

## 2 Corinthians 6:1-10

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[ 0 : 00 ] Bible is going to be the second Corinthians chapter six, second Corinthians chapter six. I am excited to be together with you this morning. It has been a great week. Last week was a great week. It's an odd week for a pastor and a pastor's family.

We get just to be present. We get to see the church doing the ministry and it's an awesome thing to see workers and volunteers just really pouring into the lives of children, pouring into the lives of families.

And I'm so proud of you church. So thankful for you. I rejoice in the work you do. I rejoice in the efforts you put forward and I celebrate that. I know you're tired. I know you're wore out.

I know it was a long week. And like many of you, I've tried to keep my day straight. This morning I had to come into the office and just kind of remind myself that everybody was getting here, not for VBS, but for church, right?

That it was a church day. Things are a little bit different for me simply this week because VBS. And then I have a wedding today. This is probably in my 18th year of ministry.

[ 0 : 54 ] This is only the second wedding I've ever performed on a Sunday. It's the first one that has ever taken place during a service time. So, and I've done some between services with non-church members where I was formerly pastor, but we have two of our church members getting married this evening.

A number of them are there now. And there's a lot of our church members in it. So it'll be interesting. It's the time. I was encouraged the bride to be. And then she told me, Miss Sarah told me, she said, I want you to preach at my wedding.

And so I always have a sermon. She goes, no, I want you to really preach. And then all of her family reminded me, this is an outdoor wedding and it's like 98 degrees. And so they all encouraged me apart from her, please don't preach.

We just need to, you know, just say the vows and let's get over. But it is going to be a wonderful time. So I believe marriage is important. I believe God has so ordained it for his glory and his honor. And if you've been through the pre-marriage counseling with me, you understand that and you know, but it'll be a great time. We're in 2 Corinthians chapter 6, verses 1 through 10 will be our text this morning. So if you're physically able and desire to do so, would you join with me as we stand together, we read the word of God with one another, and then we will pray.

[ 2 : 06 ] The word of God tells us there in the sixth chapter, starting in verse 1, And working together with him, we also urge you not to receive the grace of God in vain. For he says, Behold, now is the acceptable time.

In the word of God, by the weapons of righteousness for the right hand, and the left, by glory and dishonor, by evil report and good report, regarded as deceivers and yet true, as unknown yet well known, as dying yet behold we live, as punished yet not put to death, as sorrowful yet always rejoicing, as poor yet making many rich, as having nothing yet possessing all things.

Let's pray. God, we're so thankful for this day. We are reminded, Lord, of your work among us as we celebrate your work this previous week. We celebrate what you're doing even in our presence today.

God, we are reminded that you are the God of this world, of all happenings, of all circumstances, and I know there has been much this week to distract us. There have been many good things.

There are many bad things.

There are many things of this world that long to garner and gather our attention off of you. But, O God, may we focus upon you and you alone, and may the word of God speak to our hearts and minds.

[ 3 : 55 ] May it penetrate to the very depth of our being. May you captivate us by your presence. And, Lord, now we are in your presence. May we learn from you for your glory and your honor, and

may we apply it in the lives that we lead.

In Jesus' name, amen. You may be seated. We're making our way through the book of 2 Corinthians. If you have not been with us, you know that Paul is admonishing the church at Corinth to live out an authentic faith.

He is encouraging them. He is not really rebuking them as he did in the first letter. He's not correcting any false practice or false doctrine. He's really just admonishing them to live their faith out authentically because what a grand opportunity they had.

They were in the city of Corinth at that time in history, a major trade route in the Roman Empire, one in which they would literally drag ships across the isthmus there because it was deemed easier to go across land with the ships than it was to go around in the bay.

And so they would drag the ships across, and there was all this trade that was going on. The world was really being gathered into the city of Corinth. It was an intersection of many different faiths and many different nationalities and many different heritages and cultures.

[ 5 : 05 ] And in the midst of that, God had a church. There was a church that was planted there. That church was started by Paul. Paul had come. He set up the elders. He wasn't the pastor of the church, but he was the planner of the church.

And that church had a grand opportunity to live out an authentic faith. But the world didn't just need someone else living how they believed. The world needed someone living it out accurately, rightfully, so that the world would take notice.

