

Dr. Ayo Adewuya, 2 Corinthians, Session 7, 2 Corinthians 6, Christian Relationships

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This is Dr. Ayo Adewuya in his teaching on 2nd Corinthians. This is session 7, 2 Corinthians 6, Christian Relationships.

In the previous chapter, we see Paul continue to defend his ministry as an apostle, and we ended up by looking at the fact that it is not only Paul who's been called as an ambassador of Christ, but we all as believers are called as ambassadors, as representatives of the Lord.

Here, we want to see in Chapter 6 how Paul continues to defend his integrity as an apostle. In chapter 6, verses 1 to 10, Paul continues his defense of his ministry from the standpoint of his conduct and experiences as an ambassador of Christ. So, what he does in chapter 6 is that he turns to a description of his life as an apostle, and he opens with a transitional statement in verses 1 and 2. As we work together with him, we all do also not accept the grace of God in vain, 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. I'm sure most of us are familiar with that passage because usually, when we go for evangelism, we want people to give their lives to Christ, and we want to impress upon them the urgency of making that decision. So, we tell them now is the acceptable time; today's the day of salvation.

As good as that is, and we can use that, but in this original context, Paul is talking about his apostleship, and he's defending his integrity. Those verses introduce a new topic altogether while at the same time, it is forming a practical conclusion to his presentation of the new order of salvation and Christ, which he has shown in chapter 5, verses 17 to 21. So Paul continues his defense; he calls himself God's servant, focusing specifically on his call.

He perceives his walk as being an integral part of God's mission. So, it begins by saying we walk together with him. It begins with an adverbial participle, walking together, which stands all alone on itself.

They were walking together, which is actually unqualified. However, the preceding verses make it very probable that Paul refers to God as the one with whom he cooperates in ministry. As Christ's ambassador, Paul, and God are co-workers, and that's, in a sense, very encouraging.

We are co-workers with God. It's encouraging in the sense that we're not left to our own devices to do whatever we're doing, and apart from that, God being there is important for us to know. So, the Apostle says walking together, walking together with him, we urge you also not to accept the grace of God in vain.

So, as Christ's ambassador, Paul, and God are co-workers and laborers, and it's important. I mean, we understand that all real human work is God's work, and it's simply saying more than we are walking together with God. So, he follows Isaiah chapter 49, verse 8, to make his plea. In other words, in the same manner as a servant in Isaiah, Paul calls the Corinthians to reconciliation with himself as proof of their salvation.

If we fail to put a practical use in the details, the spiritual benefits that were received by the favor of God, even God's favor, become useless and empty things. So, we can't take the grace of God in vain. He appeals to the Corinthians not to receive God's grace in vain.

You see, the grace of God here summarizes the gospel of salvation, which we find in chapter 6, verse 2, particularly in the light of the emphasis in chapter 5, verses 16 to 21. You see, without any doubt, there are implications in the exhortation for the Corinthians' relation to the Apostle. So, bear in mind that at the beginning of the series of lectures, we mentioned the fact that there were so many problems between Paul and the Corinthians and that they were estranged.

So, when Paul is talking about reconciliation in chapter 6, reconciliation is not just limited to God; it's not restricted to their relationship with God alone, but Paul is actually saying you need to reconcile with me as well as your Apostle. You see when we talk about reconciliation, it's a two-way street. You find a vertical relation, vertical reconciliation with God, and, of course, lateral reconciliation with others.

It's just like when we talk about holiness, you can't say, well, God knows my heart, and then I'm alright with God, but I'm not alright with fellow people. No, not at all. It's not that way.

You see, Paul fears that they will resist God's efforts to produce among them the holy lives that the death of Christ demands, and we see that in 2nd Corinthians 5, 14 to 15. Only such lives can face the judgment of God as unashamed when we live reconciled lives. So, it is true of us today in verse 2, Paul is not only concerned about the Corinthians' relationship with God but also with him.

It is unfortunate that today, many believers behave as if it is the only personal relationship with God that counts, regardless of our relationships with each other. No, we don't live the Christian life in isolation. I love the way John Wesley put it.

He said, just like you cannot have holy adulterers, you cannot have solitary Christians. You can't have holy adulterers. The Christian life is a life to be lived within the context of a community as a people of God.

You see, you can't live the Christian life solitarily. We need one another when it comes to running the race of the Christian life. So, it's very, very unfortunate that you see many believers who are just eye lines unto themselves, and when people are like that, we're vulnerable to problems.

