



MESSAGE NOTES

Doug Baker | September 11, 2022

Blessing Through Suffering

2 Corinthians 6:1-13

It's time to be _____ and be healed!

2 Corinthians 6:1-2

It's time to _____ our effectiveness and sacrifices for Jesus and the Gospel

2 Corinthians 6:3-10

Personal Risks to Endure	Personal Qualities to Have	God's Divine Enabling to Thrive	Personal Perspective to Pursue
Afflictions	Being pure	God's Truth	When dishonored, be honorable
Hardships	Experiencing God first hand	God's Power	When slandered, be praiseworthy
Calamities	Being Patient	God's weapons of righteousness	When called an "imposter," be a person of truth
Beatings	Being Kind		When spoken of as distant, be well known in relationship
Imprisonments	Being filled with the Spirit		When thought of as fading, be alive with enthusiasm
Rioting	Having an unfeigned Love		When treated as a "child," don't curl up and die
Sweaty Work			When feeling sorrowful, rejoice
Sleepless Nights			When treated as insignificant, make others spiritually rich
Hunger			When left with little, remember we actually possess all

It's time to _____ our hearts to each other and find _____

2 Corinthians 6:11-13

Ray Stedman in his message on 2 Corinthians 6

Paul loved these people in Corinth, and he has manifested that love in various ways toward them. He has demonstrated it, as he says here, by two special things. **(First)** "Our mouth is open to you," he says. That means he communicated with them; he told them what was going on in his own life; he shared with them his feelings, his struggles, his failures, his pressures, his problems, and he let them know where he was. That is always a mark of love. To open up to someone is to love him. Contrariwise, to close up and not communicate is to violate love.

As I travel around the country, I find this is probably the number one problem in churches today. Christians actually think it is right for them to be closed in on themselves, to be private persons, unwilling to communicate who they are and how they feel and where they are in their lives. That, of course, is the way of the world. The world teaches us to be private, to let no one see who we are. But we need to understand that when we become Christians that is the one thing we must not do. We must learn to open up to one another.

Paul loved these Corinthians. He tells us he manifested toward them the unmistakable marks of love: "Our mouth is open ... **(And second)** our heart is wide." The open mouth is a symbol of full communication. He has opened himself to them; he has hidden nothing. They are fully aware of his problems, his struggles, his fears, and even his failures. He has just informed them anew of his dangers and hardships and yet of the resource he looks to for deliverance and support -- "the Holy Spirit, genuine love, truthful speech, and the power of God," (2 Corinthians 6:6b-7a RSV). To communicate with this openness to another is to love him, for total love is total sharing. Now he wants them to love him back in the same way -- not for his benefit but for theirs.

Here is the problem: many churches in this country are filled with Christians who will not open up, will not communicate their needs and struggles to one another. Their mouths are not open. "Our heart is wide," he says. What does he mean? Well, he means there is no favoritism; he included the whole congregation. He was not merely loving the nice people among them. He loved them all, the difficult ones, the ones who were struggling, the hard to get along with ones as well. There were no pre-conditions that he demanded before he would love somebody in the congregation, either. He accepted them as people. Though he knew their struggles, their weaknesses, their heartaches, their failures and their resistance, still he loved them.

The problem was that they were not loving him in return. This is also a problem in churches, in individual lives, in homes, in families and in marriages today. It is a failure to understand the reciprocal nature of love. Love is a two-way street. It always is; it is inherently so. Love requires a response. Paul was loving them, but they were not loving him back. They were closed; they were unresponsive; they were coldly self-contained toward him. And the result? Paul puts it in one word: They were "restricted." What does that mean? It means they were limited; they were bound; they were tied up by themselves; they were imprisoned within the narrow boundaries of their own selfish lives. As a result, they could not experience the richness of life.

Now that is what I find is wrong in many, many places and among many individuals today. They are Christians, but their lives are cold and barren. They are lonely, oftentimes. They are bored; they find life hardly worth the living. They have to struggle to get up in the mornings, to make themselves go on. Why? Well, Paul puts his finger right on the problem. It is not that they are not being loved. There are people reaching out to them and trying to touch them and help them, but they are not responding, and love that is not reciprocated can go no further.

To be loved is to be given an opportunity to step into a new and wonderful and greater experience of life; to be freed, in a sense. That is what love does. When you love a child you free him. He relaxes, he begins to feel himself. We have all felt this. So, to be loved is to be given an opportunity to step into freedom, if you respond. The fulfillment of that opportunity depends on you. You are given the opportunity by the one who loves you, but you lay hold of it by loving him back.