They needed a city on a hill. They needed a light in the darkness. They needed someone living out what they truly believed so that the world could take notice. And an easy way to say it, they didn't need someone reflecting the traditions and cultures of the world.

They needed someone changing that. And that was what the church was to do, and you're only going to do it if you live it out authentically. Paul has been encouraging the church for the last couple of chapters regarding their mission and ministry.

We've looked at that extensively. We won't rehash that. Paul is using his life and the life of those who are with them of what their ministry looked like, what their mission is, and how they're intentionally living it out.

[ 6 : 06 ] But we are reminded that it is not just some that are called to vocational ministry or missions, but rather God has appointed each and every one of us to a mission. God has assigned us to work and to labor.

We are called into the labor fields for his kingdom and for his glory. The Bible tells us over and over again that if you know Jesus Christ as your Lord and Savior, that before he called you to himself, you cannot miss this.

Friend, please do not miss this. Before he called you to himself, he had a good work for you to accomplish for the kingdom that he called you to do. So he called you to himself to accomplish a good work for the king of kings and lord of lords.

That is, he didn't just call you because he wanted to make his family larger. He called you because he loves you and he employs you in the ministry and missions that he has for you. Some of us do it vocationally. Some of us take short breaks and we go on the mission field and we labor there.

Most of us, the majority of our mission life, listen, even me, I am a vocational pastor. This is my job. I had someone ask me the other week, so what else do you do? I said, that's it.

[ 7 : 10 ] I am a pastor. That's my job. There are other things that I do. There are other hobbies that I have because for my own sanity, I need them. There are things there. But this is what I do. I'm a pastor.

That's my job. That's my vocation. I don't ever take that for granted or take that lightly because it is, at one moment, the scariest thing and the most glorious thing to be a pastor vocationally for the kingdom and the king of kings.

But my greatest ministry, my greatest ministry, that is, the thing that gets the majority of my time is an unpaid and uncalled and ungifted one, and it's called being a husband and a dad.

That's the greatest ministry he's given me. Everything else comes after that, right? So I say that in the reality that even those vocationally, those who get paid to do it, the majority of their mission is done outside of the public's view.

So how much more should we expect that for ourselves? We have a mission and a ministry God has given us. He has given it to those closest to us, and he's given it to those who we come into

contact with.

[ 8 : 11 ] You know what Jesus says there in John 14, 15, 16, the last discourse of Christ. Jesus makes this grand, astounding statement. He says, greater works than I have done, you will do.

And I thought, man, that's amazing. How can he look at 11 disciples at that time, because Judas is already gone, and say, greater works. I mean, they're not going to turn water into wine.

We'll see them doing some amazing things. We see Peter walking on water for a minute, but then he sinks, right? We don't see them doing these things, but what he's talking about is the reality that he intentionally limited the scope of his ministry to three and a half years of public ministry to one geographical mission field.

That is, the land of Israel and just a little bit of the outskirts of that, one small area. But the 11 disciples would go into the known world at that time.

They would have more context. They would have more influence. They would have more impact through Christ than he ever did. And so he is telling them, you have greater. The church has a great mission field, because if we look across the room, each and every one of us have at least contact or ability with other people.

[ 9 : 17 ] You can reach people I can never reach. You can talk to people I will never see. And it is our ministry and our mission. But I want to encourage you this morning, because what encouragement do we have for faithfulness in that?

That's the title, an encouragement of faithfulness. How can we be encouraged? Because I know, scripturally, the reason we look at this, we see these realities. We read things like the Great Commission.

We read the fact that God has a work for us to do. And naturally, our enemy stands on our shoulder and convinces us we can't do it. If you ever feel like you cannot do what God has called you to do, then you can just join me in that reality that it is not based upon our feelings, but it's based upon our callings and the facts of Scripture.

There are many, many times I never feel like I could be the husband God has called me to be, the dad he's called me to be, or the pastor he's called me to be. God does not base our calling upon our feelings.

Praise the Lord. He based it upon his callings. So I want to give you some encouragement to stay faithful in whatever God has called you to do. The first thing I want you to see is the ability that you have to accomplish your calling.

