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Father, we thank you for this day. Thank you for all that you have given us. And we thank you, Lord, that we live in a nation where we get to vote on our leaders. But I also pray, Father, as well. We come to this election season and as we vote, and as many of us have already voted, I pray, Lord, that we will understand that you are still the God of this nation.

You are the God of all things. And I pray that we will realize, no matter the outcome, that it's in your hands. But Father, I also pray for the outcome, Lord, that it is in your sovereign will. And I pray for guidance and leadership in whoever is there. Father, I pray as we.

As we go to this time before you, I pray that you will guide us in your word. I pray that you will conform us. And I pray, Father, that we will glorify you as we turn to you. In Jesus name we pray. Amen.

Good evening, everyone, and welcome back to our evening services. I promise this week should be significantly less eventful than last week.

On that note, we're going to continue our study through the book of Second Corinthians. Just a reminder of kind of what we went through last week, especially with so many interruptions. I want to make sure that. That we are all on the same page with what happened there. Paul began his address in that chapter by reminding us that we, indeed the bodies we are in, they're corruptible.

They groan. We have pain, but we will be raised up in a newness of life. He also told us that we have the spirit of God as a down payment and guaranteed that this will happen. He says that we are also Confident that we are with Christ and we make it our all to live for Christ. And he says that we try to persuade people for this reason to know who Jesus is.

I'll just say so that we don't get a SWAT team called to us again. What I am about to say, we are not in danger. We tried to persuade people with persuasion of the mind, not with hammers and guns.

He then told us that every person who is in Christ is a new creation. So if you are in Christ, you are new. The oldness of your life has passed away and the newness of your life, life has begun. And if we are new in Christ, we are his ambassadors. We share that duty to represent Christ here on earth.

He ends the address by making an appeal. He says, because of this, I make an appeal to you, right, on the behalf of Christ. He says, be reconciled to God, for he made the one who did not know sin to be sin for us, so that in him we might become the righteousness of God, right? So Paul is asking us, he says, be reconciled because the sinless one took on our sin so we could become righteous. We're going to pick up immediately on that theme in chapter six.

And if I was thinking, I would have actually gone read these two verses last week. But I wasn't thinking with everything going on. So verses one and two, working together with him, we also appeal to you. Don't receive the grace of God in vain. For he says, at an acceptable time, I listened to you, and in the day of salvation, I helped you see, now is the acceptable time.

Now is the time of salvation. So we finished really strong last week, right? Pleading for salvation, pleading that anyone who hears these things will be reconciled to Christ. And we're going to start strong tonight by pleading that you do not receive, or we, even I are. Do not receive the grace of God in vain.

Don't receive it as the person who was in rocky soil, as the person who got choked out by weeds. We talked about these a few weeks ago in the book of Luke. Don't receive it to throw it away. For now, he says, is the acceptable time and the day of salvation. This Wednesday in service in our Bible study, we actually talked about the fact someone brought it up and we talked about it.

Every knee will bow. That's going to happen. You will bow before the throne. You will confess that Jesus is Lord. But that is not the time for salvation, right?

If you kneel and bow and confess by force on the day of judgment, that is not the day of salvation. Today is Right now, here, when you have the choice to bow before Christ and the choice to confess him as Lord, now is the day that God says, I am listening to you. I am here to help you. Do not receive this in vain. The next section here in chapter six is going to focus on the character of Paul's mission ministry.

Most of this book has been spent on that, and I think that is great. Not just to see that the gospel is the gospel regardless, but also to see what we should expect in our ministers today so that we can divide true and false ministers. Picking up in verse three, he says, we are not giving anyone an occasion for offense so that the ministry will not be blamed. Instead, as God's ministry, we commend ourselves in every way by great endurance, by afflictions, by hardships, by difficulties, by beatings, by imprisonments, by riots, by labors, by sleepless nights, by times of hunger, by purity, by knowledge, by patience, by kindness, by the Holy Spirit, by sincere love, by the word of truth, by the power of God, through weapons of righteousness for the right hand and the left left, through glory and dishonor, through slander and good report, regarded as deceivers, yet true, as unknown, yet recognized, as dying, yet seen. We live as being disciplined, yet not killed, as grieving, yet always rejoicing, as poor yet enriching many, as having nothing and possessing everything.

We have spoken openly to you, Corinthians. Our heart has been opened wide. We are not withholding our affection from you, but you are withholding yours from us. I speak as to my children as a proper response, open your heart to us.

