**OPEN WIDE YOUR HEARTS**

2 Corinthians 6:3-7:16

Key Verse 6:13

As a fair exchange—I speak as to my children—open wide your hearts also.

**Introduction**



 Today's passage is a continuation of the ministry of reconciliation. Paul identified himself as Christ's ambassadors and said, "Be reconciled to God." However, practically it is not easy to reconcile with someone. Rather to break a relationship is easy. Paul had to make a great effort to reconcile with the Corinthians. In doing so, Paul revealed his great shepherd's heart.

1. Read verses 6:3-10. How should we commend ourselves in every way as servants of God? (3-4) How can we live praiseworthy lives as God’s people? (4b-7) What paradoxical truths can we find in the Christian life (8-10)?

1-1, Read verses 6:3-10.

We put no stumbling block in anyone’s path, so that our ministry will not be discredited. **4** Rather, as servants of God we commend ourselves in every way: in great endurance; in troubles, hardships and distresses; **5** in beatings, imprisonments and riots; in hard work, sleepless nights and hunger; **6** in purity, understanding, patience and kindness; in the Holy Spirit and in sincere love; **7** in truthful speech and in the power of God; with weapons of righteousness in the right hand and in the left; **8** through glory and dishonor, bad report and good report; genuine, yet regarded as impostors; **9** known, yet regarded as unknown; dying, and yet we live on; beaten, and yet not killed; **10** sorrowful, yet always rejoicing; poor, yet making many rich; having nothing, and yet possessing everything.

1-2, How should we commend ourselves in every way as servants of God? (3-4)

 ***We put no stumbling block in anyone’s path, so that our ministry will not be discredited.***

* As Ambassadors(ministers) of reconciliation, we should avoid doing anything that would discredit our ministry, because people not only listen to our message of reconciliation, but they also watch our practical lives.
* So we must demonstrate a Christian lifestyle that gives good influence to others.
* We are Christ's ambassadors at home, at school, and at work. So Paul was very sensitive about being a good influence as a minister of reconciliation.

***4 Rather, as servants of God we commend ourselves in every way:***

* Being servants of God it is not merely a matter of eloquent speech, deep knowledge. But we must have right criteria to recognize a true servant of God.
* Of course, we must share a sound doctrinal statement. But we should also commend the godly lives of UBF leaders.
* They reveal Christ. In addition, each of us must set an example of enduring sufferings with the character of Christ.

***in great endurance;***

* Paul first mentioned "great endurance." Endurance is a crucial quality for God's servant. It is "the great power of enduring an unpleasant or difficult process or situation without giving way."
* God's servants must have ability and power to go through pain and hardship. We need great endurance, not just ordinary endurance, in order to be ministers of reconciliation.
* Paul had a lot of distress in serving the Corinthian believers, who criticized him in ignorance. Sometimes it was unbearable, but he endured.

1-3, How can we live praiseworthy lives as God’s people? (4b-7)

***in troubles, hardships and distresses; 5 in beatings, imprisonments and riots;***

* Paul also endured physical pain and trauma from beatings, imprisonment and riots. When Paul was in Philippi, he was beaten and imprisoned unjustly. But he endured with joy and sang hymns of praise to God.

***in hard work, sleepless nights and hunger;***

* As a tentmaker, Paul supported himself and his companions. Sometimes he worked all day at his job, and stayed up all night to prepare/preach his message and write letters.

***6 in purity, understanding, patience and kindness; in the Holy Spirit and in sincere love; 7 in truthful speech and in the power of God; with weapons of righteousness in the right hand and in the left;***

* Paul's source of strength was the Holy Spirit, sincere love, the power of God. Paul always used truthful speech, sharing the word of God with others.
* Paul also had the image of a victorious general with both weapons of righteousness in his right hand and the sword of the Spirit, and in his left hand.

1-4, What paradoxical truths can we find in the Christian life (8-10)?

 ***through glory and dishonor, bad report and good report; genuine, yet regarded as impostors;***

* Though Paul lived an exemplary life as a man of God, he was not always honored. There were times of dishonor as well as glory; times of bad reports.
* Regardless of the response, Paul followed Jesus with great endurance.

