

Intro: Wed night I was sitting in the FC w Darlene as everyone came in! It was a wonderful sight. Kids came in...wired! Excited, chattering, sometimes running to the KidzCentral door, Ready to go! Adults...little different story! LOL Most were coming from work. No one was running! Almost all fast food You could see...they were glad to be there...but it was not easy! Tired after long day, no time eat, another 2 hours As I thought about that my mind went back to the passage I had been studying right before I came down to meet my wife.

1 Cor 6:3-7:2 Page 819 (Read)

Continue our Series on Finding God's Strength in Our Weakness
Strength To Serve!

In this passage Paul is continuing to make a significant switch. He is moving his thoughts from:

- **Internal vs External:** A lot of what he has looked at so far was about What God Does **IN** us. Now **THROUGH** us
- **Others Vs Self:** Here Paul starts to put the focus on how God wants to use you. He is beginning to talk about making God's work in your life about **MORE** than just you!
- **A Disciple vs Ministry:** Ministry: Lit = *to serve; to be like Jesus; other oriented; allow God to work through you*
Def: *Giving service to others freely for the Lord's sake, so the benefit is all theirs!*

Ministry: What it is NOT:

- >Not just what happens in Church
- >Not just what happens on Sunday
- >Not just preacher, musician, group leader

Ministry: What it IS

- <BOB visiting Ed in hospital <Youth Mission
- <Food Pantry: Handing out food <AWANA
- <Deacons: Caring, Praying, Serving <Greeter

Every time you make yourself available to SERVE OTHERS IN JESUS NAME...You are doing ministry!

Office; Neighborhood; Cup of Coffee w Struggling; Prayer: Visit Sick; Take Food Invitation to church; KidzCentral

3 Key Principles For Ministry We All Need To Embrace

If you want your life to Count...Be used by God...Make a difference...You Can!

1. Be Willing To Pour Yourself Out For The Sake Of The Lord, And Others.

Vs 3-10

Here in these few verses Paul approaches it from the positive and the negative! Do this...Don't Do this!

- What we **DON'T DO** If we want to be effective servants of Jesus
 1. **Don't** Put a stumbling block in anyone's path
Lit = *rock of offence* Something that we KNOW is going to cause them to trip and fall!
Go out of your way to keep them from tripping! (Language you use, Conversations you have) (Darlene Work)
 2. **Don't** give any occasion for blame: Lit = *A blemish! A Spot* Can be a LOT of different things
Lack of Love; Thoughtless words or actions, Lack of Commitment or devotion
The Offence of The Cross is Unavoidable...We should do all we can to add nothing to that!
- What we **DO** if we want to be effective servants of Jesus!
Commend ourselves: Lit = Not *"I'm patting myself on the back!"* **Instead,** *"I'm here for you! Ready to serve!"*
Then, Paul tells us in EXPLICIT detail how we can do that! He give us no less than 30-36 specific items...
Break them down into three categories! (Not hypothetical, but rather, Autobiographical)
 1. The price we pay (9) 3 groups of three It's going to COST
 2. Spiritual gifts we need to depend upon You can't Do It ALONE! POWER
 3. Conflict is something you will live with Ongoing CONFLICT is to be expected

APPLIC: Cartoon I saw years ago: *"Pastor, I want my life to count...really make a difference. I want to be involved in something that is high impact, a real difference maker. I want to do something significant. I have Thursdays 3-5 free!"*

2. Be Willing To Love Unconditionally.

Vs 11-13

You need to keep something in mind as a backdrop for these next couple of verses.

Paul is writing to people that are questioning his integrity, his credentials, his heart and his motivations!

AND...this is from a church that HE FOUNDED! If anyone was going to respect, honor and love him...should be them!

- What Paul is doing
 - >Speaking freely: My mouth is still open: *"I am still seeking to speak what is helpful to you."*
 - >Open his heart: My heart is still open: *"I still love you unconditionally, not drawing back!"*
 - >Not withholding affection: Lit= *I'm putting no restrictions on my love! If you feel it...it is you!"*
- What He asks of them: I want YOU to love me the way I love YOU!
Notice something here:
 1. Paul went first! Despite the way they treated him...he loved them unconditionally!
 2. He didn't just reciprocate their lack of love: Used it as a platform to encourage them to love like Jesus!

APPLIC: When you say, God I want to be used by you...you can be guaranteed that you will get hurt!

I talk with people all the time in Church: *"It shouldn't be that way!"* Christians should be different

Yes they should ... But can I tell you something... So should YOU! You should give the grace...you want!

If you walk through church life expecting it all to work, not be hurt, not make mistake, not do wrong thing

1 Pet 4:8 *"Above all, love each other deeply, because love covers a multitude of sins!"*

You are going to get hurt in ministry...that's ok. Servant not greater than his master!.....