[ 10 : 22 ] You see the ability you possess. And you need to know it because the enemy longs to whisper in your ear, you can't do this, you can't do this.

When the enemy tells you you can't, tell him you're so glad that he finally gathered enough strength to join you in what you already knew. If he says you can't do it, say, well, Satan, I'm glad you got on board because I knew a long time ago I couldn't do it.

Because it is not your work. Look at what it says. I just about didn't get past this first verse, the first half of this verse in this message. I read it over and over and over again.

Look at what it says. And working together with him. And working together with him. You need to know that in the original Greek language, with him is not there.

It is implied in the tense and it is implied in all that. So if it is implied and it was not written in chapter and verse breaks like we have here, it would have literally said, and working together. So if we want to see what we're working together with, we need to go back a few verses, right?

[ 11 : 24 ] I'm glad you agree with that. So let's go back just a few verses into the fifth chapter and look at what it says in verse 20. Therefore, we are ambassadors for Christ. As though God were making an appeal through us.

Who is? As though God were making an appeal through us. We beg you on behalf of Christ, be reconciled to God. He made him who knew no sin to be sin on our behalf so that we might become the righteousness of God in him.

And working together with him. There it is. Here is the ability that you possess to perform the work you've been called to do. Friend, listen to me.

It is not your work. It is his work that he has given you to accomplish. It's a big difference.

It is not something you came up with. It's not an idea you had. It's not something you thought would be good to do. It is a work he prepared for you to do.

[ 12 : 25 ] But it is his work. And working together with him. God is making an appeal through us. Be reconciled to Christ.

And since God is speaking through us, Paul says, we also realize that we are working together with him. It is not our strength. It is not our abilities naturally.

It is not our fortitude. It's none of these matters, he says. It is the reality that we are working with him. Come. Jesus says in the Gospels, he who is weary, let him what?

Come to me. Now, Jesus did not say that those who are weary should come to him, sit down and take a break. He didn't say that, right? He didn't say, whosoever is weary, let him come and sit down and I'll do all the work.

That's not what he said. Jesus says, whosoever is weary, let him come to me and take upon my yoke. Take my yoke upon him. You know, a yoke was an instrument of work.

[ 13 : 24 ] You've seen it. There are harnesses or yokes that they put on two animals of burden. Brother Turley Reynolds used to love Brother Turley. He would always tell me here, I talked to Brother Turley. I'd say, Brother Turley, I don't know about that.

He'd say, hey, brother, don't worry about the mule. Just load the cart. Okay, I just keep loading the cart. He said, don't worry about the mule. And that's what Christ has called us to do. He says, take my yoke upon you, right?

He's called us, if we're weary, not to quit doing work. He's called us to join up with one who's already doing the work. He says, take my yoke. I'm on the other side of it.

You just stand beside me. And you have this illustration here. It's taking the one who doesn't have the ability and yoking it up with the one who already possesses the ability so that the greater amount of the work is done by the stronger one, and that is Jesus himself, and you are just working with him.

The late Henry Blackaby used to say, you need to know where God is working. Look around you. See where God is working. Get into the word of God. Pray to the spirit of God. Ask God to show you where he is working, and then join him there.

[ 14 : 30 ] Why? Because if it's your work, you'll never do it. It says that the ability is possessed in the reality that we are working together with him.

Friend, let's just be honest. So many of us have tried to fulfill our ministries and our missions, whether they be the job that we possess, the job that he has gifted us.

Paul tells the people at Athens that the time you are born, the place where you live, everything about you is ordained by the God of heaven. He says, you don't get to choose. He says, oh, no, I chose to move here, or I chose to work there.

Yes, but I believe that as the Bible tells us, man plans his steps, but God ordains his ways. Right? It is God who makes sure that you are where you are at. And some of us have tried to do it to the best of our ability.

Some of us have tried to do it in our own strength. Some of us have tried to be the best husbands or best wives that we could be. Some of us have tried to be the best mothers or the best fathers we could be. Some of us have tried to be the best employees we could be.

