

2 Corinthians 6:1-13 ESV

Are You Holding Back?

Sunday, June 21 at 8:00 & 10:45 + Monday, June 22 at 7 PM

4th Sunday after Pentecost / 3rd Sunday after Trinity – 2015

Father's Day

Introduction: Dear friends in Christ: God has blessed us with life and many relationship opportunities; for example: *between Jesus and us*, and *between fathers and children*. As we think about such relationships, ▶are they the best they can be **or** ▶are we holding back?

1. **Don't Miss This Golden Opportunity:** ¹ **Working together with [God], then, we appeal to you not to receive the grace of God in vain. ² For [the LORD] says [Isaiah 49:8], "In a favorable time I listened to you, and in a day of salvation I have helped you." Behold, now is the favorable time; behold, now is the day of salvation.** // Near the end of chapter 5 Paul wrote: "We implore you on behalf of Christ, be reconciled to God" (5:20 ESV). Then, *in verses 1-2 of chapter 6*, Paul strongly urged the people "not to receive the grace of God in vain." What does it mean to receive in vain? Dr. Luther wrote: "To accept the grace of God in vain can be nothing else than hearing the pure Word of God, in which the grace of God is offered, and yet remaining apathetic and not accepting it, remaining as one was before." (Kretzmann, NT 2:193).
 - a. The need: All have sinned (Rom. 3:23); also, *the requirement for heaven is no sin* (1 Peter 1:14-16), so all are in need of God's forgiveness!

- b. The offer: Even though we have sinned, God loves us (Rom. 5:8). That love moved God to give His Son to take away our sins (John 3:16).
 - c. The response: Since we all need Jesus, it is very important for everyone to *receive Him* as their Savior (John 1:12) **and continue to trust in Him!**
 - d. The rejection: Dr. Kretzmann wrote: “If the time of grace is neglected, if its invitation is ignored, it may soon be past forever, to be followed by a time of wrath and condemnation” (NT 2:194).
 - e. Let’s not hold back: Let’s *trust Jesus and grow up in Him!* Also, for *fathers to children AND children to fathers*, let’s *not* hold back in loving each other and spending quality time together!
2. **More Than Words**: In this section Paul and Timothy explain *how far they were going* to be a blessing to the Corinthians. They were not bragging; instead, they were trying to encourage a God-pleasing response:
- ³ **We put no obstacle in anyone’s way, so that no fault may be found with our ministry, ⁴ but as servants of God we commend ourselves in every way:**
- a. **by great endurance, in** [things that have negatively affected our bodies, such as] **afflictions** [illnesses], **hardships** [distress], **calamities** [difficulties], ⁵ **beatings, imprisonments, riots, labors, sleepless nights, hunger;**
 - b. ⁶ **by** [ways that are a blessing to you, such as] **purity, knowledge, patience, kindness, the Holy Spirit, genuine love;**

- c. ⁷ **by truthful speech** [*not lies*], and the power of God [*not men*]; **with the weapons of righteousness** [*namely Word and Sacrament*] for the right hand and for the left; ⁸ **through honor and dishonor, through slander** [*evil report*] and **praise** [*good report*].
- d. **We are treated**
- i. **as impostors** [*thus not true servants of the Lord*], and yet **we are true** [*servants*];
 - ii. ⁹ **as unknown** [*by the world*], and yet **well known** [*by the Lord*];
 - iii. **as dying** [*by those trying to end our lives*], and **behold** [*by God's grace*], **we live**;
 - iv. **as punished** [*with, for example, my thorn in the flesh (2Co 12:7)*], and yet **not killed**;
 - v. ¹⁰ **as sorrowful** [*as we focus on our many troubles*], yet **always rejoicing** [*in Christ*];
 - vi. **as poor** [*not having the wealth of this world*], yet **making many rich** [*in Christ with the treasures of heaven*];
 - vii. **as having nothing** [*of this temporal world*], yet **possessing everything** [*which is truly and eternally important*].
- e. I can't say the same as Paul and Timothy in regard to my ministry to you – *they suffered and gave up so much*; however, I hope you know of my efforts, *oftentimes behind the scenes*, to help you **know God's truth**, **grow up in Jesus**, and **be blessed forevermore!**

3. **A Full Desire for a Two-Way Street:** Finally, Paul made his point: ¹¹ **We have spoken freely to you, Corinthians; our heart is wide open.** ¹² **You are not restricted by us, but you are restricted in your own affections.** ¹³ **In return (I speak as [a father] to children) widen your hearts also.** // Paul was calling them to change, to be different in God-pleasing ways:

- a. Jesus to us: As He went all the way to remove our sins, *so we should fully trust in Him as our only Savior and live for Him day by day!*
- b. Me to you: As I try to do whatever I can to eternally bless you – *through my studying, writing, preaching, teaching, and visiting*, so I ask you to *gladly and faithfully* respond to whatever agrees with God’s Holy Word!
- c. Fathers to children: As the Lord has entrusted fathers with children, so they should love them *by providing for them and teaching them!*
- d. Children to fathers: Since the Lord has used our fathers to give us life and bless us in countless ways, *let us love them by honoring them and helping them!*

Conclusion: Since we are all holding back in some way, let us
 ♦understand God’s truth, ♦be sorry for our sins, ♦rejoice in God’s forgiveness, and ♦STOP holding back!

And all God’s people said: **Amen!**

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