

An Appeal For Reconciliation

2 Cor 6:1-13; 7:1-4
SS Lesson for 08/24/2014

Devotional Scripture: Col 1:15-23

OUTLINE

INTRODUCTION

OVERVIEW AND APPROACH TO LESSON

Key Verse: 2 Cor 7:2

Commentary from the Bible Knowledge Commentary

LESSON INTRODUCTION AND BACKGROUND

From the NIV Standard Lesson Commentary

From the Bible Expositor and Illuminator

Introductory Commentary From Bob Deffinbaugh

MAJOR THEME ANALYSIS

RECONCILIATION THROUGH WORKING TOGETHER (2 COR 6:1-3)

Working in the grace of God (1)

Grace through faith (Rom 4:16)

Grace that makes one work harder (1 Cor 15:10)

Grace that provides sufficiency (2 Cor 12:9)

Grace through God's will and pleasure (Eph 1:5-6)

Grace through mercy (1 Tim 1:13-14)

Grace through justification (Titus 3:3-7)

Grace that results in blessing after blessing (John 1:16)

Working in the acceptable time (2)

Acceptable time when God answers and saves (Isa 49:8)

Acceptable time while anointed (Luke 4:18-20)

Acceptable time to encourage one another (Heb 3:13-14)

Acceptable time to enter and lead others into God's rest (Heb 4:7-11)

Acceptable time while it is still day (John 9:4-5)

Working while ensuring no stumbling block (3)

Not being a stumbling block through not judging others (Rom 14:13)

Not being a stumbling block to those who are weak in the faith (Rom 14:2-3)

Not being a stumbling block through bearing with other's failures (Rom 15:1)

Not being a stumbling block through seeking the good of the many (1 Cor 10:32-33)

Not being a stumbling block through serving others (Gal 5:13)

RECONCILIATION THROUGH PERSEVERANCE (2 COR 6:4-10)

Perseverance during suffering (4-5)

Perseverance during suffering because there is a reward in Heaven (Matt 5:11-12)

Perseverance during suffering because the future glory far outweighs the current temporary suffering (2 Cor 4:17-18)

Perseverance during suffering because of the greater value of suffering for Jesus (Heb 11:25-26)

Perseverance during suffering because of looking forward to a better resurrection (Heb 11:35)

Perseverance during suffering because of a genuine faith (1 Peter 1:6-7)

Perseverance with godly character (6-7)

Godly character through knowing God (1 John 2:3-6)

Godly character through God's establishment (1 Peter 5:10)

Godly character through waiting on God (James 5:7-8)

Godly character through perseverance (Rom 5:3-4)

Godly character through the testing of faith (James 1:2-4)

Perseverance during trying circumstances (8-10)

Circumstances that God provides a way out (1 Cor 10:13)

Circumstances that teach us to rely on God (2 Cor 1:8-10)

Circumstances where in all things God works for the good (Rom 8:28)

Circumstances where God is with us (Ps 23:4)

Circumstances where we remember that God is for us (Rom 8:31)

RECONCILIATION THROUGH COMPLETE ACCEPTANCE (2 COR 6:11-7:4)

Acceptance through an open heart (11-13)

An open heart means to have integrity (1 Chron 29:17)

An open heart means to walk blamelessly (Ps 15:2)

An open heart means to be sprinkled clean by the Holy Spirit (Heb 10:22)

An open heart means to be obedient to the truth of God's word (1 Peter 1:22)

An open heart means loving others as part of a sincere faith (1 Tim 1:5)

An open heart means having God set apart in the heart (1 Peter 3:15)

Acceptance through an honest heart (1-4)

An honest heart where the conscience is clear before God and man (Acts 24:16)

An honest heart where one has lived honorably (Heb 13:18)

An honest heart where one has good behavior in Christ (1 Peter 3:15-16)

An honest heart where one is an example of doing what is good (Titus 2:6-8)

An honest heart where one is kind and gentle (2 Tim 2:24-25)

