

Being an Awesome Ambassador for Christ

[Part 2] (2 Corinthians 6:1-13)

In lesson eleven, we looked at the first four requirements for **being an awesome ambassador for Christ**. In this passage, we will discover three more requirements, as Paul appeals to the Corinthians to live up to their professions of faith. First ...

Partner with God (6:1-2).

As ambassadors for Christ, we must cooperate with God, so He can channel His power through us. Therefore, Paul writes, *Working together with him* (6:1a). Evangelism is what being ambassadors for Christ is all about and is a joint effort between the Lord and us. We are to **partner with God** in winning the lost.

Therefore, we must take *the grace of God* seriously and live up to the demands of the Gospel. If we don't, *we receive God's grace in vain* (6:1b). Vain translates a Greek word (KENON, ken-on'), which means "empty" or "useless." To fail to share the Gospel with the lost is to be "useless" in God's kingdom. God expects results from our lives. As ambassadors for Christ, we carry on the mission God gave to Jesus. How does Jesus express this truth in John 20:21c-d?

Why did God send Jesus to earth? Jesus said God sent Him "*to proclaim good news*" (Lk 4:18b). Jesus is sending us on this same mission.

Next, quoting Isaiah 49:8, Paul writes, *For he says, "In a favorable time I listened to you, and in a day of salvation I have helped you"* (6:2a-c). Isaiah was predicting God would deliver the Israelites from Babylonian captivity. This occurred during the time of Ezra (Ezra 1:1-11). However, Paul also sees this being fulfilled in his day. Therefore, he writes, *Behold, now is the favorable time; behold, now is the day of salvation* (6:2d). Isaiah also predicted *the day of salvation* would not only be for the stubborn Israelites but also for the Gentiles. What did God say to the Jews through Isaiah in Isaiah 49:6d?

The emphasis of Isaiah's prophecy is that God has shown favor and helped His people. One major reason was so they would be a *light to the nations*.

To be an awesome ambassador for Christ, **partner with God** and ...

Prepare for hardships (6:3-10).

Paul knows both unbelievers and believers are watching his life. Therefore, he writes, *We put no obstacle in anyone's way, so that no fault may be found with our ministry* (6:3). Then, Paul reminds his readers that as *servants of God*, he and his associates have demonstrated *great endurance*, or "much patience" in many ways (6:4a-b). The word translated *endurance* (HUPOMONE, hoop-om-on-ay') cannot be translated with a single English word. It means to continue steadfastly on a mission in spite of problems and opposition.

To explain his *endurance*, Paul lists nine trials, in sets of three. The first three are in verse four. First is *afflictions* (THLIPSIS, th-lip'-sis), which we have learned is sometimes translated "tribulation." It refers to physical and emotional suffering. After Paul was stoned at Lystra, what did he say to encourage other believers (Acts 14:22c)?

Hardships refers to being in need. *Calamities*, or "distresses," refers to bad circumstances that cannot be escaped (6:4).

The second trio is *beatings, imprisonments, and riots* (6:5). These obviously need no explanation. The third trio of problems Paul had to endure is *labors, sleepless nights, and hunger* (6:5). Because of these kinds of experiences, what does Paul write in Philippians 4:12?

Paul gladly endured many *hardships* in spreading the Gospel. His endurance also reveals itself in nine positive qualities. He lists the first five in verse 6. The first is *purity*, which means free from moral contamination. Second, Paul lists *knowledge* (GNO-SIS, no'-sis), which refers to a practical understanding of God's Word and His will.

Patience, or "longsuffering," refers to tolerance with difficult people. *Kindness* is being considerate and helpful. It is goodness in action. Next, Paul lists *the Holy Spirit*. He is probably referring to Galatians 5:16. Personalize and write it below:

Next on the list is *genuine love*, which is an honest desire to do what is best for others without any ulterior motive. *Truthful speech*, or "the word of truth," probably refers to the Gospel (Col. 1:5). The power of God means Paul's ministry was not based on his own abilities but on God's power. How does Paul describe how he accomplishes his mission (6:7c)?

A Roman soldier wasn't fully equipped without his sharp two-edged sword in his right hand and his shield in his left hand. The sword was for offensive attack, and the shield was for defense. In another letter, Paul tells us to equip ourselves with the *shield of faith* and *the sword of the Spirit* (Eph. 6:16-17b).

Like Paul, people who proclaim the Gospel are always loved by some and despised by others. Paul explains he serves God *through honor and dishonor, through slander and praise. We are treated as impostors, and yet are true* (6:8). In other words, regardless of how he is treated, Paul will continue to serve God.

He next writes that he and his associates are *unknown, and yet well known* (6:9a). Paul was *well known* in the Gentile churches he established. However, he was *unknown* to many Jewish churches in Judea (Gal. 1:22).

Paul further describes himself and his assistants as *dying, and behold, we live; as punished, and yet not killed* (6:9b-c). Regardless of outward appearance, God is protecting and strengthening them. Such a life would seem to naturally lead to depression and sorrow. But, to the contrary, what does Paul write in verse ten?

In terms of this world, Paul lost everything when he gave up being a Pharisee with a brilliant future. He gave up his family (his father was a Pharisee), his friends, his religious status, and his livelihood. He gave it all up, because it's all temporary. The blessings of his present ministry are making many rich spiritually, and then will come his eternal reward in heaven.

To be an awesome ambassador for Christ, **partner with God, prepare for hardships,** and ...

Promote love (6:11-13).

Paul has been and continues to be honest with the Corinthians. That's why he writes, *We have spoken freely to you, Corinthians* (6:11a). Then, Paul is taking the first step in laying aside past conflict and misunderstanding. He writes: *our heart is wide open* (6:11b). The verb *open* is present tense, which means his heart is *wide open* and will remain *open*. Despite the tremendous heartache the Corinthian believers have caused Paul, his love for them has not changed and never will.

He continues, *You are not restricted by us, but you are restricted in your own affections* (6:12). Some of the Corinthians have withheld their love from Paul and closed their hearts to him - probably because they believed the lies of his critics. This deeply hurts Paul. However, he has not stopped loving them. Why (1 Cor. 13:7a, d)?

Because Paul's heart is *open*, he hopes for reciprocal action from the Corinthians. He writes, *In return (I speak as to children) widen your hearts also* (6:13). Paul is asking the Corinthians to love him because of his great sacrifices for them and the fact they are his spiritual children (1 Cor. 4:15).

Love is the first component of the fruit of the Spirit, without which none of the other components can exist in our lives (Gal. 5:22). Therefore, *love* is the most important part of **being an awesome ambassador for Christ**. In Colossians 3:12-13, we are instructed to put on *compassion, kindness, humility, meekness, patience, and forgiveness*. Then, what does Colossians 3:14a command?

To be an awesome ambassador for Christ **partner with God, prepare for hardships, and promote love**.