This is a very moving passage to me.

If we look at just the things he says and let it sink in, and I've talked about a lot of these things through the past six months as we've read about Paul and his mission in Corinth. So he says, we give no one an occasion for offense so that the ministry won't be blamed. So what he's saying is we live in such a way as to never give you something to say against us. We never do anything that can allow you to say, hey, look at what they're doing. They're not ministers.

They're not representing God. They're not preaching the gospel of Christ. Instead, he says, we commend ourselves and everything. So no matter what it is they go through, they live to a standard, and this list is long. But he says, we commend ourselves in everything with great endurance.

Paul is other than Christ, I would say the chief example of what it looks like to fixate your eyes on Christmas and continue forward for Christ in the face of life. And I say life because it's everything. He says by afflictions, Paul has had sickness, he's had illnesses, he's had blindness. He has been afflicted in every way by hardships. Financial, material hardships, food hardships, various different hardships.

Hardships with his friends, with his co workers, difficulties where him and his co workers had to break up and go different ways, come back together. He even says by difficulties. We just spoke about some of those difficulties, but he's had. We don't have time to talk about the difficulties other than explaining some of what he shows of his difficulties here. He's had difficulties in beatings.

We've talked about the fact that he has been beat on multiple occasions and one occasion was actually stoned to the point that they thought he was dead. And then they took him and threw him over the wall of the city and left him by imprisonment. Paul was imprisoned many, many times.

Half of the book of Acts we walk with Paul in his imprisonment. In fact, the entire book of Acts, from chapter one through the end is all a letter to the person who will be judging whether or not Paul is guilty or innocent. But imprisonment many times, shipwrecks. As we talk about trials, hardships, being bitten by snakes, he says by riots, right? Many, many riots, labors and sleepless nights.

He's gone hungry. But he also commends himself in purity. He lives upright knowledge. He commends himself not just by the things that he does, but he continues to study, he continues to grow his knowledge, continues to show himself. Approved that way.

He is patient and kind and led by the Holy Spirit and love through the truth and power of God. God.

I'm going to skip forward because he has a lot he says here. Now. He says through glory and dishonor, right? So he lives his life in such a way that there is glory even in the dishonor among men, right? Men.

The world dishonors believers in God, right? Not just Paul. Let's be honest. If you're a believer in God, you are or will be or have been dishonored by the world, he says, through slander and good report. In his life and ministry, there have been people who have reported great and excellent things about him.

And there are people who have reported untrue things about him and slandered him with the intent of derailing him and stopping him. And the same happens today. In fact, every single one of us, I can guarantee, have had untrue things said about us, so we know what it's like. However, how many of us have had something untrue said about us because of the Gospel of Christ? And that's what Paul is going through.

He has. People are slandering him because he shares the gospel of Christ. And there's the difference. Some of us may know what that's like. Some of us may have experienced it, and some of us may not have, he says, regarded as deceivers, yet true.

True. Here's something we can all identify with, right? Every person who shares the Gospel of Christ, who believes in God, who tells someone else there is a God, is regarded as a deceiver by the world. The world says there is no God. The world says, you're stupid to believe in a resurrection.

The world says there's no afterlife. And so for all of us who say you're wrong, there is a God, there is a resurrection, there is an afterlife. They call us deceivers and brainwashers. Right? Even though what we say is true, Paul experiences that, he says, as unknown yet recognized.

Paul was in his day, largely unknown, but he was. He wasn't concerned with being known, and that's what's important. He was recognized. He could be recognized anywhere by his life. There are many cities that he's gone into to preach, and he wasn't known there.

But as soon as he got there and began preaching, he was recognized. They knew, oh, hey, this is Paul. But his concern, I want to point out, is not that he was known. He doesn't say, I'm unknown, but want to be known. Paul doesn't care about being known.

Paul cares about Christ being known as regarded as dying and yet alive. Right? We are alive because we're in Christ and that life will never depart from us. We are dying because our immortal bodies will be shed. Yet we live.

I want to continue showing you some of the things he says. We grieve, yet always rejoice. Can you be grieving and rejoicing at the same time?

I think our binary yes and no things say no. If you're grieving, you can't be rejoicing because that's opposite it. But Paul shows us that you can. Who recalls when Paul and Silas are in prison, halfway through the Book of Acts, what do they do? It says at midnight they begin rejoicing with prayers and psalms to God.