CONCLUSION AND OTHER THOUGHTS

COMMENTARY THOUGHTS FROM BOB DEFFINBAUGH

PRACTICAL POINTS FROM THE BIBLE EXPOSITOR AND ILLUMINATOR

Introduction

Overview and Approach to Lesson

The lesson reviews how as Christians we always have **An Appeal for Reconciliation**. The **study's aim** is to urge openhearted love and understanding between brothers and sisters in Christ. The **study's application** is to establish as a core principle in our congregations love and reconciliation - first, last, and always. (Adapted from *the Bible Expositor and Illuminator Commentary*).

Key Verse: 2 Cor 7:2

Open your hearts to us. We have wronged no one, we have corrupted no one, we have cheated no one.

Commentary from the Bible Knowledge Commentary

Whatever failings Paul may have had, dissimulation was not one of them. Candor in speech and an unrestrained affirmation of **affection** (cf. 7:15; Phil. 1:8; 2:1; Col. 3:12; Phile. 7, 12, 20; 1 John 3:17) had marked his letter to this point (e.g., 2 Cor. 2:3-4). And he wanted the Corinthians to reciprocate. The depth of his feelings is noted by his calling them **Corinthians**. Only rarely did he name his readers in the midst of a letter. When, for example, he was greatly exercised about the declension in the Galatian churches, he sharply rebuked them by name (Gal. 3:1). On the other hand when he recalled the Philippian church's faithful support of him in the early days of his ministry and in his prison experience, he called them by name (Phil. 4:15). Blending frustration and affection, Paul similarly hailed the Corinthians and called for them to respond with unrestrained love (**my children—open wide your hearts**; cf. 2 Cor. 7:2-3). What hampered the Corinthians' open, loving response, which Paul called for? (v. 13) Answer: rival suitors vied for their affections and allegiance. Though verses 14-15 are often applied to various sorts of alliances (e.g., mixed marriages, improper business associations), Paul's primary association was probably ecclesiastical. The rival suitors were possibly pagan idolaters (cf. 1 Cor. 10:14) or more likely false apostles (cf. 2 Cor. 11:2-4). In censure or affection Paul was equally candid (cf. 6:11). The solution to the dilemma was for the Corinthians to separate from the false apostles. Whatever may have been their own and others' estimation of their spiritual status, Paul considered the false apostles to be **unbelievers** (cf. 11:13-15) from whom the Corinthians needed to separate. But Paul did not say that Christians should have no contacts whatever with unbelievers. Earlier he argued the absurdity of such a position (1 Cor. 5:9-10). But religious unbelievers might lead believers astray from "sincere and pure devotion to Christ" (2 Cor. 11:3), and the fact concerned Paul greatly. A **believer** can be rightly **yoked** only with **Christ** (Matt. 11:29-30). To illustrate, Paul asked five rhetorical questions (2 Cor. 6:14-16), posing antitheses that reflect the wide chasm between the kingdom of Christ and the kingdom of Satan (cf. Col. 1:13). **Belial** transliterates an Old Testament word that means "worthless person." In Greek it came to mean "a lawless person." It was then used of Satan, the most worthless and lawless of all. Paul's fifth rhetorical question provided a transition to his citing several Old Testament verses. Their cumulative effect bolstered Paul's exhortation (v. 14a). The church is **the temple of God** (cf. 1 Cor. 3:16) where the Spirit of God and Christ dwells (cf. Matt. 28:19-20; Eph. 2:22). The promise of **God to live** among His people was ultimately fulfilled in Christ (Matt. 1:23). Enjoying God's presence requires personal holiness. Paul cited a portion of Isaiah 52:11 and Ezekiel 20:41, passages that speak of Israel's redemption. God's people are redeemed from pagan bondage (**come out from them and be separate**) in order to be clean before God (**touch no unclean thing**) and thus enjoy fellowship with Him (**I will receive you**). In Galatians Paul spoke of the bondage of those who are under the obligation of the Law (Gal. 3:13-14; 4:5; cf. 2 Cor. 3:7-9). Paul wrote to Titus that redemption implied two things: (a) deliverance "from all wickedness" and (b) a purified people who are "His very own, eager to do what is good" (Titus 2:14). Personal purity makes it possible to serve God and be received by Him. A redeemed people are brought into a special relationship with God the **Father** as His **sons and daughters** (cf. Isa. 43:6). Those who identify with Christ by faith in Him may call God "Father" (Eph. 2:18; Gal. 4:5-6). From these sons and daughters God wants obedience (Deut. 32:19-21) as He did from David, His people's chief representative, and from David's lineage (2 Sam. 7:14; cf. Ps. 89:30-34). **These promises** refer to God's assurances of His presence (6:16) and fellowship (6:17b-18) to those who obey Him. This obedience requires purification (**let us purify ourselves**), which here implies separation (cf. Matt. 8:3; Deut. 19:13) **from everything that contaminates body and spirit** and from every person who pollutes the truth (cf. 2 Cor. 2:17; 4:2). "Body and spirit" refers to the whole person in his external and internal aspects (cf. 7:5). In an attitude of **reverence for God** (cf. 5:11) which produces obedience, sanctification (**holiness**)

