Lownes Free Church Sunday Morning – August 12, 2018

The Apostle Paul’s ***Second*** letter to the *Corinthians*

how the Cross changes everything

Text: 2 Corinthians 6:1–7:1 Time to change partners!

The Background: Relationships are two-way streets.

It may be embarrassing to defend yourself, but sometimes it’s necessary. Paul is presenting his case because his authority as an apostle have been undermined. He has presented his two witnesses, God and conscience, and now is explaining why he does what he does. He is open and straight-forward, but the Corinthians are holding back. Here he tells them why, and encourages them to change and live out God’s grace.

Transformation: The Cross calls us to break with the world.

What does it mean to receive God’s grace “in vain”? It means not realizing we are living in “the day of salvation,” and instead are still cavorting with the world. This is why Paul goes on to tell this church not to be unequally yoked with unbelievers, and to separate from them (as to their practices, not moving away). It’s also why they are not responding openly to him, even though he was transparent with them. The Corinthians were trying to live for Jesus AND the world, but Paul (and Jesus) say that is impossible. Because God has saved us, and is our Father, we are to be holy, cleansing ourselves “from every defilement of body and spirit, bringing holiness to completion.” How? In Jesus, because the Cross changes everything.

The Narrative: (Reading 2 Corinthians is like hearing one side of a phone conversation. But we don’t really have to guess much, since Paul is both explicit and passionate. That said, we’ll be paraphrasing each section to sort out the argument and the not-so-hidden assumptions the Corinthians were making about Paul and his actions.)

(1) Remember, God already is at work in bringing salvation to human-kind. So don’t be slack in participating in the grace awakening.

(3) How? First, by causing no one to stumble or cast reproach on our lives. We are servants, and therefore we take the place of servants in all sorts of hardships, using “weapons of righteous-ness,” refusing the tactics of the world.

(8) Second, by realizing that our identity has been changed. We are new people. Now we live and die with Jesus bearing his reproach, and enjoying His blessings. In our emptiness and poverty we are full and rich! What we apostles are is clear to all and available to you, but to us you hold back, and non-committal.

(13) We respond to you as our very children, and plead, stop supporting spiritual foes, God’s enemies and your own! You have nothing, nothing in common with them. Remember, you are God’s temple: He is yours and you are His. (7:1)Act on His promises, both in separating yourselves from these evil ones and cleaning up your lives to become holy in God’s sight.

The Challenge: Is my life in God transforming my behavior?

*Memory Verses: Romans 12:1, 2*

Is my life or behavior a roadblock for someone’s faith?

Is my life an “open book,” or full of secrets?

Is my life “empty” of the world but “possessing everything” in Christ?

Are my spiritual ears open to correction, admonition, even rebuke?

Am I unequally yoked (in heart-partnerships with) unbelievers?

Is God truly MY God? Am I truly His son or daughter by faith?

Am I striving to eliminate what defiles either my body or my mind?

God wants you free! Let Jesus release you today. Luke 416-21