

**2 Corinthians 6:1-13**

6 As we work together with him, we urge you also not to accept the grace of God in vain. <sup>2</sup> For he says, 'At an acceptable time I have listened to you, and on a day of salvation I have helped you.' See, now is the acceptable time; see, now is the day of salvation! <sup>3</sup> We are putting no obstacle in anyone's way, so that no fault may be found with our ministry, <sup>4</sup> but as servants of God we have commended ourselves in every way: through great endurance, in afflictions, hardships, calamities, <sup>5</sup> beatings, imprisonments, riots, labours, sleepless nights, hunger; <sup>6</sup> by purity, knowledge, patience, kindness, holiness of spirit, genuine love, <sup>7</sup> truthful speech, and the power of God; with the weapons of righteousness for the right hand and for the left; <sup>8</sup> in honour and dishonour, in ill repute and good repute. We are treated as impostors, and yet are true; <sup>9</sup> as unknown, and yet are well known; as dying, and see—we are alive; as punished, and yet not killed; <sup>10</sup> as sorrowful, yet always rejoicing; as poor, yet making many rich; as having nothing, and yet possessing everything. <sup>11</sup> We have spoken frankly to you Corinthians; our heart is wide open to you. <sup>12</sup> There is no restriction in our affections, but only in yours. <sup>13</sup> In return—I speak as to children—open wide your hearts also.

**Sermon... Learning from some one liners in 2 Corinthians 6.  
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**Some other one liners for starters...**

1. Some people are kind, polite, and sweet-spirited-until you try to sit in their pews.
2. Many folks want to serve God, but only as advisers.
3. It is easier to preach ten sermons than it is to live one.
4. People are funny, they want the front of the bus, the middle of the road, and the back of the church.
5. Quit griping about your church; if it was perfect, you couldn't belong.
6. I don't know why some people change churches; what difference does it make which one you stay home from?
7. A lot of church members who are singing "Standing on the Promises" are just sitting on the premises.
8. The phrase that is guaranteed to wake up a congregation: "And in conclusion."
9. If the church wants a better pastor, it only needs to pray for the one it has.
10. To make a long story short, don't tell it.
11. Peace starts with a smile.

There are some great one liners in the passages of Scripture today. Of course one has to be a little bit careful to quote one liners out of context... however God can also use the one liner quite powerfully.

Take the Gospel today... as Jesus demonstrates her authority, his Lordship over creation:

- Mark 4:39. **Peace! Be still!** (Then the wind ceased, and there was a dead calm.)
- Mark 4:40. **'Why are you afraid?** (Have you still no faith?')
- Mark 4:41 And they were filled with great awe and said to one another, **'Who then is this,** that even the wind and the sea obey him?'

What one liner might God want you to remember and / or respond to in Scripture today? Or what God given word might there be in the sermon, one of the songs, one of prayers in the liturgy, or in a word from one of your brothers or sisters in the family of God?

Listen up! Be ready to hear and apply God's guidance, God's word, God's will... to your life.

You get a real sense in St Paul's writings that he wants the various Christian communities to hear and to respond to what the Lord may be saying to them individually and corporately. His letters with plenty of good one liners are written to provoke response. Words such as appeal and urge often accompany the one liners... "I appeal to you (Romans 12:1, 15:1, 2 Cor 10:1..." "I urge... (Rom 16:17, 2 Cor 6:1, 1 Tim 1:3."

#### **First One Liner from 2 Corinthians 6**

**2 Cor 6:1. As we work together with him, we urge you also not to accept the grace of God in vain.**

A reminder that amongst other things a main message in this letter of 2 Corinthians is 'relationship'.

In this letter Paul writes to defend his apostleship in the face of criticism from rivals... who are against Paul. Classic power dynamics when it comes to leadership! Paul is seeking to lead the Corinthian congregation back to a right relationship with Christ, and he also strengthens their relationship with himself as their founding apostle, and with each other in their discord.

Paul says the Corinthians have received a message of reconciliation to God... and therefore they have received the grace of God. But, there's an issue... there are voices denying the legitimacy of Paul's apostolic position... even though it was Paul whom God choose in the first place to bring them this message of reconciliation and this amazing grace of God. In rejecting Paul, and being easily influenced by certain voices..., the Corinthians are in danger of rejecting the Gospel message too. Paul does not want the lives of those who made a good response to the Good News to now be marred by erroneous, critical voices.

