

# ***International Bible Lessons Commentary***

## ***2 Corinthians 6:1-18 & 7:1-4***

### ***International Bible Lessons***

**Sunday, August 24, 2014**

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The **[International Bible Lesson](#)** (*Uniform Sunday School Lessons Series*) for **Sunday, August 24, 2014**, is from **2 Corinthians 6:1-18 & 7:1-4**. NOTE: Some churches will only study **2 Corinthians 6:1-13 & 7:2-4**. **Questions for Discussion and Thinking Further** follow the verse-by-verse *International Bible Lesson Commentary* below. **Study Hints for Thinking Further**, a study guide for teachers, discusses the five questions below to help with class preparation and in conducting class discussion; these hints are available on the **[International Bible Lessons Commentary](#)** website. The weekly *International Bible Lesson* is usually posted each Saturday before the lesson is scheduled to be taught.

### ***International Bible Lesson Commentary***

#### **2 Corinthians 6:1-18**

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

The Lord Jesus Christ, along with Paul, Timothy, Titus, and those Christians who faithfully followed Him as Lord and Savior worked together to achieve the goals of God in Christ; including the salvation of all who would accept the good news of Jesus. Salvation includes everlasting fellowship with God through faith in Jesus Christ rather than simply hearing the good news and not following Christ or not using God's gifts, which would be accepting the grace of God in vain or to no effect or uselessly.

**(2 Corinthians 6:2)** **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!**

At various times in the past, the Israelites had called out to God to save them from their oppressors. In the books of Exodus, Joshua, and Judges, the Bible records many of God's saving acts through His leaders. At the acceptable time, God sent His only begotten Son, Jesus Christ, to save His people from their sins and free them from slavery to Satan, sin, sinful habits, and the fear of death. As Paul preached and wrote his letters, the acceptable time came for his listeners and readers to accept and act upon the good news they received; their day of salvation had come if they would rightly respond to the good news they heard.

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

False apostles and prophets accused Paul of falsely presenting a false gospel, but these false apostles and prophets were the ones putting obstacles in the way of Jews and Gentiles coming to faith in Jesus Christ and His gospel. They were the ones who insisted that to be saved believers also had to conform to the Jewish ceremonial laws, such as some of their food laws, and do other works to earn salvation. Paul preached repentance and faith in Jesus Christ as Lord and Savior as the conditions of salvation; he did not add anything to what he had received or preach that salvation was earned by doing works.

**(2 Corinthians 6:4) but as servants of God we have commended ourselves in every way: through great endurance, in afflictions, hardships, calamities,**

Paul did not put any obstacle in anyone's way to saving faith. Someone who would not believe could not justifiably blame his refusal to believe on something Paul had done or said. Rather, because of his moral and spiritual values and loving way of life, Paul lived and taught in a way that encouraged people to believe in Jesus Christ and His saving power no matter what the situation or trouble. They had the ability to see the power and presence of Jesus Christ in Paul's life as he faced many challenges and great suffering; therefore, many began to trust in Jesus too.

**(2 Corinthians 6:5) beatings, imprisonments, riots, labors, sleepless nights, hunger;**

Paul listed some of the physical ordeals that Jesus Christ had helped him through. Few believers could create a list as detailed and varied as Paul's, but those who have faced some of these challenges can testify that the grace of Jesus Christ was more than sufficient for them. The Book of Acts recounts in more detail some of the hardships and persecutions that Paul merely lists here. Jesus said that if believers followed Him they would need to endure persecutions, and history shows how Jesus spoke the truth. Today, many believers receive encouragement and take heart from Jesus' promise: "Blessed are you when people revile you and persecute you and utter all kinds of evil against you falsely on my account. Rejoice and be glad, for your reward is great in heaven, for in the same way they persecuted the prophets who were before you" (Matthew 5:11-12).