This rejoicing actually led to the jailer getting saved. So. So it is possible to be grieving and to have deep grief and yet rejoice. Because we know that Jesus is Lord. Rejoice because we know that he is in control, that he is sovereign, that he holds all things in his hand, and to be content in that alone, we can rejoice.

Though we may be enslaved, though we may be imprisoned, though we may be persecuted, that we may have job loss, that we may have loss of life in our family, we can rejoice because Jesus is Lord. He says that we live as poor, yet enriching many. Paul was not rich, and everything that he had, he gave away, right? You don't have to have a million dollars to help someone. In fact, if you know Christ, you have the number one thing you need in order to help someone, and that is to give them Christ, to give them eternal life.

You can't put a value on it and you can't buy it with money. So though he's poor, though he has nothing, he is enriching many and possesses every. He ends this little speech here and he says, we have spoken openly to you. Remember, the occasion behind this writing is that the Corinthians have sidestepped Paul and shunned him because of some unknown dispute that was talked about in another letter that we don't have. And Paul is defending his position.

He says, we've spoken openly to you and we have not withheld our affection from you, but you are withholding yours from us.

As a pastor, I've experienced that very thing as a pastor. It's like we pour our affection out now to everyone in the church, to everyone even outside of the church, who we share with. And it's not uncommon for people within and without of the church to withhold their affection back. Paul says, that's what's happening here. We're not withholding our affection, but you are another way to put this.

And this can be seen from parents to kids. We do know whatever this issue is, it regards church discipline. And the church is upset with him for it. So parents to kids, you discipline your kid. And they may sometimes get more rebellious or say, you don't love me, or whatever it is that they say by disciplining them, you're not withholding affection for them.

Discipline is a form of affection, a form of love. Because if you can't, you can't really discipline if you don't love someone. Discipline comes from the very act of love and saying, we don't want you to do that because it's wrong for you, it's not good for you.

But then your kid says, well, you don't love us. Now, that's what's going on between Paul and Corinth. Paul takes this parent role in disciplining the church, and they rebel further against him. So he says, that is what's going on.

We're going to continue. We're going to go from verse 14 through verse 1 of chapter 7, and this will finish us off for the night.

Verse 14, he says, do not be yoked together with those who do not believe. For what partnership is there between righteousness and lawlessness? Or what fellowship does light have with darkness? What agreement does Christ have with Belial?

Or what does a believer have in common with an unbeliever? And what agreement does the temple of God have with idols? For we are the temple of the living God, As God said, I will dwell and walk among them. I will be their God, and they will be my people. Therefore come out from among them and be separate, says the Lord, and I will welcome you, and I will be a father to you, and you will be sons and daughters to me, says the Lord Almighty.

So then, dear friend, since we have these promises, let us cleanse ourselves from every impurity of the flesh and spirit, bringing holiness to completion in the fear of God.

Okay, so Paul is shifting gears from being on the defense to correction. And he says this. Don't be yoked to those who do not believe.

So what he's saying here, don't marry an unbeliever if you're a believer. Don't marry an unbeliever. Now, we can take this further than what he's saying and say, if you are a Baptist, don't marry a Pentecostal. However, that's not where Paul is going with this. And I bring this up intentionally because I know Baptists and Pentecostals who use this in that way and say that we're not equally yoked.

You can have different beliefs in minor scripture and be equally yoked. Right? There's various. Even amongst us Baptists, there's various disagreements on various scriptures and what they mean. That doesn't mean one of us is Baptist and one of us isn't.

I said that intentionally, knowing there's people who say that. But it does mean to not yoke yourself to an unbeliever. All right, so what if you are already married when you become a believer and your spouse doesn't? Paul handles that in First Corinthians when he says, if you are already married, to stay married to the unbeliever unless the unbeliever asks you for a divorce. Right?

So there is that flip side here. Believers do not intentionally yoke themselves to unbelievers, while believers who were married beforehand remain married unless the unbelieving spouse says they don't want to be married anymore. He tells us why we should not yoke ourselves to unbelievers. There is no partnership between righteousness and lawlessness.

Good and bad cannot mix. It's not possible to mix them. And for them to have a partnership for that. What is good will always say to that, what is bad? That you are wrong.

And that which is wrong will always repel itself from that which is right. The way he describes it is light and darkness. Can light and darkness intermix?

