



BELIEVERS CHAPEL

6420 Churchill Way | Dallas, Texas | 75230 | t 972.239.5371 | believerschapeldallas.org

The Sermons of Dan Duncan

2 Corinthians 6: 1-10

Summer 2025

"In Much Endurance"

TRANSCRIPT

Thank you Seth, and good morning. The answer to that question in Romans 8:35, (*"Can anything separate us from Christ's love?..."*), is, 'No!... ', [Laughter], '...nothing can separate us from the love of God. In fact, I'm going to refer to that later in the sermon.

Well, happy Fathers' day; I wish you all that as well, and hope you have an enjoyable one today.

We are in a new chapter in 2 Corinthians. We're looking at 2 Corinthians chapter 6, and we'll go through verses 1 through 10. 2 Corinthians, chapter 6;

"And working together *with Him*, we also urge you not to receive the grace of God in vain." (*Now you'll notice that word, 'with Him', is in italics because it's not in the original text; so this is an interpretation. I think that's correct. It could have been, 'working together with us', (with the apostles), but I think, 'with Him', ('with the Lord God')...it fits the context earlier in verse 20, of chapter 5, where we are called "ambassadors for Christ". Which means we're His representatives; we work in concert with Him. And then later, in this chapter, (in verse 4), they are called, (and we with them), "servants of God". So, 'Working with God', fits this context. And that's a very important point to make and understand as we understand Paul's instruction to us here.)*

6 And working together *with Him*, we also urge you not to receive the grace of God in vain— ²for He says,

“AT THE ACCEPTABLE TIME I LISTENED TO YOU,
AND ON THE DAY OF SALVATION I HELPED YOU.”

Behold, now is “THE ACCEPTABLE TIME,” behold, now is “THE DAY OF SALVATION”—

³giving no cause for offense in anything, so that the ministry will not be discredited,

⁴but in everything commending ourselves as servants of God,

in much endurance, in afflictions, in hardships, in distresses,

⁵in beatings, in imprisonments, in tumults,

in labors, in sleeplessness, in hunger,

⁶in purity, in knowledge, in patience, in kindness, in the Holy Spirit, in genuine love,

⁷in the word of truth, in the power of God; by the weapons of righteousness for the right hand and the left,

⁸by glory and dishonor, by evil report and good report; *regarded* as deceivers and yet true;

⁹as unknown yet well-known, as dying yet behold, we live; as punished yet not put to death,

¹⁰as sorrowful yet always rejoicing, as poor yet making many rich, as having nothing yet possessing all things.

2 Corinthians 6: 1-10

May the LORD bless this reading of His Word and bless our time of study in it together. Let's bow together in a word of prayer.

Father, we thank You for this time together. What a blessing it is to be with Your people on a Sunday morning, on a LORD's day as You have instructed us to do, as the author of Hebrews told the congregation to which he wrote, ‘they're not to be forsaking

the gathering together of the saints, as is the practice of some.' (Heb 10:25). It's very easy to slip into that...slip into missing meetings and following a more personal schedule.

We need to be together. We need to be together once a week at least in fellowship, and fellowship in this way. And so, Father, I pray that You would instill that in us, and give us resolve to do that and continue to be faithful in that.

And bless us in this hour. We can expect that because we're reading and we're studying Your Word, Your inerrant Word, Your revelation; and it is nourishment for the soul, and it builds us up; that's how we grow. So we pray for spiritual growth in this hour, and conviction where we need it, and encouragement where we need that. May the Spirit of God use this in a very effective way in the lives of each and every one of us.

And we thank You for this great privilege that we have of offering prayer, for ourselves, and to You in words of praise and thanksgiving. May You bless Your people, whatever our issues are. Make us thankful for the peace and the prosperity that we may be enjoying, the health that we may have; and give us strength where that's taken away, and where we pass through difficulties. We read about lots of those that the apostle went through in our text this morning—and we may experience much of that ourselves. Prepare us for that. And the only way to prepare us for that, Father, is through Your Word—and so give us a hunger for it and a desire to be obedient.

We pray these things in Christ's name. Amen.