***9 known, yet regarded as unknown; dying, and yet we live on; beaten, and yet not killed; 10 sorrowful, yet always rejoicing; poor, yet making many rich; having nothing, and yet possessing everything.***

* Paul goes on to describe the paradoxical nature of his life of faith. Even though Paul was a great man of God, he was ignored; sometimes people despised him. Yet he was known to God.
* Sometimes Paul felt that he was dying. Yet he lived on because of his resurrection faith (2 Cor 4:14).
* One time in Lystra he was stoned and left for dead. But after the disciples had gathered around him, he got up and went back into the city and continued preaching the gospel (Ac 14:19-21).
* Paul often experienced heartbreaking sorrow while serving God's flock. Still, he was always joyful in the Lord. He rejoiced in trials and even in prison. He said, "Rejoice in the Lord always; I will say it again, rejoice" (Php 4:4).
* Outwardly, Paul looked poor as a self-supporting lay missionary. However, inwardly he was rich in the knowledge of Christ, and he made many people rich by sharing the good news of eternal life with them. Paul could sacrifice his life to make others rich in Christ.
* In this part, we can find a principle in Paul's life and ministry. It is endurance through trials with a Christ-like character. In times of hardship and distress, Paul did not react according to his emotions.
* He did not become frustrated or angry, and he did not give up. He endured patiently, defending himself with wisdom, loving the Corinthians to the end.
* Paul fixed his eyes on Jesus who endured the cross(Heb 12:2). Here we learn that the trademark of a servant of God is endurance through trials with a Christ-like character.
1. Read verses 6:11-7:1. What did Paul ask the Corinthians to do? (6:11-13) What is Paul's advice for them? (6:14-16a) What should we do in light of God’s promises? (6:16b-7:1)

2-1, Read verses 6:11-7:1.

We have spoken freely to you, Corinthians, and opened wide our hearts to you. **12** We are not withholding our affection from you, but you are withholding yours from us. **13** As a fair exchange—I speak as to my children—open wide your hearts also.

**14** Do not be yoked together with unbelievers. For what do righteousness and wickedness have in common? Or what fellowship can light have with darkness? **15** What harmony is there between Christ and Belial[[b](https://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=2+corinthians+6&version=NIV#fen-NIV-28914b)]? Or what does a believer have in common with an unbeliever? **16** What agreement is there between the temple of God and idols? For we are the temple of the living God. As God has said: “I will live with them and walk among them, and I will be their God, and they will be my people.” **17** Therefore, “Come out from them and be separate, says the Lord. Touch no unclean thing, and I will receive you.” **18** And, “I will be a Father to you, and you will be my sons and daughters, says the Lord Almighty.” Therefore, since we have these promises, dear friends, let us purify ourselves from everything that contaminates body and spirit, perfecting holiness out of reverence for God.

2-1, What did Paul ask the Corinthians to do? (6:11-13)

***11 We have spoken freely to you, Corinthians, and opened wide our hearts to you.***

* It is hard for anyone to open their hearts to those who have been critical and harsh. Yet Paul spoke freely of what was on his heart to the Corinthians.
* He took the initiative in this. There are some Bible teachers who have been hurt by critical comments or disappointed by their Bible students.
* It is natural to close our hearts, hold a kind of grudge, and become very superficial. But to reconcile, we must learn to open our hearts first.
* Our Father God was deeply grieved over the terrible sin of mankind. Yet, God came to us first by sending his one and only Son Jesus Christ into the world to die for our sins.

***12 We are not withholding our affection from you, but you are withholding yours from us.***

* Because of a rebuke, a misunderstanding, or a problem, they have closed their hearts. No matter how much they are loved, they never respond.
* Only when the Corinthians opened their hearts to Paul could there be true reconciliation and a heart to heart relationship. This is what Paul wanted.
* He would not settle for less. In truth, opening their hearts to Paul was welcoming Christ's love through him (Mt 10:40).
* Christ's love could fill their hearts with new life, joy, and peace. They could have deep fellowship with Christ and one another and experience the kingdom of God as a community.

***13 As a fair exchange—I speak as to my children—open wide your hearts also.***

* A narrow closed heart is self-centered. They easily misunderstand others and condemn them. Their hearts are always troubled and they trouble others as well.
* However, those whose hearts are open wide are God-centered and other-centered. They always try to understand and embrace people. They respect others from their hearts and serve them humbly.
* At one time, Paul's heart was narrow and closed. But as he followed Jesus, his heart opened wide to God and others.
* When we follow Jesus, we can grow until our hearts are open wide. Jesus accepted, loved and served all kinds of people. Let's pray to learn Jesus’ heart.

2-2, What is Paul's advice for them? (6:14-16a)

***Do not be yoked together with unbelievers. For what do righteousness and wickedness have in common? Or what fellowship can light have with darkness? 15 What harmony is there between Christ and Belial? Or what does a believer have in common with an unbeliever? 16 What agreement is there between the temple of God and idols? For we are the temple of the living God.***

* In order to open our hearts wide to God and his people, we must avoid ungodly relationships. Because they had joined themselves to unbelievers, and this was affecting their reconciliation with Paul.