can be perfected, that is, completed or matured. This is a maturing, growing holiness, an increased Christlikeness (3:18), a progressive sanctification (not sinless perfection). Having given a warning about the rival suitors for the Corinthians' affections (6:14-7:1), Paul resumed his appeal for mutual love, mentioned in 6:11-13. The accusations made about him were unfounded. He could offer disclaimers (e.g., 2:17; 4:2; 6:3), but the Corinthians' conviction of his integrity was his best rejoinder. Unhappily, however, this was yet lacking. Paul did not blame the Corinthians for their vacillation. His rivals were impressive (11:3-5), much more so than he (10:7-12), at least in externals. The Corinthians' vacillation had not produced disaffection in Paul. On the contrary his love was unabated (cf. 6:13; 7:1) and his **confidence in** them was unimpaired. He had **pride** ("exulting") and **joy** (cf. v. 7) in them **in all his troubles** (lit., "trouble" [sing.]; cf. 1:4). No doubt this was primarily due to his confidence that God was at work in them (1 Cor. 1:4-9) but also partially due to the news Titus had brought him when the two finally met in Macedonia (2 Cor. 7:5-7).

Lesson Introduction and Background

From the NIV Standard Lesson Commentary

Paul faced opposition from one or more factions within the Corinthian church. We can sketch some of their characteristics by reading his letters to that church. His opponents claimed superior spiritual status and knowledge (1 Corinthians 8:1, 2). Some taught that immoral behavior was of no consequence (5:1, 2; 6:9-13). Some denied that God raises the dead (15:12). Furthermore, some opponents minimized or denied Paul's authority as an apostle (2 Corinthians 6:8; 11:5; 12:11, 12). Some characterized him as powerful in his letters, but unimpressive in person (10:9, 10)—perhaps downright crazy (5:13). Some insisted that Jewish identity was vital to a true relationship with God (11:22). The combination of doctrinal deviations and power struggles created big problems at Corinth! Paul worked hard to straighten things out. When he wrote 2 Corinthians, it appears that he had largely succeeded. Not all had given up the false teaching, but to those who had, Paul had the message of today's text.

