

## BY LOVE UNFEIGNED

### 2 CORINTHIANS 6:1 – 11



~ Our Spiritual Safari has considered God's comfort in all circumstances of our ministry for the Lord Jesus Christ in our first ten reports from second Corinthians; and the Holy Spirit is going to sum it all up for us in this chapter. In this report, we have set before us the requirements of a good minister of Christ; unfortunately, not a single one of us can read this section of Scripture without repeating what we have said many times before: "... *who is sufficient for these things?*" Well, not me. There is not a man or woman alive who can meet this incredibly high standard. Thankfully, even in our predicament, we still rest in the myriad comforts of the ministry of the Spirit of God towards us....

***<sup>1</sup> We then, as workers together, beseech you also that ye receive not the grace of God in vain.***

~ This first verse erases the line between clergy and laity altogether; uniting pulpit and pew in one body. There ought not be a distinction. Every one has a gift; and some have the gift of being a pastor, a missionary, a prayer partner, or a teacher – among other things – but they're all the same in God's eyes. If teaching isn't my gift, then I don't have a gift, by the way. Every layman has a specific gift; but we're not talking about "*sign gifts*" such as tongues or healing. If you can speak in tongues, it is still never going to bring anyone to Christ. If you healed every person in every hospital in the world today, it wouldn't bring many – if any – to the Lord Jesus Christ. That's just not what it's all about, friends.

You're responsible to further the Gospel in sound doctrine by getting the Word of God out to this lost and dying world – as am I. That will require learning Scripture properly, correctly and completely. That is our gift; although it will be executed differently by each individual body part. What we must discover is our function in the body of Christ concerning our service to others; and that *NEVER* includes edifying ourselves. It *MUST* edify others through the death, burial and resurrection of the Lord Jesus Christ. If

that isn't part of your gift, then you don't have a gift, friends. We are *ONLY* to equip believers to serve – not edify self with psycho-babble; nor does it mean to usurp God's glory by declaring that we have the right to determine who is healed and who isn't. Those interpretations of "*gifts*" are absurd. Don't like that? – *TOO BAD* – for *Y-O-U!* Maybe you should stop reading if you haven't already done so and go fishing; you know, have a cocktail or something – I really do not care.

Another misconception is that the pastor is to perform all soul-winning for Christ. Well, the shepherd doesn't produce sheep – sheep produce sheep. God has given us the responsibility to fill out the body of Christ and prepare the body of believers. Those who sit in the pew are to be taught to go out and witness properly, correctly and completely. The shepherd feeds the sheep, and watches over them by shepherding them; but he cannot produce more sheep – impossible. The main reason the modern-day church is completely bogged down is because they are not out witnessing with the Word of God when they should be. So, what are you doing to get the Word of God out to others?

Some of you can do things I could never do — and things no other preacher in the world could do; because some people have confidence in *you* and will listen to *you*, but they wouldn't read one word of my reports unless you recommended them. Some people write me off the moment they see the title of one of my reports. See, we're workers together; and that is exactly what this passage means. My only method is to write these reports — and fling the seed of the Word of God out — and I don't look back. However, *you* may have a more effective method. Maybe all you can do is support this ministry; although none seem to have the gift of giving today – but I digress.

Receiving the grace of God in vain is determined by the response we exhibit to the love in God's heart. God is showering His goodness and mercy on us right now as you read and as I type. If we receive His goodness and salvation, yet continue to live carnally and worldly lives, as in, edifying ourselves, that indicates we receive the grace of God in vain. This is a profound truth that we will *ALL* do well to recognize, understand, remember and respond to....

**<sup>2</sup> (For he saith, I have heard thee in a time accepted, and in the day of salvation have I helped thee: behold, now is the accepted time; behold, now is the day of salvation.)**

~ Some want to postpone making a decision for Christ. They say they'll accept Him at some later point in life. Others are waiting for a certain evangelist or a better Bible teacher to come along. Some are waiting for the skies to part and for Jesus to speak His instructions to them audibly. Others yet merely dream it all up. Well, I don't know who you are, where you are, or how you are as you read this report; you may be reading this many years after I published it. Either way, if you aren't saved, and you are reading this report, then *NOW – RIGHT NOW* – is the time God is calling you. Just look at your calendar and your clock, and whatever day and time it is right *NOW* – that's the acceptable time for you to be saved. If you want to wait until tomorrow, be aware that today may be your last tomorrow. That doesn't mean now or never — but it does mean you have no promise that you will even see the end of the day today....

**<sup>3</sup> Giving no offence in any thing, that the ministry be not blamed:**

~ Naturally, this means we are instructed to be extremely careful about our personal behavior; because it will directly affect the way others view our ministry. However, "*offense*" here does *NOT* mean hurting other people's feelings. If you are a pastor or a Bible teacher, there is absolutely *NO WAY* you will escape hurting many feelings. In fact, some people are led to you by God for no other reason than to have their feelings hurt.