That reminds me of the story in the book of Samuel. I mean, when you read the Old Testament and the children of Israel, in Georges rather, and the children of Israel were fighting, and the tribe of Dan got to a place, they saw these people who were living on their own. Nobody troubled them.

And what did they do? They went there and ravaged them because they dwelled in security on their own, removed from everybody. And that's the danger we face as Christians as well when we want to live on our own island and just get into our own cocoons and don't have anything to do with anybody. What we're saying is this: Nothing is further from the truth, not even from Paul's mind.

Reconciliation with God necessitates and demands a corresponding reconciliation with our fellow Christians. What we are saying, in essence, is the right relationship demands, and as a matter of fact, should result in the right relationship with others, especially believers. We can't say it too much.

The new relationship with God created by Christ does not maintain itself automatically, not in any way. Paul urges his audience not to let it go for nothing, as the new English Bible translates it. So, the exhortations, both God's and Paul's, involve the Corinthians' reconciliation with their Apostle as well as with God.

In other words, failure to reconcile with God's messenger, in this case, amounts to receiving the grace of God in vain, and that is very important. Now, some interpreters will see verse 2 as a parenthesis, but that reveals a fundamental assumption of his gospel. It reveals and reinforces his appeal in verse 1. Then he says, Isaiah 49 says, In the time of my favor I have heard you, and in the day of salvation I helped you.

You see when you look at Isaiah, the Lord calls upon his servant to restore the nation from exile in Babylon. That's what you see in Isaiah chapter 49, verse 6. In the verse that Paul quotes, God promises the servant to help in that day of Israel's salvation from exile. So, using the Jewish interpretative method, which we know as Peshar, Paul applies the Isaiah quotation to his contemporary situation.

And Paul is making use of the scriptures now, so he said, Behold now is the favorable time. Behold, now is the day of salvation. It's very interesting that Paul now uses the behold two times.

Behold now two times. That stresses the prophetic future, which is the present time. God's final salvation action is taking place in the present.

So, God is working at the moment. You know what Paul is saying? The last days are not a far-off event. Not at all.

The last days have finally arrived. I mean, with the coming of Christ, with the death of Christ, we're living in the last days. The gospel era becomes a crisis moment in salvation history.

This is the unique time they accepted the favorable time by God for all to respond to his invitation to reconciliation in Christ. In other words, Paul's preaching is part of the eschatological event itself, as it announces the word of the cross. It creates a crisis that demands a response from everyone.

Will those who hear the message welcome the age initiated with the resurrection of Christ? Paul's preaching encounters them as God's eschatological message. So, Paul's role in the history of redemption is very, very strategic. Now, from verse 3, Paul takes the argument further.

He says he doesn't want to offend in anything. So, reading from chapter 6, you look at it in verse 3. We are putting no obstacle in anyone's way so that no fault may be found with our ministry. You see, the exhortation of Paul and his associates is consistent with the quality of the apostolic ministry.

What we are saying is this. Their conduct conforms to the nature of the gospel that they proclaimed. There was no credibility gap between their belief and behavior.

There was no credibility gap between their words and their work, which is what we see today in many places. We have a credibility gap in Christianity today. We profess one thing. We practice another.

There is a credibility gap between deeds and doctrine. And for Paul, no, it doesn't work that way. Paul sees his ministry as being involved with his life and his gospel as being reflected in his life.

Their conduct conforms to the nature of the gospel. You see, this continuity will be strengthened grammatically if you look at verse 2, which says, commending ourselves, not giving. We are putting no obstacle in anyone's way so that no fault may be found in ministry.

It goes on to say so many things that are very important there. So, number one, Paul is careful not to offend in anything, less blame belated on the gospel ministry. You know, it's interesting that the word translated obstacle in the New Revised Standard Version means something that makes another stumble or something that puts another person off.

We must continually remember that our manner of life either comments on or discounts the message that we seek to share with the world. You know, people say this, and I'm sure most of us have heard it: your actions speak so loud that I cannot hear your voice. We preach one thing, and we practice another.

That reminds me of the story of a young boy who went with his father to the barber's shop. And you know, I mean, those of us who still go to the barber's shop, and you remember you go to the barber's shop, usually the music and so many things, not unless you go to a Christian barber's shop. But if you go to the ordinary barber's shop, that's where they tell a lot of jokes and say quite a number of things and a lot of literature that you don't care to read.