Adapted from the Bible Expositor and Illuminator

The concept of reconciliation was extremely important to Paul. His primary concern was that people be reconciled to the God who created them; he viewed his entire life of ministry, therefore, as one of bringing people to God. Paul used two Greek words to speak of reconciliation in this book. These words were not used by any other New Testament author. Except for what he said in I Corinthians 7:11, he always wrote about being reconciled to God. In that one case he referred to Christian women being reconciled to their husbands. Read what he said in II Corinthians 5:18-20. We cannot overstate the importance of restoring damaged relationships. Whether between husbands and wives, parents and children, fellow believers, or colleagues at work, Christians should be the examples to the world of how to mend relationships that have been harmed. When Christians are at odds with each other, it is a really bad advertisement for the gospel. Even people who are totally against Christ have heard that the watchword among Christians is "Love one another." They know that if love is not working for Christians, it surely is not working for non-Christians. They will not believe that "God so loved the world" (John 3:16), including themselves. So the gospel is negated. The world will think there is nothing to the gospel and that Christians are no better than the unsaved. They are simply hard-hearted hypocrites. However, when there are conflicts and then a true reconciliation and restoration of love and harmony, that is a great recommendation for the gospel! Everyone understands that problems come up in life, and they are reassured when Christians give a practical demonstration that being a Christian can bring victory in any circumstance.

Introductory Commentary From Bob Deffinbaugh

The Corinthian church has a very serious problem with mistaken identities. In the church at Corinth, there is a problem of mistaken identity concerning spirituality. Some think they are spiritual because they feel free to participate in pagan idol worship (chapters 8-10). Some think themselves more spiritual than others because of the spiritual gifts they possess or because of the public nature of their ministry (chapters 12-14). Some criticize and look down upon Paul and his gospel, claiming they are genuine apostles when they are actually servants of Satan (2 Corinthians 11).

In our text, Paul defends authentic apostleship by defining what it is. 2 Corinthians 5:20–6:10 sets down those elements of authentic apostleship which distinguish it from the counterfeit. In his earlier First Corinthian epistle, certain things made the apostles distasteful, even shameful, to some Corinthians (see chapter 4, verses 6-13). Paul now returns to these "offensive elements," to show that these very things authenticate true apostles and set them apart from the false.

Paul defends not just himself, but his fellow-apostles as seen by his use of the plural pronoun (“we”), rather than the singular pronoun (“I”).

My understanding of the structure and argument of this passage stems in part from an observation concerning the expression, “**we are ambassadors.**” From the English translation, one would expect that there are three words in the original text: the pronoun, “**we**”; the verb, “**are**”; and the predicate nominative, “**ambassadors.**” Actually, the expression reads, “**we ambassador.**” Ambassador is a verb, not a noun. As I interpret it, this detail is important because it is the principle statement of the passage, and the others are supportive. “Ambassadoring” entails: (1) begging lost men to be reconciled to God (5:20-21); (2) urging saints not to receive the grace of God in vain (6:1-2); and (3) not giving cause for offense, but commending oneself as a servant of God (6:3-10).

Viewing the structure of our passage in this way helps to explain the emphasis we find in verses 3-10. The most lengthy portion of our text is all about the sufferings of Paul and his colleagues in the gospel ministry. What does this have to do with the whole passage? If, as I am contending, the main verb is “to ambassador,” then these three segments define what ambassadoring is. Ambassadoring is about preaching the gospel to the lost, urging saints to live according to the gospel, and suffering in a godly way for the cause of the gospel.

Major Theme Analysis

(Scriptural Text from the New King James Version; cross-references from the NIV)

Reconciliation through Working Together (2 Cor 6:1-3)

- 1 We then, as workers together with Him also plead with you not to receive the grace of God in vain.
- 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.
- 3 We give no offense in anything, that our ministry may not be blamed.

Working in the grace of God (1)

Grace through faith (Rom 4:16)

16 Therefore, the promise comes by faith, so that it may be by grace and may be guaranteed to all Abraham's offspring — not only to those who are of the law but also to those who are of the faith of Abraham. He is the father of us all.

Grace that makes one work harder (1 Cor 15:10)

10 But by the grace of God I am what I am, and his grace to me was not without effect. No, I worked harder than all of them — yet not I, but the grace of God that was with me.

Grace that provides sufficiency (2 Cor 12:9)

9 But he said to me, "My grace is sufficient for you, for my power is made perfect in weakness." Therefore I will boast all the more gladly about my weaknesses, so that Christ's power may rest on me.

