**Transformed: 2 Corinthians wk 6 - What A Friend!**

**What would you do: - If someone in our church sued another member for slander? - If you discovered a case of incest by one of the leading men of the church? - If you discovered several young people (and not-so-young) were sleeping around? - If you knew there was extra-marital affairs going on? - If you found out some of the elders didn’t believe in the resurrection of Jesus? - That members were getting drunk in small groups? - If some leaders demanded the church go vegan for God? Or - If you got a note saying four of the board members called a secret meeting to replacing me? And what - If all these things were happening at the same time in our church? What would you do?**

**“I’d find another church” - Well, that was the church in Corinth**

**Now a few years later Paul is trying to follow up, but they're resisting – but with a gracious shepherds hearts he confronts…**

**Left off at - 2 Corinthians 5:20 Therefore, we are ambassadors for Christ, God making His appeal through us. We implore you on behalf of Christ, be reconciled to God. 21 For our sake He (God the Father) made Him (God the Son) to be sin who knew no sin, so that in Him we might become the righteousness of God. (made right before God)**

**v21 – That is gospel in one verse. The great exchange! A lot of sermons end with the gospel I want to start with it!**

**- God the father sent (the cross was intentional – not accidental)**

**- God the son the perfect sinless sacrifice. (Christ divinity)**

**- To die in our place for our sin on a sinners cross – our substitute.**

**- This is known as penal substitutionary atonement.**

**6:1 Working together with Him, then, we appeal to you not to receive the grace of God in vain. 2 For He says, (quoting Isaiah 49) “In a favorable time I listened to you, and in a day of salvation I have helped you.” Behold, now is the favorable time; behold, now is the day of salvation.**

**Why put it off another day? Do it right now – today.**

**\* Lead in a confession of faith right now \***

**(Paul then describes the kind of friend and leader he has been to them) 3 We put no obstacle in anyone's way, (We have been transparent - we never tried to trick you - we have been upfront from the beginning) so that no fault may be found with our ministry, 4 but as servants (ministers) of God we commend ourselves in every way: by great endurance, in afflictions, hardships, calamities, 5 beatings, imprisonments, riots, labors, sleepless nights, hunger; 6 by purity, knowledge, patience, kindness, in the Holy Spirit, genuine love; 7 by truthful speech, and the power of God; with the weapons of righteousness for the right hand and for the left;**

**8 through honor and dishonor, through slander and praise. We are treated as impostors, and yet are true; 9 as unknown, and yet well known; as dying, and behold, we live; as punished, and yet not killed; 10 as sorrowful, yet always rejoicing; as poor, yet making many rich; as having nothing, yet possessing everything.**

**11 We have spoken freely to you, Corinthians; our heart is wide open. 12 You are not restricted by us, but you are restricted in your own affections. 13 In return (I speak as to children) widen your hearts also.**

**Paul lists 19 challenges of being in the ministry.**

**But they also reflect his heart as one who loves them.**

**Paul as a Friend: Paul is talking to them as a friend and father**

**God uses our relationships to shape us, change us, and transform us.**

**Wherever there are people, you have problems. Following Paul’s example, we can see what grace-filled friends are like.**

**Qualities of a Christ Centered Relationships**

**What to look for in a close relationships (Friends or dating)**

**Paul explains the kind of relationship he has had with them. And similarly, the kind we should look for. A GOOD FRIEND:**

**6:1 Working together with Him…**

1. **AGF - does not see themselves as more significant than others.**

**We (Paul, Tim, Luke, Silas, the whole crew – you and I) we are in this together. We are different personalities, different abilities and strengths – but we are working together in Christ.**

**I may be the pastor – but I am not more important than you.**

**2b …Behold, now is the favorable time; behold, now is the day of salvation.**

1. **AGF - sees their relationship with God as the utmost importance**

**Where you are with God is something, I want you to know – now. Let’s not put this off another day. I need to let you know.**

**Ironic - People who date for weeks and still don’t know if the other is a Christian – it says a lot about both of you. It should come up on day one. #1 most important thing In my life.**

**3 We put no obstacle in anyone's way, so that no fault may be found with our ministry, 4 but as servants of God we commend ourselves in every way:**