(Message) In 1954, Roger Bannister, a student at Oxford University did what many thought was impossible...he ran the mile in under four minutes. Two others ran the race, an Australian and an American. They all endured thousands of hours of training, working to the point of exhaustion just to knock off one second during the race. They trained in rain, sleet, snow, and heat; it was a life of discipline and self-denial, all to achieve what someone called, 'The holy grail in all of sports.'

Paul would have appreciated that; he found a lot of metaphors from athletics to describe the Christian life. He described the Christian life as 'a race' at the end of

1 Corinthians chapter 9, (vs24), and told the Corinthians to 'run the race to win'.

And that takes discipline. That take sacrifice, and he gave himself as an example: "I run in such a way, as not without aim...I discipline my body and make it my slave, so that...I myself may not be disqualified." (1Cor 9:26-27).

Now that's very much the lesson of our passage, 2 Corinthians 6, verses 1 through 10, where he warns the Corinthian Christians, 'not to cause offense in anything and discredit the ministry.' (vs3). He had just told them that they, (and we by application, all Christians), "...are ambassadors of Christ." (2Cor 5:20). We are His *representatives* on earth, because He was our *representative* on the cross. God the Father, "...made Him who knew no sin *to be* sin on our behalf, so that we might become the righteousness of God in Him." (2Cor 5:21). That's grace.

And grace calls for a response of obedience. He began the chapter by speaking of himself and all Christians as 'fellow workers of God'; that's the sense of the statement, "And working together *with Him*...." (vs1). That's our privilege, that's our great privilege, 'working with God'. It's the privilege of every Christian, and we should see it as that; we are all in the ministry...all God's servants.

But, in the authority Paul had as a servant, he warns the Corinthians against not taking their privilege seriously, or, 'taking it for granted'. He wrote, "...we also urge you not to receive the grace of God in vain—", (vs1b).

Now that's not a warning against losing one's salvation—we cannot receive God's grace, then lose it. That's impossible theologically, that's impossible biblically. Theologically because God is immutable; He doesn't change. And His love doesn't wax or wane for us...He is *immutable*.

And it's false biblically because we have a plethora of Scriptures that indicate that we are secure in Him. John chapter 10, verses 28 and 29, 'No one can snatch us out of the hand of Christ. No one can snatch us out of the hand of the Father.' And then the text we have in our bulletin, Romans 8, verses 37-39; who can, "separate us from the love of God which is in Christ Jesus?" No one, and nothing! That's Paul's point, and there are many other texts.

But what we can do is waste the privilege of grace...and that's the warning here. Paul was exhorting the Corinthians to live an *earnest* Christian life. —It's what they were saved to do. Salvation is not just for heaven and for the world to come. It is certainly, and very importantly that; but we are saved to a new life—and we're to live that new life.

Earlier, in chapter 5, verse 10, he wrote that, "For we must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ...", where we will, '...be recompensed for our deeds'..."whether good or bad'...'receive what is due for our deeds, whether good or bad'. We have an opportunity as, 'the Lord's fellow workers' to do much good. And he was warning them not to miss those opportunities.

The Corinthians faced the temptation of doing that, (just as we do). They lived in a circumstance very similar to ours. They lived in a materialistic place—a wealthy, worldly city full of distractions. And then, in addition to that, (as we know from the issues of this book, and what Paul will deal with later and has dealt with to some degree), that the church had come under the influence of false teachers. All of that can distract from the grace that they had received when they believed the Gospel. They died with Christ so that they would no longer live for themselves, but for God, and for Christ; for the Triune God. That's what Paul was urging them to do here; 'Live for Christ, not for self.'

And in the rest of the passage, Paul reminds them of his life and his experience to show that his own experience was consistent with his profession, with his warning and his instruction. He's not telling them to do something that he himself has not done. In fact, he has gone way beyond anything one would expect—and he brings that out.

But first, in verse 2, he reminded them of the LORD's care for them, and of the age of grace in which we are living. He quotes the LORD's words from Isaiah chapter 49, verse 8; "...for He says,

'AT THE ACCEPTABLE TIME I LISTENED TO YOU,

AND ON THE DAY OF SALVATION I HELPED YOU.'

Behold, now is 'THE ACCEPTABLE TIME,' behold, now is 'THE DAY OF SALVATION' " (vs2).