Grace through God's will and pleasure (Eph 1:5-6)

5 he predestined us to be adopted as his sons through Jesus Christ, in accordance with his pleasure and will— 6 to the praise of his glorious grace, which he has freely given us in the One he loves.

Grace through mercy (1 Tim 1:13-14)

13 Even though I was once a blasphemer and a persecutor and a violent man, I was shown mercy because I acted in ignorance and unbelief. 14 The grace of our Lord was poured out on me abundantly, along with the faith and love that are in Christ Jesus.

Grace through justification (Titus 3:3-7)

3 At one time we too were foolish, disobedient, deceived and enslaved by all kinds of passions and pleasures. We lived in malice and envy, being hated and hating one another. 4 But when the kindness and love of God our Savior appeared, 5 he saved us, not because of righteous things we had done, but because of his mercy. He saved us through the washing of rebirth and renewal by the Holy Spirit, 6 whom he poured out on us generously through Jesus Christ our Savior, 7 so that, having been justified by his grace, we might become heirs having the hope of eternal life.

Grace that results in blessing after blessing (John 1:16)

16 From the fullness of his grace we have all received one blessing after another.

Working in the acceptable time (2)

Acceptable time when God answers and saves (Isa 49:8)

8 This is what the Lord says: "In the time of my favor I will answer you, and in the day of salvation I will help you; I will keep you and will make you to be a covenant for the people, to restore the land and to reassign its desolate inheritances,

Acceptable time while anointed (Luke 4:18-20)

18 "The Spirit of the Lord is on me, because he has anointed me to preach good news to the poor. He has sent me to proclaim freedom for the prisoners and recovery of sight for the blind, to release the oppressed, 19 to proclaim the year of the Lord's favor."

Acceptable time to encourage one another (Heb 3:13-14)

13 But encourage one another daily, as long as it is called Today, so that none of you may be hardened by sin's deceitfulness. 14 We have come to share in Christ if we hold firmly till the end the confidence we had at first.

Acceptable time to enter and lead others into God's rest (Heb 4:7-11)

7 Therefore God again set a certain day, calling it Today, when a long time later he spoke through David, as was said before: "Today, if you hear his voice, do not harden your hearts." 8 For if Joshua had given them rest, God would not have spoken later about another day. 9 There remains, then, a Sabbath — rest for the people of God; 10 for anyone who enters God's rest also rests from his own work, just as God did from his. 11 Let us, therefore, make every effort to enter that rest, so that no one will fall by following their example of disobedience.

Acceptable time while it is still day (John 9:4-5)

4 As long as it is day, we must do the work of him who sent me. Night is coming, when no one can work. 5 While I am in the world, I am the light of the world."

Working while ensuring no stumbling block (3)

Not being a stumbling block through not judging others (Rom 14:13)

13 Therefore let us stop passing judgment on one another. Instead, make up your mind not to put any stumbling block or obstacle in your brother's way.

Not being a stumbling block to those who are weak in the faith (Rom 14:2-3)

2 One man's faith allows him to eat everything, but another man, whose faith is weak, eats only vegetables. 3 The man who eats everything must not look down on him who does not, and the man who does not eat everything must not condemn the man who does, for God has accepted him.

Not being a stumbling block through bearing with other's failures (Rom 15:1)

15 We who are strong ought to bear with the failings of the weak and not to please ourselves.

Not being a stumbling block through seeking the good of the many (1 Cor 10:32-33)

32 Do not cause anyone to stumble, whether Jews, Greeks or the church of God— 33 even as I try to please everybody in every way. For I am not seeking my own good but the good of many, so that they may be saved.

Not being a stumbling block through serving others (Gal 5:13)

13 You, my brothers, were called to be free. But do not use your freedom to indulge the sinful nature; rather, serve one another in love.