1. **AGF - is not to be a stumbling block to sin.**

**A friend lives an authentic life, not an obstacle in your walk w/ God**

**We sometimes put obstacles in others’ lives, by how we live.**

**Paul = I'm not playing games about this - I cleared the brush.**

**If a friend is taking you places where your likely stumble or if they live a double life - from church people and others…**

**4 but as servants of God we commend ourselves in every way: (here is the person I have been to you) by great endurance, (I've never quit on you) in afflictions, hardships, calamities, 5 beatings, (lit. stripes) imprisonments, riots, (angry mobs) labors, sleepless nights, hunger;**

1. **AGF - does not give up in the face of hardship and trials**

**Yes, these things were the result of preaching Jesus – but he said often (and in this context) this was for your sake.**

**Friends do not give up on each other easily.**

**Fair weather friends - when times get hard – some bail or check out. A true friend is there when no one else is.**

**Proverbs 18:24 A man of many companions may come to ruin, but there is a friend who sticks closer than a brother.**

**Can you say that about yourself?**

**It is often in the trials we endure that shaped us and teach us faithfulness and endurance (this come up later in this letter).**

**2 Cor 6:6 (4 as servants of God we commend ourselves…) by purity…**

1. **A good friend has integrity**

**Purity – here means chaste. Living a God honoring sexual life.**

**Paul says - I lived a God honoring life in this area.**

**If a friend claims to be a follower of Jesus and they are not in un-convicted sexual sin. Single & sex / married & adultery or flirting.**

**A true friend encourages the best in you in this area not the worst. \*\* Can you say that about your closest relationships?**

**2 Cor 6:6 by… knowledge, patience, kindness, in the Holy Spirit,**

1. **A good friend does not try to manipulate or control you**

**Knowledge (understanding you and by experience). Paul says – by the HS, I have learned to be patient, kind, and graceful with others.**

**I never forced, pressured or manipulated you (but it was the HS)**

**As one who knows you, I listen and treat you with kindness (by the HS)**

**Are they constantly negative, controlling, or manipulative?**

**2 Cor 6:6 (4 as servants of God we commend ourselves…) by… genuine love;**

1. **A good friend is more than just words**

**Sacrificial love – compassion in action - not self-motivated.**

**John 15:13 Greater love has no one than this, that someone lay down his life for his friends.**

**Gal 5:22 But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, 23 gentleness, self-control.**

**AGF – displays the fruit of the Spirit in their life.**

**2 Cor 6:7 (4 as servants of God we commend ourselves) 7 …by truthful speech, (“word of truth” speaking the truth) and the power of God; (God working thru the truth) with the weapons of righteousness for the right hand and for the left;**

1. **A good friend is boldly honest (by the HS)**

**“by truthful speech” (word of truth - speaking the truth)**

**“and the power of God” (the power of God working thru the truth)**

**“with the weapons of righteousness” (tools /instrument of righteousness)**

**The weapons of righteousness are the word of God and prayer**

**2 Cor 10:4 For the weapons of our warfare are not of the flesh but have divine power to destroy strongholds. (we will hit this later)**

**“for the right hand and for the left” (sword/ shield - offense/ defense)**

**Speaking the truth sometimes it’s offensive, sometimes it’s defensive. A good friend seeks to mature and defend your life.**

**Proverbs 27:6 Faithful are the wounds of a friend, But the kisses of an enemy are deceitful. / Proverbs 27:17 Iron sharpens iron, and one man sharpens another. / Proverbs 27:9 Oil and perfume make the heart glad, and the sweetness of a friend comes from his earnest counsel.**

**Friends speak the truth in love – without holding back.**

**Friends actively and boldly pray for their friends.**

**(He then talks about the paradoxes of walking and serving God – 9 contrasts)**

**2 Cor 6:8 through honor and dishonor, through slander and praise. We are treated as impostors, and yet are true; 9 as unknown, and yet well known; as dying, and behold, we live; as punished, and yet not killed; 10 as sorrowful, yet always rejoicing; as poor, yet making many rich; as having nothing, yet possessing everything. (Phil 3:8 – Paul says - I lost everything but gained everything - Opposite of the Prosperity Gospel)**

**Some try to entice people to Christ thru promises of comfort, health, rich life - Lead to empty, shallow, false conversions.**