* In ancient times, two oxen were yoked together to move in the same direction, working together to pull a load. For human beings, it means two people working together to accomplish a common goal.
* It implies a shared value system and direction. Paul strongly warns believers not to be yoked together with unbelievers. We are going in opposite directions, and we have opposing value systems.
* While believers are characterized by righteousness, light, Christ, and God's temple, unbelievers are characterized by wickedness, darkness, and idolatry.
* Paul challenged the Corinthians not to enter ungodly relationships, esp., in marriage. It was a necessary step to make a heart to heart relationship with God and his people.

2-3, What should we do in light of God’s promises? (6:16b-7:1)

***As God has said: “I will live with them and walk among them, and I will be their God, and they will be my people.” 17 Therefore, “Come out from them and be separate, says the Lord. Touch no unclean thing, and I will receive you.” 18 And, “I will be a Father to you, and you will be my sons and daughters, says the Lord Almighty.”***

* We may think that we will be empty and lonely without worldly idols and unbelieving friends. But this is not true.
* God becomes our Father. God's Spirit fills our hearts with his love and grace. We become God's temple. We have true peace in God's protection and provision. Our souls are satisfied and we enjoy life with God every day.

***Therefore, since we have these promises, dear friends, let us purify ourselves from everything that contaminates body and spirit, perfecting holiness out of reverence for God.***

* Since we have these promises(6:16b-18), Paul encouraged us to purify ourselves from everything that contaminated body and spirit and perfecting holiness for God.
* It might be harder to purify spiritual sins such as pride and rebellion rather than bodily sins. But Paul points out everything that contaminates us.
* We can purify ourselves by claiming the blood of Jesus (1 Jn 1:7). The blood of Jesus has great power to cleanse any kind of contamination from unbelieving influences and sin.
* The blood of Jesus makes us holy, holy enough for God to dwell with us. Then we can enjoy fellowship with God and with his people.
1. Read verses 7:2-7. What appeal did Paul make to the Corinthians, and on what basis? (2-4) How did God comfort Paul through Titus? (5-7)

3-1, Read verses 7:2-7.

Make room for us in your hearts. We have wronged no one, we have corrupted no one, we have exploited no one. **3** I do not say this to condemn you; I have said before that you have such a place in our hearts that we would live or die with you. **4** I have spoken to you with great frankness; I take great pride in you. I am greatly encouraged; in all our troubles my joy knows no bounds.

**5** For when we came into Macedonia, we had no rest, but we were harassed at every turn—conflicts on the outside, fears within. **6** But God, who comforts the downcast, comforted us by the coming of Titus,**7** and not only by his coming but also by the comfort you had given him. He told us about your longing for me, your deep sorrow, your ardent concern for me, so that my joy was greater than ever.

3-2, What appeal did Paul make to the Corinthians, and on what basis? (7:2-4)

***2 Make room for us in your hearts. We have wronged no one, we have corrupted no one, we have exploited no one. 3 I do not say this to condemn you; I have said before that you have such a place in our hearts that we would live or die with you. 4 I have spoken to you with great frankness; I take great pride in you. I am greatly encouraged; in all our troubles my joy knows no bounds.***

* Paul had never harmed the Corinthians, nor would he do so. Rather, he loved them enough to live or die with them. They occupied in his heart.
* They could trust Paul. Paul trusted them. Though they were troublemakers in many ways, Paul trusted them with great confidence.
* Paul never gave up hope for them. Paul never condemned them. Paul only built them up in faith in Christ.

3-3, How did God comfort Paul through Titus? (5-7)

***5 For when we came into Macedonia, we had no rest, but we were harassed at every turn—conflicts on the outside, fears within. 6 But God, who comforts the downcast, comforted us by the coming of Titus,7 and not only by his coming but also by the comfort you had given him. He told us about your longing for me, your deep sorrow, your ardent concern for me, so that my joy was greater than ever.***

* When Paul's company came into Macedonia they had a hard time. They were weary and tired. They had conflicts on the outside and fears within.
* At this moment, God comforted Paul through Titus, for he brought good news that the Corinthians had repented and were longing for him.
* This was the fruit of Paul's great endurance in reconciliation and he was full of joy.

Galatians 6:9 reads,

"Let us not become weary in doing good, for at the proper time we will reap a harvest if we do not give up."