Paul was reminding the Corinthians that they are believers—they have been saved. God heard their prayers of faith and repentance. He helped them, and He helped them in part, in large part, by bringing Paul to them...to the city of Corinth to preach the Gospel.

They had great blessings. The God who heard them then, and helped them then, still hears and still helps. So they were to look to Him for wisdom, and look to Him for strength.

Paul emphasized this more by reminding them that, "...now is 'THE ACCEPTABLE TIME' ", (vs2)...this age in which we are living;

This is the day of salvation;

This is the age of great blessing and favor;

It is a time of *opportunity*;

It is the time of *harvest*.

God is saving multitudes, and He's using His church in that great work. We don't save anyone. We're merely ambassadors...but that's a lofty position: We have the message of salvation. We're 'fellow workers with Him' and we're to proclaim it; and we're to live it. So, they were to be doing that.

We will all be answerable: We are answerable for how we live life in this age... how we use the opportunities God has given to us. And we'll give an account of that before the Lord. Paul wants the Corinthians to live in such a way that they will not squander opportunities, that they will not have received God's grace in vain.

So in verse 3, he urges them to give, "...no cause for offense in anything, so that the ministry will not be discredited..." And that's certainly a warning for all of us. It happens. Some of the obvious ways people cause offense are through immorality or dishonesty—sins that genuine Christians fall into and commit. It's always been that way. Calvin called it, 'a trick of Satan, the scheme of the devil; and it's very effective.'

"It brings the ministry into contempt," Calvin said, "and all hope of progress is destroyed."

It's more public with ministers, of course, but it's true of all Christians. Paul is not addressing a special class of Christians here; he's not addressing a class of ministers in Corinth; he's speaking to all of the church—he's speaking to all of us. We are all Christ's servants; we are all Christ's ambassadors. What we do, good or bad, reflects on Him. There's a lot of truth in the statement that, 'For some people, the only bible they will see, (or the only bible they will read), is our life'. And if our life is a scandal, then the work of the Gospel is stopped.

Usually these things happen gradually. We take our eyes off the Lord and become lazy—inconsistent in Bible reading, and in prayer, and in coming to the meetings. I think I mentioned in the prayer, maybe, that the author of Hebrews talks about our responsibility to be gathering together regularly with the saints. It's easy to drift in that way, and that was evidently the case with those that the author of Hebrews wrote to.

But in the process of that we become weak. And then, in a moment, suddenly we stumble...it's the problem of spiritually drifting. So Paul was scrupulous about his life. He was very careful to avoid giving the slightest occasion of stumbling, "giving no cause for offense..." he said. (vs3).

And that's the way we must live. Christians, young and old alike, male, female, Christians must live circumspect lives, carefully lived lives, vigilant lives. Nothing will cause the Gospel to be mocked more than bad behavior, (which is a complete denial of its promise of righteousness and life transforming power).

We don't need to labor the point. A good rule is, (and you've heard me say this before), 'Be where you are supposed to be, doing what you're supposed to be doing. And if you do that, if you live that kind of a responsible life, you'll be fine.' I say that with one cautionary note: 'Temptations will find us in the best circumstances.' Joseph was where he was supposed to be, and Potiphar's wife found it. But Joseph resisted because his mind was also where it was supposed to be, and that was on the LORD.

What we're supposed to do, Paul said in verse 4, is "...but in everything commending ourselves as servants of God, in much endurance, in afflictions, in hardships, in distress..." And that is just what Paul did. He was a true leader; he didn't merely instruct, (tell people how to live without living it himself), he taught by example as well as by words—that was Paul's life. He lived as a true servant of God; and that involved *endurance*.

In fact, that word may be the key word to this passage and reaching our goal, '*endurance*', '*perseverance*.' It's what enabled those young athletes to compete in the mile, training to exhaustion, through all kinds of weather and sleepless nights, giving up a social life—all to win a race. They persevered. That was Paul; and the list of trials he gives here shows the necessity for patience, for *endurance*. The Christian life is full of challenges; and he gives some of those that he himself faced.

A lot of commentators have pointed out that the trials he lists in the rest of this passage fall into three groups of three. The *first* group of hardships is **general**; *affliction, hardships, and distresses*.

The *second* group is specific, it is **persecution**; *beatings, imprisonment, and tumults*.