ILLUS: CS LEWIS: Love (In Stedman)

3. Be Willing To Partner With The Right People.

Vs 14-18

This is a VERY interesting passage of scripture that speaks to an issue that is VERY current in our church culture today Paul here is saying to the Cor Church, be careful who you hitch your wagon to in ministry!
When you are doing ministry, Paul says, be careful who you do it with!

Now, don't misunderstand me. Paul isn't saying here "Find the perfect people and serve alongside them.

What he IS saying is that we need to Do God's Work, in God's Way, With God's People!

Do not be yoked with unbelievers: Lit= Don't get in the harness with someone that doesn't share your spiritual commitment

- You have nothing in common: Values: Common: Lit = *Shared common values Don't value same things*
- You have no fellowship: Spirit: Fellowship: Lit = *Shared spiritual connection. Heart to heart, spirit to spirit*
- You have no agreement: Process: Agreement: Lit = *No harmony or ability to work in same way!*

Now people apply this in all kinds of relationships.

>Marriage >Friendship >Business

There is something to be said for each of those. It has been my experience that when you choose to "hitch yourself" to those that don't share your values, your Spirit, and your process...Then you are going to end up in a very difficult relationship I think God is warning us off from those things here

Illus: Travel fm Maryland. I'm going to Seattle Washington; you are going to San Diego. All good at first, WEST BUT...The closer we get to our final destination, the more tension it puts on relationship.

- You both compromise...and end up in a different place than either of you wanted
- One or the other gives in....and there is a winner and a loser...and everything is *impacted (Usually Spiritual concedes)*

And, Keep in mind, that specifically what Paul is writing about...is MINISTRY!

So, here is where we need to be careful! WE need to make sure that we aren't trying to do God's work...in Man's ways!

Applic: I regularly see it. Welcome people to your church the way Disney welcome them to Disneyland!

Im confident we can learn some things from them about welcome. But...Its pretty hard to improve on:

>Speak the truth >Love Unconditionally *Don't withhold affection!*

I'm just stubborn enough to believe what works...is what God does through His people under His guidance and by His spirit!
Zech 4:6: "This is the word of the LORD unto Zerubbabel, Not by might, nor by power, but by my spirit, says the LORD of hosts."

Illus: Placebo Worship Book of Acts: VS Lights, Fog Machines, Environment

You may get goose bumps...But I'm not sure you're getting very much Jesus!

4. Be Willing To Work On Keeping Yourself Pure.

Ch 7:1-2

Again, I don't want you to be confused about what Paul is saying here. It can be easily misunderstood

Paul isn't saying here, "Oh, you have to be perfect, have it all together, be holy and pure and righteous to be used by God"

If THAT were the case...He wouldn't let me preach!

What Paul IS saying is,

- Take personal responsibility to continue to work on your spiritual life and cleanliness!
Cleanse Ourselves: Lit = *let us keep on cleansing!* Not a one time event or occurrence!
Means one of two things: Either it is never removed, so we keep on...or it multiplies as fast as we cleanse it!
Either way (or if you are like me, and live in the world of BOTH ARE TRUE!) keep on cleansing!
1 Jn 1:9 "If we confess our sins HE is faithful and just to forgive us our sins and cleanse us from all unrighteousness!"
- Aim at sins of both Body AND Spirit! (Physical and Spiritual)
I love the way Paul, under the inspiration of the Spirit, gets right in our grill and messes with us!
>In contemporary culture, we tend to be focused on the PHYSICAL!
Someone is unfaithful, or addicted to drugs, or steals, or does something external...
We are ALL over that! Totally unacceptable. As it should be!
>But...we tend to overlook or ignore the deeper more spiritual sins!
Fruit of spirit, love joy peace, patience, kindness, goodness
We seldom if every say: THAT'S NOT a LOVING person! Not a kind person, not a gentle person
When in fact, it is just as significant when we are not loving...maybe MORE significant...than if there is external sin

APPLIC: We allow sins of the Spirit to go unaddressed...while we focus on the body.

4 Truths about Spiritual Sin

>>Worse in impact >>Less Obvious >>More tolerated >>Harder to cleanse

CONCL: RTBC is going through one of those growth times...where we need people who have never served...Step up!

God may be calling you...and you think...I NEVER could..Sure you can! If you know HIM, He gifted and equipped

1. Be willing to Pour yourself out for others
2. Be willing to Open Your Heart...Love Unconditionally
3. Be Willing to partner right people
4. Be willing to keep on cleansing!

Isaiah 6: Hear the Lord say, who will go...who can I Send? "Here I am, send me!" Willing to say that? Come, Card, Ready to do that...come see me. Watch the Screens...Announcement...Sign up!