1. Read verses 7:8-16. Paul’s letter had initially brought sorrow. Yet why did Paul not regret writing this letter? (8-9) What was the outcome of this Godly sorrow? (10-13a) What made Paul happy and confident in them? (13b-16)

4-1, Read verses 7:8-16.

Even if I caused you sorrow by my letter, I do not regret it. Though I did regret it—I see that my letter hurt you, but only for a little while— **9** yet now I am happy, not because you were made sorry, but because your sorrow led you to repentance. For you became sorrowful as God intended and so were not harmed in any way by us. **10** Godly sorrow brings repentance that leads to salvation and leaves no regret, but worldly sorrow brings death. **11** See what this godly sorrow has produced in you: what earnestness, what eagerness to clear yourselves, what indignation, what alarm, what longing, what concern, what readiness to see justice done. At every point you have proved yourselves to be innocent in this matter. **12** So even though I wrote to you, it was neither on account of the one who did the wrongnor on account of the injured party, but rather that before God you could see for yourselves how devoted to us you are. **13** By all this we are encouraged. In addition to our own encouragement, we were especially delighted to see how happy Titus was, because his spirit has been refreshed by all of you. **14** I had boasted to him about you, and you have not embarrassed me. But just as everything we said to you was true, so our boasting about you to Titus has proved to be true as well. **15** And his affection for you is all the greater when he remembers that you were all obedient, receiving him with fear and trembling. **16** I am glad I can have complete confidence in you.

4-2, Paul’s letter had initially brought sorrow. Yet why did Paul not regret writing this letter? (8-9)

***8 Even if I caused you sorrow by my letter, I do not regret it. Though I did regret it—I see that my letter hurt you, but only for a little while— 9 yet now I am happy, not because you were made sorry, but because your sorrow led you to repentance. For you became sorrowful as God intended and so were not harmed in any way by us.***

* Paul had written a severe letter to the Corinthians, rebuking their sin. After that, he was very anxious, not knowing how they would respond.
* At first they were sorry because their pride was hurt. Yet, when they read Paul's letter carefully, they discovered Paul's holy love for them.
* He challenged them with the word of God to repent of their sins. This was for their good. They experienced deep sorrow, but it was godly sorrow.

4-3, What was the outcome of this Godly sorrow? (10-13a)

***10 Godly sorrow brings repentance that leads to salvation and leaves no regret, but worldly sorrow brings death. 11 See what this godly sorrow has produced in you: what earnestness, what eagerness to clear yourselves, what indignation, what alarm, what longing, what concern, what readiness to see justice done. At every point you have proved yourselves to be innocent in this matter. 12 So even though I wrote to you, it was neither on account of the one who did the wrong nor on account of the injured party, but rather that before God you could see for yourselves how devoted to us you are. 13 By all this we are encouraged.***

* When we are rebuked by the word of God, we feel sorrow in our hearts. This is why it is difficult to write Bible testimonies.
* But this godly sorrow leads us to repent and restore our love relationship with God. Godly sorrow leads to salvation. However, worldly sorrow, that is the grief we experience because of our sins, leads to death.
* Paul must have greatly encouraged by their response in a godly way.

4-4, What made Paul happy and confident in them? (13b-16)

***In addition to our own encouragement, we were especially delighted to see how happy Titus was, because his spirit has been refreshed by all of you. 14 I had boasted to him about you, and you have not embarrassed me. But just as everything we said to you was true, so our boasting about you to Titus has proved to be true as well. 15 And his affection for you is all the greater when he remembers that you were all obedient, receiving him with fear and trembling. 16 I am glad I can have complete confidence in you.***

* Paul had sent Titus to Corinth to help the believers to reconcile with God and with him. Titus was a very faithful coworker of Paul.
* He was sincere, trustworthy, affectionate, and humble. Titus was very happy when the Corinthian believers repented.
* When Titus was full of joy, Paul was delighted and greatly encouraged. In this way, Paul and Titus worked together in the ministry of reconciliation. At last, Paul could have complete confidence in the Corinthians

**Conclusion**

 We learned how Paul made a great effort in order to reconcile with the Corinthian believers. He didn't rebuke them one-sidedly. He opened his heart to them and shared how much he struggled, how much he loved them, and how he had been anxious over them. Then he appealed to them to open their hearts to him as a fair exchange. Paul endured to the end for reconciliation. Paul bore the pain of suffering until they were reconciled. Then Paul was full of joy. May God bless us to have many heart to heart relationships in Christ and overflowing joy like Paul.

**One word: Open wide our hearts!**

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