The *third* were hardships that Paul voluntarily imposed on himself, **self-discipline**; *labors, sleeplessness and hunger*.

He gives a more extended list later in chapter 11—and Luke records much of this detail in the Book of Acts.

But from this alone we learn much about Paul's life as an apostle from this passage that we're considering. It was a demanding, and debilitating, and dangerous life that he lived as an apostle. Being an apostle was a very hard thing. Often he was "in distress", he says. (vs4b). Literally that is, 'in straits', 'in narrow places', where he was boxed in...in situations that seemed unsolvable from which only Christ could deliver him.

And not all of this came from without. Some of his hardships were self-imposed. They were difficulties that he laid on himself—again, like an athlete who was sacrificing

for training. He mentions "sleeplessness", (vs5b). That wasn't insomnia; I've been blessed with that. *[Laughter]*, I might hope or wish that it was insomnia that he's speaking of because that way, as I lay awake in the wee hours of the night with my eyes open, I can think, 'Well, apostle Paul had insomnia, so he and I have something in common... he believed in predestination, I believe in predestination...he's an insomniac, I am too. *[Laughter]*, I'm apostolic!' *[Laughter]*, Well, no, I'm exaggerating my condition.

No, that was not Paul's problem...at least that's not what I think he's speaking of here. This is referring to sacrificing sleep to devote time to the ministry. Now, what could he have done...how would he have done that? We know later, (chapter 11), that he agonized over the churches, and his concern for them. And I can imagine that he had sleepless nights because he was interceding for some of those lapsed saints that he is giving a warning to, (who had given offense), and was praying for them—or spending time, late into the evening hours, giving counsel to them.

One thing we see from the Book of 2 Corinthians is, 'those who fall, those who stumble, are not to be cast away; they're to be recovered', (and there's an individual that he refers to earlier on in this book), (see 2Cor 2:5-7). And that's what Paul spent time doing. And I can imagine that his sleeplessness was over praying for some of these saints who'd gone through difficulties, (they may have squandered some opportunity), and spending time bringing them back and giving them recovery.

Well, sleeplessness.—And then there's "hunger". (vs5b). He mentions that, which was due again, to the time that Paul devoted to the ministry—so much so that he would not let a meal interrupt his work; and he would sacrifice that. So Paul's service involved personal discipline, a willingness to make necessary sacrifices in his service to Christ, and willingness in his service to the Lord to face danger daily.

In verse 6 he lists some personal virtues that are needed for living the Christian life well, and giving no offense. He lived, "...in purity, in knowledge, in patience, in kindness...in genuine love...", (vs6). And in the midst of those important virtues, Paul

puts, "...in the Holy Spirit..." because we can do these things only in His power; these are the fruit of the Spirit. This is what he mentions in the Book of Galatians; he speaks of the fruit of the Spirit, and many of those virtues are listed there. They are the product of the Holy Spirit; that's the supernatural life that we have.

We are to be diligent; we are to strive to be morally pure; we are to increase our knowledge of God. We are to be patient with each other; we are to be kind to each other; we are to show true love and avoid hypocrisy. And we can do that through the power and the ministry of the Holy Spirit.

As Paul told the Philippians, "for it is God who is at work in you, both to will and to work for *His* good pleasure." (Phl 2:13). And God the Father works through us through the Holy Spirit, and producing these virtues and this life. That's the encouragement in what would otherwise be an impossible life to live. We've been called to a righteous, holy life that requires discipline, that requires endurance.

And yet, we can do that. We can do that by Holy Spirit; that's the encouragement that we have. These are difficult things, as you begin to contemplate them and apply them to yourself, and how you are required to live. Yet we don't do it on our own; we are working together with Him, with the Lord God, and we are working together with the Spirit; we walk by the Spirit and that means we can do these things.

The Christian life is not something we do on our own strength. And Paul indicates that here with the mention of the Holy Spirit. He indicates it in verse 7, where he speaks of "the power of God". Paul's ministry is, "in the word of truth, in the power of God..."

The Corinthians knew that first hand. He came to Corinth, "...in weakness and in fear, and in much trembling."; that's what he told them in the Book of 1 Corinthians, in chapter 2, verse 3. Paul's, '...message and preaching wasn't in persuasive words, but in the demonstration of the Spirit and power.' (1Cor 2:4). That's what he told them...that this was a supernatural ministry that he had. It opened their hearts to receive the Gospel.