#### **What can we learn today?**

Oh how relationships go wrong... disputes, criticisms, power dynamics, muttering, cloister conversations and so forth can harm the Gospel and harm the work that God has done and is doing in people. As Paul would say, we are called to work together in the Lord and with one another. A crucial message as you go into vacancy!

#### **A Second One Liner in 2 Corinthians 6**

**2 Cor 6:3. We are putting no obstacle in anyone's way, so that no fault may be found with our ministry,**

If fault could be found in Paul's apostolic ministry, and there were those in Corinth only too prepared to find fault, then this could be used as an excuse to reject Paul's message. But Paul stresses, you can't use that argument. Through all sorts...

in afflictions, hardships, calamities, 5 beatings, imprisonments, riots, labours, sleepless nights, hunger; 6 by purity, knowledge, patience, kindness, holiness of spirit, genuine love, 7 truthful speech, and the power of God etc.....

through all these things and more Paul has shown he is a true servant of God and loyal authentic follower and representative of Jesus Christ. With a sense that he's really under fire Paul gives a thorough self commendation and defence of his ministry and an appeal for the Corinthians to be reconciled to him and to embrace the reconciliation given by God in Christ that Paul has received and they have received.

It's a powerful point of his letter as Paul defends and commends himself and his ministry.

What's striking is Paul's concern that he doesn't want there to be any reason, any cause whatsoever, any stumbling block that will prevent people from embracing the gospel and prevent what God is wanting to do in the Corinthians lives individually and corporately.

#### **What can we learn today?**

I struggled with this verse today because I know that over the years here there have been reasons and cause for people to not embrace the Gospel because of me/us. I personally can't rattle off Paul's list!

I/we have sometimes said the wrong thing, done the wrong thing, not done anything when I/we could have done something. And this may well have caused people to stumble or turn away from God, faith or the church. When I/we have sinned it may have put obstacles in the way of the advancement of the Good News of the Gospel... because such behaviour raises questions about the legitimacy of the message.

However, there have also been times when people have manufactured reasons and created their own stumbling blocks for why they have not responded to the Gospel and what God is wanting from them. People have listened to erroneous internal or external voices and have found reasons without foundation to avoid responding to the Gospel and embracing God's will and the church in their lives. I'm not going to give examples here... but I wonder if you or I can think of the times when we have manufactured reasons, excuses and stumbling blocks for why we cannot be or do what we know God wants us to be or do?

### **A third and final one liner from 2 Corinthians**

**2 Cor 6:12 There is no restriction in our affections, but only in yours. 13... open wide your hearts also.**

A spicy one liner to finish! Paul names something he feels needs to be named... that the Corinthians are responsible for the discord between them and a lack of affection as a result. His affection has been there all along... he's been a spiritual father to them and has fatherly affection for the Corinthians. But the Corinthians affection has become constrained and restricted because of events. As his children Paul appeals to the Corinthians to open wide their hearts to him.

#### **What can we learn and apply today?**

It's wonderful isn't it when you have a relationship with someone that doesn't change however much time lapses between meetings or whatever circumstances occur. You pick up where you left off and the trust, the depth of respect and love remains... whatever.

Conversely, it's hard isn't it when relationships change. You think you have a good friendship or relational dynamic and the next time you have contact something has changed. They're 'funny' with you and you don't know why. Perhaps you eventually find out that other people have been saying things about you that's changed how that person responds to you. I guess there's a little of that here between Paul and the Corinthians. There's a closing of the heart that results.

There is much in Scripture about guarding the heart, and testing everything... but there is also much about having open hearts... open hearts to what God wants to say and do in our lives and in our relationships. The way of Jesus Christ, the risky way of charity, involves an appropriately open heart particularly to one another in Christ and to the Gospel and to God's will and purposes. To open one's heart to love is to begin to live. To close one's heart is to begin to die.

### **In Conclusion!**

What one liner might the Lord have placed on your heart today from the readings or sermon?

Paul's correspondence to the Corinthians and to us teaches us much about relationships. We can certainly say that disputes, hurts, criticisms, discord, lies, accusations, gossip, sin cause hearts to close and cause great damage to faith, to church and to the advancement of the Gospel. On the other hand, grace, mercy and peace from God our Father through Jesus Christ, as Lord of all, manifested in our relationships causes hearts to open and brings life!

May we work together well in the Lord

May we put NO obstacles in the way of the Gospel and what God wants to do in us, amongst us and around us.

May we open wide our hearts in love to God and to one another.