[ 15 : 28 ] Some of us have tried to be the best evangelists we could be, the best missionaries we could be. Some of us have tried to be the best lights that we could be in the world. But the problem is, is we're trying on our own.

The Bible says we work together with him. Your ability and my ability to fulfill the work he's given us to do is directly connected to who we're doing it with.

And we see this reality. Paul says he's already doing a great work. He's speaking through us. He's using us. And the reason we know that we will persevere is because we're doing it with him.

Friend, if you're working with the Lord God Almighty, then you ought to be assured of your ability to accomplish what he's given you to do. Because I have yet to see anything that God said he was going to do that he could not do.

I've yet to see it. I've yet to see anything in scripture or anything in history of which when God put his hand to the plow, that he had to take it off with the work being undone.

[ 16 : 31 ] God is a faithful God. And Paul says we work together with him. Your ability is directly connected to who it is you're laboring with.

Make sure you are working together with him. And then we go on. We also urge you not to receive the grace of God in vain. So not only do you have the ability to perform it, friend, listen to me.

Now you have the authority to possess it. You have authority to assume the reality that what you're doing is not in vain. Now, let's just be honest. In our circle of life, we don't like that word authority. Some of us like it because we want to be an authority. And we like to kind of puff our chest up and say, oh, I'm in a place of authority. But we're not talking about that. We're talking about scriptural, biblical authority. It is kingdom authority.

The Bible tells us we have the authoritative assurance that what we are doing will come about. Look at what it says. He says, we urge you not to receive the grace of God in vain.

[17:33] Paul is doing this elsewhere. When we look in scripture, we see him going and looking with the believers. He's checking in on the churches. He's making sure that what they had believed was not in vain.

That is, that they were actually doing what it is God had called them to do. You say, what does it mean to receive the grace of God in vain? Well, that is to accept salvation and reject lordship. That is, to say, well, I want a savior, but I want to live however I want to live.

That's to say, I just want him to get me to heaven. Well, we're not fit for heaven until we've been called to labor on earth. I know we have all these things that say, well, what about all these other aspects?

What about all these other realities? Well, the reality is, is we only have authority when we understand that we have not received the grace of God in vain. In any quotes of passage of scripture, he says, for he says, so here we go.

When you're fulfilling your mission, your ministry, and you're laboring with God, you're basing your authority upon the word of God. That is, you're only going to say what he says. You're only going to say what he says.

[18:32] 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.

Here's the authority. He said, well, yes, because today is the day of salvation. Right. Do you know that when you open up your Bibles, now stay with me, friend, you're reading your scripture. I don't know what kind of Bible you have.

I read from the New American Standard Bible. I love the NASB. I have my reasons for that. We can talk about that. The Bible that I preach from, I actually just recently changed it, but I make sure that the Sunday morning Bible that I preach from is not a Bible with notes in it.

So I don't have study notes in it. I don't want to get my eyes distracted from it. So I usually use it on Sunday mornings. Now, Sunday nights, Wednesday nights, I can deviate a little bit from that. But Sunday mornings, I want a Bible.

But typically, every Bible has cross-references in it. That is, it tells you where you can find these passages. You say, well, Pastor, are you telling me things I don't know? Or I knew already. Well, maybe somebody here doesn't know it. When you read that New Testament and you see something in a different font, it is a quotation from an Old Testament passage.

[19:34] And since the Bible is there and it is signifying for us what it is quoting, it would be very becoming of us to go look up that cross-reference. I'm not going to ask you to do it. But if you look it up, that's Isaiah 49.

What he is quoting here is Isaiah 49, verse 8. Now, the reason you need to know that is because when biblical authors and Jewish people in general, when they quoted a portion of Scripture, they were not just referencing that one verse.

Rather, when they quoted a portion of Scripture, their reference was to the entirety of everything surrounding that verse. So if I quote Isaiah 49, verse 8, then I'm also implying that everything that is around that verse has direct application to what I am saying.

Pay attention to me here. Because when you read this, it seems as if the verse is implying that God is going to help the man who calls out to him. And today is the day of salvation for that man. And while that application is there, that's not the truth of the verse.

Because if you read Isaiah 49, you will notice that when you're reading Isaiah 49, the one speaking is not a man. Or he's a man, but he's the son of man and he's the son of God. I hope that when you read it, the capital letter there is in the personal pronouns.