That is real power on earth. We, through preaching the Gospel, through giving the Gospel, through teaching the Word of God bring about change in people's life. It's not us, it's the Spirit; He uses the Word to do that.

All through this letter Paul makes it plain that it is in human weakness that God's power works. And that power makes us sufficient for every situation and every task that we have. That's how we live the Christian life. It's difficult; it is challenging—but we don't do it in our own strength; it's through the Spirit and God's power. So, we must be looking to Him constantly—in His Word, in prayer, in walking by faith, trusting Him whose, 'everlasting arms are always beneath us.'

Now that's a great image, isn't it? It's from Deuteronomy chapter 33, verse 27;

"The eternal God is a dwelling place,
and underneath are the everlasting arms.
And He drove out the enemy before you."

He does that for us. And because His arms are beneath us, God gives our arms strength. He makes us able to fight the good fight of faith everywhere. That's the meaning of His statement, "by the weapons of righteousness, for the right hand and the left." (vs7b).

We are in spiritual conflict. We are always in the spiritual battle. It waxes and it wanes, but we are always in it, fighting continually against the powers of darkness. We don't see them. We don't feel them, but they're there, and they're influencing. But God has given us the ability to wage war successfully, and meet the attack on every side, 'the right and the left.'

And we do that when it is popular, and when it is not; "...by glory and dishonor...", Paul says, in verse 8. There will always be differences of opinions about Christians, some good, some bad. Some considered Paul to be "a madman". Festus did... he called him that. (Acts 26:24). Others would have, 'plucked out their eyes for him.'

(Gal 4:11). Some loved Paul, others despised him. That's the life of the man, or woman, who lives an earnest Christian life. So Paul, 'soldiered on', he continued the race, "...by evil report and good report; *regarded* as deceivers and yet true...", (vs9). Those were some of the personal attacks made on Paul behind his back.

These things were said of Paul during his absence from Corinth. His enemies circulated evil reports about him; they called him a "deceiver." This is what sometimes happens...Christians proclaim the truth, and it stirs up opposition. We speak of sin, we speak of guilt. We explain to people, 'You're a sinner. You're guilty.' People don't want to hear that, even when we say we're all sinners; "for all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God." (Rom 3:23). But when we touch on that, it stirs up opposition.

And one way people oppose the truth is by spreading lies, and Paul experienced that. It's called an, 'ad hominem argument', a reaction or an argument directed against a person rather than directed against their position, (which doesn't disprove the position they hold, the position that we might hold in terms of the Gospel). It doesn't disprove it at all; it's a weak and it's an illegitimate kind of argument...of countering the opposition that they don't like. It's much easier to oppose someone and call them names or accuse them of something, rather than deal with the facts of a person's position; for example, 'The resurrection of Christ', or, 'Salvation by faith alone'.

Paul used the facts. Paul had the facts about the resurrection...he'd witnessed it. He knew all the details of it, the historical details and facts. And he could use those facts in discussing the nature of the Gospel...that it is, 'by grace alone through faith alone in Christ alone'. Not by works. Not by ceremonies. And he knew that from the Scriptures, and he could argue that from the Scriptures. Scripture and history prove all of it. So instead of arguing against Paul from the facts, from Scripture, (which they couldn't do), they attacked him personally.

And they're still doing that. Thomas Jefferson, our third President called Paul, 'The first corrupter of the doctrines of Jesus.' He didn't like the apostle Paul, (in fact, you

have probably heard about his Bible where he spent the evenings cutting out passages that he didn't like). And he didn't like the apostle Paul. Why? Because he didn't like the doctrines of the apostle Paul.

Paul was always under attack, and so will godly men and women who live for Christ, and who speak the truth and who proclaim the truth, who proclaim 'light into the darkness.' (1P 2:9). It might be true of you. Don't be surprised if it is...it happened to the Lord. The chief priests and the Pharisees called Him "that deceiver". (Mat 27:62-63). If they did that to the Master, of course they'll do that to the servants—we can expect the same. This is part of the race that we run.