**(2 Corinthians 6:6) by purity, knowledge, patience, kindness, holiness of spirit, genuine love,**

Rather than give up his faith or turn from following Jesus Christ as Lord after he suffered so much, Paul maintained his moral and spiritual purity. He increased his knowledge of the sufficiency of Jesus Christ in all situations and learned more about Jesus Christ personally so he could share his knowledge to encourage others. Paul's patience was not only tried by imprisonments but also by false apostles and those in the

church who turned from him and the gospel he preached when they followed false apostles. Paul's letters and the Book of Acts show his continued kindness and expressions of genuine love when misunderstood or persecuted. He maintained an observable spirit of holiness that proved he was determined to serve God no matter what others said or did to him.

**(2 Corinthians 6:7) truthful speech, and the power of God; with the weapons of righteousness for the right hand and for the left;**

God is genuine love. The love of God in Paul motivated him to speak the truth to others as he engaged the world and the worldly. God's Spirit developed the moral and spiritual qualities in Paul that he listed previously. Now, with humility and boldness Paul spoke and wrote the truth in the power of God, and the power of the gospel led many to saving faith in Jesus. Paul used the sword of the Spirit and the sword of the Word of God in his right and left hands (or the shield of faith in his left hand) to fight for the truth of God, for living God's way, the right way, so believers would believe and follow Christ for the sake of righteousness: "he leads me in the paths of righteousness for his name's sake" (Psalm 23:3).

**(2 Corinthians 6:8) in honor and dishonor, in ill repute and good repute. We are treated as impostors, and yet are true;**

Paul used the weapons God gave him to keep doing righteousness and to take the right actions no matter what his situation or the consequences that would follow his obedience. Sometimes, though it seems rarely, Paul was honored as an effective evangelist and pastor, apostle and prophet. At other times, Paul was dishonored by those who were liars and false apostles and by those in Corinth who believed the lies these false apostles spread about him. Paul's opponents in Corinth and those enemies of his that followed him from place to place accused Paul of being an imposter and preaching a false gospel. Sometimes he had a good reputation; at other times his enemies spread lies that ruined his reputation. In actual fact, the false apostles were the impostors who preached a false gospel.

**(2 Corinthians 6:9) as unknown, and yet are well known; as dying, and see-we are alive; as punished, and yet not killed;**

Paul was a true apostle who was called and set apart by Jesus Christ personally. He was an apostle that the church leaders in Jerusalem commended. Paul was an apostle the church leaders in Jerusalem sent to be an apostle primarily to the Gentiles, while they sent Peter to the Jews. Paul was well known by many, some of whom were helping him collect an offering for the poor in Jerusalem. When he went to a city to be the first to preach the gospel, he was unknown, but the power of the gospel quickly made him known throughout the city. Though imprisoned, beaten, stoned, and left for dead, God raised Paul to life and continued to empower his ministry and his outreach so many came to believe.

**(2 Corinthians 6:10) as sorrowful, yet always rejoicing; as poor, yet making many rich; as having nothing, and yet possessing everything.**

In the most discouraging circumstances, Paul demonstrated by his life and words the power of the truth of the Scriptures and the power of the Holy Spirit who lives within the hearts of true Christians. Though sorrowful in his situation and when he considered the sad situations of some others, Paul had good reasons for always rejoicing in the Lord. He wrote, “Rejoice in the Lord always; again I will say, Rejoice” (Philippians 4:4). Paul was poor financially, as were the believers in Jerusalem who needed financial aid and others, but the gospel made many spiritually rich and so transformed some that they had the wisdom to achieve financial stability and even wealth. Paul owned nothing when he worked as a missionary, but he knew that God had planned an eternal inheritance for him and would meet all of his needs as he did the work of God on earth. Missionaries such as Hudson Taylor learned this lesson well, and Hudson Taylor inspired many of God’s servants with these words: “God’s work done in God’s way will never lack God’s supply.”