So, this pastor, this preacher, went to the barber's shop with his son, and they were there. And for the whole time, when people were talking, the boy just kept quiet, and the dad just kept quiet. After they got out of the barber's shop, the father asked the boy; he said, Son, I saw that you were quiet all through while you were in the barber's shop, and you must have been thinking of something.

And the boy said, yes, Dad. And the father said, what is it? And the boy said, well, I have seen my father behind the pulpit. I wanted to see my father in the barber's shop.

And the dad said, what do you mean by that? He said, well, I remember you taught us that if we laugh at obscene jokes and all the rest, we're partakers. So, I wanted to see your action as well, whether what you taught us is exactly what you practice. And the dad said, did I disappoint you? And the boy said, no, Dad, I'm proud of you because I see that you put into practice what you teach us.

That's the lesson we need to learn. Our lives must conform with the gospel that we preach. You see, look at it this way.

We don't make the gospel to fit our lives. We make our lives fit the gospel. We don't bring the gospel down to our own standards.

Rather, we seek the grace of God, and we depend on God to make sure that our lives conform to the gospel that we preach and that we are not obstacles. We must continually remember that our manner of life either comments or discounts the

message that we share to the world. We understand that oftentimes, it is not the difficult, hard-to-understand truths or somewhat embarrassing things about the gospel that cause people to stumble.

It is not the great theological truths or doctrines that make people to stumble. Rather, it is our misrepresentation of the gospel through our lifestyle that causes problems for unbelievers when they can't see what we preach.

We preach love, but what they see us practice is hatred. We preach reconciliation, but what they see us practice is division. We preach so many things, but they just wonder, I can't reconcile this.

This is what they are saying, but this is what they are doing. Which one is true? Who can live that kind of life? When there's a chasm between belief and behavior, doctrine and deeds, people are usually turned off. They don't want to hear about anything, but Paul says we don't want to provide an occasion for offense.

You see, no legitimate basis can be found for rejecting the apostolic message that Paul preached. Paul says, hey, look at me. Basically, this is what he's saying.

Look at me. My life agrees with the gospel I'm preaching. There is no division between my life and my lips.

So, Paul felt that he needed, on the contrary, to point out that even his sufferings were demonstrations of the genuineness of his apostleship. And we see that as we read in verses 4 and 5, as he moves on. Think about this.

Blameworthy conduct brings reproach to Christ and his work. Although each person is accountable for his or her life. Nevertheless, believers, especially those in positions of responsibility, ought to serve as a positive influence on those who come in contact with them. To be a Christian leader or minister is a great responsibility, and we need to make sure that we serve as a positive influence to those we come in contact with.

You can't be something in the gym and be something in the church. No, not at all. It's like we say that some people are public saints or private sinners.

That can't be. Paul will not admit of that. You are not an angel in the church and a demon somewhere else.

No, Paul says my gospel informs my life, and my life conforms with the gospel that I preached. Reading from verse 4, but as servants of God, we have commended ourselves in every way, through great endurance, in afflictions, in hardships, in calamities, in beatings, imprisonments, riots, labors, sleepless nights, hunger, by purity, knowledge, patience, kindness, holiness or spirit, genuine love, truthful

speech, and the power of God, with the weapons of righteousness for the right hand and for the left, in honor and dishonor, in ill repute and good repute. We are treated as imposters, yet we are true, as unknown, yet are well known, as dying, and see, we are alive as punished, yet not killed, as sorrowful, yet always rejoicing, as poor, yet making many rich, as having nothing, and yet possessing everything.

Wow, Paul has got a lot to say right there. That is what we call a mouthful. In this section, Paul continues to defend his call.

You see, Paul's Corinthian detractors apparently felt that the honor of an apostolic appointment by God meant success and preeminence. Those who opposed Paul had a different idea of what an apostle should look like. You see, it's the same thing with Jesus.

When Jesus came, people had different ideas of what the Messiah should look like. Some of them felt that it should just be the Messiah who comes in pomp and pageantry, and the zealots were looking for a Messiah who would come and just take the sword and lead them and defeat Rome. It's the same thing with Paul here.

The Corinthian detractors of Paul apparently felt that the honor of being an apostle is to be successful and to have preeminence. So, Paul felt he needed, on the contrary, to point out that even his sufferings were demonstrations of the genuineness of his apostleship. You see that in verses 4 and 5. He said, in all circumstances, in every way, in everything, in all circumstances, in every way, we were commending ourselves to you as ministers, as servants of God.