Fortunately we have an Advocate before the throne of God, a good 'lawyer', who argues our case and defends us. (1Jn 2:1). Sometimes all that we can do is leave the matter with Him. Trust Him to solve our problems and answer these false charges made against us—and then simply press on in the faith.

Paul continues with the hardships in verse 9; "...unknown yet well-known...". Being "unknown" was another result of his conversion—and leaving the synagogue. When Paul was *born again* he became a new creation in Christ. He ceased to be the ambitious Pharisee, 'the rising star in Judaism'; Gamaliel's 'prize student'.

He left fame for Christ...and he became a nobody. So to men he was "unknown" and unimportant. Still, he said he is "well-known", meaning, *well-known to Christ*...and that is true of every believer in Jesus Christ.

Presently, in this age the world looks past us—we're invisible people to the world. As Paul reminded the saints of their "calling" in 1 Corinthians chapter 1, verses 26&27, "...there were not many wise according to the flesh, not many mighty, not many noble..." Instead he said, "...but God has chosen the foolish things of the world..." And it's through those 'foolish things that He will confound the wise of this world.' (1Cor 1:27).

But the result of that is the world overlooks the Christians. It's not impressed with the church and with Christians, especially if we're living a godly life, especially if we're active in our service for Christ. Well, that's the world.

In fact, it's the nature of the world; it is even indifferent toward its own. It's an alienating, prejudicial place where there are lots of lonely souls. It's based on reciprocity: 'If you have something that advantages me, then I'm willing to advantage you.' It's all self-oriented and selfish in its nature.

In the church, the saints have friends. In the church they have a true family where people look after one another...(should, that's the ideal). And those relationships are all based on our relationship with the Triune God. It's an invisible relationship, but it is real, and we should make every effort to develop that relationship to know the Lord. That's what Paul did. In fact, that was his great goal. You see him expressing that in Philippians chapter 3, verse 10. "...that I may know Him, and the power of His resurrection and the fellowship of His suffering..."

He wanted to know Christ.

I think that's the great goal of the Christian life, and all the other things will come.

So Paul could say, "Unknown, yet well-known." Known by the Lord; known by the Lord from all eternity, loved "from the foundation of the world". (Eph 1:4). All His elect are. So to be 'unknown to the world' is really a very little thing. "The world...", as John tells us, "...is passing away." (1Jn 2:7). It is in the process of passing away...but to be known by the Lord God is everything! And it is eternal...and we will be well-known to myriads of others—myriads of angels and saints, *forever!*

So Paul's anonymity didn't bother him. He goes on to say that he ministers, "...as dying yet behold, we live; as punished yet not put to death..." (vs9b). Paul experienced a lot of that. He may have Acts 14 in mind, when he was stoned at Lystra: He took a terrific beating; he was dragged outside the city and he was left for dead.

The believers all gathered round what they thought was his corpse—when he stood up, suddenly...alive!...and went back into town—and then went on to finish up that first missionary journey.

Many times Paul 'cheated death' and marveled over it, "...yet behold, we live..." (vs9). It was amazing, and it was not 'cheating'—God delivers. And since He delivers from death...'What can He not deliver us from!? He delivers us from everything.'

And He does, if we trust in Him.

But in fact, He doesn't always deliver from death. That would be foolish to suggest...and to suggest, 'Don't worry about dying.' Well, we shouldn't worry about it, but don't think that won't happen. It does happen, and we have many accounts of it. The church has its martyrs, and Paul, in fact, would be one of them; but not until it was God's right time for that.

And we often have sorrow in life; Paul says in verse 10a, "as sorrowful". The Christian life is not an easy life: Friends fail us; converts stumble; the work of the church has setbacks, has divisions, has threats from heretics. Paul knew all of these sorrows, and he speaks of it later in this book. Still, regardless of the disappointments in this life, we are victorious. 'We are being led in triumph'; that's what Paul said back in chapter 2, verse 14.

Paul ends, "...as poor yet making many rich, as having nothing, yet possessing all things. (vs10b). If you'd seen Paul you wouldn't have seen a man with a whole lot of the world's gifts. You would have seen a man with little or nothing of the world's goods. He would not have appeared, 'to be a success' in our terms of *success*. You wouldn't have coveted his bank account or his wardrobe, (he didn't have much of a bank account, if he even had one.)

