

THE DANGERS OF 'RUNNING ON EMPTY'



TEXT: 2 Cor. 6:1-3 We then, as workers together with him, beseech you also that ye receive not the grace of God in vain. (For he saith, I have heard thee in a time accepted, and in the day of salvation have I succoured thee: behold, now is the accepted time; behold, now is the day of salvation.) Giving no offence in any thing, that the ministry be not blamed:

INTRO.: A. I rarely check my gas gauge in my car, so I often find myself running very low on fuel. (My wife would usually remind me. In fact, to her anything below 1/2 tank = empty!) I used to have a car with a talking computer & I would often be shocked into reality when I heard its (her) voice suddenly say: "You are low on fuel." Because I knew that it (she) would remind me again and again, I would often put off refueling until I would hear a final nagging warning and find that I was close to **"RUNNING ON EMPTY!"** If you are not close to a gas station, this can be a little disconcerting and a real inconvenience!

B. Believers often do the same thing. That is, they try to live the Christian life without the filling of the Holy Spirit. They continue to attempt to serve the Lord, but without His fuel! That is even more dangerous than running your car with very little fuel. That is, at least in part, the subject of this passage: **"THE DANGERS OF 'RUNNING ON EMPTY'."**

C. According to our Savior who rebuked Satan at His temptation, **"Thou shalt worship the Lord thy God, and Him only shalt thou serve."** He joined worship and service. That is the theme Paul picks up on in this passage.

I. A SUBLIME PRIVILEGE: v.1a

A. A Holy Calling: **"...workers together with Him"**

1. We are saved to serve, not just to sit, and there can be no true worship without service.
2. We are to be workers, not shirkers; there is a lost world that needs to hear the Gospel.

B. A Heavy Responsibility:

1. The words **"working together"** are from the Greek "sunergeo" (English: synergy).
 - a. Synergism is the doctrine of the human will & the Holy Spirit working together to produce salvation (Encarta Dictionary).
 - b. Synergy occurs when something works together with something else to increase its effect or benefit.

ILLUS.: Think of it! God desires to work together with us to increase the effect of the Gospel ministry! (Not that He couldn't do it better without us, but that He has chosen to effectively work through us!)

II. A SOLEMN POSSIBILITY: v.1b

A. Empty Saints:

1. Salvation should result in service.
2. Paul expresses his deep concern that some believers in Corinth were **"RUNNING ON EMPTY"** i.e., that God's grace had done nothing for them from the practical standpoint; they weren't engaged in service & thus were not really "workers..."

ILLUS.: I wonder how many 'empty saints' we have at Faith Baptist? How many believers here have received the **"grace of God in vain."** How many are "running on empty" here tonight?!

The fault is not the Lord's – there is sufficient grace available to enable every saint to serve. Ex.: If your car is low on gas, and you ignore the need, it is not the local gas station's fault if you run out! You can keep driving till you have no fuel, but then you

will either have to get out and walk for gas, or you will have to push your car, i.e., you will have to provide the energy to get where you are going without the assistance of the fuel, motor, transmission, power steering, heater, etc.

B. Graceless 'Believers':

1. Since Paul addresses both believers and unbelievers in his epistles, he may also be provoking those who have professed faith in Christ, to examine their spiritual condition
2. To the believer he may be saying: *"I hope that now that you are saved it will do something to make you a co-laborer of Christ"* and to the unbeliever he may be saying *"I hope you truly received God's grace"* and a good check is your service or lack of it.
 - a. This is the "age of grace" so grace is offered to provide salvation, but it must be accepted.
 - b. Grace is provided for every believer to equip us for service, but it must be used to enable productivity.

III. A SEVERE PROBLEM: v.2 (Parenthetical)

A. The Blessing: v.2a

1. This is a partial quote from Isaiah 49:8 which has a dual application to Israel and to Israel's Messiah.
2. God is promising to preserve and "succour" or help his people.
 - a. Paul quotes this passage here in this context to show that this promise is given to sinners also in this **"day of salvation."**
 - b. This **"day of salvation"** was originally given to Israel for when their Messiah would show up; in this verse a new application is made.

B. The Appeal: v.2b

1. The latter part of the verse is used most often to apply to sinners in an invitation to get saved because of the urgency of that decision.
2. The application is O.K., but it is not the correct interpretation or primary application of this verse which deals with this present dispensation of salvation (grace).
3. In other words Paul is saying that we need to be working while we can to get folks saved because this is "A LIMITED TIME OFFER!"
 - a. Though many will be saved during the Tribulation, the conditions will change.
 - b. Once the rapture takes place the Church Age is over and the heavy hand of God's judgment begins.

IV. A SERIOUS PREDICAMENT: v.3

A. Offensive Servants:

1. Remember that v.2 was parenthetical, so the 1st & 3rd verses can be read together.
2. The idea is that those who are co-workers with the Lord must take every precaution not to bring an offense on the ministry.

ILLUS.: Every time a Christian fails & gets backslidden, there are repercussions to the ministry. Who knows the damage inflicted by some sinning saint?! And the more public the sin, the more damage to the ministry. Ex.: a Christian who smokes privately(!) may harm himself, but do little damage to others or to the cause of Christ; whereas a Christian gossip may destroy others and damage severely the ministry.

B. Blamable Believers:

1. We all know the ministry WILL be blamed, but the idea is that we do not give the enemies of the Gospel any LEGITIMATE reason to blame the ministry. (*cf. v.8 "dishonor," "evil report," "deceivers"*)
2. One of the most dangerous weapons that are formed against us usually comes from our own arsenal, i.e., we supply our enemies with the materials to make those weapons.

ILLUS.: The U.S. supplied the materials in our trading with Japan before WWII for the weapons used against us. The U.S. supplied Saddam Hussein with the weapons, money and resources he used against us. The same thing happens every time we compromise with sin, allow our testimony to be tarnished, etc. We supply the enemies of the Gospel the material to form weapons against the church.

CONCL.: The ministry is **"blamed"** every time a believer attempts to serve the Lord when he or she is **"RUNNING ON EMPTY."** God's grace is given to us so we can be co-laborers with Him in getting out the Gospel. The unsaved recognize when our testimony is a sham, when our witness is powerless, when there is no grace or graciousness in our ministry.