As servants of God, Paul's consistent message here shows us how important it is to him. He uses the word there, which means ministers or servants of God.

And it is very interesting that he stresses this by the design of what follows what it means to be a servant of God. All the conditions mentioned in verses 4 to 10 provide a platform for the display of God's grace in the life of his servants. So, beginning in verse 4, Paul employs what we call a lyrical rhetorical structure.

I mean, it's like somebody who is almost singing when he begins with his list of hardships, and then he goes to virtues, and then he goes to various problems and antitheses. And Paul's first phrase, descriptive of his conduct, he said, in great endurance, through great endurance. When he talks about great endurance here, it is very general.

I mean, he's generally saying that he has endured a lot. And then you see the way he talks about it, keeping it as close as possible. I mean, if you read the NIV, it makes a good division right here. Keeping closely to it, he talks about great endurance, troubles, hardships, distress, and beatings, which is the same thing.

Now, the version I read to you earlier does not add the in, in, in, in. But the NIV has it, which makes it a little bit more lyrical. In hard work, in sleepless nights, and in hunger, in purity, in understanding, in patience, and kindness.

So, what Paul does is he returns now to defend his apostleship by returning to his paradoxical understanding of the ministry, which we already looked at in chapter 4, verses 7 to 12. So, what does he do here? He again gives the Corinthians another catalog of his qualifications, somewhat in a very more detailed fashion. Momentarily, Paul continues to appeal to the Corinthians for reconciliation.

So, Paul's return to his defense begins in verse 4. His eloquent description of apostolic suffering that follows concludes with a possible allusion to Isaiah chapter 53. I'm talking about verse 10 right there. As a servant of God, Paul affirms that although he is poor, yet he has made many rich.

But let's look at it. You see, the overarching characteristic of Paul's apostolic ministry is that he has conducted it with great endurance, which is stressed by Jesus himself in Matthew chapter 10, verse 22. And you see, that's very significant, and certainly significant for Paul as well.

We see that in 2nd Corinthians chapter 1, verse 6. So, it talks about afflictions and troubles. Afflictions. It begins with endurance, and then he says it is in afflictions.

When Paul talks about afflictions, he talks about things inflicted upon him by others. All of these are experiences that were physical, mental, or spiritual pressure that might be avoided. However, he couldn't evade them.

No escape was possible from these distresses and their straits. And he talks about beatings. You see that in chapter 11, verses 23 to 25 as well.

As well as Acts chapter 16, verse 23. Then, he talks about imprisonment. Then riots.

Riots. All these things that Paul lists here can be found in the Acts of the Apostles. When you read about riots, you find it in Acts Chapter 13, verse 50, Acts Chapter 14, verse 19, Acts Chapter 16, verse 19, Acts chapter 19, verse 29, and Acts Chapter 21, verse 30.

All those things are detailed there how he went through all that. Then he talks about in hard work.

In hard work. Now listen, this is what Paul imposed upon himself. The first things he mentioned were external.

When he talks about beatings, imprisonments, and riots, these were not things he brought to himself. These were external. But I want you to look at this.

This is something imposed upon him to further his mission. He said in hard work. He worked hard.

In labors. Then in sleepless nights and in hunger. Those were voluntary.

Those were things he had to deny himself. That is part of the sacrifice in ministry. In hard work.

In sleepless nights. Now, it's not that Paul was saying, well, I have a problem with insomnia. No, Paul did not have a problem with insomnia.

It's just that he deprived himself of necessary sleep. Probably to pray. I was thinking about the disciples.

I was thinking about those who have come to know the Lord. You know a man who always says, you wonder how Paul does it. In Corinthians, he says, I'm praying for you.

In first Thessalonians, I'm praying for you. In 2 Thessalonians, I'm praying for you. All the churches are saying, well, always mention you in my prayers.

How does he get the time to do it? In hard labor. So, you probably could guess that this man will spend nights in prayer. Nights in prayer.

We are seeking the face of God. In sleepless nights. Not because he has sleep apnea or whatever it is.

In hunger. This hardship supposes what we find in chapters 4, 8, and 10. Then you see, having listed all that, he began to, he took a breath, so to speak, and now he talked about eight spiritual characteristics introduced.