Reconciliation through Perseverance (2 Cor 6:4-10)

4 But in all things we commend ourselves as ministers of God: in much patience, in tribulations, in needs, in distresses, 5 in stripes, in imprisonments, in tumults, in labors, in sleeplessness, in fastings; 6 by purity, by knowledge, by longsuffering, by kindness, by the Holy Spirit, by sincere love, 7 by the word of truth, by the power of God, by the armor of righteousness on the right hand and on the left, 8 by honor and dishonor, 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 yet not killed; 10 as sorrowful, yet always rejoicing; as poor, yet making many rich; as having nothing, and yet possessing all things.

Perseverance during suffering (4-5)

Perseverance during suffering because there is a reward in Heaven (Matt 5:11-12)

11 "Blessed are you when people insult you, persecute you and falsely say all kinds of evil against you because of me. 12 Rejoice and be glad, because great is your reward in heaven, for in the same way they persecuted the prophets who were before you.

Perseverance during suffering because the future glory far outweighs the current temporary suffering (2 Cor 4:17-18)

17 For our light and momentary troubles are achieving for us an eternal glory that far outweighs them all. 18 So we fix our eyes not on what is seen, but on what is unseen. For what is seen is temporary, but what is unseen is eternal.

Perseverance during suffering because of the greater value of suffering for Jesus (Heb 11:25-26)

25 He chose to be mistreated along with the people of God rather than to enjoy the pleasures of sin for a short time. 26 He regarded disgrace for the sake of Christ as of greater value than the treasures of Egypt, because he was looking ahead to his reward.

Perseverance during suffering because of looking forward to a better resurrection (Heb 11:35)

35 Women received back their dead, raised to life again. Others were tortured and refused to be released, so that they might gain a better resurrection.

Perseverance during suffering because of a genuine faith (1 Peter 1:6-7)

6 In this you greatly rejoice, though now for a little while you may have had to suffer grief in all kinds of trials. 7 These have come so that your faith — of greater worth than gold, which perishes even though refined by fire — may be proved genuine and may result in praise, glory and honor when Jesus Christ is revealed.

Perseverance with godly character (6-7)

Godly character through knowing God (1 John 2:3-6)

3 We know that we have come to know him if we obey his commands. 4 The man who says, "I know him," but does not do what he commands is a liar, and the truth is not in him. 5 But if anyone obeys his word, God's love is truly made complete in him. This is how we know we are in him: 6 Whoever claims to live in him must walk as Jesus did.

Godly character through God's establishment (1 Peter 5:10)

10 And the God of all grace, who called you to his eternal glory in Christ, after you have suffered a little while, will himself restore you and make you strong, firm and steadfast.

Godly character through waiting on God (James 5:7-8)

7 Be patient, then, brothers, until the Lord's coming. See how the farmer waits for the land to yield its valuable crop and how patient he is for the autumn and spring rains. 8 You too, be patient and stand firm, because the Lord's coming is near.

Godly character through perseverance (Rom 5:3-4)

3 Not only so, but we also rejoice in our sufferings, because we know that suffering produces perseverance; 4 perseverance, character; and character, hope.

Godly character through the testing of faith (James 1:2-4)

2 Consider it pure joy, my brothers, whenever you face trials of many kinds, 3 because you know that the testing of your faith develops perseverance. 4 Perseverance must finish its work so that you may be mature and complete, not lacking anything.

Perseverance during trying circumstances (8-10)

Circumstances that God provides a way out (1 Cor 10:13)

13 No temptation has seized you except what is common to man. And God is faithful; he will not let you be tempted beyond what you can bear. But when you are tempted, he will also provide a way out so that you can stand up under it.

Circumstances that teach us to rely on God (2 Cor 1:8-10)

8 We do not want you to be uninformed, brothers, about the hardships we suffered in the province of Asia. We were under great pressure, far beyond our ability to endure, so that we despaired even of life. 9 Indeed, in our hearts we felt the sentence of death. But this happened that we might not rely on ourselves but on God, who raises the dead. 10 He has delivered us from such a deadly peril, and he will deliver us. On him we have set our hope that he will continue to deliver us,

Circumstances where in all things God works for the good (Rom 8:28)

28 And we know that in all things God works for the good of those who love him, who have been called according to his purpose.