1. **A good friend is radical about Jesus!**

**Life is hard – serving Jesus can be difficult – but I love it and it’s worth every bit of hardship!**

**When looking for close friends/date - look for someone sold out to Jesus!**

**Paul says, my life - since the day I meet Jesus I’ve been chasing after Him - I'm not perfect, but I'm growing and becoming more like Jesus.**

* **Can you say that about your relationships?**

**Some just use God as a means to an end... do they play the God game / or a church crasher / the gig is up...**

**Paul then mentions their relationship with him.**

**2 Cor 6:11 We have spoken freely to you, Corinthians; (some trans have, "Oh, dear Corinthian friends!") our heart is wide open. (we have been transparent about everything) 12 You are not restricted by us, but you are restricted in your own affections. 13 In return (I speak as to children) widen your hearts also.**

**“I feel like our relationship is not reciprocal. I give and give – all you do it take. I bare my heart – and all you do is put up a wall.”**

**You as a Friend**

* **Be the friend / person you desire to have.**

**Some give and check on you and all you do is take. As a result some might not feel loved by you. And you wonder why we you’re not getting along or don’t have any close friends.**

**Want honesty? Be honest. Need a good influence? Be one. Want a trusted friend? Be trustworthy. Want a friend on fire for God? Be on fire for God! The Dance of friendship.**

* **Sometimes being a good friend can be hard**

**- Being consistent and faithful when one is not being a good friend can be difficult.**

**Proverbs 17:17 A friend loves at all times, and a brother is born for adversity.**

**- Giving and depositing into a relationship when you need some deposits too can be draining.**

**- Learning to be vulnerable and honest can be difficult – especially if you have been hurt in the past.**

**- Forgiving a friend can be hard – forgiving as Christ forgave us can be hard.**

**The reality is - sometimes being a good friend can be hard**

**The Best Friend! John 15:13 Greater love has no one than this, that someone lay down his life for his friends. 14 You are my friends if you do what I command you. (meaning if you follow me) 15 No longer do I call you servants, for the servant does not know what his master is doing; but I have called you friends, for all that I have heard from my Father I have made known to you.**

**You Have A Friend - Jesus is the ultimate Friend!**

**Through the cross I am a friend of GOD.**

**In Ireland, Joseph Scriven plagued with poor health found love and made plans to marry. On the eve of his wedding, his fiancée drowned. His pain was so deep he was only able to find solace in Jesus.**

**He then moved to Canada to start over. He fell in love again and just weeks before they were to marry, she fell sick and soon died. He turned again to Jesus, his only anchor.**

**He then turned his life over to full time ministry service to help the handicapped and the poor – often literally giving away the clothes on his back. He lived as one unknown serving the poor and hurting.**

**He had received word his mother was ill in Ireland, unable to travel to her – he wrote a letter, and in it a poem – to comfort her lonely heart.**

**It read:**

**What a Friend we have in Jesus, All our sins and griefs to bear!
What a privilege to carry Everything to God in prayer!
O what peace we often forfeit, O what needless pain we bear,
All because we do not carry Everything to God in prayer!**

**Have we trials and temptations? Is there trouble anywhere?
We should never be discouraged, Take it to the Lord in prayer.
Can we find a friend so faithful Who will all our sorrows share?
Jesus knows our every weakness, Take it to the Lord in prayer.**

**Are we weak and heavy-laden, Cumbered with a load of care?**

**Precious Savior, still our refuge—Take it to the Lord in prayer;**

**Do thy friends despise, forsake thee? Take it to the Lord in prayer;**

**In His arms He’ll take and shield thee, Thou wilt find a solace there.**

**That song has been recorded by thousands and sung all over the world by millions in hundreds of languages and hymnals.**

**Published anonymously – it was only after his death that he was given credit. But he did not mind, he knew he was known by the one that mattered – He was known by Jesus, his friend.**

**If you feel alone – Christ is near!**

**If you feel betrayed – Christ understands and is here.**

**If you feel unwanted – Christ says, “I want you”**

**If you feel left out – Christ welcomes you as family.**

**“But how do I know God loves me?”**

**Christ was not just willing to die for his friends; he deliberately died for us enemies, so that we might become his family and friends.**

**Romans 5:8 But God demonstrates his own love for us in this: While we were still sinners, Christ died for us.**