All these characteristics recount the means by which God enabled him to endure as a minister of Christ. What are these eight characteristics? You begin to see that from verse 6. By purity. By purity.

That seems to be out of place when you read the whole thing, thereby purity. He can make this claim, for he has kept his motives.

Even though ordinarily, it seems out of place. But Paul is saying, listen, I conduct my ministry by the grace of God, my motives have been pure, and his behavior is above board. And then he says, by knowledge or understanding.

Understanding. Understanding of what? The knowledge of what God has done in Christ Jesus. Both in his own life and in its implications for all humanity.

Then, he talks about kindness and patience. He thought with God giving patience and forbearance. He said by purity, by knowledge, by patience.

We come across the word again. We mentioned it in the previous discussion. Patience, forbearance.

He could endure all the injuries, all the insults, all the stubbornness, or all the stupidity of the people without responding in anger or revenge. You know, if anybody had authority or power with God who could have said that God should zap all his enemies, I think Paul did. I said, God, get rid of them.

Take care of them. God could, he could just have told God, God, help me nuke them. No, not at all.

Rather, he bore with them in patience. He endured the insults without responding in anger or revenge at all. That means a lot when you are a missionary, when we are ministers, because people will say things that are not true about you.

How are you going to defend yourself? People will say things that are not true, blatantly false, and they know it. And you know, unfortunately, in the days we're living, and this is common in the majority world, this is common in the majority world, that when people see a minister who is doing very well, and the Lord is blessing his ministry, other people will rise up. And because they want to get up, they want to step on the head of that minister in order for them to be well known.

So, what they begin to do is pull down that other person. They want to pull down that other person and show things that they believe they know better now than this other person. And people, you see all those kinds of things on YouTube.

But look at Paul. He just kept quiet. Recently, I was talking to a minister somewhere in Africa, and I was talking to him because I watched something on YouTube that somebody recorded about him.

And as I watched it, and as I looked at it, the person was, the person was telling quite a number of lies, blatant lies that were not true concerning this minister. And I called him, and I said, I saw this about you, and as I saw this about you, he just laughed. He said, well if this person is calling me Antichrist now, is he calling me Antichrist? He said, well, I am doing my father's work, and he's doing his father's work.

He did not let that thing bother him. That is what it means: that we could endure injuries, insults, stubbornness, and stupidity of the people without responding in anger or revenge. And then fourth, Paul exhibited kindness.

You see, by purity, by knowledge, by patience, by kindness. Now look at this. Isn't this interesting? As you read this, what comes to mind is the fruit of the Spirit.

In Galatians chapter 5, Paul is saying, I exhibited. I mean, look at it—truthful by purity, knowledge, patience, kindness, holiness, or spirit, genuine love.

This sounds almost like the fruit of the Spirit. And remember, when it comes to the fruit of the Spirit, I mean, this is just as an aside, is a uniplural word, is not fruits of the Spirit, is one fruit of the Spirit with different virtues. So, you don't pick and choose.

You don't choose long, long-suffering. I say I don't; I like long-suffering. I don't like kindness.

I like goodness, but I don't like love. I like love, but I don't like patience. No, the fruit of the Spirit, you can pick and choose.

It needs to be exhibited in totality, even though it's communal as well, but in the life of the individual, it needs to be manifested. So, Paul says, by purity, by knowledge, by patience, by kindness, and then by holiness or spirit. Now, there's a little bit of discussion going on here.

Should it be by holiness or spirit, or should it be by the Holy Spirit? That has been a major question that is being asked, but we see holiness, or spirit, seems to be more appropriate in this particular instance, and then he says, by genuine love, by genuine love, and then truthful speech, and the power of God with the weapons of righteousness for the right hand and for the left. You see, Paul fought, and he fought fear, weapons of righteousness, weapons of righteousness, and then he talks about love, which reflects the attitude of Christ in the life of the Apostle, and then he talks about sincerity. He talks about being sincere.

When you talk about sincerity, you see, permit me, the Greek word is that is, without hypocrisy, very sincere. He was not trying to act a part without pretense, and then he says, in the word of truth. So, in chapter 4, verse 2, Paul plainly places the word of God in parallel with certain for the truth.

So, in this light, you find what Paul is saying, in the word of truth to be right. Now let's go to verses 7b to 8a, where he says, what weapons of righteousness for the right hand and for the left, and then in honor and dishonor with weapons. You see, Paul wields metaphorical implements of battle in the right hand and in the left.