[20:43] Because what we find is we have the suffering Savior who's talking to the Father. And we have the suffering Savior saying, I paid a great price, O Father, but I don't know if you've heard me. You have the suffering Savior who is Jesus Christ, who is there talking to the Father.

And now pay attention to me. Before God quotes this, God says, It is not enough for the price you paid just to redeem the Jewish nation. Now I'm paraphrasing, but that's what it says. He said, It is too little of a thing that only a few will believe.

So God says, So in the day of salvation, I'm going to call the nations to hear the word. In the day of salvation, I'm going to draw men from every people group, from every nation. See, when you open up the Old Testament, it's not just about the nation of Israel.

When you open up the Old Testament, it's about all of the people of the world. Because it even says there, in the most Jewish of all Jewish books, the book of Isaiah, it says right there in the middle of it, when it's talking about the Jewish Messiah, that is Jesus, that God himself says, It is too little of a thing that this would just be for the Jewish nation.

So therefore, in that day, on the day when I hear your cry, in that day, I will call people from every tongue, every tribe, every nation. In that day, I will gather people from the east and the west.

[ 21 : 53 ] In that day, I will gather people from the north and the south. And in that day, God says, I will draw them to you, my Savior. I will draw them to you, my Son. And in that day, I will give them a desire that they would long to know you.

In that day, God says, the people will be drawn to you. Friend, what I'm trying to tell you is the authority is not based upon your ability. The authority is not even based upon the reality that people need a Savior.

The authority is not even based upon the reality that people desire a Savior. The authority is based upon the fact that God declared he would draw men to the Savior. See the difference? The authority is the reality that God the Father said, I will draw the world to my Son.

And if you are basing it upon how people feel, if you're basing it upon how people desire, if you're basing it on the character and qualities of this world, you will get discouraged.

Because you'll look around this world and you'll say, don't nobody need a Savior? Don't nobody want a Savior? You'll look around this world and say, they don't want anything to do with Jesus. That's nothing new under the Son. Ever since Adam took from Eve and ate from the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, we wanted nothing to do with the Savior.

[ 23 : 00 ] But God said, I'm going to redeem you anyway. See, they were hiding from the Savior in the garden. You remember that? They were hiding from God. God sought them out and found them. They didn't ask him to give them some clothes.

They said, we just don't want you to see us naked. And God said, but I'm going to redeem you. See, man didn't want a Savior then. Man doesn't want a Savior now. What's different? The difference is that the suffering servant has already come.

The difference is God has promised that he would draw people to the Savior. The difference is God says until the consummation of the ages when the fullness of the Gentiles has accepted Jesus Christ.

I don't know what that is. I'm about to start preaching. You don't know what that is. But until that time, God said he's going to draw men and women from all places, all peoples, all tongues, and all positions to come to Jesus Christ.

And if God is drawing them, then, friend, you have the authority to tell them. You're not trying to persuade them. You're not trying to change their mind. You're not trying to make them better. You're just trying to find out those that God is drawing.

[ 24 : 03 ] You see how that's a different thing. Now you're standing in a place of authority. You don't walk out there and you say, well, I messed up because I didn't have the ability. You don't walk out there and say, well, I couldn't do it. Well, your authority is not based upon who you are.

I don't mean to tell you that. I don't mean to hurt your feelings. I don't mean to bust your burble a little bit. Your authority is not based upon how people receive you. Your authority is based upon the fact that God has said that Jesus is the Savior of the world and he's going to draw people to him. That's your authority. And when you go forward and you live out your life in ministry and missions and you live out your life laboring, you know your labor is not in vain. Because if God said he's going to draw people to Jesus, guess what?

He's going to draw them. Even if you don't see it. People have asked me, pastor, how do you preach? And you don't ever see anybody repent? Or pastor, how do you preach? And you go so long, there'll be people you don't see.

People aren't praying the way they don't seem to be broken. And pastor, how can you preach? We ought to see the altar full every morning. We ought to see the baptismal stir. And I said, yes, you're

right. And they said, well, how do you do it? How do you not get discouraged? I said, because it's not about me.