See, here's how it works: if you do not shake hands with someone, they think you are intentionally slighting them; if you *do* shake their hand, then you hurt them by forgetting they have arthritis. If you stop and speak with someone, then you will be interrupting; but, if you don't stop and talk to someone, then you're arrogant and proud – and too good to talk to them. If you write to them, they accuse you of only being after their money; but if you don't write to them, then you are neglecting them. If you visit them at home, then you're just a bother; but if you don't visit them, then it shows you are cold and indifferent. Trust me, it is *IMPOSSIBLE* to please these

people; and it is possible to offend almost everyone without even being aware of said offense. So, I recognize I cannot please everyone —but I still try....

***<sup>4</sup> But in all things approving ourselves as the ministers of God, in much patience, in afflictions, in necessities, in distresses,***

***<sup>5</sup> In stripes, in imprisonments, in tumults, in labours, in watchings, in fastings;***

***<sup>6</sup> By pureness, by knowledge, by longsuffering, by kindness, by the Holy Ghost, by love unfeigned,***

***<sup>7</sup> By the word of truth, by the power of God, by the armour of righteousness on the right hand and on the left,***

***<sup>8</sup> By honour and dishonour, by evil report and good report: as deceivers, and yet true;***

***<sup>9</sup> As unknown, and yet well known; as dying, and, behold, we live; as chastened, and not killed;***

***<sup>10</sup> As sorrowful, yet always rejoicing; as poor, yet making many rich; as having nothing, and yet possessing all things.***

~ Our Spiritual Safari concludes this report with three sets of nine characterizations of any ministry. I hope you read them very carefully. My comment on them will be rather brief – but it may be harsh. The number one way we approve ourselves as ministers of God is through *MUCH* patience. Well, that's a problem — because I don't have any patience. I'm no preacher, either — but, if I ever give a sermon, you can be assured it will *NOT* be a message on patience.

Serving in afflictions is something that many of us in the ministry have to bare; and that means afflicted in necessities. Friends, I could tell you more about this subject than you care to know; you have *NO IDEA* how poor I really am. There have been *MANY* times when I had not a single dollar to

my name. If I didn't have a wonderful church family, you wouldn't be reading this report. Yes, I know all about this subject.

When the foreigner messages me and asks for money, and I tell them all I can do is pray for them – that's not some pious cliché – I don't have anything to give them except prayer and these reports. In fact, looking at these so called "orphans" in the bleeding-heart pictures, I have to laugh because they are better fed and more well-dressed than I am. I declare all the time I am living by faith; and most people sure don't mind letting me do it. I know all about afflictions; you can just write that down — if you even care.

I'm sure very few of us know what physical stripes are as Paul did; but I have been cut across the face many, *MANY* times spiritually. I receive the worst insults from uber-pious saints who have never even read half of one of these reports – yet have labeled themselves experts in the Word of God. Well, I have one word for them: hypocrite. Jesus said that all the time. Say, this gets downright personal, doesn't it?

Any minister with any credibility knows exactly what I am talking about here. It's extremely important that a minister be pure in his life, too. One person who turns out to be a bad egg hurts the cause of Christ more than a thousand atheists protesting the Bible and prayer. Immorality gives everyone a very bad name.

When Paul refers to knowledge, he means more than just spiritual discernment in the Word of God. Of course, the word of truth means a preacher needs to know the Bible — and that's something we're seriously in short supply of — however, a preacher or teacher should know all about what's going on in the outside world. We need to be wise about the times in which we live; street smart — wise as serpents.

Longsuffering is another word for patience. It's interesting Paul mentions it twice. Kindness goes hand in hand with patience. Then, finally, Paul mentions all of this is done *ONLY* in the power of the Holy Spirit. You won't work this up in and of yourself. God have mercy on those who try to preach or teach without the direct leading of the Spirit of God. That just happens

to be the one thing I am, personally, more concerned about than anything else. I pray the Lord will guide me in writing these reports because, on my own, I'm not sufficient for these things.

We need a genuine love for others. I'm not going to go too deep with this, but we have a whole bunch of phonies running around today. We have pious pretenders and fake professors of faith who constantly quote pious platitudes — and you make God sick — and you make me sick, quite frankly. Many people have told me they love me but, as it turns out, they never even *liked* me. I have so many knives in my back it's a wonder I haven't fallen over dead. Try to be genuine and real for a change — and that can only happen when the Holy Spirit has actually done a work in your heart.

Verses eight through ten outline a well-balanced ministry. Some people are going to say some ugly lies about all of us. Well, even so, we're to serve and not even recognize them; and I, personally, don't even dignify most of them with a response. Even a good report can hurt you, friends. Shakespeare said, "*... my friends flatter me and cause me to make an ass of myself; but my enemies call me an ass — which is the worse?*" Well, if you attempt to teach the entire Word of God to the entire world, you can be confident you're going to get an evil report — and a good report. Be careful of *both* of them.

Lastly, if you have a preacher who is rich — watch out to avoid them at all cost, too, my beloved readers. That's the most definite hallmark of a heretic you'll ever find. We're not in the ministry to get rich. Those who desire to be rich are disingenuous. Ministers of the Word of God aren't celebrities — we're servants. Having nothing yet possessing all things means we're rich — *spiritually*. Well, these Christians in Corinth were just little babies in Christ; but, even so, Paul's heart went out to them — as mine does to you dear readers....

***<sup>11</sup> O ye Corinthians, our mouth is open unto you, our heart is enlarged ~***

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