These look like the armor. When you read Ephesians chapter 6, you think about putting on the old armor of God. Weapons of righteousness that is, righteous weapons in the right hand and in the left, and then he talks about glory and dishonor, through the bad report and through good report.

I mean, Paul says quite a lot here, and then you see in the other part, he says in honor and dishonor, verse 8a, in ill repute and good repute, then he said, we are treated as prisoners, and yet we're true. I mean, look at it. We're treated as imposters, as deceivers.

It's about yet we're true. We're treated as unknown, yet we're well-known. As dying, yet we're alive.

As punished, yet not killed. As sorrowful, yet always rejoicing. I mean, look at the paradox that is going on here.

Some regarded the apostles as imposters and deceivers. Remember, when we were talking about chapter 1, verses 15 to 21, we mentioned the fact that they said he was fickle. He could not be depended upon.

He could not be trusted. They used, the Greek word used in that passage, as we reminded you, is elaphria. Very, very fickle, unstable, cannot be trusted, and you can't rely on his word.

Paul says, no, we can be trusted. Nevertheless, we're genuine. They are regarded as unknown in the human world, particularly among Paul's rivals, but they are truly known by some in the church.

And, of course, he said, even though we are dying, we're alive, which is very interesting. You know, when you read Psalm 118, verses 15 to 16, which says, I will not die, but live.

I will proclaim what the Lord has done. The Lord has chastened me severely, but he has not given me over to death. That seems to be the kind of thing that Paul is talking about here, that as dying, we're alive.

As punished, yet not killed. As sorrowful, yet always rejoicing. Now, look at this.

This paradox characterizes Paul's ambivalence in the midst of the events of his ministry. I mean, he says, as poor, yet make, making many rich, which refers, no doubt, to his experience of material poverty. Now, how does this fit with the gospel of prosperity today, so-called? Paul says we are poor.

He experienced material poverty. I mean, but he says, we make many rich, make many rich spiritually. Now, this is very, very important.

He's talking about their spiritual enrichment. You could see that in 1 Corinthians 1, verse 5, where he says, in 1 Corinthians 1, verse 5, he says that very clearly. Look at what Paul says in 1, verse 5, that in everything, you are enriched by him in all utterance and in all knowledge.

In all utterance and in all knowledge. That is, making many rich. He says it's an allusion to 2 Corinthians 8, 9, which is going to talk later.

These words are similar to those that he will use in 2 Corinthians 8, 9, to describe the vicarious nature of Jesus' life. For you know the grace of the Lord, of our Lord Jesus Christ, that though he was rich, yet for our sake he became poor. Although he was rich, he became poor for our sake, and you, through his poverty, might become rich.

You see, neither of these statements is far from the description of the servant that we see in Isaiah. So, you see all that Paul is talking about in terms of his ministry and his suffering. And this is important.

It is very, very important for us to think about. Then, moving on now from verse 10, from verse 11, he said, we have spoken to you, we have spoken frankly to you, Corinthians. Our hearts are wide; our hearts is wide open to you.

There is no restriction in our affections, but only in yours. There's no restriction in our affection, but only in yours. Now, this is very important to look at.

In return, I speak to children, open your hearts wide to us also. Verse 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? What agreement does Christ have with Belial? Or what does a believer share with an unbeliever? What agreement as a temple of God with idols? For we are the temple of the living God. Now, overflowing with love for the Corinthians, Paul addressed them by name and directed their attention to the freedom with which he writes and, of course, the large place that they have in his heart.

Large place that they have in his heart. You see, Paul speaks freely to the Corinthians and pours his heart to them. He is not afraid to express his feelings to them.

Although he realizes that he could be hurt or disappointed, as one who genuinely loves them, he is willing to take the risk. He loves them. He is willing to express his mind to them.

He was ready to take a risk. He is not afraid to express his feelings to them. Although he realizes that he could be hurt, they are not restricted in his feelings for them, but he senses that they are restricted in their feelings towards him as their spiritual father.

He urges them to reciprocate his love for them by giving him an equal place in their hearts. That's in verse 13. Paul is aware of the disastrous consequences of personal hurts, malice, and distrust in relationships.

You see, these are usually difficult to handle. As such, churches and families resign themselves to estrangement and broken relationships. It ought not to be so.

We need the Ministry of Reconciliation. You see, at the same time, Paul must deal with something that will hinder their having proper affection for him and for God. They cannot love, and they cannot love as they should as long as they have the wrong association with teachers who oppose Paul's directives.

