

LOVE
&
AUTHORITY
2 CORINTHIANS



Sermon Series Notes

"Receiving God's Grace In Vain" (II Corinthians 6:1-2)

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I Cor. 15:1 Now, brothers, I want to remind you of the gospel I preached to you, which you received and on which you have taken your stand.

2 By this gospel you are saved, if you hold firmly to the word I preached to you. Otherwise, you have believed *in vain*.

To believe "in vain" means to not follow through on God's intended course for your life. And that is exactly what threatened many in the church at Corinth. God has touched their lives, and they have received God's grace in salvation, but have gotten "off course."

KJV = "as workers together with him " Paul is saying that he is working together with the Lord to keep them "on track," or to get some "back on track." Paul's ministry is a part of God's grace to them, the same way Isaiah's ministry was God's means of grace to the Israelites. God sent Isaiah as a voice of grace

Isaiah 40: 3 A voice of one calling: "In the desert prepare the way for the LORD ; make straight in the wilderness a highway for our God."

- * The desert is a dry place, a dangerous place, a place where one needs help to survive

- * General grace to all of us

 - Matthew 5:45 He causes his sun to rise on the evil and the good, and sends rain on the righteous and the unrighteous.

- * Grace that is direct and personal

What is the means of God's grace to you?

How do I make sure I don't receive God's grace *in vain*?

1. Don't miss *the means* of God speaking to you

 - See Luke 19:41-45; For us Jesus did not come bodily and offer grace to us. So what other means might God use?

 - See Numbers 22:1-35 The grace in Balaam's life was a Christian jack ass! Is there a jack ass trying to tell you something?

- My testimony of beginning to hang out with "the wrong crowd." I was just shy of my teen years, and Michael Stewart invited me to be in a band with him. It was me, Michael, and Frankie Tyson. Frankie was a short, thin, guy with a large nose and thick glasses, but that big nose boy could play a bass guitar. Michael played guitar and was the lead singer. He had grown up listening to people like Buck Owens. When bands like Black Sabbath and Grand Funk Railroad came on the scene, Mike began his transformation from country to hard rock. If you can picture a cross between Buck Owens and Mark Farner, that was Mike. Those were the days they first came out with a "wah wah" peddle, and Mike, an only child with a very generous dad, had the best one you could buy in that day. I was attending a Christian elementary school at the time, but the band began to get invitations to play at birthday parties, and at these parties, I met guys that were really "cool," and girls that were really "hot." One of these guys invited me to go to church with them. The church was within walking distance from his house. So that Sunday evening I attended my first "MYF" (Methodist Youth Fellowship). Upon discovering some of the "hot" girls from the parties at MYF, I became a regular attendee! I went on a trip with MYF to Myrtle Beach. The only rule the chaperone laid down was no hard liquor. Nat Stallings went on the trip with his girlfriend. Nat was the town pothead, and everybody knew it. He and his girl were stoned out of their minds the whole weekend! And my group, we got caught playing cards in the room, with the bottle of hard liquor right there on the table. We were reprimanded, but the bottle was not confiscated (and we were delighted). The party continued with only that minor interruption I had begun to hang out with the wrong crowd. My next year of school (beginning of middle school), I talked my mother into enrolling me in public school where all my new friends attended. Those years were the beginning of my eventually becoming a drug addict (promote "Finding the Father's Love"). During my high school years, some young people from the church I had attended as a very young boy, the same church that had the elementary school I was attending before joining "MYF," came to visit me on "visitation night." I did not want to see them or talk to them. Their visit was brief, and I made sure that they never caught me at home again on "visitation night." Then a young man (my recollection was he was in his early 20's), came to visit "out of the blue." He tried to talk me and my brother into giving our lives to Jesus Christ, but neither of us were ready to do anything of the sort. That was a painful visit, and I remember thinking that what he was saying was exactly what I needed to do, but I resisted. I was enjoying my life of drugs and partying too much. Thank God his grace was not through with me yet!

- There's someone listening to me right now, and you can relate to my life. How long ago when you decided to begin hanging out with the wrong crowd? It can be a church crowd and it be the wrong crowd. There are lots of people who attend church faithfully and yet live like hell regularly!

- God sometimes will use circumstances to speak to us (See Isaiah 9:13; Amos 4:6-11; Haggai 1:9; I Cor.11:30).

- II Chron.16: 12 In the thirty-ninth year of his reign Asa was afflicted with a disease in his feet. Though his disease was severe, even in his illness he did not seek help from the LORD, but only from the physicians.

- Psalm 119: 67 Before I was afflicted I went astray, but now I obey your word.

2. Don't reject the voice of God

- Balaam clearly heard from the Lord, but he chose to reject God's Word, and the wisdom of his donkey! See Numbers 31:8/Joshua 13:22; II Peter 2:15. Once you identify the means by which God is speaking to you, don't reject Him!

- Note: Some people reject God no matter what their circumstance in life (see Isaiah 26:9-10; Rev.16:9).

3. Don't let your heart become calloused

- Isaiah 6: 10 "Make the heart of this people calloused; make their ears dull and close their eyes. Otherwise they might see with their eyes, hear with their ears, understand with their hearts, and turn and be healed."

- See John 12:37-41

- This happens by repeatedly hearing God speak, but doing nothing about it.

- See Isaiah 58:6-9a. These people were in captivity, yet were caught in a religious routine that missed the heart of God.

- See James 1:22-27

- There are scores of people who sit in church services week after week, but do nothing about what they have heard. They, like the people of Isaiah's day, are caught in a religious routine, and their hearts are calloused. I pray that is not the condition of your heart today.

CONCLUSION

* What is God's "voice of grace" in your life? Perhaps you're caught in a religious routine that has missed the heart of God. You need to humble yourself, repent, and by faith get involved in serving others perhaps you are the one on a reckless path, and God is trying to get your attention through a jack ass. Won't you pay attention, change your course, get away from that crowd you're hanging out with. Are the circumstances in your life God's way of speaking to you? Whatever your situation, God is pouring out some fresh grace to you. The voice of the preacher, the jack ass that so angers you (but is trying to teach you wisdom), the voice of God through the circumstances you find yourself in

* Paul says "now" is the time of God's favor. This does not mean that grace may not be available for us tomorrow. What it means is that ***we do not know*** if grace will be available for us tomorrow. At the very least putting off the right decision will lead you one step closer to a calloused heart.