[ 25 : 11 ] God promises in his word that he's drawing people to himself. It is just my responsibility to stand up and proclaim it. That's all it is. Your responsibility is to share it, is to live it, and to believe it.

It is in a place of authority. One more, third and finally, I'll be done, I promise. I know it's getting late. And number three, you see we have the ability, we have the authority. But with this authority comes this third. When we don't like it so much, this is the accountability.

Since we have the ability as we work together with him, and since we have the authority because God has said he's drawing people to himself, we therefore ought to live in accountability. Look at what God says.

Paul makes this quick transition, and he spends the majority of these verses on this place. He says in verse three, and I just read them slowly, giving no cause, no cause, giving no cause for offense in anything, giving no cause for offense in anything, so that the ministry will not be discredited.

Paul doesn't say I'm going to try to live so that most people aren't offended. Paul doesn't say I'm going to try to do the best I can in some things. He says I don't want there to be any cause for any offense in anything.

[ 26 : 36 ] Why? Because the ministry is that important. I want you to get something. If you don't leave with anything else, I want you to get this. The ministry is more important than the minister.

The ministry is more important than the minister. That is, the work God has called you to do is kingdom work.

We, the ministers of that work, have the glory and the joy of partnering with him in it. But the king is of greater importance. The ministry is more important than the minister.

Many of you, if not every one of you, have watched videos over and over and over of the events that happened yesterday in Pennsylvania. You watch those events and you see the series of things after the shooting and those matters happened.

You notice something as they're trying to lead the individual off the platform. I'm not here to make a political agenda out of it. I'm not going to. But you notice there are men and women who are putting themselves in place of another individual.

[ 27 : 53 ] That the one in the center was more important than their own lives. That in case there was another shot fired, that the one in the center at that moment was more important than themselves.

Because their job was to protect the one in the middle. And they were ensuring that the main thing remained the main thing. They weren't thinking much about anything else other than the reality that this is the most important thing.

See, too often in our ministry, we don't want to do that. We want to duck when he is the center of our lives. He is the core of our being. And he tells us to remember that the main thing is the main thing.

The ministry is more important than the minister. Because the reality is this. Paul says, I don't want to give an offense. Well, Paul, aren't you free to do this or that? Well, sure, I'm free. But if it causes anybody to stumble, he would say elsewhere, I'm free to do whatever I want to do.

In Christ, I am free to do this. I'm free to do that. I'm free to do that. I can eat whatever I want to do. I can drink whatever I want to do. I can live however I want to do. See, Paul knew what grace was. Paul knew what forgiveness was.

[ 28 : 54 ] Paul knew what mercy was. And the reason he knew it, because he also knew what law was. He had lived according to the standards. Don't walk too far. Don't carry too much. Don't do that. Don't do this. Don't do that. He had enough of that.

He met a savior on the road who showed him what grace was. He said, so man, I'm free. The law is dead to me. I put on the new man. And the new man can live however he wants to. But then the new man got to thinking, what if however I live?

What if the fact that I can eat bacon causes my friend to stumble? So he says, if that's going to cause my friend to stumble, I ain't eating bacon. Because the ministry is more important than the minister.

He says, I don't want to give cause for offense in anything to anyone at any time. Because the work God has called me to do is of greater importance than the freedoms that I may possess.

See, we get caught up. We think we come to Jesus and oh, thank God for grace. And I thank him for praise the Lord for forgiveness. And we ought to praise him for thank you for mercy. [ 29 : 52 ] And we would be broken without it. But friend, may we always understand and comprehend that the work that he's called us to is more important than the freedom we possess. You want to be free.

You got all of eternity to be free. You got all of eternity to eat whatever's on the wedding supper of the lamb. You got all of eternity not to be bound by temptations and distractions and all these other things.

You got all of eternity to live out your freedom. Won't you bind yourself for the sake of the ministry for a little bit of time? Won't you say, I don't want to give offense for anything? If that means, oh, I remember there was a time.

Your pastor, I was young in the ministry. I know I'm preaching. It's okay. I was young. Your pastor used to love some sweet tea. As a matter of fact, I still do. I love sweet tea. I'd come home from work at the time.