Circumstances where God is with us (Ps 23:4)

4 Even though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I will fear no evil, for you are with me; your rod and your staff, they comfort me.

Circumstances where we remember that God is for us (Rom 8:31)

31 What, then, shall we say in response to this? If God is for us, who can be against us?

Reconciliation through Complete Acceptance (2 Cor 6:11-7:4)

11 O Corinthians! We have spoken openly to you, our heart is wide open.

12 You are not restricted by us, but you are restricted by your own affections.

13 Now in return for the same (I speak as to children), you also be open.

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

2 Open your hearts to us. We have wronged no one, we have corrupted no one, we have cheated no one.

3 I do not say this to condemn; for I have said before that you are in our hearts, to die together and to live together.
4 Great is my boldness of speech toward you, great is my boasting on your behalf. I am filled with comfort. I am exceedingly joyful in all our tribulation.

Acceptance through an open heart (11-13)

An open heart means to have integrity (1 Chron 29:17)

17 I know, my God, that you test the heart and are pleased with integrity. All these things have I given willingly and with honest intent. And now I have seen with joy how willingly your people who are here have given to you.

An open heart means to walk blamelessly (Ps 15:2)

2 He whose walk is blameless and who does what is righteous, who speaks the truth from his heart

An open heart means to be sprinkled clean by the Holy Spirit (Heb 10:22)

22 let us draw near to God with a sincere heart in full assurance of faith, having our hearts sprinkled to cleanse us from a guilty conscience and having our bodies washed with pure water.

An open heart means to be obedient to the truth of God's word (1 Peter 1:22)

22 Now that you have purified yourselves by obeying the truth so that you have sincere love for your brothers, love one another deeply, from the heart.

An open heart means loving others as part of a sincere faith (1 Tim 1:5)

5 The goal of this command is love, which comes from a pure heart and a good conscience and a sincere faith.

An open heart means having God set apart in the heart (1 Peter 3:15)

15 But in your hearts set apart Christ as Lord. Always be prepared to give an answer to everyone who asks you to give the reason for the hope that you have. But do this with gentleness and respect,

Acceptance through an honest heart (1-4)

An honest heart where the conscience is clear before God and man (Acts 24:16)

16 So I strive always to keep my conscience clear before God and man.

An honest heart where one has lived honorably (Heb 13:18)

18 Pray for us. We are sure that we have a clear conscience and desire to live honorably in every way.

An honest heart where one has good behavior in Christ (1 Peter 3:15-16)

15 But in your hearts set apart Christ as Lord. Always be prepared to give an answer to everyone who asks you to give the reason for the hope that you have. But do this with gentleness and respect, 16 keeping a clear conscience, so that those who speak maliciously against your good behavior in Christ may be ashamed of their slander.

An honest heart where one is an example of doing what is good (Titus 2:6-8)

6 Similarly, encourage the young men to be self-controlled. 7 In everything set them an example by doing what is good. In your teaching show integrity, seriousness 8 and soundness of speech that cannot be condemned, so that those who oppose you may be ashamed because they have nothing bad to say about us.