No. Right. No matter how dark it is, the moment you light a match, that light overcomes the darkness. They cannot mix. Now, there can be a boundary where the effectiveness of that match no longer lights the surroundings around you and it becomes dark.

But they cannot intermix.

He says, what agreement does Christ have with Belair? I just so you guys know, did look at the pronunciation just a minute ago. He says, what partnership does Christ have with Belair? What partnership to modernize to the language and words we use? What partnership does Christ have with Satan?

That's who Belair is, is Satan. Satan. Does Christ have any partnership with him?

No. Christ has nothing to do with him.

So what does a believer have in common with an unbeliever? We don't. We have our humanity in common. But we read last week and recap today, once you are in Christ, you are new. The humanity, the sin for you has died to the world and you have been reborn.

So though you have humanity in common, you are not of this world. You have nothing in common with the people of this world. Instead, we are the temple of the living God. Right? Because God dwells within us.

He walks among us. He is our God if He's in us, and we are his people. So he says to separate from them. That doesn't mean we don't live among them. We can't get rid of our neighbors and say, hey, you move away because you're not a believer.

And we can't exclusively move somewhere based on believers, but we don't have to be yoked to them.

And so he ends with this. Since we have these promises, we have the promise that we will shed this mortal body and take on an immortal body. We have this promise that the Holy Spirit of God will be with us, that he will be our God and we will be his children. We have this promise that we will have eternal life in the kingdom of God with no sickness, no death, no sadness, no wickedness, sin, disease, whatever. Because of these promises, he says, let's cleanse ourselves from impurity, let's walk in the ways of God, and let's bring holiness to completion in the fear of God.

These promises should be enough that we change our lives. We allow Jesus to perform a miracle in us, and we walk in that newness. We walk in holiness.

For those of you who are not yet Christian, not yet believers, we started this message strongly with repeating the appeal of Christ through Paul. And I want to end with the same appeal of Christ through Paul. Because we know Christ and because we know these promises, because we know that they are true, we plead with you on behalf of God to be reconciled to Him. Right? Because he did it.

He reconciled us to Himself. He can reconcile you to Himself and take your sin from you. And to be reconciled to him, you have to admit that you're a sin sinner. You cannot come before him if you do not believe that something's wrong with you. You have to believe that there is a God.

You can't come to God without believing in a God. And let me give you a news flash. You probably believe in him already, because if you're not yet a believer, you've probably found yourself mad at Him. How can you be mad at someone who doesn't exist? So you have to believe that there's a God.

You need to believe that God is Jesus Christ who created everything, and you need to confess him as Lord. Right? There's a difference between believing that he is Lord. Right? For example, I can believe that wherever you stand right now, Joe Biden is our president and not confess him as President by saying, I refuse to follow Him.

Right? The. The intellectual knowledge that Joe Biden is President is meaningless apart from the ability to follow him as president. It's the same thing with Christ. The intellectual knowledge and belief that he is God and Lord isn't the most important thing here as much as it is the willingness to confess him as God and Lord and follow him.

Even the demons, the scriptures say believe and shudder.

So if you believe, if you know that he is God, and if you know that you're a sinner and you are willing at this point in your life to be reconciled and say, Jesus, I will follow you. I invite you here in our closing prayer to verbalize that to him with me. I'll stress as I often do, this prayer does not and cannot save you. It's that belief

that saves you. This prayer is a verbalization of this belief.

So I invite you to repeat it with me as we close here right after communion. I'll take a brief 1 minute break to go grab after communion. Right after the closing prayer I will take a brief 1 minute break to go grab my communion and we'll partake of that after service. And then we will meet here next week on Wednesday at 6:30 to continue our study in the book of Luke. Just a reminder, this link that you use tonight will not work for Wednesday's meeting.

I will send everybody a new link Wednesday morning.

So with that said, let's go ahead and we'll close out in prayer and I'll see everyone for communion in just a minute.

Father, I admit that I am a sinner and that I cannot save myself and I know that that something's wrong with me and I know that something a sin and I know that you can fix it. And I believe Jesus that you are the God man creator of heavens and earth and more than believe in I confess you as my God and my King to follow you and I ask you for this free and precious gift. Father, I pray that no matter what comes our way in this life, whether it's sickness or persecution, trials, hardships and different forms of tribulations that like Paul, we can grieve and yet rejoice that we can follow you and keep our eyes on you, not seeking material perishable things, but the immaterial and immortal things. And I pray that you will be glorified in us. In Jesus name we pray.

Amen.