**(2 Corinthians 6:11) We have spoken frankly to you Corinthians; our heart is wide open to you.**

Paul loved the Corinthians. In spite of their sins and disrespect for him personally, Paul spoke and wrote openly and honestly to them without compromise or holding back from them the personally sensitive conflicts and sufferings he faced daily. He opened his heart to them and poured out his love for them with the hope and prayer that they would respond rightly to him and express their love for him in return.

**(2 Corinthians 6:12) There is no restriction in our affections, but only in yours.**

Even though the Corinthians had mistreated Paul by believing the lies of the false apostles and by turning from him and many of the truths he taught, Paul remained affectionate toward them and extended genuine love toward them as he spoke the truth to them. One problem he faced with them was the knowledge that they had lost their love and affection for him, and instead they trusted imposters they barely knew who claimed to be somebody important in the church.

**(2 Corinthians 6:13) In return--I speak as to children--open wide your hearts also.**

Paul wrote to the Corinthians as their spiritual father and mentor. He opened his heart to them as a loving father would open his heart to his children – wanting what was right and best for their total well-being and joy in the Lord. Paul had previously written them as infants in Christ, and he wanted to draw their attention to the fact that as loving children they should open wide their hearts to him also.

**(2 Corinthians 6:14) Do not be mismatched with unbelievers. For what partnership is there between righteousness and lawlessness? Or what fellowship is there between light and darkness?**

As their spiritual father, Paul showed his loving concern for the Corinthians by giving them the advice a Christian father would give to his children in the Lord. The Lord Jesus Christ enables believers to obey the moral law of God and live righteously as the work of the Holy Spirit (the work that the Bible calls “sanctification”) develops them spiritually. Unbelievers do not believe in God or obey the law of God: lawlessness or disregard for law and order characterizes their behavior. Believers walk in the light, but unbelievers prefer darkness which clouds their vision, but they think hides their deeds. Paul warned believers against uniting with unbelievers to form a family or business or to work together for agreed upon goals, because believers and unbelievers are building their lives on opposite foundations; an unbeliever will not be guided by the commands of Jesus and the Holy Spirit to do what is right and best for all concerned.

**(2 Corinthians 6:15) What agreement does Christ have with Beliar? Or what does a believer share with an unbeliever?**

Beliar is another name for Satan. During Jesus’ temptation by Satan, Jesus made it clear that He would not come into agreement with Satan or work with Satan to do anything. Jesus cast out demons and defeated the power of Satan in many ways during His ministry. Paul made it clear in his writings that unbelievers are slaves of Satan whether they know it or not. Believers are slaves of Jesus Christ, willing slaves of their Lord and Savior to do God’s will. The slaves of masters who are at war with one another (especially when one master is God and the other master is Satan) cannot share the same life purposes or reach the same goals. At some point, the slave of Satan will turn on and try to destroy the slave of Jesus Christ.

**(2 Corinthians 6:16) What agreement has the temple of God with idols? For we are the temple of the living God; as God said, “I will live in them and walk among them, and I will be their God, and they shall be my people.**

In the days of Moses and later, God chose to dwell in the tabernacle to be present with His people. In the days of King Solomon, God descended into the temple in Jerusalem to be present with His people, but King Solomon set up high places for idols in the surrounding hills, which eventually led to the dilution and destruction of the people’s faith and the destruction of the kingdoms of Israel and Judah. As believers in Jesus Christ, our bodies are now the temple of God; God now lives and walks among believers all around the world rather than reside in a man-made temple. Believers must not follow the evil example of King Solomon and have any relationship with Satan or idols that bring people into fellowship with demons.

**(2 Corinthians 6:17) Therefore come out from them, and be separate from them, says the Lord, and touch nothing unclean; then I will welcome you,**

As usual, Paul referred believers back to the Scriptures that he sometimes paraphrased, combining prophets and interpreting them, as he quoted them for people to understand. Paul wrote that the Corinthians, and anyone who read his letters, should not worship in the temples of idols or eat in temples that honored idols or do anything unclean or contrary to the law of God, especially those things that might mislead their families and others. Paul upheld the moral law of God, the law of love, as the way the believer should obey God with the guidance, help, and power of the Holy Spirit within them, Who would help them do God's will.