I was lying with a phone company and I would drink literally a gallon of sweet tea every night. I was thirsty. I'm still, I'm a very thirsty individual. I sweat a lot. Can't help it. And I remember sweet tea didn't like loving your pastor back a little bit more, right?

[ 30 : 47 ] And so then all of a sudden I got into where I changed jobs and I was working second shift. I love second shift. You could eat four times a day, right? You eat four times. I was getting breakfast with the family, then lunch, then going to work, supper, and then Carrie had supper waiting on me when I got home.

Hey, man, that was good stuff. Four times. I gained a lot of weight on second shift. And then God started calling me into the ministry. And then your pastor's wife started realizing that you see things more than you hear things.

And the pastor needs to be a reflection of the king that he represents. And the pastor's health matters. It just does. I know pastors don't like hearing that. There's a lot of jokes about it. But the pastor's health matters because how your people perceive you will be how they hear you.

And so then your pastor's wife got mean. She took sweet tea away. She quit making it. I didn't like it. I got mad. I got upset. I said, honey, I want some sweet tea. She said, we ain't got nothing to drink but water.

And we kept orange juice. I like orange juice. So I come in and I drink orange juice. You know, she took orange juice away. She said, that's loaded with sugar. I said, it's natural sugar. I love that natural sugar. Look, no sugar that. She said, but it ain't good to your body.

[ 31 : 47 ] So she started taking this stuff away. Then she changed. You know, I have lifesavers in my pockets when I preach. Still got them now. I got lifesavers. I used to win a green lifesavers. Love them. Now I got sugar-free lifesavers. Why?

Because I had to give up some things. These are little things. Somebody's like, I'd never give up my sweet tea. But if it would cause an offense because of the way we were representing the king, would you?

The question is, do you love Jesus more than whatever that blank is? Do you love him more than this?

Because if there's something in your life, I'm wrapping up, you will not give up. You love it more than you love your Savior. That's the only way to put it.

If there's something you say, Lord, I cannot give that up, then what you're telling him is you love that more. Paul says, I don't want to give calls for offense in anything so that the ministry is not discredited.

[ 32 : 46 ] I know it seems trivial to you, but I didn't want the appearance of my body to be a hindrance to the message. Now, I'm not the picture of health.

I know it. I still love sweets. Some of you know that. Some of you take advantage of that on me, and you bring them to me and hand me things. I had a cookie offered to me this morning. I didn't take it. I didn't take it.

I wanted to, but I didn't. But you understand this reality. Look at what he says. We keep going, and I'll be done. But in everything, commending ourselves as servants of God.

Now, I'm not going to go through the list. This is a repetition of nine items in a set of three. There are nine negative items. There are nine positive items. And then there are nine items that are just a

result of his ministry.

What he is saying? In the good, in the bad, and in the unfortunate and unlikely, I'm going to commend myself as a servant. See, it's one thing to be diligent when things are bad, but it's a whole other thing to be diligent when things are going good.

[ 33 : 45 ] He says, I'm going to be diligent at all times. And I had to look this up to commend myself, because usually we give commendation. I commend this individual to you, or I want to give commendation to them.

That is to give credit. What Paul is saying is, I am putting myself on public display for public inspection as a servant of God. And I want to pass the test.

Friend, the work and ministry he's called you to do may not be vocational, but I can assure you it is public. You are on display as a servant of holy God. And I hope that you commend yourself.

That is, you present yourself in such a manner that there will be no cause for any offense in anything. King is worthy. Worthy.

The encouragement to faithfulness. Friends, stay faithful. Stay true. It's hard. It's tiresome. And it's difficult. But he's worthy.

[ 34 : 43 ] Let's pray. God, we thank you. We thank you for this day, oh Father. Father, we thank you that we have the opportunity and the ability of gathering together.

So Lord, now as we come to this time of response, we know that you may be speaking to each one of us differently. Lord, our desire is that we would respond to what it is you're calling us to do.

May you have control. May you have freedom. And Lord, may we respond obediently for your glory. And we ask it all in Christ's name. Amen. Amen.

Amen. Thank you.

Thank you.