But he was **rich**!... Rich with the riches of Christ, which are infinite and eternal—and we have access to that! And he did through prayer, and through trusting in the Lord,

and walking by faith. And we didn't need to know and believe that; Paul did, so he could say, while, "having nothing", he possessed "all things". (10c).

And he made others rich. He proclaimed Christ, proclaimed to Christ and the riches that are in Him: Forgiveness, reconciliation, eternal life, an inheritance beyond comprehension! In this life we're like a vapor, and eternity is before us—and we have that through Christ. That's a great statement, "...as poor, yet making others rich..." (vs10)—making others rich by the spiritual blessings we give them, and making others rich in other ways...materially.

This was George Whitefield's motto. I'm sure you know who George Whitefield is, but if not, George Whitefield was an 18th century evangelist, close friend of the Wesleys, John and Charles, but very different from them. They were Armenians; he was a 'five point Calvinist', and a vigilant evangelist. He preached the Gospel in the open air to thousands of people at a time in England—and then later in America, up and down the Eastern Seaboard he preached. And he had a work with orphans in Georgia. He enriched people spiritually, and he enriched them materially. So, "Poor yet making others rich" is a good motto.

Mike Black and some Christian businessmen in Oklahoma City adopted Whitefield's name and motto for a society that they began to do two things: 'To promote the Gospel and to care for the poor.' [I'm glad Mike's not here sitting on the front row, because that would be embarrassing him to mention all of this.] But he does a great work, and it is a great work. And they do it out of their own personal funds. They receive funds from others, they do, but they make no solicitations; they do it from themselves. There's no overhead. It's all their free work and their gifts that provide for many, many people.

And that's what we're to be doing as Christians, blessing people spiritually and materially as we can do that. We're to be Christ to those around us, even when we're poor. Even in that condition we can be of service, and we can help, and we can make others rich in many ways. But to do that, we must dedicate ourselves to the mission—

and most importantly to Christ Himself. And doing that over the long term takes endurance.

This passage, which Philip Hughes in his commentary calls, "One of the high peaks of all Paul's writing", challenges us to do that—to reexamine our relationship to Christ...and devote ourselves to His service. It's not an easy life. And we need to know that, and not to be naive about the kind of life we've entered into.

In Lystra, where Paul was stoned, he told the young Christians that they needed to be ready for such things. They must have been horrified at what they saw, the violence of it. And he said, 'Don't mistake what you've come into, and the life that you are now part of.' "Through many tribulations...", he said, "...we must enter the kingdom of God." (Acts 14:22).

Christian life is a demanding life. It requires sacrifice and discipline, like the athlete who disciplines himself to reach his goal and win the prize. But the reward is worth it, well worth it.

And for the Christian, the sacrifices are well worth it. The rewards are given to us by 'the King of kings' and they don't fade, and they're not forgotten. They are forever, and, "an eternal weight of glory", as Paul described them back in chapter 4, (vs17).

So, may God help us to take a clear and serious look at ourselves and our mission...and devote ourselves to it: To live for Christ in the short time that we have on this earth, and in doing so be a blessing to others. If we live for Him, we will be a blessing for others.

And you who may be here who don't know Christ, who've not believed in Him, (I don't know who you are if you're here), but give a clear look at yourself: You're a sinner; and I don't say that to offend you because we all are; but that's what Christ came to remedy. He came for sinners. He came to save. And He is the Savior. He died in the place of sinners, and all who trust in Him are saved at the very moment of faith, and given eternal life *at that moment* and forever—it's, eternal life.

It's not by the works we do—the works will follow, they must follow...and they will follow, and we will have the earnest desire for that, by the grace of God, to do that. But it's all by grace. We're brought into the family of God as a free gift; we simply believe. So trust in Him.

And then in the meantime, God has given us the most meaningful life in all of the world: Serving Him, serving the Lord God with benefits that are eternal. May God help us to live that kind of life.

(Closing prayer) Father, we thank You that because of Your grace, and because we are in Christ through faith in Him alone, it is well with our soul.

Now,

The LORD bless you and keep you;

The LORD make His face shine on you,

And be gracious to you;

The LORD lift up His countenance on you,

And give you peace. Shalom.

In Christ's name, Amen.

(End of Audio)