**(2 Corinthians 6:18) and I will be your father, and you shall be my sons and daughters, says the Lord Almighty.”**

God sent Jesus Christ into the world so He could adopt into the family of God all who would believe in Him and receive the free gift of eternal life through faith in Him. Those who receive Jesus Christ as Lord and Savior of their lives welcome Jesus into their hearts, and God welcomes them into His family knowing the love and joy He can bring His children and they can bring Him and one another. God made this promise in the Old Testament, and Jesus Christ has made this promise possible for Jews and Gentiles, men and women, and those who are slaves or free so all can be members of the family of God.

## **2 Corinthians 7:1-4**

**(2 Corinthians 7:1) Since we have these promises, beloved, let us cleanse ourselves from every defilement of body and of spirit, making holiness perfect in the fear of God.**

According to the promises of God, the children of God and their heavenly Father can rejoice together for eternity because His children will live rightly with the help of the indwelling Holy Spirit. Even now, His children will prepare themselves to meet Jesus face-to-face by cleansing themselves from every defilement by the choices they make and by trusting that the blood of Jesus Christ will cleanse them from all sin. They will seek daily to live for God because God has set them apart for His service. There can be no real or lasting agreement between those who live primarily for God and His glory and those who live primarily to fulfill their selfish needs. Someday, everyone will stand before Jesus as Lord of the universe: the believer will not want to feel ashamed of his behavior before Jesus. The unbeliever prefers darkness and does not want to live like Christians live, so he will go into the outer darkness (See John 3:19-21; Matthew 8:12; Matthew 22:13; Matthew 25:30). A healthy fear of God may move believers to seek holiness of life and unbelievers to seek salvation in Christ alone, He Who is the light of the world.

**(2 Corinthians 7:2) Make room in your hearts for us; we have wronged no one, we have corrupted no one, we have taken advantage of no one.**

The Corinthians had shut Paul out of their hearts probably because they believed the lies told about him by the false apostles who had quickly won their hearts and veiled their minds. They accused Paul of hurting people and turning people away from the true faith

of Jesus Christ. They also accused Paul of taking money from them for the poor in Jerusalem while planning to keep the money for himself. In other words, they accused Paul of doing the very things that they were doing as false apostles.

**(2 Corinthians 7:3) I do not say this to condemn you, for I said before that you are in our hearts, to die together and to live together.**

Because he loved them, Paul graciously wrote that he did not condemn them for believing the lies told about him. Eventually the Corinthians did return to him and express their love for him. Paul encouraged them and wrote that because they were all united to Jesus Christ that they would die and live again together with Jesus Christ.

**(2 Corinthians 7:4) I often boast about you; I have great pride in you; I am filled with consolation; I am overjoyed in all our affliction.**

In spite of their sins and the way they had treated him, Paul encouraged them as a father might encourage his children. Rather than focus on their missteps and sins, Paul wrote that he was proud of them and boasted about how far they had come as followers of Jesus Christ. When he thought about his afflictions, suffered for the sake of sharing the good news, Paul found comfort and reason to rejoice when he thought about believers coming to faith in Jesus Christ as Lord and Savior as a result of his labors.

### **Questions for Discussion and Thinking Further**

1. When should a person repent of their sins and place their faith in Jesus Christ as their Lord and Savior?
2. List some of the afflictions, hardships, and calamities that Paul suffered as an apostle.
3. What character traits did Paul develop through his sufferings or in spite of his sufferings? How did he develop them?
4. As an apostle, how was Paul sometimes misrepresented or mistreated?
5. Because Christians have the promises of God in Christ and the Bible, what does Paul say they should do?

Begin or close your class by reading the short weekly *International Bible Lesson*.

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