty, and mutual love.

Healthy relationships require openness from both sides. Paul had already opened his heart to them; now he was encouraging them to open theirs to him.

2 Corinthians 6:14- *"Do not be unequally yoked together with unbelievers. For what fellowship has righteousness with lawlessness? And what communion has light with darkness?"*

This verse does not say to avoid unbelievers. Jesus came to seek and save that which was lost (Luke 19:10), and He came to save sinners (1 Timothy 1:15).

Jesus spent time with sinners when others ignored and rejected them. The question is not whether we interact with unbelievers, but whether they are influencing us or we are influencing them.

I once heard it explained this way: think of an ice cube. Are you melting on them, or are they sticking to you? When selecting close friends, deciding who we spend our lunch breaks with, choosing a spouse, or determining who receives our most intimate time and influence throughout the day, we should be discerning.

Scripture says that evil communications corrupt good character (1 Corinthians 15:33). What may seem innocent and casual can actually cause a casualty.

Paul's warning is not against loving unbelievers but against entering relationships and partnerships that pull us away from our identity in Christ. As believers, we are called to influence the world without allowing the world to shape us.

2 Corinthians 6:15- *"And what accord has Christ with Belial? Or what part has a believer with an unbeliever?"*

What accord, concord, or agreement do these things have with one another? Scripture asks, "How can two walk together unless they are agreed?" (Amos 3:3).

The word *Belial* is used as a name for worthlessness, wickedness, or lawlessness and is contrasted with Christ. Paul is drawing a sharp distinction between two opposing kingdoms and ways of life.

The word *unbeliever* refers to one who has rejected Jesus. Paul is not condemning unbelievers; rather, he is highlighting the difference between those who have placed their faith in Christ and those who have not.

The opposite of Christ is Satan. The opposite of light is darkness. Paul is contrasting these opposites to show that there can be no true spiritual agreement between them.

His point is that believers should be mindful of the partnerships and influences they allow into their lives. While we are called to love and reach unbelievers, we are not called to join ourselves to beliefs, values, or relationships that pull us away from our walk with God.

2 Corinthians 6:16- *"And what agreement has the temple of God with idols? For you are the temple of the living God. As God has said:*

'I will dwell in them

And walk among them.

I will be their God,

And they shall be My people.'"

In context, Paul is encouraging those in Corinth to see that their behavior—already addressed extensively in 1 Corinthians—could be influenced by their circle and environment.

We have everything we need pertaining to life and godliness (2 Peter 1:3), yet we can still live limited lives depending on who we surround ourselves with. What may appear to be a circle of friends can actually become a cage when we align ourselves with darkness.

You may think you have a group of friends, but it can really be a non-profit organization if it is not aligned with your purpose. And I will say this: you don't have time to invest deeply in people who are not like-minded. Even people in church may not always share the same level of spiritual direction or mindset.

There is a powerful truth in this scripture that can change a life. It declares that we are God's temple. For much of my religious upbringing, I believed I was trying to get God to come and be present with me, when in reality He had already chosen to dwell within me.

It is like searching for something you already have—like looking through every room in the house for a cell phone, only to realize it was in your pocket the entire time. If this truth has not become real to you, I encourage you to meditate on it. The God of the universe has chosen to make you His permanent dwelling place.

Other scriptures that parallel this truth include 1 Corinthians 3:16, 1 Corinthians 6:19, and 2 Corinthians 13:5—all pointing the believer back to identity and union with Christ. This is the mystery once hidden: Christ in you, the hope of glory.

2 Corinthians 6:17 – *Therefore "Come out from among them, And be separate, says the Lord. Do not touch what is unclean, And I will receive you."*

Any time you see the word *therefore*, it is there to cause you to look at what came before and connect the current thought to the previous one.

Because you are His temple, you should be and look different from this world. The reason many people feel defeated is because they have been conformed and molded to the patterns and influences of this world. Often, we struggle because we do not fully understand who we are, and as a result we spend our energy trying to become someone else.

If we truly understood the darkness and fallen state of this world, we would not desire its approval or feel the need to conform to it. Instead, we would recognize the value and identity God has already given us.

**2 Corinthians 6:18- "*I will be a Father to you,
And you shall be My sons and daughters,'
Says the Lord Almighty.*"**

This all goes back to relationship. Corinthians, who are you? This is what Paul is emphasizing. And to you reading this—who are you?

Take time to discover your identity in Christ, and your circle will naturally shift without constant striving or effort.

Jesus' final prayer before being arrested (John 17) includes the words, "I in them." This was one of the last truths He emphasized to His disciples. He was speaking about abiding, remaining, and union. His desire was that they would live in ongoing connection with Him.