Consequently, he commands them to separate themselves from all who defile them morally and spiritually. Now, we get to that section of chapter 6, verse 14, which runs through chapter 7, verse 1. That section is a very important section of Paul's letter. Now, be not on equally yoked together or do not be mismatched with unbelievers.

A few points need to be noted. Some scholars have argued that that section is what we call an interpolation. It is originally not there, and they argue that it is based on at least one or two things.

Number one is the vocabulary of the passage. There are many words that are used in that passage that are not used anywhere. That's number one.

Number two, when you see the section, and you look at it, it seems to come in between 6.13 and 7.2. If you read from chapter 6, verse 13, and you go to chapter 7, verse 2, it naturally blends together. When Paul says, open wide your heart, we're not restricted in our hearts toward you. Then you go to chapter 7, verse 2, and you'll see it flows directly. So, that makes scholars say it's an interpolation.

But like I said in one of our lectures, the burden of proof is with those who call it an interpolation. And I've argued elsewhere that that passage is important for the understanding of holiness in the letters of Paul. When Paul says be not unequally yoked together with unbelievers, it is interesting that Paul uses the language of the holiness code.

And that passage is taken directly from Leviticus chapter 19. Leviticus chapter 19 is one of those important passages that talk about the teaching of holiness in the Old

Testament. And I dare say that that passage is quoted by almost everybody or all the writers in the New Testament.

And there's a lot about loving each other's neighbor. And that phrase, be not unequally yoked together, is especially in Leviticus chapter 19. And you see it right there.

When we look at Leviticus chapter 19, this is important to realize. Leviticus chapter 19, it begins with verse 2 saying, be ye holy as your heavenly Father is holy. Speak to all the congregation of the sons of Israel and say to them, you shall be holy for I the Lord, I'm your God, I am holy.

Now look at verse 19, which is right at the middle of Leviticus chapter 19. You are to keep my status, and you shall not breed together two kinds of your cattle, you shall not sow your field with two kinds of seed, nor wear a garment upon you of two kinds of material mixed together. That verse in the Septuagint, the word which is used there, is the same word used in 2nd Corinthians chapter 6 verse 14.

You know, in agriculture, we talk about what we call heterozygotes, when you take two different species and you match them together. And that is the word that Paul uses in 2nd Corinthians chapter 6, verse 14, and that word is used as well in Leviticus chapter 19 in the Septuagint, which is the Greek version of the Old Testament. So Paul is bringing that passage right from the Holiness Code.

Not only that, he quotes Isaiah chapter 43 verse 8, he quotes chapter Leviticus chapter 17, so he just weaves a catena of scriptures together. He said to be not unequally yoked together with unbelievers, but you see, he goes on by saying, for what partnership is there between righteousness and lawlessness? Or what fellowship is there between light and darkness? What is interesting here is that Paul did not say that believers are living in righteousness. He literally says what partnership is there between righteousness and lawlessness? Or what fellowship is there between light and darkness? What agreement does Christ have with Belial? Or what does a believer share with an unbeliever? What agreement is the temple of God with idols? For we are the temple of the living God. Here, Paul uses the language of the temple.

There are quite a number of things to look at there. He says believers are light, and unbelievers are darkness. Now listen, separation is not segregation, and separation is not isolation.

Separation is not segregation, and separation is not isolation. Be ye separate doesn't mean you isolate yourself and you just go and live in a mountain somewhere and hide yourself in a cave, no not at all. And it's not segregation. Well, this, you know, segregation is different and altogether different.

But separation, you are separate people. Look, Paul sees believers as what we call a contra society, a people of God who are completely different. Our values, our behaviors, and our belief systems are completely different.

He said we don't have anything to do. People usually quote this passage for marriage, and it could be applied to marriage, but the passage is not primarily about marriage or business. The passage is about knowing our identity as believers and who we are, and that is what we face in the 21st century today.

The church is going through an identity crisis. Knowing who we are, and if we don't know who we are, then we would not know how to live. That's why Paul says, listen to the Corinthians; this is who you are.

You are now the temple of God. And it's interesting here that Paul uses the plural, and he says you collectively, not just individually. I mean you are the temple of God.

He says the same thing in 1st Corinthians chapter 3, verse 16, which could be a juxtaposition by Paul between the individual and the community. At least in one place, he calls the individual the temple, and then here, as well as in Ephesians, we're the temple. Collectively we are the temple of God.

