

Clogged Arteries – Part 3

Scripture Reading: II Corinthians 6:11-13

“We have spoken freely to you, Corinthians, and opened wide our hearts to you. We are not withholding our affection from you, but you are withholding yours from us. As a fair exchange – I speak as to my children – open wide your hearts also.” (II Corinthians 6:11-13 – NIV)

Our text shows us Paul making an impassioned plea for the Corinthian people to open their hearts to the ministry of the Word that Paul and others had been giving them. Those who had ministered to the church did it with an open heart. But the Corinthians had mixed affections. Like clogged arteries, they were not completely open to the things that were offered to them.

Our goal is to look at portions of Paul’s second letter to the Corinthians and determine what things can either clog or open the heart to the ministry of God’s Word, to the ministers of God’s Word, or to the fellowship of the saints. Three main areas of consideration are:

- **Christ’s love creates ministry – II Corinthians 5:14-21**
- **Christ’s reputation needs protection – II Corinthians 6:1-10**
- **Christian response to the gospel call needs purification – II Corinthians 6:11 – 7:1**

Christ’s reputation needs protection – II Corinthians 6:1-10

In this passage, the key verse is verse three, *“giving no offense in anything, that the ministry be not blamed (discredited).”* *“To give no offense”* does not mean to avoid making anyone angry or displeased – that is impossible. But rather, *“to give no offense”* means to not put a stumbling block in the way of others. We can tell the truth to people, but if our example and/or attitude is bad we make it harder or even impossible for people to receive that truth and be helped (Colossians 4:6; Philippians 2:14-16, I Thessalonians 1:5-6; 2:3-12; I Timothy 4:12-16; Titus 2:1-10 cp. II Corinthians 1:12).

So, we are to protect the ministry of the gospel. We are to preserve the reputation of Jesus Christ, so that others cannot make accusations based on the example of our lives. Before we discuss how to protect the ministry of the gospel of Jesus Christ, let’s get an overview of that ministry, which Paul has carefully discussed previously in this letter.

A Triumphant Ministry – II Corinthians 2:14-16; 3:1-6. Note the question in 2:16 is answered in 3:5. As we become the *“aroma”* of Christ to all people. We succeed because of our testimony. The results of what people do with that testimony is between them and God.

A Glorious Ministry – II Corinthians 3:7-18. Paul compares the glory of the law to how Moses' face shined in Exodus 34. The glory of the gospel excels that glory. The glory of the law was subdued by a veil, put over Moses' face. The glory of the gospel allows us to view God's glory without a veil.

A Sincere and Pure Ministry – II Corinthians 2:17; 4:1-6. A ministry before men must be seen as a ministry before God. The ministry must be free of vain pride, deceit, and any ulterior motives.

A Tested Ministry – II Corinthians 4:7-18. God has a way of letting us know that the ministry depends on divine grace. It is not a talent show. Through our sufferings and weaknesses, we see the resurrection power of Christ prevail. To God be the glory! See II Corinthians 12:7-10.

An Urgent Ministry – II Corinthians 5:1-11. Life is short. We all are one step from eternity. Only what we do in Christ's name is of lasting value. Working with souls is urgent business because we know not when we or anyone else will die and stand before the Lord. See II Corinthians 6:2; James 4:13-17 cp. Hebrews 9:27-28.

A Precious Ministry – II Corinthians 6:1-10. Because the ministry of the gospel is a precious gift and a privilege of God, we need to protect it. God values the record that He has given of His Son. The purity of the gospel is of primary importance (II Corinthians 11:2-4,13-15; I John 5:9-12; II John 1:9-11; Galatians 1:3-9; Jude 1:3-4). We must not do anything to spoil the reputation of the gospel ministry through careless and sinful living (II Samuel 12:13-14 cp. Titus 2:1-10; I Corinthians 10:31-33). How shall we value and protect the reputation of Christ and the gospel?

- **Do not receive the grace of God in vain – II Corinthians 6:1-2.** Do not neglect or ignore the wonderful aspects of what God has given you. Develop, use, and enjoy all the benefits of God's grace (Hebrews 2:1-3; 13:9; II Timothy 2:1-10).
- **Do not become a stumbling block to others – II Corinthians 6:3.** God's testimony and our testimony go together (I Corinthians 9:19-27; 10:31-33 cp. Romans 14:13; 16:17-19)
- **Be a steppingstone for others – II Corinthians 6:4-10.** Strive to demonstrate a good example throughout all the labors and struggles of life and ministry. Our lives need to be dedicated to promoting and protecting the gospel of Jesus Christ (Philippians 1:20-21,27; Romans 12:1-2).

The list in verses 4-10 is too long to put in these notes. The Holy Spirit gave Paul a very comprehensive list of all that may be required of us. Please don't think that this list is only for pastors, evangelists, and missionaries. All of us are included (II Timothy 3:12). Is there anything that the Lord might ask of you, and He would find you unwilling? Has the offering of Christ's life not led the way for us to follow Him through anything? Are our arteries clogged or clear for His service? See Matthew 16:24-26; Galatians 2:20; Philippians 3:10,14-21; II Timothy 1:7-8,12.