An honest heart where one is kind and gentle (2 Tim 2:24-25)

24 And the Lord's servant must not quarrel; instead, he must be kind to everyone, able to teach, not resentful. 25 Those who oppose him he must gently instruct, in the hope that God will grant them repentance leading them to a knowledge of the truth,

Conclusion and Other Thoughts

Commentary Thoughts From Bob Deffinbaugh

Paul tells us that he and the true apostles **“give no cause for offense in anything, in order that the ministry be not discredited”** (verse 3). It is very important that we understand what Paul does and does not say here. Paul does not say that he avoids offending unbelievers altogether. Paul says, in effect, that he is scrupulous to avoid offending anyone unnecessarily and in a way that adversely affects the gospel, which is the heart and soul of their ministry. Paul has already told us that the message of the gospel is offensive to the unbeliever (1 Corinthians 1:22-24). *The gospel does not flatter lost men; it condemns them as guilty sinners.* Men do not come to faith through flattery and appeal to their egos; *they come to faith in brokenness and humility.* Paul does not and will not change the gospel to make it more appealing to lost sinners, and he strongly condemns anyone who does (see Galatians 1:6-10). Paul seeks to avoid offending men by his conduct and lifestyle, setting aside anything which hinders the gospel in any way. One of the best examples of Paul’s eagerness to avoid unnecessary offense to the gospel is found in 1 Corinthians 9:15-23.

In this chapter of 1 Corinthians, Paul goes to great lengths to demonstrate his right to be supported in ministry. In the verses just cited, Paul explains that while he has the right to be supported in his ministry, he sets this right aside so there is no unnecessary hindrance to his ministry. Some people then, as now, think that all preachers are in the ministry for the money. They can hardly accuse Paul of this, because he labors with his own hands, providing not only for his own needs but also for those of others (1 Thessalonians 2:5-12; see also Acts 20:33-36). What a contrast this is to the mindset and lifestyle of those who are false apostles. The false apostles more than willingly modify the gospel so it will not give offense to fallen men (see 1 Corinthians 15:12; 2 Corinthians 2:17; 4:2; 11:1-4). They seem to be taken with themselves and are far from humble. They advocate assertive leadership, not servant leadership. They may be involved in some of the practices which even offend the pagans of their day (see 1 Corinthians 5:1). They do not seem to be the kind who surrender their rights as Paul and others do, but may well be among those who insist on their rights, even when their “rights” are wrong (such as participating in pagan idol worship ceremonies—1 Corinthians 8-10). The false prophets are **“wolves”** who feed on the sheep, while the true apostles are shepherds, who protect, guide, and feed the sheep at great personal sacrifice. Authentic apostles seek to avoid any offense which hinders the gospel of Jesus Christ.

We know that suffering was the rule for the Old Testament prophets: “Which one of the prophets did your fathers not persecute? And they killed those who had previously announced the coming of the Righteous One, whose betrayers and murderers you have now become” (Acts 7:52). Jesus made it very clear to His disciples that He would suffer, and so would they (Matthew 16:21; see also Luke 9:22; 24:26; John 15:18-21; see also Matthew 24:9). False prophets have minimized sin and its consequences throughout biblical history, and they have promised peace and prosperity to the wicked (Jeremiah 6:14; 8:11; 2 Peter 2:1-3; 3:3-7). When Jesus spoke to those who would follow Him, He made the cost of discipleship very clear (see Luke 9:57-62), and so did the apostles (Acts 14:22; 2 Timothy 3:12). The apostles know what it means to “take up their cross” in following Jesus. But the false apostles are not interested in paying a price for following Christ, because they do not know Him (see Jeremiah 23; John 10:10-13). They are motivated by greed and self-indulgence. Thus, one of the ways of discerning an authentic apostle is to see how much he has suffered for His Lord.

Adapted from URL: <https://bible.org/seriespage/authentic-apostleship-2-cor-5208211610>

Practical Points from the Bible Expositor and Illuminator

1. God’s offer of saving grace is only available on this side of eternity (2 Cor. 6:1-2; cf. Isa. 55:6)
2. Godly leaders live in such a way that the gospel is not discredited (2 Cor. 6:3)
3. Godly leaders are willing to endure trials for the sake of ministry to others (vss. 4-5)
4. God-pleasing ministry demands God-pleasing means (vss. 6-7)
5. Godly leaders balance the joys of ministry with its trials and troubles (vss. 8-10)
6. God is pleased when His people seek and accept biblical reconciliation (6:11-13; 7:2)