Do you know what makes the temple different? You ask yourself. Why is a temple different from an ordinary building? What makes a temple different is the presence of God. It doesn't matter how big a building may be. If the presence of God is not there, it is just a building.

It doesn't make a difference. It's just like when you call a church a cathedral. Remember the Greek word kathedra, which means a seat.

What makes a church a cathedral is that it is where the bishop's seat is. What makes the church the temple of God is the presence of God. If the presence of God is not there, then it is just an ordinary building of no value and of no use.

And he says we are the presence of God. Now, let's talk about this a little bit. Today, the church is fascinated by and carried away with programs.

We are looking at programs, but we're not looking at presence. We are fascinated. We want to have this program.

We have this program, but we are not asking the question, is God here? Is God in the midst of this? He said we are the temple. Now let me let me back up a little bit. You know, usually when we go for evangelism, we say well, you are a sinner, and therefore, don't smoke because we're the temple of God.

The Bible does not call a sinner the temple of God. It is not the temple of God. It is those of us who are believers who are the temple of God.

As I said that, I quickly remembered a story of somebody who said if God wanted humans to smoke, he would have put the nose at the back of the head so that when you blow it in your nose when you blow it through your mouth, it'll come out as an exhaust pipe at the back of your head. That's just an aside. We are the temple of God.

We belong to God. Now, this is interesting. There are two words that are used for the temple.

The one Paul uses here is Naos. I mean, you find the temple here on and then Naos. Naos is in the inner sanctuary.

That is where the Holy of Holies. He doesn't use Aaron. He uses Naos.

That is the temple of God. The presence of God. Now listen to this very carefully.

If the church is a temple of God, then pastors and ministers must be careful in the way they treat that temple because it is a temple of God. And for members, they must be careful. You see, those who destroyed the temple of Solomon did not go away free of charge.

Not at all. Those who destroyed the temple of Solomon did not have a free pass from God. Rather, God punished them.

And the same thing today. We must be careful lest we bring divisions.

Lest we bring impurity to the temple of God, to the church of God, and remember in chapter 1, he calls them the church of God. It doesn't belong to a person.

It belongs to God. What agreement as a temple of God with idols. For we are the temple of the living God.

As he said, I will live in them. That is quoting from Leviticus again. I will live in them and walk among them.

I will be their God, and they shall be my people. And then he says, therefore, come out from among them. Now he's quoting Isaiah chapter 52 now.

He said, come out from among them and be separate from them, says the Lord, and touch nothing unclean. Then I will receive you. I will welcome you.

And I will be your father, and you shall be my sons and my daughters, says the Lord Almighty. Very, very important. You see, to those who divest themselves of unequal yoke, God promises to receive them, to be a father to them, and to consider them his own sons and his own daughters.

This is not to say that an unequal yoke causes one to lose his salvation, but it does rob him of awareness of God's relationship with him and of the blessings that accompany that relationship. Any unjust sin will blight upon the spiritual life of anybody. We must be very, very careful to live lives that are pleasing to God.

God himself says I'll be your father. You will be my sons, and you will be my daughters. So, we need to ask ourselves, as we wrap chapter 6 up, some basic questions.

Ask yourself, in what ways can I receive the grace of God in vain? Am I receiving it in vain? Remember in the case of Paul, Paul says, your failure to reconcile with me as your apostle is tantamount to receiving the grace of God in vain. The grace of God goes beyond our personal relationship with God, but our relationship with one another as well. Then you ask yourself, how important is integrity in the minister's life? And Paul answers that question by showing his own life.

And then you ask another question: what is holiness? In what ways does it manifest in the believer's life? It manifests by walking with God, by keeping sin at bay. Listen, I may say this: Jesus did not die to make us better sinners. Not at all.

He did not die to make us better sinners. He died to make us saints, and we have become his temple. And the presence of God is important in our life.

And then you want to ask yourself again, in what ways can I become unequally yoked in life and ministry? There are usually temptations of unequal yokes. We want to do ministry in a way that does not bring honor to God just because we are fascinated with numbers and all that. We are the temple of God.

This is very important, and that word has implications for the way we live our lives every day. And we need to make sure that we live our lives in such a way that God is glorified and honored.

This is Dr. Ayo Adewuya in his teaching on 2nd Corinthians. This is session 7, 2 Corinthians 6, Christian Relationships.